

**A sample activity from the
Fenman trainer's resource:**

Practical Training Skills

Written by Rod Storey

Thank you for downloading this sample activity. You are welcome to use this material in your courses.

This sample activity is just one of 20 contained in the trainer's activity pack '*Practical Training Skills*', published by Fenman. Details of the other activities are given at the end of this document.

Practical Training Skills

Contents:

- Introduction
- Activity 6: Structuring a training session or course
- Full contents listing: 20 activities – 60 tools
- About this resource

Introduction:

Practical Training Skills is a trainer's toolkit from Fenman, written in response to frequent requests by inexperienced trainers for guidelines and advice on preparing and delivering training.

If you are new to training, you're bound to have countless questions and concerns about the training sessions you're preparing and delivering:

- Will it work?
- How do I get my timings right?
- When do I intervene?
- How do I handle a 'difficult' delegate?

And if you're a training manager with responsibility for developing your more inexperienced training colleagues, you'll save yourself a lot of time and effort by passing on the tools in this new pack.

This new training resource is your **one-stop toolkit** for practical training skills. It contains over 60 tools which will guide you, or your colleague, through the training process step by step. You can work through it 'cover to cover' for a

comprehensive overview of the training process, or you can dip into it when a specific need presents itself.

A trainer with over 30 years experience has written *Practical Training Skills*. His aim in writing this pack for inexperienced trainers, was to speed up learning, by giving **accelerated experience** Why not take advantage of the skills and knowledge that he's built up over three decades of preparing and delivering training?

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6 STRUCTURING A TRAINING SESSION OR COURSE

Description

This unit shows you how to structure or design a training session or course, allocate the correct time for each activity, and ensure there is a good balance of techniques.

There are five tools:

Tool 6A Mind Map[®] – **example:** to show you how to organise a wealth of information with great visual clarity

Tool 6B Time allocation chart: a guide to allocating time to different activities

Tool 6C Timing a course: an exercise to give you practice in planning the time needed for a training course

Tool 6D Balance exercise: a more detailed exercise, to give you practice in selecting and balancing suitable activities, which meet training objectives/outcomes and also fit within a time limit

Tool 6E Balance check: a check for you to ensure there is a reasonable variation and balance in the design of your piece of training. It can also be used to check someone else's design.

Purpose

This unit helps you allocate the correct amount of time to each activity in your training session or course, and get the right balance of techniques.

The 'correct amount' of time is long enough for the trainees to carry out the activity fully and learn from it, yet not so long that they get bored, or feel that time has been wasted.

The 'right balance' in the training is a variety of techniques to keep up the trainees' interest, to use the skills or knowledge learned, and possibly to make things progressively more difficult, so they feel they are being stretched.

When to use the tools

Use Tool 6A *Mind Map*[®] – *example*, when you have gathered your ideas, and need to organise them and differentiate between them.

Use Tool 6B *Time allocation chart*, when you have your ideas of what you want to include in the session or course, but are trying to see if it will all fit.

Use Tool 6C *Timing a course*, when you are learning how to allocate times, especially if you often feel that you try to, 'put a quart into a pint pot'.

Use Tool 6D *Balance exercise*, when you are learning how to get the balance right in the design of your training sessions or courses.

Use Tool 6E *Balance check*, when you are deciding which training techniques to include in your design, and want to make sure that there will be adequate balance and variety of activities. You can also use this tool to check the balance in a session or course designed by someone else.

Background

When you start to think about the content needed in a training session or course, you may find that you have many ideas buzzing round in your head. The big problem is capturing those ideas, and getting them on your computer screen or on paper, so you can use them, keep them, discuss them with other people, and probably move them around.

There are several methods of doing this. One of the best is to draw by hand a Mind Map[®], first devised by Tony Buzan (see Useful addresses, page xxv), which is a structured diagram to get a huge amount of information on to one piece of paper. An example is given in Tool 6A. This is for a practical course on Presentation Skills for new trainers who already have some experience of making presentations.

The MindManager[®], also produced by Tony Buzan, is a very good computer-based system which does a similar task. Use either of these as a way of organising your ideas, and then put them on paper or on your computer as your draft design.

Another method is to write all your ideas on to small sticky Post-it[®] Notes. First of all, put one idea on to each Post-it[®] Note and then stick them to a whiteboard, wall, table or large sheet of paper, in what you think are logical groupings or order. Then move certain ones around if necessary, until you are happy that they represent a suitable order and layout for your session or course. It is often worth while getting a second opinion from a colleague, and going back to them the following day, to see if you need to modify your design. Once you are happy with the design, put it on to paper or on to your computer. The next stage is to write down the order or framework of the session or course, using the tools in this unit to allocate times to each part of the framework, and to check if the balance of techniques to be used is right.

A third, and slightly easier but longer method, is to write down the framework very roughly, and then check and adjust timings and balance using the tools.

How to use the tools

Tool 6A *Mind Maps*[®] – *example*: Use this as a handy method for organising your ideas and transferring them on to paper.

Tool 6B *Time allocation chart*: As you write or check the framework, refer to the chart to see how long you should allocate to each activity.

N.B. If you are using prepared activities, for example, from some of the very good packages of exercises, the time needed is usually given in the package.

Tool 6C *Timing a course*: Use this exercise to give you skill and practice in allocating times, before you start the design of your own session or course. A suggested answer is given at the end of the tool.

Tool 6D *Balance exercise*: Use this tool to give you further skill and practice in balancing the techniques and allocating times, before you start your own design. Comment and advice is given at the end of the tool.

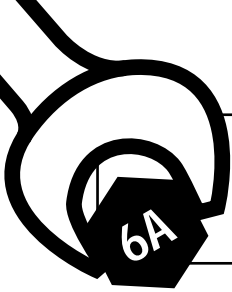
Tool 6E *Balance check*: When you are part-way through your design, write the techniques you intend to use on the tool, and the number of times you intend to use that technique. Then check that you have a range of techniques, and also that you are not planning to use one technique straight after another of the same kind, for example, a lecture followed by another lecture.

Training techniques include:

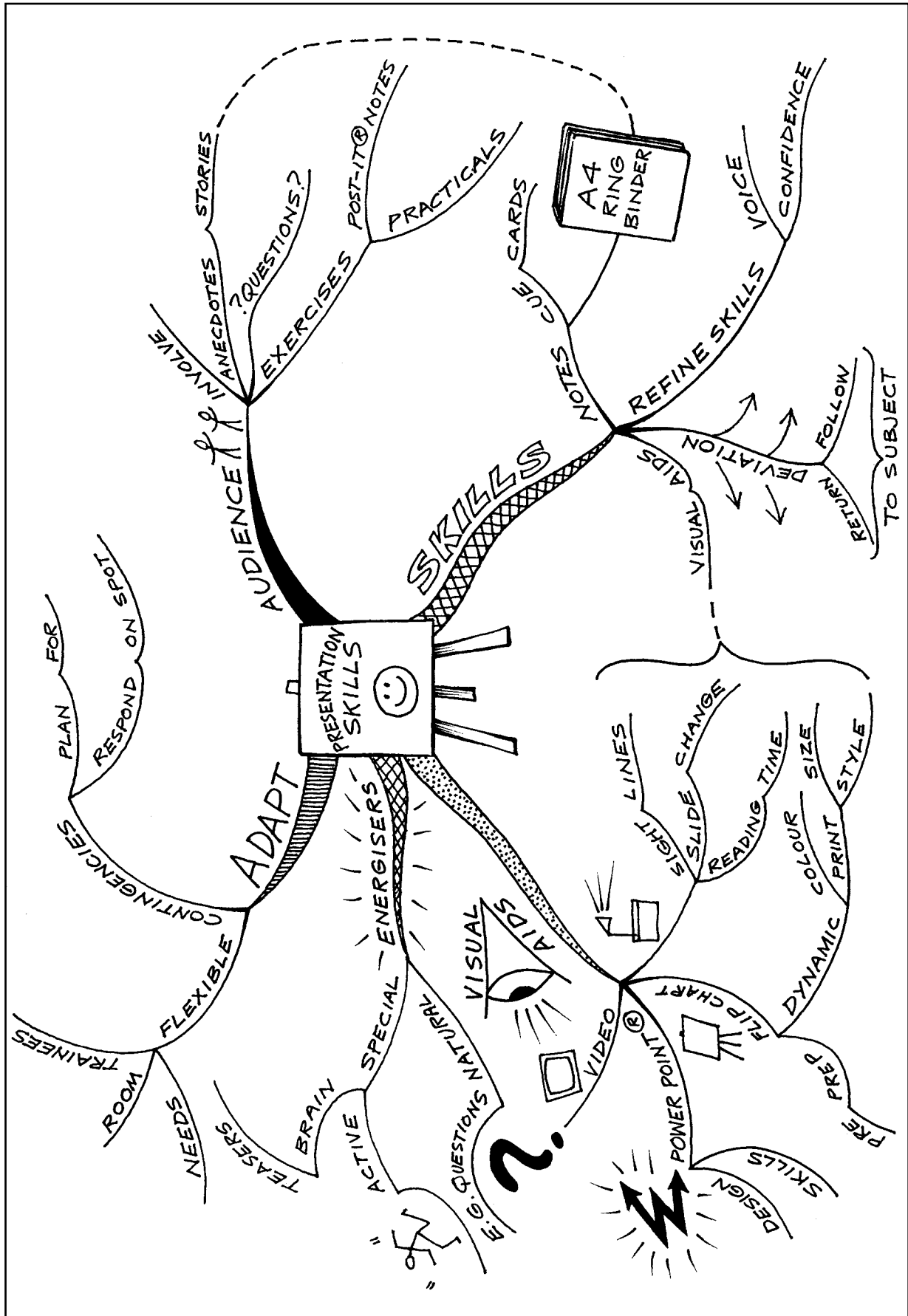
- lectures/input
- questions and answers
- films/videos (prepared)
- one-to-one instruction
- group instruction
- CBT (computer-based training)
- discussions
- reading
- projects
- case studies
- group exercises
- individual exercises
- simulations, for example, in-tray exercise
- simulators, for example, aircraft cockpit
- business games
- role-plays
- coaching
- and so on.

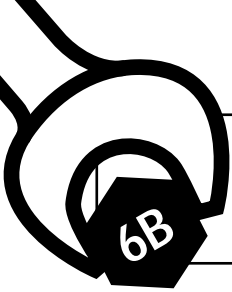
This list is by no means definitive or complete.

If a session or course is designed for you by someone else, use this tool to check whether there is a good balance in it, either when you are discussing the draft design, or when it is given to you for approval.



Mind Map® - example





Time allocation chart

Giving accurate times for an activity is notoriously difficult, but here are some general principles:

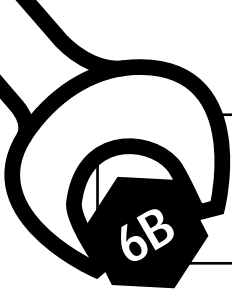
Note 1: If you are using an activity from one of the packages of activities, use the timings given in that activity, not forgetting time for briefing (explaining the task), and debriefing (discussing the learning points), and ignore this chart, except for general principles

Note 2: Either a length of time is shown, for example, 30 minutes (min.) or a percentage (%) of the length of the main activity

Type of Activity	Briefing	Reading	Activity	Debrief	Notes
Lecture			20 min.		40 minutes if plenty of visual aids, questions and discussion included
Films/videos	15%		Dictated by film	30%	
Discussion as part of a lecture			20% added to length of lecture		
Discussion to raise awareness of subject	10%		About 30 min. (for 5-6 people)	30%	You need to set a length of time and tell trainees how long is available A good chairperson should be able to involve everyone and not let some people take over, and yet draw out all the relevant points in the allotted time

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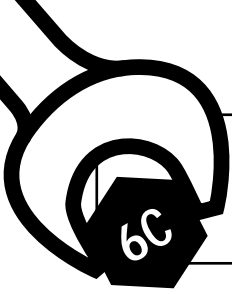


Time allocation chart

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Type of Activity	Briefing	Reading	Activity	Debrief	Notes
Case study	15%	15%	About 30 min. (for each side of an A4 sheet of paper)	50%	Allow a further 25% if there are two separate groups who need to report back
Group exercise	15%		As shown in exercise brief	30–50%	To find out how long an exercise will take, do it yourself, then add 50% extra time
Role-play	25%	50% preparation	Can be set by you (see notes)	50% 100–150%	For verbal debrief If video-recorded and played back in stages Length of role-play depends on complexity of subject and skill of role-players For meaningful feedback, try to keep the role-plays short.





Timing a course

This exercise gives you practice in planning the time needed for parts of a session or course.

Assume you are designing a short course on time management for middle managers. You have already decided on the activities and techniques you want to include, which are:

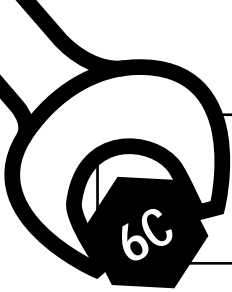
- **problems caused by poor time management, and methods to manage time better:** film (30 minutes), plus introduction and discussion afterwards
- **how to use time-planning sheet or system:** lecture/explanation
- **diary planning – urgent versus important, planning priorities:** lecture/explanation, with exercise to practise
- **how my time is used now:** individual exercise
- **objectives and priorities of my job:** individual exercise
- **poor use of time:** case study
- **how to handle interruptions, run meetings and so on:** discussion
- **'Time robbers' and how to handle them:** brainstorm
- **introduction to course and delegates**
- **planning the day of a (fictitious) manager:** group/syndicate exercise.

Please decide how much time to allocate to each activity, put them into what you feel is the correct order, and explain why.

Make any reasonable assumptions you wish, such as the kind of work these managers do and the organisation culture, and add any activities you feel are essential. You can delete certain activities if you wish, but please explain why.

A suggested answer and rationale are given on pages 6–9 and 6–10.





Timing a course – suggested answer

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N.B. This suggested answer is one solution only; it is not definitive. You or your colleagues may have a different but equally good answer, especially if it reflects the culture or needs of your organisation.

Time management

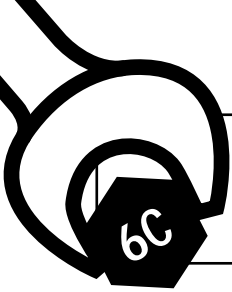
One-day course, assuming a 7_g to 8-hour day, including lunch.

6

Time	Activity	Length in minutes	Rationale
9.00	Introduction to course and delegates	20	To build right atmosphere
9.20	How my time is used now: individual exercise	30	Recognise own problems
9.50	How to use time-planning sheet or system: lecture broken up with discussion and questions (Use whichever system your organisation does, maybe a single sheet of paper or one of the very good Filofax [®] -style systems)	45	Main skill and knowledge of course
10.35	Coffee	15	Break
10.50	Objectives and priorities of my job: individual exercise	20	Recognise needs of own job Link between system shown in lecture and further problems and ideas in film <i>continued ...</i>



6-9

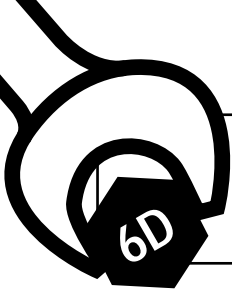


Timing a course – suggested answer

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Time	Activity	Length in minutes	Rationale
11.10	Problems caused by poor time management, and methods to manage time better: film – introduction: 5 minutes – film: 30 minutes – discussion: 10 minutes	45	Visual reinforcement of problems discussed earlier and ideas given in lecture
11.55	Diary planning – urgent versus important, planning priorities: lecture broken up with discussion and questions	30	How time management fits into work planning
12.25	Recap of morning	5	Consolidation
12.30	Lunch	60	
1.30	Diary-planning: group exercise	30	Application of diary-planning skills
2.00	Handling interruptions, running meetings and so on: discussion	30	Bring out ideas of other areas to cover
2.30	‘Time robbers’ (things which steal time): brainstorm and discussion	40	Share needs and solutions
3.10	Tea	15	Break
3.25	Planning the day of a manager: group exercise	60	Application of all of course
4.25	Individual action plans	15	Consolidation
4.40	Final review	10	Draw everything together
4.50	End of course		





Balance exercise

Assume that the course shown here is partly designed.

Please rearrange the order of activities, to give a good balance and meet the objectives/outcomes. You will probably also need to adjust the timings.

Presentation skills

This course is aimed at staff who are likely to make presentations within the organisation, and to outside clients.

There will be eight to ten delegates.

Objectives

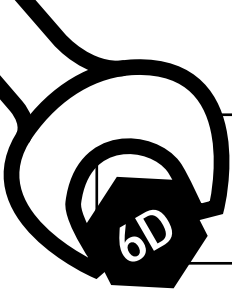
By the end of the two-day course, the delegates will be able to:

- present ideas, proposals and recommendations clearly within the company and to clients, on company or client's premises
- illustrate their presentations with relevant visual aids
- answer questions from the audience clearly, briefly and accurately
- 'sell' themselves effectively, and leave a lasting impression on others.

Time	Activity	Training technique
Day one		
9.00	Welcome and introductions: fire procedure, accident and so on	Input
9.20	Objectives: personal objectives for course, on flipchart	Plenary
10.00	'Who are you?': ice-breaker exercise	Exercise
10.30	Key features of a good presentation: list on flipchart	Exercise
11.00	COFFEE	

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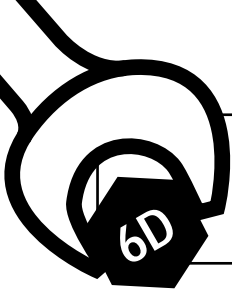
Balance exercise

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Time	Activity	Training technique
11.15	Verbal skills: opening, closing, voice projection, mannerisms, non-verbals	Input
12.15	Getting the audience relaxed: use of ice-breakers, getting the atmosphere right	Input
12.45	LUNCH	
1.45	Notes: preparing notes to work from	Input
2.15	Preparing your own notes: writing notes in your own style	Individual exercise
2.45	Visual aids: how to use, how to prepare	Input
3.15	TEA	
3.30	Preparing visual aids	Individual exercise
4.00	Visual aids practice: each delegate practises in front of all	Plenary
5.00	End for day	
Day two		
9.00	Review of Day one	Plenary
9.30	Handling questions	Input
10.00	Handling questions exercise	Syndicates
10.30	COFFEE	

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Balance exercise

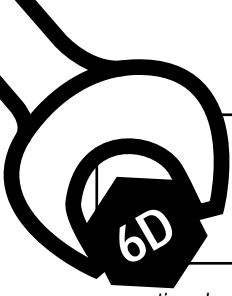
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Time	Activity	Training technique
10.45	Verbal skills exercise	Syndicates
11.15	Preparation for own presentations	Individual
1.00	LUNCH	
2.00	Individual presentations: presentations, with structured feedback from tutor and other delegates	Plenary
4.45	Review	Plenary
5.00	End of course	

Comment and advice on this exercise is given on page 6–14.

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Balance exercise – comment and advice

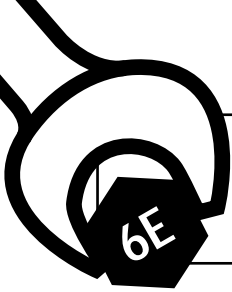
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No definitive answer is given. Here is comment and advice that can apply to other designs.

The situation shown here is very common. The trainer has worked hard to think about what to include in the course to give delegates plenty of information and skills, but has not yet thought about the need for variety and balance in the design.

1. Welcomes and introductions are important, but should not take too long, as delegates may get restless.
2. Break up exercises and inputs, so that one is not followed by another of the same type. Try breaking up the long inputs with short exercises to practise the skills – for example, verbal skills with the verbal skills exercise from Day two.
3. Asking delegates to apply a skill just after it has been covered is helpful, as in the sections on notes and visual aids.
4. Try to do something lively in the 'graveyard shift' (session immediately after lunch when participants may be slightly sleepy), not an input or film.
5. The visual aids practice of one hour is short for eight to ten people. Either give more time, or break the whole group into smaller groups. They will still be able to give feedback.
6. Two and three-quarter hours for eight to ten delegates to give a presentation, each with feedback, is quite short. You *could* divide them into two groups, but that may deprive them of the chance to present to a reasonably sized group.
7. The preparation for their own presentations is *not* too long. Preparation can take an awfully long time!
8. You *can* use the same technique twice in succession, if you have a break (coffee, lunch) between them.





Balance check

- Within your session, or each day of the training programme, how many examples of each training technique (group exercise, individual exercise, discussion, lecture, practical and so on) have you planned?
- Is the order right?
- Consider variety, so that one technique, a lecture for example, is not followed by the same technique.
- Consider gradual buildup and use of skills and knowledge.
- Is the balance right?

6

Training technique	Number



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SECTION ONE: FRAMEWORK

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Effective training.

How training fits into the business plan.

From training needs to the trainer's role.

The training process and the training cycle.

2. Identification of training needs

An introduction to identifying training needs.

Identifying needs from the business plan, and in discussions with line managers.

Analysing individual skills and needs.

SECTION TWO: UNDERSTANDING YOUR TRAINEES

3. How adults learn

How adults learn and absorb information.

An introduction to learning styles and training styles.

The language that trainers should or should not use to help people learn.

Possible effects of the trainer's preferred learning style and training style on the trainees.

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4. Body language for trainers

Reading and responding to the body language of trainees.

Using your own body language positively when training.

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5. Planning a training session, course or programme

The framework for planning a training session, course or programme.

Checking the viability of one designed by someone else.

Training objectives and outcomes.

6. Structuring a training session or course

Structuring or designing a training session or course.

How to allocate the correct amount of time for each activity.

Ensuring a good balance of activities, to maintain trainees' interest.

7. Selecting resources

How to find the films, exercises, case studies, notes, and so on, for the training you are planning.

How to check whether they are of the correct length to fit into your design and that they are suitable.

How to 'road-test' activities, to check they will achieve what you intend.

8. Adapting materials

Adapting existing training materials and activities, to save time and work involved in writing your own.

9. Trainer notes

How to lay out the trainer notes you will need for running a training session.

Hints and tips on the programme or agenda you give to the trainees at the beginning of the session or course.

SECTION FOUR: RUNNING THE SESSION OR COURSE

10. Presentation skills

Hints and tips on putting your message across, and preparation.

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11. Setting the scene at the beginning of the session

Setting the right atmosphere with participants right away, to achieve effective learning.

Introduction methods and ice-breakers.

12. Running a training session or course

Framework of how to run the session or course.

When and when not to intervene.

Encouraging trainees.

Handling difficult trainees.

Effective use of questions.

13. Flexibility and pacing when running a session

Reacting 'on the spot' and how to adapt your training session as you run it, in order to meet the needs of your trainees.

Running the training at the right pace or speed for the trainees, including when to extend or shorten a session.

Selecting and using energisers.

14. Running exercises, case studies and discussions

Briefing trainees for exercises and case studies, including explaining the purpose, and how they should carry out the activity.

What to look and listen for during the activity.

How to lead a discussion.

How to get the best from activities.

15. Debriefing exercises, case studies and discussions

How to debrief activities to help trainees gain maximum learning from them.

Using prepared debrief sheets.

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Probing and adding further questions.

Writing your own debrief sheet for a specific activity.

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Overcoming resistance and fear by trainees.

Preparing and briefing trainees, to get the best from role-plays.

Debriefing role-plays, to help the trainees make the most of the learning.

17. Using video for role-plays

Setting up and running a video camera to record role-plays, as well as other activities.

How to avoid potential mishaps.

SECTION FIVE: EVALUATING THE TRAINING

18. Debriefing for evaluation

How to evaluate the effectiveness of the training, and to link this with assessment of trainees' performance.

Probing and adding further questions, to help the trainer and trainees relate learning to the workplace.

Long-term evaluation, to examine how the learning from a whole course or series of activities has been applied in the workplace.

19. Giving and receiving feedback

How to give feedback to trainees, in groups as well as one-to-one.

How to receive feedback, both as a trainer on your own performance, and as a trainee. Advising trainees how they should receive feedback, so they gain maximum benefit.

SECTION SIX: DEVELOPING YOURSELF

20. Identifying and developing your own skills

Analysing your own performance and training needs, to plan your further development.

How to get help and guidance from a coach, so as to learn from their experience.

How to select your coach or mentor, and use them to maximum effect.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Practical Training Skills: The Trainer's Complete Toolkit is for inexperienced trainers or those who want to improve their practical skills in planning, designing, and running training sessions, courses, and programmes in a professional manner. It has been written in response to numerous requests from new or newish trainers, with less than about two years' experience, who need to ask for advice, want to know how to do things, and want hints and tips, which an experienced trainer uses almost without thinking. This Toolkit tries to give experience to the inexperienced!

It is all about practical skills, and has virtually no theory. There are plenty of very good textbooks which you can study to give you the theory.

Practical Training Skills: The Trainer's Complete Toolkit is the crystallisation of Rod Storey's nearly 30 years of designing and running training, and he has tried to give you as much of his experience as possible. If a skilled and experienced trainer looks at this Toolkit and says, 'I know all of this stuff, from my own experience', the author will be delighted. It will confirm that he has achieved his aim: providing practical 'how to' information for the inexperienced.

Although the units are numbered, they are not intended to be used sequentially. They cover:

Section One. The framework of how training fits into other business activity, the training process, the trainer's role, and how to identify training needs.

Section Two. Understanding your trainees, through how adults learn and through understanding body language in training.

Section Three. How to design the training session, course, or programme.

Section Four. How to run the session or course.

Section Five. Evaluation and giving feedback.

Section Six. Developing yourself and your trainer skills.

Apart from the introductory unit which gives a framework for the Toolkit, at the beginning of each one there is a description of that unit, with an outline of each of the tools in it, and notes on its purpose, to help you decide if it will give you the advice and information you are seeking.

Each unit has background notes, to put each subject in context, and to help you understand the logic behind the tools. There is further information on when and how to use each one, and finally the tools themselves. Each tool stands alone, although you may wish to use more than one from a unit. The Applications grid on page xv gives an overall picture of the applications of the material.