

## Tips for Encouraging Effective Learning

The following tips are from a recent PTLLS course attended by several key people from the RTA team; they are in no particular order but may prove helpful when teaching in a group situation.

1. Providing an 'icebreaker' exercise, where new people can interact with one another, in an organised way, without the trainer interrupting is a great way to start sessions.
2. Establish 'ground rules' for each session - e.g. based on mutual respect, etc.
3. Going through the session's aims and objectives is a standard approach but keeping these visible during the session, on a flipchart or handout, is also good practice.
4. Engaging your Candidates in 'question and answer' discussion early on in a session can really help to establish interest – use of a 'fishing exercise' where you ask people what knowledge or experience they have of the topic (this will help you identify people that you might be able to 'use' later on and promotes ownership in the session with the participants).
5. Engage the group in tasks that involve some aspects of pair/group work, where people can feedback their thoughts on (for example) flip charts to the rest of the group.
6. When Candidates are engaged in pair or group work, ensure that you visit them personally to see if they are 'on track' and have any questions. This applies particularly to younger students!
7. It's often useful for any tasks that you want people to do, to have clear WRITTEN instructions – detailed on a flip chart – with the timeframe needed for the exercise.
8. Allow people sufficient time to undertake and complete any exercise you set for them.
9. Acknowledge and 'capture' people's contributions by writing them down where appropriate. This respects and acknowledges Candidates' contributions. Writing down people's contributions (eg on a flip chart etc.) promotes ownership of the session with Candidates.
10. Candidates will also need a 'capturing vehicle' too (such as an incomplete handout) otherwise all those useful discussions will evaporate into thin air and the main points of the session will not be able to be reviewed at a later date.
11. Listen to all contributions – try to avoid correcting people openly – attempt to 'steer' them to the correct answer, by using other Candidates if possible.
12. Try to avoid telling people how to do things correctly – they will often learn more effectively if you allow them to 'fail' or get things wrong initially then they will have a deeper and more sustained understanding of correct answers or procedures.
13. Consider whose voice is predominant during the training session – if it is yours (as the trainer) is this beneficial to learner engagement and effective learning?
14. Consider the general atmosphere of the classroom. Was the classroom quiet (apart from you speaking and some questions and answers from time to time)? Were the learners passive? Was the class humming with activity and pockets of meaningful discussion, were the learners kept active?

15. When drafting a lesson plan, remember that the aims and objectives 'belong' to the Candidates. Always explain how each objective will be demonstrated and use SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) when drafting your objectives.
16. Use quizzes, short tests, question and answer and discussion to 'test' understanding.
17. Be aware of each person's learning styles and personalities when setting group work and interactive tasks.
18. Role play can achieve a lot BUT they can be a terrible failure too – always plan ahead and be aware of the preferred learning styles before using this technique.
19. Use 'chunking' of teaching methods that address as many of the learning styles (where appropriate) when planning the lesson, e.g. question and answer, discussion, lecture, pair/group work, video etc. up to 20 minutes per 'chunk' usually works best.
20. Use pictures, models, video recordings, actual examples, verbal examples of experiences etc. to bring to life your session's topic – (where appropriate).
21. Avoid telling people that your subject may be boring! If you hint that it might be boring, then it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy!
22. Directing questions at people by name often encourages participation amongst the quieter members of the group.
23. Don't forget that one of the few aspects of the training environment you can control, is the effective positioning of tables and chairs – consider this before starting a session – get Candidates to help you move furniture if required!
24. Always 'test' your resources – e.g. pens, OHP, TV, video, position of tables and chairs etc. It will always be your fault if things don't work effectively so always have a plan 'B'.
25. Maintain appropriate eye contact with people.
26. Ensure that your voice is heard – you may need to develop strategies here if you have a quiet voice.
27. Avoid packing too much into a session – there always has to be a compromise between allowing time for a thorough understanding of your topic and the time available to complete the syllabus in the time available.
28. Switch of the OHP or PowerPoint projector when not in use.
29. Take care not to obscure your teaching aids, e.g. the OHP image, flip chart or white board etc.
30. Keep an eye on the size and quality of your writing – can your Candidates see and read writing on flip charts, OHP's, etc. If you have poor writing get your Candidates to assist where appropriate.
31. Always use dark (preferably black) pens when writing on a flip chart, whiteboard, etc. Colours such as red or green are not always easy to read.

32. Always try to start and end on time – timing is important but remember that there is a balance between covering each subject and promoting learning through learner centred teaching methods.
33. Avoid reading your own teaching notes - good preparation should involve you being able to remember! Teaching aids, such as over-head transparencies and handouts will also form prompts to help you remember.
34. Avoid asking questions that you answer yourself! You will consequently exclude and alienate people from engaging with the sessions.
35. Always provide a recap and conclusion to each session – you could do this by reviewing the aims and objectives (where appropriate) and/or a short quiz.
36. Explain what each Candidate needs to do by the next session – outline what will be happening at the next session – whet people's appetite!