

Advocacy Training Resource

Ten Tips for Facilitating a Successful Training

1. Set Realistic Goals

Decide in advance what a successful training would look like. Consult with those who invited you or with the audience in advance to determine their goals and expectations. Be aware of time — your training goals should be realistic based on the time allotted to you.

2. Know Your Audience

Before you plan the training, ask questions about the audience. What is their knowledge or skill level on the subject matter on which you are training? What is their interest level? Is this a totally new area, a refresher course, or is it building on earlier trainings? What else is on the program — will the audience be tired after a long business meeting? Will they be sleepy after eating a large lunch? Should there be accommodations made for non-English speakers or audience members with disabilities? Are there gender-neutral restrooms available for nonbinary participants?

3. Know the Venue and Logistics

Find out in advance if the audio-visual (AV) equipment you need will be available. Set up and test the equipment ahead of time. Depending on the size of the audience and the room, check if there is a working microphone (and someone there to trouble-shoot if it malfunctions)? Is there a microphone for audience members who might want to ask questions? Is the lighting adequate for your purposes? What is the actual set up — is the audience in rows of chairs or at tables? Are you up on a stage or closer to the audience? Speak up in advance and let the organizer know what AV equipment you will need and your preferred set up. Make sure the venue is accessible to anyone who might want to participate.

4. Plan the Training with Your Goals & Audience in Mind

Organize your training based on the skill level of the audience. Never talk down to an audience (even if they are young people); but, do not assume too much knowledge on their part either. Be clear in your explanations. Time components of your training so you will be able to complete it without rushing, and use someone as a timekeeper or keep your own time in order to stay on track!

5. Choose an Appropriate Format and Media

If you are going to use PowerPoint (and equipment is available), choose powerful images and limit the amount of text on each slide. You want the audience to look and listen to you rather than read! If you will be speaking and writing on a white board or easel paper — consider writing key points in advance and asking another person to write during the training so you don't lose your audience by

turning away from them. Think about handouts in advance. What would be most useful as reinforcement of the training afterwards? When is it best to provide handouts — beforehand, afterwards, during?

6. **Make Your Training Interactive**

Think about beginning your training with a relevant question directed at the audience. This is a good way to learn about your audience and engage them immediately. Sometimes it is useful to contact some who will be in the audience in advance to involve them in the training — sharing a relevant experience, for example. If possible allow time for small group activity — brief dialogues between members of the audience about a related topic; small group discussion in response to a launch question you provide; or practice using a particular skill. Leave sufficient time for the activity based on the assignment and size of the group and plan on a “report back,” which may or may not involve every group or individual.

7. **Decide in Advance How to Handle Questions**

Always leave time for questions, but think about how to incorporate them into the training. Decide whether you want to allow participants to stand up and ask directly, fill out a card that can be collected so that you can group like-questions together and/or be selective, or use small groups to answer questions collectively. Make it clear from the beginning when and how questions may be asked so you are not interrupted. Be attentive to your audience and check for signs that might indicate they are confused!

8. **Be Flexible!**

Remember to expect the unexpected — equipment failure; a larger/smaller-than-expected audience; a rebellious audience member; or a change in the timing for the session. Most audiences will be sympathetic when things go wrong, so be candid and relaxed about any problems or mistakes — people appreciate a leader with whom they can identify! Go with the flow and be ready to make last minute (sometimes on the spot) changes. Perhaps you’ll have to cut a group activity or a report back, maybe you will have to add more time to the small group activity, or take questions mid-way if you sense confusion in the audience.

9. **Practice, Practice, Practice**

Get comfortable with your materials but don’t over-practice so that you aren’t attentive to the “vibe” in the room. Have water, a cough drop, tissue, and anything else you might need close at hand.

10. **Maintain Your Sense of Humor, Smile, & Have Fun!**

You don’t need to start with a joke, but you should have fun with your material and audience. Smile and try to maintain a conversational tone as you speak. Be open to learning from your audience and seeing things in a different light. Enjoy!