

Planning a session

To teach a topic effectively you must use methods which are well suited to your audience and the topic at hand. We have established that active training methods are best suited to adult audiences so we will focus primarily on these. With each topic ideas on how to teach them are offered, these are NOT lesson plans! They are to be used to help you create well thought out lesson plans which suits you group and situation.

In this document:

- Common training methods will be identified
- Training methods will be linked to learning objectives
- Points to be considered when designing a session are considered

It should help you:

- Identify the objectives of a training session
- Decide on the content and materials of a session
- Structure a session and decide on an appropriate pace

Creating a session: points to consider

Certain points will be predetermined you can not change these therefore you must create the session around them. Two of these are

The Audience

- You must learn as much as possible about your audience before you create the session. Think carefully about what you know, who are they what do they do, what are their interests, what is their situation in their home, the village...what positions do they hold and any other information you can find.

The duration

- You must keep your timeframe in mind throughout. Think about how much time you have, think about it in relation to your audience. Do you anticipate that they will be a talkative group? If so allow time for that.

The predetermined points will help you to set achievable **learning objectives**.

- Learning Objectives
 - Should take into account the audience and duration
 - Will determine the pace, content, materials
 - Should be stated in terms of the learner
 - Must be verifiable
 - Must be clear achievable goals

Once these have been set you must refer back to them repeatedly while creating the session and choosing your activities.

At the beginning of the class present the learning objectives so that everyone knows why they are there. You should also refer back to these at the end of the session to establish whether or not they have been met.

Everything in your planning of the session must be centred around **the audience meeting the objectives within the timeframe**.

Once you have established your learning objectives you need to think about the following points:

Content

- The first thing to cover is the learning objectives and the rationale behind them. Why should the participants learn whatever you are presenting? (Create readiness to learn)

Then go on to focus on how to achieve your objectives:

- Think about your objectives, which topics do you need to cover for people to achieve them?
- Always keep it clear and to the point, refrain from including peripheral information
- Make sure it flows logically

Finally evaluate and give and receive feedback:

- Go back to your learning objectives to gauge whether students feel they have been covered. Ask probing questions to ensure understanding.
- Check that you feel they have correctly grasped what you were conveying.
- Provide feedback, tell them what they have got right and correct what they have misunderstood.
- Ask them for feedback on the session, what did they like? What did they dislike?

Training method

- Think about your objectives, what type of learning are you aiming for? (see Blooms taxonomy)
- Think about your content how do you think its messages will best be understood?
- Think about your audience, what might they enjoy? How can you get them involved and inspired?
- Think about your timeframe, which activities will make best use of it?
- Will participants be actively involved in the learning process? (Participation should account for at least 50% of the lesson)

Materials/Resources

- In light of your chosen content and training methods what do you need?
- Make sure that they are appropriate, do not use something just because it is there. Often simple is best, if you decide to use a complex range of materials make sure they do not distract from the message you are putting across.

Pace

- Think about your audience and what you are asking from them.
- Have an ideal pace in mind, you should practice your presentations to fit this.
- However your pace must be dynamic, you should be able to vary the pace in case your audience is unexpected. If you have over or underestimated them you will have to slow down or speed up accordingly.

Training methods

Take a few minutes to think about or discuss with colleague:

- Training methods you have used or encountered in the past.
- Make a list of all the training methods you have experienced.
- Which did you think most and least effective/enjoyable and why?
- As mentioned in the adult learning document adults learn better in an environment which allows them to be autonomous, share their experience and be active. In light of this which training methods do you think would be best suited to adult training?

Training methods fit into two categories:

Active

In Active learning the responsibility of learning lies with the learner. It covers all methods of training where the participants are involved and active in the learning process.

Passive

In passive learning knowledge is directly transferred from one entity to another. It is normally a one way transfer some from an entity with more knowledge of the topic towards an entity with less knowledge of the topic.

Both are useful and necessary in their own ways. Although active methods have been found most effective in consolidating knowledge during adult training one can not do without passive training to first convey the information. You must combine the two so as to get the best of both worlds.

Here are a few of the key training methods (though there are many more):

- Lecture

Words spoken by an instructor to an audience

- Reading

Using text books, participants are given reading which they will later be quizzed on or need to recall

- Demonstration

These are similar to lectures but are more focused on the visual component. (like demonstrating how to tie a bandage in front of a class)

- Group discussions

Are conversations about a topic among a group of participants facilitated by a trainer. The trainer's role is to help set the stage, keeps the discussion moving along and get everyone involved.

- Debates

A debate is an organised group discussion where participants are assigned a position on a certain topic. It works well with controversial topics where half the group are for it and the other half against.

- Brainstorming

Is a method of problem solving in which all members of a group spontaneously contribute ideas. Every idea is acknowledged and recorded without judgment. There then follows a discussion to structure the recorded points.

- Role play

Participants are provided with a situation and asked to act it out for the rest of the class. The situations are not complicated and they do not use scripts, it is improvised and brief.

- Field trips

Participants are taken into the field so they can see the true context of the topics being studied. These are not necessarily long trips; it can just be a short walk to see an innovative farming idea, latrine or water harvesting site or system.

- Case studies

As a training method Case Studies refer to an exercise where participant are presented with a problem situation and its background. They are then requested to propose recommendations.

- Small group tasks

Small groups may be asked to complete any number of exercises, this develops soft skills while ensuring everyone in the class get hands on experience with the topic.

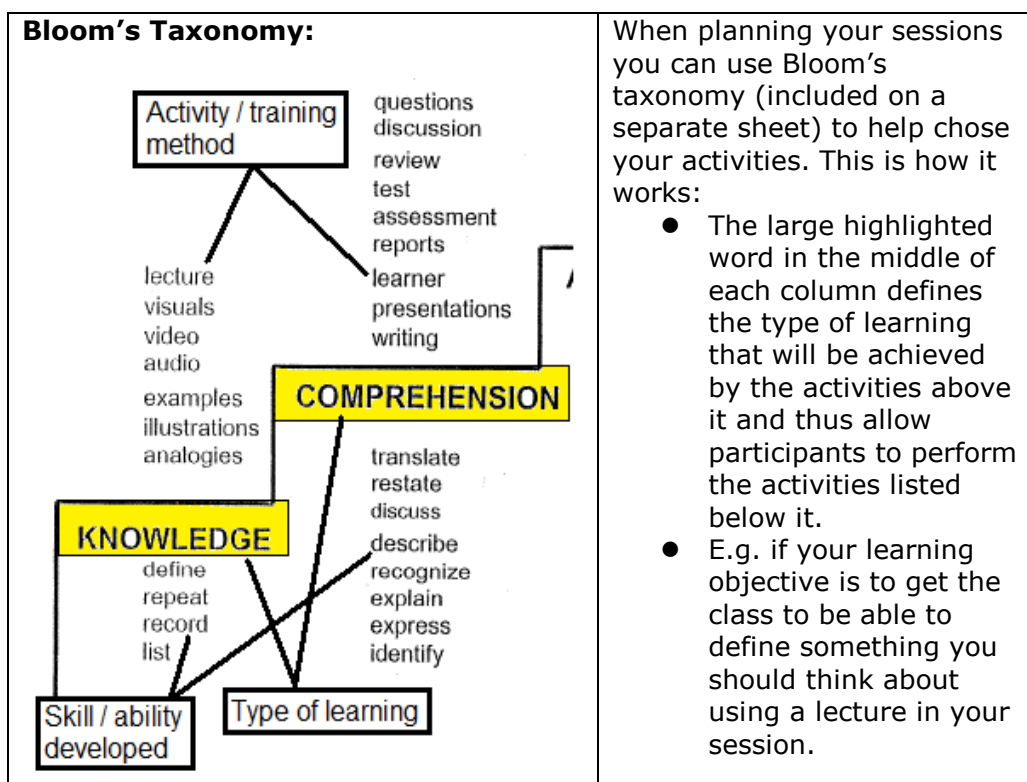
- Learning in pairs

Creating learning partnerships is an effective way to promote active learning.

These can be short or long term arrangements which can be integrated into and provide support for other training methods

Combining methods:

Each of the training methods has strengths and weaknesses. The way to overcome these is to combine them into an interesting varied training session. Lecturing is a good way of transferring knowledge. While discussions are good for introducing topics, getting participants thinking about them and by proxy allowing the trainer to grasp the level of the class. They are also useful for reviewing topics, making participants think back to all they have learnt about it and addressing any remaining questions. The activities such as group work should be there to make the participants think for themselves and thus personalise and further that knowledge.



Learning objectives and training methods

The training methods are the tools which will allow you to achieve your objectives. Keep referring back to you learning objectives as you plan your

session and chose your activities. Make sure you have clearly established what it is that you want to achieve. Which level of learning are you aiming for?

- Increased knowledge
- Improved comprehension
- Practicing the application of knowledge
- Analytical thinking about a topic
- Synthesising of information
- Evaluation of information

If you are not sure how to meet an objective refine it, make it specific and achievable. If you are not sure what an activity is achieving remove it or alter it to meet an objective. The two components must be closely linked.

Draw out the following session planning sheet and fill it in each time you create a session:

<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="display: flex; width: 100%;"> <div style="width: 30%; font-size: small; padding-right: 10px;"> <p>What participants will have learnt and be able to do by the end.</p> <p>Why they should learn about the topic and how it applies to participants lives.</p> <p>The bulk of the session inform about the topic and get people thinking actively about it.</p> <p>Find out what they have learnt, find out if learning objectives were met.</p> <p>Check knowledge.</p> </div> <div style="width: 70%; text-align: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;">1. Objectives</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;">↓</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;">2. Rational</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;">↓</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;">3. Activities</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;">↓</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;">Evaluation</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 5px 0;">↓</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center; gap: 20px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;">OK?</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto; font-size: x-small;"> Yes No </div> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;">Corrective feedback</div> <div style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 5px;">Correct them where they have gone astray</div> </div> </div> </div> </div> </div> <div style="width: 30%; text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;">Confirming feedback</div> <div style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 5px;">Tell them they have got it right</div> </div>
--

Repetition and review:

Because you are teaching a whole course and the lessons will be spaced out it is important to check learning and review previous topics. This will not only benefit the students by helping them remember but also allow you to gauge whether you are making progress. Repetition is an important part of learning, especially if some of your students are illiterate, they do not have the luxury of referring to

their notes if they want to look over something. At the start of each session review what was done the week before, the review should be led by you but done by the students. Ask leading questions about the topics covered to get them to explain to you what they learnt. If something small was not understood explain it again there and then. If you feel that the lack of understanding is great you may need to plan another session on that topic to do the next week. This process of reviewing topics will also allow you to emphasise the links between the topics of the course, it is important that people see these all as related topics and not individual. All the subjects covered relate to improving livelihoods, they are linked at a high level for example good nutrition improves health and good health improves people's ability to work or farm which in turn can improve nutrition; there are also enumerable smaller links between the topics of each session.