

Strategies for Successful Learning

Presentation Strategies - Used when the major objective is to convey information, whether to an individual or to a group.

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>The Lecture – A well-prepared oral presentation on a topic by a qualified person.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively easy to plan and can be more economical than other teaching strategies. • Facts and related information can be presented in an orderly and systematic manner. • Skillful lecturers can stimulate an audience to become more knowledgeable about the topic or issue through further inquiry or related activities. • Information can be given to a large number of people in a relatively short time. • Some adults would rather listen than read or become involved in a discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some teachers are unable to plan and organize a talk for an audience. • There is usually no convenient way to determine whether or to what extent learning has occurred. • A speaker can distort facts and dispense erroneous information. • Speakers may use terminology that confuses or irritates the audience. • Speaker's behavior may distract the listener from the actual talk. • Generally learning begins to diminish after approximately 15 minutes of listening to a lecture. • The likelihood of long-term retention of content presented in a lecture is less than other strategies.
<p>Symposium – A series of short presentations by two to five persons qualified to speak on related topics or on various phases of the same topic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The variety of presentations enables the audience to acquire a wide range of knowledge or opinions. • Short talks help prevent monotony and keep listeners alert and stimulated. • Even though presentations may be short, comprehensive coverage of a topic is possible. • If one presenter is poor, the others can compensate for that weak performance. • Since speakers have limited time, they tend to stay on topic and make certain they present the most critical points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It appears formal to the audience. • Learners have little opportunity to interact with speakers. • No discussion or interaction among speakers. • Obtaining a number of speakers who are both technically and verbally competent may be difficult. • If the moderator is not competent, repetition of information or even general confusion may occur. • One or more speakers can neglect the assignment and change the content.

Presentation Strategies (cont.)

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>The Panel – A small group of persons, usually about six, who sit around a table and discuss a topic in which they have special knowledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several experts can be used to present a variety of viewpoints on a particular subject. • Viewpoints can be explored and discussed more fully than through presentations alone. • The informality of discussion is usually well received by most audiences. • A skillful moderator can emphasize important points that will add to the knowledge of the listener. • Panels allow learners to choose presenters or points of view with which they agree. • Some learners prefer to explore various viewpoints rather than reach a single decision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of this strategy’s success depends upon the moderator, who must be extremely skillful in leading a discussion. • Finding several panel members evenly matched in knowledge and ability to discuss their views may be difficult. • More planning and organization are required than for most presentation strategies. • Unless the audience is really interested in the issue, panels can be very dry events. • One or two panel members can dominate the discussion.
<p>The Dialogue – A dialogue is a discussion by two people competent in a subject area and capable of communicating effectively with each other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is relatively simple and easy to plan. Only two people are required and a wide variety of material can be used. • The strategy provides for direct communication between the two participants regardless of their points of view on the content. • If the subject is controversial, the dialogue removes the audience from any emotional involvement since only two participants enter into the discussion. In this way, salient points may be debated on an atmosphere of objectivity. • Instead of debating, the participants may actually support each other’s views and conduct a mutually supportive discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because they are usually more knowledgeable and well prepared about the subject than the audience, participants may talk over the heads of the listeners and proceed too rapidly. This is especially true when the content is complex or technical. Audience preparation is crucial to this strategy’s success. • If participants become combative, the dialogue can become and lose much of its potential as a teaching strategy. • Participants can become so involved they forget that the purpose of the activity is to teach or communicate the content to others. • If one person is more vocal and aggressive, the two sides may not be presented equally when discussing opposing points of view.

Presentation Strategies (cont.)

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>The Debate – A structured discussion during which two sides of an issue are presented and argued by two or more individuals within a given time period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is usually a stimulating experience for listeners because of the argumentative nature of the strategy. • Since each side is trying to win the debate, only the most salient points will be made within the time allowed. No time will be wasted with useless or irrelevant information. • The combination of a variety of speakers and short presentations prevents the boredom potentially generated by some presentation strategies. • It is a convenient way to present controversial materials because the audience is removed from entering into the debate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderators must be well trained and make certain the participants adhere to the ground rules, including time limitations. • Learners not comfortable with a competitive or argumentative atmosphere may find the debate unpleasant. • The structure must be followed carefully to allow fairness, which leaves little room for flexibility. • Participants may become emotionally involved in trying to win the debate and forget the educational purpose of the activity. • In an effort to win the debate, some participants may withhold information or slant their facts instead of presenting them objectively.
<p>The Demonstration – A carefully prepared presentation that shows how to perform an act or use a procedure. It is accompanied by appropriate oral and visual explanations, illustrations, and questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations are generally interesting and hold attention. • Demonstrations present subject matter in a way that can be understood easily and add meaning. • They convince doubters that a thing could be done, or that they themselves could do it. • Demonstrations are objective and concrete. • Demonstrate practical applications of theory and knowledge. • Usually yield more positive responses to the material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good demonstrations are not easily developed. • The result of a demonstration may require a long time to achieve and could be expensive. • Complex conditions may be required. • Equipment needed may limit the location where demonstrations can be held.
<p>The Interview – A presentation in which an interviewer asks questions of one or possibly two resource persons before and audience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interview is relatively simple to plan and develop. • Because the audience is interested in the topic, boredom and apathy should not be a concern. • Many resource persons perform better during an interview than by other presentation strategies. • Points of interest can be clarified or discussed more in depth when necessary. • The audience can be indirectly involved in the questioning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewer must be skilled in asking questions and must not get personally involved during the interview process. • If the resource persons do not give relatively short responses, the interview can become a series of short speeches. • The resource persons might fail to answer the questions adequately, even after several efforts by the interviewer. • Some important details may be omitted if the right questions are not asked.

Action Strategies – Teaching activities in which the learners are physically as well as intellectually active during the learning process.

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>In-Basket Exercise – A simulation strategy in which items that might appear in a manager’s box are presented to participants, who must make a decision on the proper strategy for responding to each item.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves participants in situations similar to those faced on the job and evokes personal decisions and analyses of the causes and effects of these decisions from each learner. • Easy to construct and involve the use of few resources. • Each exercise can be designed to deal with problems specific to the organization or the position for which the individual is being trained. • Learners are offered the opportunity to experiment with new behavioral patterns in a relatively safe environment. • Exercises can be easily adapted to fit time constraints and most other situational variables. • No special skills beyond those of any good teacher are demanded of the instructor. • Calls for the exercise of higher order cognitive skills. • In-basket exercises are involving and interesting to most participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reaction of the learner to the situation in a classroom might be radically different under the pressures of the actual work environment. • Learners tend to react to problems they see in the described situation rather than to the problem the instructor attempted to pose. The limited time devoted to orienting participants to the simulated situation often leaves them with varying perceptions of the environment. • The development of new insights and skills is dependent upon the quality of the discussion that follows the exercise. • Complete analysis of the situations posed by the in-basket exercise can often be very time-consuming.
<p>Simulation Games – Exercises that use mock-ups or similar situations as the process to train individuals and to provoke interaction and thought conducive to specific learning goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally arouse the interests of adult participants and enhance their involvement in the learning activity. • Effective for training in leadership and management skills, human relationship skills, sensitivity, and problem solving. • Provides a safe environment in which to test newly formed insights or conclusions or to practice unfamiliar behaviors. • Allows the presentation of complex models or situations. This enables the learning director to deal with the total model or with specific segments of it. It further allows for the introduction of chance or for attempts at replication. • Provides the opportunity to integrate both new factual knowledge and that gained through prior experience with the practice of newly formed skills. • Allows openness and flexibility thus enabling participants to use the learning strategies and styles they prefer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In that simulations may not be able to present the actual environment, they may instill inaccurate information or inappropriate skills. • May involve large amounts of valuable resources. • The learner’s awareness that the situation may not be “real” can engender a play mentality regarding the learning activity. • Ability, experience, and learning style of the participant, as well as the leader, influences learning outcomes.

Action Strategies (cont.)

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>Role Playing – Activities in which participants are involved in assuming thinking-doing-feeling roles associated with the exercise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages learners to be actively involved and focuses their attention on specific, concrete applications of the concepts or skills under consideration. • Allows redirection even during the actual conducting of the role-play. • Conceptualization of appropriate behavior is integrated with practice of that behavior, supplying reinforcement of both the principles of action and the skills vital to carrying out the newly developed insights. • The focus of the individual’s attention can readily be directed to personal concerns thus allowing the adult learner to concentrate on felt needs in addition to being directed to the concerns of the instructional leader. • Conducive to demonstrating principles that may be abstract or upon which a group has difficulty concentrating. • May provide a common experience important to collaborative efforts to analyze a situation. • Encourages behavioral and attitudinal change. • Encourages a greater appreciation and understanding of the role of feelings in interpersonal relations and promotes reflection on the impact of the skill together with practice in its use. • Allows the opportunity to experiment with new behavior without embarrassing or endangering oneself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires an atmosphere of trust between facilitator and participants and among the members of the group. • Care must be exercised in its use to ensure no adverse emotional impact upon participants. • Must ensure sufficient time is available to completely explain the activity and to debrief effectively following. • Difficult to ensure involvement from all participants if a utilized for large group sessions.
<p>Case Studies – a seemingly real and relevant situation requiring complex analysis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to develop or sharpen problem-solving skills. • Promotes independent study • Provides ways to gain insight into one’s own way of viewing reality and making decisions. • Promotes interaction among participants and develop communication skills • Can be valuable in evaluating learning by groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, full individual feedback on performance and involvement is more difficult to achieve. • Participants may feel the case study is too slow paced. • Learners may be frustrated by limited understanding of the complexity and intricacies of situation. • Participants may become uninterested if they do not see the case as relevant to their problem or situation.

Interaction Strategies – Teaching techniques that rely heavily on discussion and sharing among participants. Students are active during the learning process in clarifying their own thinking and sharing their ideas with one another.

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>Discussions – A group of people brought together for face-to-face oral communication for the purpose of sharing knowledge or making a decision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tends to keep the learner physically and mentally active and thus inclined to process information more deeply. •Promotes development of listening and speaking skills. •Leads learners to an awareness of different views of a situation and more tolerant of other stances. •Participants have some control over the content and direction of the discussion thus making it more likely that their needs and interests will be considered. •Group cohesiveness developed during discussions may continue to be expressed in other collaborative work or learning efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Generally tends to take more time to develop a plan of action or consider a content area. •A few members may dominate the group, directing the discussion to their own interests and ignoring the wishes of others. •Group pressures can lead to concern for efficiency rather than satisfaction, authoritarian approaches rather than collaboration, or consensus rather than divergent thinking. •Time and space constraints can interfere with the effectiveness of small-group discussions.
<p>Participation Training – Frequently used with discussions by involving participants in a learning discussion and then having them reflect upon the process they experienced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Provides a realistic setting in which adult learning is likely to occur and in which the learning process can be analyzed. •Promotes the development of basic tools essential to learning in groups such as listening, observing, communicating, and reasoning. •Enables participants to examine and appreciate the effect of climate and emotions on the learning process. •Individuals who have experienced such training are usually adept at analyzing and adapting various group-learning strategies. •Participants also have an opportunity to explore meaningful topics of common concern. •Can challenge individuals to examine basic presumptions and to think through positions on important issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Demands a willing group and an insightful leader. •Takes several sessions before participants begin to appreciate the benefits that can be derived from participation training and for full comprehension of the process. •Tendency for participants to be distracted from examining learning processes during their discussion of interesting content.

Interaction Strategies (cont.)

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>Buzz Groups – small clusters of learners who are temporarily grouped together for a short period to address a topic presented by a facilitator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each participant has more time to express and explore ideas and to get reactions from others. • Adult learners can relate their experiences to the ideas defined or principles enunciated by the presenter and share in the insights of other group members. • Provides an opportunity to get feedback on the interpretation of the material presented. • Satisfaction of group members is usually greater when they are allowed to express their opinions and ask questions regarding material presented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be time consuming when considering the overall time required for initial presentation of concepts, group activity, and debriefing. • Quality of discussion is directly related to appropriateness of the topic or task defined by the instructor. • Participants do not have the instructor's reactions to their ideas or to those of the overall group. • Some adults may be threatened by implied expectations for them to participate in discussions with people they do not know well.
<p>Brainstorming – An interaction strategy used to generate ideas or to help determine the exact nature of content to be discussed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful for getting many ideas out before a group. • Encourages participants to think beyond their traditional approaches to solving problems and their day-to-day procedures for dealing with issues. • Well-run sessions draw out ideas too divergent to be suggested through other techniques. • Encourages involvement of all participants yet relies on ideas suggested by individuals to stimulate thinking by other group members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has no quality control, is undirected, and relies on motivation and maturity of the group. • Many ideas may not be useful; only later discussion and analysis can determine their feasibility. • Members of the group can dominate the process by their suggestions, or the first few ideas generated can set a direction for thinking. • No guarantee that all relevant areas will be mentioned or that creative ideas will be suggested.
<p>Audience Reaction Team – Similar to a listening team. Members of an audience reaction team need not restrict their remarks to the end of a presentation, they may interrupt the presenter at any point to seek clarification or to direct the trend of the presentations to the needs or interests of the audience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful for complicated or difficult information or when the presenter would benefit from the audience input. • See Listening Teams strengths and limitations for additional information. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires clear explanation of process by the facilitator or chairperson in order to enhance effectiveness. • May interrupt the train of thought of the presenter and cause the presentation to appear unorganized or the presenter unprepared.

Interaction Strategies (cont.)

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>Listening Teams – small groups of learners who are assigned to listen for specific information during a presentation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows assignment of listening topics that alert learners to major elements of the presentation and stimulate questioning. • Provides for summarizing and synthesizing presentations and integrating participants' experience into the discussion. • Injects audience participation into formal presentations. • Presenters are more likely to consider the interests and concerns of their audience when they know that participants will respond to what was presented. • Responsibility for assigned listening tasks can promote the development of listening skills among adult learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those listening carefully for material related to their topic may overlook other ideas. • The organization imposed by the facilitator may hinder the learners in organizing the information in a manner more natural to them and more likely to be retained. • Listeners may be assigned a topic of little interest to them, or their interpretation of the presentation may be of little interest to others.
<p>Colloquy – A small panel of experts presents information, insights, or opinions to a representative panel of the audience who in turn, interact with the expert panel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenters are pressured to attend to audience needs and to be precise about the information and opinions they express. • The format encourages exploration of various sides or aspects of an issue. • Provides for formative feedback to all involved so that direction or emphasis in the discussion can change to meet interests, needs, or levels of competence. • Stimulates thought, because participants are involved in taking sides or identifying with positions expressed. • Can interject audience participation into a discussion at timely and relevant occasions rather than restrict such participation to post presentation situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires sufficient time for presenters to express all their ideas and to allow for all the comments and questions of the audience representatives. • Because of time and participation constraints, opinions are difficult to change. • Extreme positions may be taken by an expert or an audience representative and block the general resolution of an issue. • May be difficult to control and demands a skills chairperson and cooperative panelists.

Interaction Strategies (cont.)

Strategy	Strengths	Limitations
<p>Committee – A small group of people given an assigned task or responsibility by a larger group or person. Sometimes referred to as a “task force.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees can develop into very efficient groups. • Committees are likely to move consistently toward closure of the learning or work tasks. • Members learn through action, thus getting both practice in the learning task and feedback on the effectiveness of their learning. • Members develop a stronger allegiance to the parent organization and create networks among other members of the larger group. • Members are in a favorable position to educate other members of the parent organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assignment given the committee may appear be unimportant, unclear, or posed in such a manner as to limit the learning involved. • Members may have hidden agendas that interfere with the learning tasks. • If members don't perceive ownership in the assignment, they may give only perfunctory service to the work or learning tasks. • Must ensure sufficient time is available. • Committee members must meet together regularly. • Members must be encouraged to have equal participation in committee activities rather than a few individuals carrying the load.
<p>Committee Hearing – The questioning of a person or several persons by a group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible control over the investigation of the issue under the control of the committee, thus enabling the members to direct the flow of information. • Allows for cooperative thinking and questioning in which members can concentrate on certain aspects of a problem or take time to think while others lead the discussion. • The verbal interplay among participants can create high interest among observers. • Committee hearings can provide good training for group members in information-gathering and problems-solving procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees can be disorganized and members can interfere with each other's learning. • May be difficult for the person being interviewed; questions may jump from issue to issue or the probing can become intense. • Are generally time consuming since multiple members are allowed to ask a string of questions. • The public image of a committee hearing is generally one of hostility or a self-seeking forum thus causing further concern for the interviewee.

Ref: Seaman, Don F., Fellenz, Robert A., 1989, *Effective Strategies for Teaching Adults*, New York, Maxwell Macmillan International Publishing Group