Two Hundred Tips

Active Training for successful learning requires you to be aware of myriad details. In true Mel Silberman–style, I've continued his tradition by opening this book with two hundred tips that address many of these details. The tips cover everything from opening to closing a classroom session and include introductions, storytelling tips, and presentation tactics. You'll find ideas for becoming an engaged facilitator, keeping your learners focused, and addressing challenging situations.

The top 10 lists in this chapter, 20 of them with over 200 training tips, summarize best practices and ideas for how to address some of the issues and challenges that you face. We are fortunate to have tapped into some of the best trainers in the world for these tips to make your life easier.

You have probably heard of some of these tips and already used many. Mel believed that having organized lists of ideas in one place makes your job easier. Someone recently described these top 10 lists as a "bonus" to trainers. I agree. The organized lists provide ideas in a flash for some of the questions you have most often.

To celebrate Mel and what he has done for our profession, I asked Karen Lawson to create the first list: "Mel's Top 10 Training Tips." Karen worked closely with Mel on the first and second edition of this book. This list of the best-of-the-best tips will give you pause to think about your own training style and how well you implement each of these tips.

Top 10 Lists

1. Mel's Top 10 Training Tips
2. 10 Tips to Open a Learning Session Actively
3. 10 Tactics for Relevant Icebreakers

4. 10 Participant Introductions

5. 10 Tips to Create an Enticing Learning Environment

6. 10 Basics for Active Facilitators

7. 10 Tips to Become an Engaging Facilitator

8. 10 Tips to Keep Learners Focused

9. 10 Presenting Mistakes to Avoid and a Bonus: 10 Tactics for Professional Presenters

10. 10 Factors That Increase Retention

11. 10 Storytelling Tips

12. 10 Tips to Effectively Launch a Practice Activity

13. 10 Ways to Encourage Participant Timeliness

14. 10 Creative Strategies for Forming Groups

15. 10 Options to Motivate Learners

16. 10 Quick Recap Strategies

17. 10-Step Process to Increase Applicability

18. 10 Ideas to Ensure Transferability

19. 10 Ways to Address Challenging Situations

20. 10 Options for Active Closings

1 Mel's Top 10 Training Tips

Mel Silberman was the originator of the "Top 10 Training Tips" in his *101 Ways to Make Training Active* books. It is fitting that we honor him by beginning this set of top 10 by remembering his personal top 10:

1. **It's not what you give them; it's what they take away that counts.** Our minds are like sponges as we soak up knowledge and information. When sponges are saturated, any additional water will run right through. Just as the sponge is overloaded, a learner can experience cognitive overload when he or she receives more information than the brain can store in its working memory. It doesn't matter how much information you disseminate. If the learner does not retain that information, learning has not taken place. The challenge to the trainer is to present information in such a way that participants do not experience overload.
2. **You can't hide in a pair.** Don't overlook the power of pairs to promote active learning. Asking participants to work with learning partners is an efficient and effective active-learning technique. It guarantees 100 percent participation.
3. **Telling is not training.** The belief that "I gave them the information," "covered the material," or "told them how to do it" is very misleading for both the trainer and the learner. Telling, explaining, or lecturing does not guarantee the receiver of the information understands it. Learning is not an automatic result of pouring information into another person's head. People learn by doing, not by being told.
4. **Distinguish between "need-to-know" and "nice-to-know."** When designing your training program, focus on what participants absolutely need to know. This is particularly important when there are time constraints. Don't try to cram eight hours of content into a two-hour program. By clearly defining objectives for what participants will know and be able to do by the end of the sessions, trainers clarify content and select appropriate learning strategies.
5. **Inquiring minds want to know.** Human beings are naturally curious. If you have any doubt, just watch young children exploring and learning about the world around them. Take advantage of that innate curiosity. Create learning

Contributed by Karen Lawson, Lawson Consulting Group, Inc.

experiences that require the learner to seek something such as an answer to a question, information to solve a problem, or ways to do his or her job.

6. **When training is active, the participants do the work.** Participants work in concert, encouraging and facilitating one another's efforts to achieve, complete tasks, and reach the group's goals. People understand concepts better and retain information longer when they are actively involved with the learning process. The trainer's role is to create an environment in which learning takes place and to facilitate the learning process.
7. **People will remember what they figure out for themselves.** One of a trainer's objectives is to get participants to think. Learning experiences that require participants to use their minds will result in better retention, both long term and short term.
8. **Get them active from the start.** Getting people involved from the very beginning through some type of opening activity accomplishes several purposes. Techniques that immediately involve participants are very effective in piquing interest, arousing curiosity, and preparing them for the learning experience. They can help reduce tension and anxieties, energize the group, set a tone for the session, and involve everyone. Most importantly, opening activities communicate to the participants that they are not going to sit back and be passive learners or receivers of information.
9. **It's not about you.** Focus on your audience, not on yourself. Unfortunately, some trainers are more concerned about showcasing themselves and demonstrating how much they know. When you put the needs of the learner first, you automatically change the way you design and deliver training.
10. **When I *hear,* I forget. When I *hear* and *see,* I remember a little. When I *hear, see,* and *ask questions* or *discuss* with someone else, I begin to understand. When I *hear, see, discuss,* and *do,* I acquire knowledge and skill. When I *teach* to another, I master.** This Active Learning Credo is a modification of what Confucius declared over 2400 years ago: "What I *hear,* I forget. What I *see,* I remember. What I *do*, I understand." It sums up Mel's passion for the profession; however, as Mel did so often, he took a great idea and improved it.

2 10 Tips to Open a Learning Session Actively

The opening of your training is critical. You know what they say: "You only have once to make a first impression." Your opening sets the stage for the rest of the training session—whether it is in person in a classroom or online. You will want to accomplish five objectives in your opening: stimulate interest and enthusiasm, understand your participants' needs, initiate active participation, clarify expectations, and help everyone get to know each other. Avoid the usual opening: welcome, name, objectives, emergency information, and ground rules. Yikes! That's a sure bet for an inactive session. These suggestions will help you to accomplish the five objectives for opening an active training session.

Stimulate interest and enthusiasm.

1. Build in an element of surprise by using unusual props or a shocking statement. Use relevant humor, anecdotes, or stories that make a point about the session content.
2. Use a short exercise or demonstration that supports the topic.

Understand your participants' needs.

3. Use questions or small groups to identify content needs. You could pose questions that start with, "How many of you…?" or "What questions did you bring with you today?"
4. Address esteem needs by learning something about participants' experience and expertise that they bring to the learning session. This suggests that you want them to share what they know with others.

Initiate active participation.

5. Get participants up and moving around and interacting with other participants to establish that the session will be interactive and they have a role in their learning. If you are online, ensure that your participants are involved early.
6. Ask a question. Even a polling question that requires a simple raised hand (classroom or e-learning) is an early indicator that you expect active participation. Choose your questions so that most participants can respond affirmatively and raise their hands.

Ideas from Kenneth Stein, EdD, CPLP, SPHR, Successful Endeavors

Clarify expectations.

7. Ask participants to share why they are attending the training and what they are expecting to learn or happen. You could ask for their hopes and fears, what they need to learn to make the day worthwhile, or how well their expectations match the objectives.
8. Equally important is to clarify if participants' expectations go beyond the scope of the training design. Tell them how you will handle this such as meeting with them after the session, adjusting content to accommodate the expectations, providing supplemental material after the session, or other ways.

Help everyone get to know each other.

9. Ensure that you have an icebreaker (see "10 Tactics for Relevant Icebreakers") or plan for introductions (see "10 Participant Introductions") that allow participants to move around and greet others. Everyone should speak at least once during the opening and should hear the name of everyone in the session.
10. In addition to a getting-to-know-you exercise, use table tents. Have participants place their names on both sides during the introductions. This allows you and other participant so see the names from all angles.

3 10 Tactics for Relevant Ice Breakers

An icebreaker is a structured activity usually used at the beginning of a training session to initiate participation and introductions. The key purpose of icebreakers is to help everyone get to know each other, but an icebreaker can accomplish a whole lot more. A well-crafted icebreaker is tied to the program content and outcomes and is relevant to the participants. It is conducted in a relaxed atmosphere with no pressure to "produce" and increases the participants comfort levels. It allows participants to learn a little more about the other participants and gently transitions them into the content. Icebreakers also give you an opportunity to observe the group to learn something about individuals and their interaction with each other.

1. **Bingo.** Bingo is probably the most used icebreaker and the reason is that it works. Create a bingo card on a sheet of paper. Instead of having B-3 or N-13, each square has information written. It could be very specific, such as "played a saxophone in high school" or general so that it relates to many people, such as "plays a musical instrument." Try to include some questions about the topics, such as "is a new supervisor" if you are facilitating a supervisory skills session. Each person signs only one square per card.
2. **Declarations.** Divide the audience into small groups. Have each group write one declaration for what they will learn by the end the end of the session. Post the declarations and weave them into the learning experience.
3. **Ask questions.** This can be done with the entire group or in small groups. Assign a lighthearted question or two but help participants slide into the content such as: "What is it you wish you knew how to do well with regard to [the content]?" "What lessons did Mom (or a favorite teacher) teach you to help you adjust to [this content]?"
4. **Human graphs.** Ask a series of questions related to the content such as, "How many of you need today's content to do a better job?" Instead of having people raise their hands in response, have them stand up. Ask participants to report the survey results in percentages, for example, 80 percent of the audience stood as affirmation of the statement.

Ideas from Marcia Stokes, Ogletree Deakins Law Firm

5. **Go to your corners.** Post four flipchart pages (or online use four chat rooms) that generate some curiosity, such as travel, reading, running, and gourmet cooking. Ask participants to select one and move to that part of the room. Once there, they introduce themselves to the others and tell why they selected the corner they did. After a few minutes they will look on the other side of the flipchart to find a content-related question to address as a small group and report back to the larger group. This can lead directly into the first content module.
6. **Spell it.** Participants take one letter from the course title and use it to explain what they hope to learn. For example, in a Change Management class, someone could say, "I selected 'C' for 'communication,' because I want to know how and when to communicate change better."
7. **Picture me.** Have crayons scattered around the table. Ask participants to decorate their table tent to better define their goal for the session. They can introduce themselves and their goals in pairs or trios before introducing themselves to the entire group.
8. **My boss expects.** Form small groups and have them identify what their bosses expect them to learn in the session and bring back to the workplace.
9. **Trainer for a minute.** Invite pairs to imagine they are teaching this class. Have each pair identify what one thing would they be sure to include. Allow 90 seconds for introductions and topic discussion. Then have them mix again and pair with another person. Do this as many times as you have time allowed. Facilitate a discussion that leads into the objectives of the session.
10. **Autographs.** This activity requires that you create a handout that lists 15 to 25 questions or statements that can be "autographed" by participants who match the description. Include some personal statements such as "Has been to Asia." Content-related statements will help you ease into the session. A communications training session may include statements such as "Have been told I am a good listener" or "Spends at least 59 percent of my time on the job communicating."

4 10 Participant Introductions

Literally hundreds of ways exist for you to conduct introductions. So why would anyone start at one end of the group and go around in a circle? There is no reason. Enjoy experimenting with this part of your training. You'll have just as much fun as your participants.

1. **Introduce you.** It is sometimes easier to introduce others than to introduce yourself. Participants pair up and learn something that can be shared with the rest of the group, including an interesting thought about the content.
2. **Creative questions.** Provide a list of questions and ask participants to introduce themselves by answering one question. Here are examples: "If your life was a TV program or movie, what would it be called?" "What is your favorite word and can you connect it to this course?" "What famous person are you most like?"
3. **Two truths and a lie.** Participants make three statements about themselves: Two are true and one is false. The other participants try to guess the false statement.
4. **Little-known fact.** Share something that no one knows or would guess about you.
5. **Mingle.** Ask everyone to move around and introduce themselves to others. Ask them to identify something they have in common with others and something that is different from others.
6. **Double the pairs.** Assign each participant another's name. They could draw them out of a hat. Have them locate one another and introduce themselves. Ask the pairs to combine with another pair, and all four introduce each other. If you have a large group, you could have each quad combine with another quad for a final round of introductions.
7. **Roll of the dice.** Create six questions and assign each a number from one to six. Each person rolls the dice and answers the corresponding question. If you have table groups or a particularly large group, you could complete the introductions in small groups.

Ideas from Marlene Caroselli, Center for Professional Development and Dr. Kella Price, SPHR, CPLP, Price Consulting Group

8. **Share successes.** Have participants start the session in a celebratory mood. Have them introduce themselves and add, "This week I am excited because I…"

9. **What's your bag?** Have participants draw a picture and add a slogan to a brown paper bag that answers the questions, "What's your bag? Who are you?" In a team building session, you could have them hang the bags on the wall and ask team members to add comments to the bags.

10. **Tweet intros.** If you have little time or the session is short, ask participants to tweet their introduction in 140 characters. The introduction would include their name, department, or company name, plus 144 characters of interest to the group. Allow a few minutes for participants to write their tweets.

5 10 Tips to Create an Enticing Learning Environment

Creating a comfortable and enticing learning environment sets the mood for participants to be more receptive to learning. These techniques spark curiosity and create intrigue so the learners want to discover more. Creating a theme takes time, forethought, and preparation, but the result is well worth it.

1. **Use bright colors.** Bright colors excite the mind. Use colored paper for handouts, colored 3″ × 5″ cards for activities, and brightly colored pipe cleaners or fidget toys on the tables.
2. **Use creative titles and themes for the topic.** Instead of "Using PowerPoint Effectively" try "Avoiding PowerPoint Pitfalls" and give your presentation an adventurers theme. Instead of "Conflict Management" try "Working with Wild Beasts" and give the presentation a safari theme. Instead of "Customer Service" try "Earn Yourself a Five Star Rating," give the presentation a restaurant or hotel theme.
3. **Play dress up.** Using the previous examples wear khaki, a pith helmet, and some binoculars around your neck; dress up like a lion tamer or circus leader; or dress up as a waiter or waitress and escort the learners to their seats as they arrive.
4. **Use decorations that inspire curiosity.** Using the previous examples, try safari themed decorations, or hang posters of inspirational quotes.
5. **Inspirational quotes.** Find relevant inspirational quotes about your topic. Use PowerPoint templates to make them colorful and visually enticing. Print and tape them around the training room. For leadership development you might use Zig Ziglar's quote: "People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing; that's why we recommend it daily." For customer service you might borrow from Lewis Carroll: "One of the deep secrets of life is that all that is really worth doing is what we do for others."
6. **Use a theme song.** Pick a song that matches the theme of your training. Play it as participants arrive, on breaks, and in celebration at the end of the class. The learners can also discuss why the song is relevant to the class or have them

---

Ideas from Rachel Stromberg, Mad Cowford Improv

pick a song that they think is relevant. Be sure to follow appropriate copyright usage practices.

7. **Use props.** For product training or new hire orientation, have some of the products your organization produces on the tables. For supervisory skills collect a variety of hats to discuss the "many hats a supervisor wears." Get creative and economical by using items from a dollar store. Be sure there is a logical link between the topic and the prop you are using.
8. **Provide incentives.** Adults enjoy prizes and incentives. Your organization may have marketing tchotchkes or small recognition gifts you can use, or you can check out local discount stores for inexpensive items that support a theme. Make it even more special and relate the incentives to the training.
9. **Use intriguing transitions.** Build curiosity as you transition from one topic to the next by using a statement or asking a question that excites the learners to want to know more. For example in a communication session ask, "Have you ever wanted your employees, spouse, or teenager to *really* listen to what you have to say?" For customer service you could ask, "Would you like to know the secret to telling a customer that they are wrong and have them love you for it?"
10. **Use storytelling.** Parables, analogies, metaphors, and personal experiences make a powerful point. They key is to keep the story short, relevant, and relatable to your learners. Don't be afraid to share a personal story of how you failed at something. The participants may be currently dealing with the same issue. Ensure that the message of the story is clear.

6 10 Basics for Active Facilitators

The basic tasks of a facilitator are to keep everyone focused on the same challenge, to make sure everyone is participating, to create a safe environment where all want to contribute, and to guide the process to achieve understanding and transfer of knowledge and skills. Being a good facilitator requires "in-the-moment" skills to ensure learning occurs. No matter how experienced you are, these basics are good reminders for all of us.

1. **Set the tone.** The tone of the session is established by you and your demeanor—calm or urgent or interested or adventurous. The group will follow your mood, so if you are sarcastic and not focused, the group will not likely be productive.
2. **All together now.** Ensure that all participants understand the concepts in each module before moving on. Stay attuned to the group needs. Going too fast? Slow down. Going too slow? Stop repeating yourself and allow learning to occur at its natural pace. Pair up those who are ahead with those who are trying to catch up. Focus on the participants. Scan the classroom for cues to their energy, interests, questions, and concerns.
3. **Be open and aware.** Assess your ignorance. Admit when you are wrong, make mistakes, or do not know. It demonstrates to participants that making mistakes is part of learning. Also be aware of your own biases toward individuals or the topic. Model the same openness you are asking of participants.
4. **Balance and recognize participation.** If people are not participating, ask everyone to write their ideas on a piece of paper. This affords time for introverts to process in silence and to contribute when it is their turn. Ensure no one person is monopolizing the discussion. Use round robins to get ideas from everyone. Whether it is a smile, a nod, or a thank you, we all respond positively to appreciation.
5. **Ask questions and listen.** Use open-ended questions that start with Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. Try asking more and telling less to shift

---

Ideas from Barbara Pate Glacel, The Glacel Group, and Gary Wagenheim, Wagenheim Advisory Group, Canada the learning to participants. After asking a question, pause and listen to their answers. Listen to the first thing participants say: It's often a clue to their real issues, concerns, and questions.

6. **Demonstrate empathy and patience.** Show empathy, positive regard, and respect for participants regardless of their perspectives. Take your time. Don't rush through your agenda. A learning path will emerge when participants are ready. Less content often means more and deeper learning.
7. **Stay on track.** If the discussion gets off-track, suggest that the off-track topics be "parked" for a later time and guide the discussion back to the content at hand.
8. **Encourage participation.** There is more knowledge within the group than you have. Encourage the group to share its expertise and experience throughout. You do not need to be responsible for every concept and knowledge point in the session.
9. **Curtail disruptions.** Manage disruptions directly and wisely. Have a list (mentally or physically) of what you can do in every situation. Then take action immediately. Don't let it get out of hand.
10. **Have fun.** "Seriously" have fun. Learning can and should be fun, engaging, and interesting. You set the tone, so smile and laugh and do not take yourself or your knowledge too seriously.

7in x 9.25in Silberman c01.tex V3 - 03/20/2015 5:41pm Page 17

7 10 Tips to Become an Engaging Facilitator

"She's an engaging facilitator!" What exactly does that mean? Are you born that way? Well, you may have natural proclivity, but being more engaging is a learnable skill. Here are some actionable tips that you might try to be even more engaging (or just check off to affirm that you already are!).

1. **Be enthusiastic.** Enthusiasm is the "secret sauce" that separates the most successful people in any profession from all the rest. It's not sufficient by itself, but it is required.
2. **Be authentic.** People can smell what is fake from a mile away. You will not be able to get through to participants unless you show up as real and authentic.
3. **Show confident benevolence.** Say what? Let's break it down. Benevolence means having others' best interests in mind and approaching others with an assumption that they mean well—expecting the best of others. Confident benevolence means showing your confidence without it trumping your humility and focus on others. It means respecting your own worth while respecting others.
4. **Be approachable.** Sometimes when we are concerned about being seen as credible, we can come across as aloof, cold, self-important, or detached. So humility and an intentional focus on others' welfare will help you come across as approachable. Smile, make eye contact, and relax!
5. **Be interested to be interesting.** In our quest to be seen as experts or to gain respect, we can put excessive emphasis on what we came to share. Instead, shift your focus to the learners and activate your curiosity. Ask questions. Be genuinely interested in others' ideas, questions, objections, concerns, or perspectives. People are instantly drawn to others who show interest in them.
6. **Use self-deprecating humor.** If you show that you don't take yourself too seriously, you will allow learners to relax and take themselves a little less seriously, too. This will help them be more open to learning and experimentation and less concerned about keeping up appearances.

Ideas from Halelly Azulay, TalentGrow LLC

7. **Be congruent in body and voice.** When we perceive a mismatch between the verbal and nonverbal message, we tend to trust the nonverbal part of the message to be more credible and trustworthy. Don't present learners with a mismatched message and let them guess what you really feel or mean. Be congruent and ensure that your words and your actions align.
8. **Be upbeat and high-energy.** Your energy level needs to be a couple of levels above that of the participants. If you sit or feel lethargic, you can be sure that it will have a contagion effect on the learners. Ensure that you exude lots of energy to help learners feel energized. Stay standing, keep moving, and be high-energy.
9. **Be trustworthy.** Learners will need to show vulnerability and even share personal or uncomfortable stories or examples in order to truly grow and learn. The more you convey that you can be trusted to keep confidences and honor their trust in you, the less learners will feel at risk and the better able they will be to take chances and go outside their comfort zone, where real learning takes place.
10. **Be open to feedback.** Actively solicit feedback from learners and not just on the "smiley sheet" at the end of the session. Ask after lunch or at the end of the first day or the morning of the second day: "What should I keep doing? What else can I do to make this a successful and comfortable learning environment for you?" Listen openly and attentively to their feedback and, as much as possible, demonstrate that you are taking it to heart by implementing changes in the course that make sense.

8 10 Tips to Keep Learners Focused

We are all busy and have lots of things on our minds. Anyone can be distracted while participating in a training session, whether in a classroom or virtual setting. Use these tips to help participants maintain their focus.

1. **Write it out.** Give participants two to three minutes to write down everything that could distract them in the session so it's out of their heads. You could provide paper sandwich bags and suggest that they put their distractions inside to "bag them."
2. **Assigned roles.** When working in teams or small groups, assign each team member a role, such as scribe, timekeeper, facilitator, or spokesperson. Keep the groups small enough so that no one can "drop out."
3. **Round robin.** Go around the room or use the phone to ask each person to provide input on a specific topic; don't move on until each person has contributed.
4. **Ground rules.** Establish ground rules for greater focus with input from the participants, such as putting phones on silent or vibrate.
5. **Individual work.** Incorporate individual activities while in a classroom environment so participants see their fellow learners working quietly and can follow suit.
6. **Polling.** Take instant polls or surveys to keep participants engaged in the learning content.
7. **Publicize breaks.** Let participants know up front when session breaks will occur to prevent worrying about when they'll be able to check messages.
8. **Self-documentation.** Ask open-ended discussion questions. Have virtual participants use whiteboard tools and classroom learners use flipcharts to document their responses.
9. **Stand and stretch.** If energy is low, ask participants to stand up and have a stretch; if feasible, give them a fun question to ask the person next to them to boost energy.
10. **Mix it up.** If participants have been working with the same people for much of a session, ask them to stand up and find a different seat to change the environment and gain new perspectives.

Ideas from Lisa J. Downs, DevelopmentWise Consulting

9 10 Presenting Mistakes to Avoid and a Bonus: 10 Tactics for Professional Presenters

We all want to communicate so that others will listen. We also probably all know what we could do better. This list of the mistakes most often committed by presenters will be a good reminder for what to work on during your next presentation. This list comes with a bonus! Following the mistakes is a list of reminders of what to do better.

1. **Speaking too fast.** To shorten your speech, don't just talk faster. Make fewer points. Or, if you are given less time than promised, remove some of the quotes you are using first. Then, take out the statistics and finally the stories.
2. **Walking aimlessly.** Move with intention and to make a point. You appear more confident when you are "standing your ground."
3. **Using verbal fillers.** "Um" or "you know" can be distracting. Eliminating these unnecessary words takes awareness and practice. Most people don't realize they are saying them until they watch a replay. Focus on how you feel when you are about to say, "um" and try to fill that space with a pause where you say nothing at all.
4. **Swaying or shifting weight.** Steady yourself and have good posture to present powerfully.
5. **Avoiding eye contact.** To have a better audience connection, look at individuals seated in different areas of the room and speak directly to each as if you were having a conversation.
6. **Using a fig leaf stance.** When you cover your body, you give a signal that you are protecting yourself or are not at ease. Instead, move your arms, use appropriate gestures, and show you are open and in control.
7. **Killing with PowerPoint.** People prefer larger fonts and bullet points to text-heavy visuals. If you can use a picture that tells the story, that's even better.
8. **Using acronyms or jargon.** Use real words and proper names to ensure your message is clear. Provide definitions where necessary.

Ideas from Linda Swindling, *Journey On! Training and Development,* and Lorri Allen, *Good News!*

9. **Speaking too softly.** If a microphone is available, use it. Don't say, "Oh, I can talk loud enough." Use a microphone when necessary and practice using it. Test every microphone before you use it.
10. **Apologizing or making excuses.** Resist the urge to save face by saying, "I'm sorry I didn't have time to prepare for this," or "I'm just going to wing this because my PowerPoint isn't working." Statements like this insult your audience and you'll lose people immediately.

To avoid these speaker mistakes and speak more confidently, remember:

1. **Know your beginning and closing cold.** Anticipate potential questions that people may have during your presentation and address them with your speaking points.
2. **Start on time, end on time.** Know what content and stories you can cut ahead of time to stay on schedule.
3. **Send a positive message.** Before you begin, remind yourself that your information is important. Tell yourself, "People can't wait to hear what I have to say." Research your audience so you can tailor your content. Find out the audience size, demographics, key personnel, words that are taboo, current issues the group is facing, and so forth.
4. **Don't bluff.** Instead say, "I don't know," or throw the question to the audience.
5. **Collect and use relevant quotes to support your points.**
6. **Tell stories to help people remember.**
7. **Use props and visual aids.** Good use of visuals adds depth to your content. They should be simple and consistent. Always have a backup in case the room won't accommodate your visuals or in case of a technical glitch.
8. **Involve the audience with interactive activities, discussions, or questions.** But never end with Q and A. Always reserve time to conclude and close powerfully.
9. **Help people follow you by verbally giving them the structure of your speech.**
10. **End with emotion whenever possible.** Start strong and end stronger.

10 10 Factors That Increase Retention

The speaker dropped to the floor and started doing pushups to compare the old version with the new approach. A speaker promoting nuclear disarmament dropped BBs one at a time into a tin wastebasket explaining that each BB represented a bomb or warhead the size of the Hiroshima bomb still existing today. Many were in tears two minutes later when the BBs stopped falling. A speaker pulled out a laundry basket and started folding clothes in the middle of his speech to demonstrate the idea of multitasking. Learners remember these examples years later. What can you do to create retention? How can you put that stamp of memorability on your presentation? These 10 factors will increase the magic of memorability.

1. **Primacy/Recency effect.** The brain recalls material at the beginning and at the end far better than what comes in the middle. Our most important ideas, therefore, need to be hammered home at the opening and closing.
2. **Linking.** Connect major points of a presentation with some common image or verbal marker, that is, "I have a dream that…" repeated with each new point.
3. **Outstandingness.** Your content will stick in the minds of your learners if you connect it with something unusual, strange, or out of context. Learners remember laundry being folded or BBs dropping for years. Presenters usually don't do that sort of thing.
4. **Contrast.** To increase retention, set a pattern and then disrupt it. For example, you may have four to five slides with detailed analysis. Disrupt the pattern. Your learners' minds become more alert because of the change. Add a video, provide an analogy, add graphics, or encourage audience participation. There's a boost of energy and retention,
5. **The art and energy of story.** We are hardwired to listen for stories. We are able to visualize and experience the content in our minds. A simple statement like, "That's the data but here's what happened with our number one client…," perks up our ears.

Ideas from Mary McGlynn, PowerSpeaking, Inc.

6. **Illustrate content with descriptive gestures.** You can use your body as a visual aid. Make lists, show time progression, and illustrate scale (large and small numbers, for example) with your hands.
7. **Boost your confidence pose.** Amy Cuddy's research at the Harvard Business School suggests that if you stand for two minutes in a "power pose," stretching out into all your personal space, you'll lower the stress hormone cortisol in your system and feel more courageous. When you look confident, the learners relax and get into the groove of your content.
8. **Use the B key.** If you use slides, a good way to transition from one idea to another is to hit the "B" button to make the screen go blank. This breaks up the pattern and brings attention back to you. When you're ready to continue, hit "B" again and go back to the slides.
9. **Connection.** Be interesting. Build connections. Care about your learners. Focus on them, their needs, and their motivation to be there. Have them participate.
10. **Review.** The memory pattern will be strengthened by reinforcement. This is why a summary at the end is so critical to long-term retention.

11 10 Storytelling Tips

Storytelling is an effective way to help learners remember, to transform abstract concepts into understandable ideas, and to make a point without offending. The best speakers tell great stories. Tell stories to begin a training session, to explain points throughout your material, and to successfully summarize at the conclusion. Stories are especially important to break up intense data-filled sessions. Ask participants to explain how the information has helped them, and you will often hear a great story that you can share at a future training session. Some storytellers are born, but most of us get better by sticking to a few guidelines.

1. **Tell the whole story.** A story must have a beginning, middle, and an end. Think of compelling commercials that present a problem and a solution in 30 seconds.
2. **Add surprise.** Humor or suspense keeps people listening. Even your favorite family stories are retold because there's a twist.
3. **Keep it personal.** Your real, personal stories are most authentic and interesting to others. People will engage when you are vulnerable, but make sure you are not the hero of every story. That makes you look arrogant.
4. **Tell new stories.** Avoid stories told too often like the ones about the starfish or the lighthouse. Everyone has read them or heard them. You will come across as lazy or a plagiarist. If you do share someone else's story, make sure you have permission and give credit to that person.
5. **Keep it short.** Aim for economy of words. The fewer wasted words, the bigger the impact. Minds can wander if you give too many details.
6. **Show the story.** Use movement, vocal variety, and exaggerated facial expressions to grab attention. Remember how Robin Williams engaged us with different accents and funny faces?
7. **Hold the punchline.** Don't get ahead of yourself. Save the punchline until the end. And be careful with humor because it is subjective. One type of humor that is always safe is self-deprecation. Audiences love it when you can laugh at yourself.

Ideas from Lorri Allen, the Soundbite Coach, *Good News!*

8. **Just say it.** Don't preface your story with phrases such as, "Here's a story you will like" or "Now I'm going to tell you a story." Just tell it.
9. **Practice.** Tell your story to people before you take it into the classroom. Stories get better as you see the reaction to them. You will learn where to pause to let material sink in, and you will realize some parts are not essential to get the point.
10. **Make up names.** If you can't use names and situations for confidentiality reasons, try changing the people into talking animals, like Aesop's fables.

12 10 Tips to Effectively Launch a Practice Activity

Practice is critical for the transfer of learning to behavior. Learners need an opportunity to apply a new skill or technique in a safe environment where they will receive feedback.

1. **State the purpose.** Communicate how learners might use this skill or technique on the job. The purpose establishes relevance and value.
2. **Assign teams first.** Establish teams or partners before starting the activity. Allow people time to arrange themselves prior to offering instructions or distributing materials.
3. **Manage time.** Make the amount of time for the activity visible to all using a clock or electronic countdown timer.
4. **Prepare and label materials.** Organize materials so that everything is ready to go in advance. Include written instructions. Verbal instructions are difficult to remember and to hear in a group setting.
5. **Test your instructions.** Verify that the steps you provide make sense and nothing is missing. Complete a dry run with colleagues before the training session.
6. **Communicate to all.** Based on learning styles, learners may need you to state, write and/or demonstrate how the activity is to be conducted.
7. **Prepare the learners.** Provide a brief verbal overview of the activity that might include the purpose, time, materials, instructions, or other information. Allow questions by asking, "What questions do you have?"
8. **Monitor the practice.** Walk among the groups to provide support, answer questions, and ensure the teams are on the right track.
9. **Countdown.** Provide time checks such as, "You should be half way through," or "You should be starting on the third section," or "There are three minutes left to finish up."
10. **Debrief.** Prepare questions that guide learners to reflect on the practice and state how they will apply what they learned. Ask questions about what happened, how it relates to the workplace, and what they will do differently as a result of what they learned.

Ideas from Kimberly Seeger, MS, CPLP, Senior Talent Development Leader

13 10 Ways to Encourage Participant Timeliness

Getting the learners to return from breaks and lunch can be a struggle. It is important to make attendance expectations clear from the start, as well as model the appropriate behavior yourself. These tips will introduce some fun ways to encourage participants to return on time.

1. **Ground rules.** Establish ground rules at the beginning of the session and ask participants how they would like to handle people returning late from breaks. Past suggestions include singing, telling a joke, or donating $1 to a charity jar. The ideas need to come from the participants and they need to agree to the rules so there is buy-in. Doing nothing is also an option, since people returning late already have missed out on the content.
2. **Odd times.** Give breaks in unusual time increments. Instead of 10 or 15 minutes, people are more likely to remember and adhere to 11 or 17 minutes.
3. **Gamble for time.** Give a participant two or three dice and have them roll for the break time. Any roll under six is awarded a minimum six-minute break.
4. **Trivia.** Post a trivia question on a flipchart or PowerPoint slide and promise to show the answer after break.
5. **Comedy routine.** Tell the first half of a joke and promise the punchline when break is over.
6. **The puzzler.** Post a puzzle on a flipchart or PowerPoint and promise to show the answer after break.
7. **Team experience.** Assign participants to workgroups for the length of the class. Give teams points for participation in activities and for returning on time. If one member of the team is late, the whole team is not awarded points for that break. Teams can use their points in the end for prizes or an auction.
8. **Best is after break.** Make the opening of class after the break meaningful. Simply jump into important material as soon as the break is over.
9. **Rest of the story.** Use intriguing transitions that build curiosity by using a statement or asking a question that excites the learners to want to know more.

Ideas from Rachel Stromberg, Mad Cowford Improv

For example, in a customer service workshop, ask, "Would you like to know the secret to telling a customer that they are wrong and have them love you for it? You will be enlightened when you return from break."

10. **Reward timeliness.** State that everyone who returns from lunch on time will be emailed a link to an article that is relevant to the course topic, or will be given one of the assessment questions in advance to help them prepare.

14 10 Creative Strategies for Forming Groups

Working in small groups is an important part of active learning. They provide an opportunity for more people to have more "air time" to express opinions and ask questions. Small groups allow learners to receive feedback more quickly and to learn from each other. Small groups create opportunities for more people to practice skills. Learning becomes more dynamic and active in small groups. Groups should vary in composition and size throughout the session. These creative strategies also add some fun. Think ahead. Do you need a certain number of people in each group? For example, do you need two people to conduct the activity and one person to observe? Or is it important to have a certain number of groups to ensure enough equipment is available? Once you know the answer to these questions, you can select a creative way to form groups.

1. **It's in the cards.** Use children's playing cards such as "Go Fish" or "Old Maid." Ask participants to find others with similar cards. Use playing cards and ask participants to form subgroups by suit or number. Groups can be reformed again using suit or number, whichever was not used the first time.
2. **Famous names.** Create nametags of recognizable characters for the group such as sports superstars, television characters, cartoon characters, or political figures. Learners can find the same character or complete a group, such as everyone who stars in the same TV program.
3. **Color matches.** Use colored index cards with questions for reviewing content. Ask participants to find others with the same color card, or form a rainbow and then proceed to review course content.
4. **Bake a cookie.** Identify key ingredients for making a chocolate chip cookie and put one or two ingredients on each index card. Ask participants to form teams so they make a complete cookie. You can serve cookies during the activity.
5. **Build it and they will come.** Provide a different color LEGO piece(s) to each participant. Ask them to form teams based on the color and then proceed to build something.

Ideas from Gale J. Mote, Gale Mote Associates

6. **Longevity line.** Ask participants to form a line around the room based on seniority with the organization. Then count off to the number of subgroups required. They could also form the line based on the month and day of their birthday.
7. **Sticker it up.** Use stickers on index cards. Ask participants to find others with similar stickers. A question on the index card might be used as an icebreaker, team building exercise, or content review.
8. **Jingle jangle.** Using index cards, put one to three words (depends on group size required) to several favorite jingles or familiar quotes. Ask team members to join together to complete the jingle or quote. You can make the quotes relevant to course content. You could ask the teams to sing the jingle once in place.
9. **Chew team.** Provide a different piece of gum at each participant's place. Ask them to form teams such as all "Juicy Fruit" or all "bubble gum."
10. **Count off.** Of course you can always count off. But you could do it in a unique way: backwards or using only even numbers. You could also ask groups to count in a foreign language. Use someone from the participant group who knows a foreign language to lead.

15 10 Options to Motivate Learners

Getting the learners engaged in the learning can be a challenge. Adult learners attend training for a variety of reasons. They attend for personal growth or career advancement, to build social relationships, or because it was expected by a manager or required for continued employment. These tips will help you gain learner buy-in and motivation to learn.

1. **Why are you here?** Identify why they are taking the class and what they hope to gain. This will allow you to stress the components of the course that are most relevant to them.
2. **Atta boy.** Provide frequent feedback and encouragement. Coach them with constructive suggestions for improvement and provide positive reinforcement. Simple statements like "Great question," "You're on the right track," and "I agree" allow adults to feel safe to contribute ideas and answers in front of their peers.
3. **Vary the design.** Use a variety of teaching strategies to appeal to all learning styles.
4. **Address their needs.** Be flexible and willing to go a little off the agenda to answer questions or meet a learning need that is relevant to the topic. Table questions that are too far off topic and address them during break, after class, or with a follow up email.
5. **Tap into their expertise.** Acknowledge your own knowledge limitations and leverage the knowledge and experience of the participants. Even if you are highly knowledgeable about the topic, draw upon the expertise of the learners whenever possible.
6. **Idea exchanges.** Provide opportunities for participants to exchange ideas and learn from each other. Conduct pair shares, group activities, and group discussions.
7. **Personalize.** Allow learners to personalize the training by providing general guidelines, then allowing participants to customize projects/activities according

---

Ideas from Rachel Stromberg, Mad Cowford Improv

to their own learning needs or how they feel they would apply the concepts in the real world.

8. **Treat them as adults.** Understand that adult learners have multiple responsibilities. Allow for reasonable tardiness returning from breaks to address business or personal concerns.
9. **Ask for feedback.** Invite feedback from the participants regarding the content, activities, and the instructor.
10. **Follow up.** Keep them engaged after the training by emailing them bonus material after the class is over, such as links to relevant online articles or a list of book recommendations.

16 10 Quick Recap Strategies

One of the advantages of classroom training is the opportunity to summarize and recap what was learned in creative ways. Recapping content helps to ensure that skills and knowledge will be transferred and applied in the workplace.

1. **Three-peat.** Have participants form triads and identify the session's three most important learning points. Have them share those insights with three other teams.
2. **Game changer.** In pairs, have participants share one behavioral change related to the training that would make the biggest difference in their work performance.
3. **Countdown.** Ask participants to write the following on an index card: three key points they want to remember, two actions to which they'll commit, and one skill they will teach to someone else.
4. **Short and tweet.** Ask participants to pair up and develop a summary of the training content using only 140 characters.
5. **60 minutes.** Ask participants to identify a skill introduced in the training to which they will devote one hour of practice during the next week.
6. **A different world.** Ask participants to imagine what their work lives would be like if they made progress on some key aspect of the training. Have each participant share his/her vision with one or two partners.
7. **Double trouble.** Have participants share two challenges they will face in the future that will require them to demonstrate the skills covered in the training. Have them share their challenges with a partner, along with the action steps they will take to address them.
8. **One and done.** Ask participants to summarize the training session in just one sentence. Have each participant share his/her summary with a partner.
9. **It's a mystery!** Ask participants to identify one area of content that remains unclear. Encourage a post-program web search to deepen their knowledge.
10. **Cheat sheet.** Have each participant write three learning points on a Post-it note. Have them attach their notes to the cover of their handouts for easy recall.

Ideas from Mark Isabella, Isabella & Associates

17 10-Step Process to Increase Applicability

To enhance the immediate usefulness and applicability of key learnings gained from development sessions, session participants do what we call "Make It Real…Fast."

1. **Pre-work.** Require each participant to come prepared with at least one real-world challenge applicable to the development session.
2. **Icebreaker.** To enable the session participants to better know and trust one another, ask each one to briefly answer an intriguing question requiring some vulnerability, such as "Who has been the most influential person in your life, and why?"
3. **Ensure confidentiality.** Set a ground rule to help facilitate real conversations. Ensure others feel safe in being vulnerable and in sharing real-life scenarios.
4. **Integrated conversations.** Within the development session, specifically take time for facilitated conversations in which participants publicly discuss their challenges with other participants.
5. **Seek feedback.** Allow participants to give each other feedback and generate ideas. This crucial input can help break initial assumptions and inspire new solutions.
6. **New approaches.** Based on the collective input, ask participants to think about how/what they would do differently.
7. **Commit in writing.** Ask each participant to create a written action plan and timeline for addressing the challenge discussed with instructions to be specific on what will be done differently.
8. **Share with group.** Each participant shares a summary of his/her action plan with other session participants. This builds accountability through transparency.
9. **Peer coaching.** If culturally appropriate, suggest that participants exchange contact information, to facilitate post-session follow-up among participants.
10. **Measure success.** After an appropriate time frame, have participants send updates on their progress and challenges. What learning was most relevant? What helped inspire their changes? What assistance do they still need?

Ideas from Kevin Louiselle, Ph.D., MDA Leadership Consulting

7in x 9.25in Silberman c01.tex V3 - 03/20/2015 5:41pm Page 35

18 10 Ideas to Ensure Transferability

Even though some transfer of learning barriers may not be yours to resolve, you can still do your part to ensure transfer of learning. The more options you exercise, the better chances your learners have to transfer what they learned.

1. **Five tactics.** Table groups create a list of five highly effective tactics to use in applying their new skill.
2. **Two by two support.** Participants list two people and two resources they will use to support their transfer and application of skills and knowledge.
3. **Partnerships.** Participants find a partner in the workshop, and make an appointment to follow up in 10 days.
4. **Script it.** Participants create a script for a discussion with their manager outlining what they intend to do differently and what support they will require from their manager.
5. **No nos.** Table groups provide five examples of what not to do, and how to avoid those.
6. **Follow-up discussion.** Provide a schedule and signup sheet for participants to join a follow-up discussion to discuss successes and challenges of application.
7. **Interview.** Participants interview someone who has already had successful experiences with the new skills.
8. **What worked; what didn't.** Let participants know that as follow-up they will submit a one-paragraph description of how they applied the skill and what worked/what was problematic. Then a compiled list is sent to all.
9. **Results online.** Create an online share space for participants to tell about the impact of their applications.
10. **Help line.** Provide a dial-in help line scheduled for certain hours of the week with experienced professionals handling the calls.

Ideas from Wendy Axelrod, Talent Savvy Manager, LLC

19 10 Ways to Address Challenging Situations

No matter how well prepared you are, problems may occur. You cannot think of everything. It's not that a challenge arose; it's how you manage the challenge that counts. Your participants will be watching you as a role model, because they respect your ability to address anything!

1. **Room is not conducive to learning.** Although you should always check out your room the day before, this may not be feasible. You may not see your room until an hour before your session starts, and find that it has inadequate or inappropriate furniture, is too noisy, or too small. Call the person in charge immediately. If nothing can be changed before your opening, put the learners in a small group activity and make a couple of phone calls. In the meantime make do with what you have. Find other locations for breakout sessions; going outdoors is even a possibility. You can challenge the group to identify solutions, too.
2. **Equipment fails.** Yep, another time when you need to be prepared. Always double-check the equipment the day before when possible. Have the name and cellphone number of the person responsible for equipment handy. Follow a process to locate the issue, for example, everything plugged in and turned on? Cables firmly connected? Tried to reboot? Have a backup plan for how to substitute a flipchart for your colorful PowerPoint slides or how to create a role play instead of viewing a YouTube video. Be positive. Don't complain. Keep moving forward with your active training plan.
3. **Participant side conversations are disruptive.** Try to prevent this by establishing ground rules. Let the group establish their own to increase ownership. Reward and model appropriate behavior. If two participants are talking, make eye contact or walk toward them while continuing your discussion or delivery. If possible casually saunter behind them and continue to talk to the group over their personal conversation. Give these folks the benefit of the doubt. They may be discussing a point you were trying to make.
4. **One participant dominates discussion or creates another disruption.** Break eye contact with the individual and call on others by name. Hold your hand up and state that you'd like to hear from another person. Ignoring disruptive behavior is one way to manage it. You may wish to ignore most things the first time.

When it is repetitive and interferes with others' learning, you do need to take control. In some cases you can redirect a response to another learner. You can reference the ground rules. You can also change activities from large group discussions to small groups. Sometimes humor works. If none of these work, speak with the person during a break, explaining what you observe and what needs to change.

5. **Learners are not participating.** Begin the session by ensuring that everyone speaks once or twice during the opening. Ask easier questions earlier in your session. Use a round robin to ensure that everyone knows they will need to share their thoughts. Allow the introverts time to think and prepare their response by asking everyone to write the answer to your question before discussion occurs.
6. **You lost your place.** Take a sip of water while checking your notes. If appropriate, you can pause and ask what questions they have at this point. No one knows exactly what you were going to do or say, so it is unlikely that anyone will notice the shift. Try repeating the last point in a different way or give an example to give you time to think. You can always just admit that you forgot; few learners will be upset.
7. **Energy is down.** Be prepared with your favorite energizer from this book or others. Move people into an activity that has them standing. Move people around into small groups with people at different tables or with those with whom they have not worked. Take a break. Create a challenge (the first team to name all 10 listening skills) or hold a competition (a relay race to list critical leadership competencies on a flipchart).
8. **A difficult group.** If you've done all the up-front work to understand the group's needs, be certain they know what's in it for them to attend this session. How will it make their jobs easier? How will their performance improve? Why does the organization need them to have these skills? Be sure that you have established your credibility. You can try to probe one of the friendlier faces during a break; don't bury yourself in the content. You may need to address it in the session by asking, "The group seems preoccupied; is something happening that I should know?" It doesn't happen often, but when it does, it is usually best to address the issue as soon as possible.
9. **You are nervous.** Arrive early to ground yourself with the room and make it yours. Don't try anything new—including clothes. If you have a crutch, use it,

such as having a glass of water close by. Be overly organized. During the session use up excess energy with gestures and your vocal presentation. Send a positive message: “These people are excited about learning new skills.” Accept the fact that you will be nervous and know what to expect, for example, your throat will get dry, your heart races. Get your audience involved early so that the session feels like a discussion. Memorize the first 30 minutes of content. Usually nervousness dissolves after a short time. Be ultra-prepared, so that you can do the session in your sleep and practice, practice, practice.

10. **You do not feel well.** There is little you can do about feeling under the weather. The show must go on and you probably do not have a backup trainer. Certainly if you have something contagious or are so ill that you cannot facilitate the session, you may need to cancel. It is difficult because so many other people are counting on you. Some may have traveled a long distance. If you are going to continue to conduct the training, don’t tell the participants you are not feeling well. Or if you do, don’t make a big deal out of it. You may get sympathy, but is that what you want? Shift the session to put even more emphasis on participant involvement. Supersize active!

20 10 Options for Active Closings

The closing of an active training session provides a sense of closure for the learners. It is a time to ensure that all expectations were met. Consider adding a closing activity that gets commitment from participants. You may also want to deliver final words of wisdom or encouragement.

1. **Action plan.** Have participants develop an action plan. Provide a format that includes columns for the actions, starting and ending dates, resources required, and measure of success.
2. **Paired commitment.** Have participants make a commitment to action with someone else. Ask them to exchange contact information and to call or email each other in 10 days.
3. **Email progress.** Establish an email list where participants report their action progress to everyone in the group.
4. **Reward success.** If you are an internal or plan a long relationship with participants, offer to send a surprise with reported action to you. You can purchase gifts from a dollar store and plan it in your budget or contract if necessary.
5. **My SMART objectives.** Ask participants to write SMART objectives for their action and share them with the rest of the group to generate ideas for others with less grasp of application.
6. **Partner planning.** Allow learners to pair up with anyone of their choice to create plans and to support each other with ideas.
7. **Memo to me.** Ask each participant to write a memo to him/herself identifying what will be completed within the month. Have participants seal the memo in an envelope and address it to themselves. Gather the sealed memos and mail them to participants in 30 days.
8. **Expert support.** Have each participant create an action plan. Once it is finished have them circulate among other participants to gather email addresses of those who can provide them with expert support and answers as they implement their action plans.

Ideas from Kenneth Stein, EdD, CPLP, SPHR, Successful Endeavors

7in x 9.25in Silberman c01.tex V3 - 03/20/2015 5:41pm Page 40

9. **Read me a story.** Identify a children's book that helps to close out a topic. *Oh the Places You Will Go* by Dr. Seuss works for many. Sit in a circle and have participants take turns reading the book. Discuss the implications of the book and how it relates to how participants intend to apply what they have learned.
10. **Dear Boss.** Ask participants to write a letter to their bosses telling them what they learned and how they would like to implement what they learned. The letters are not actually sent, but they can serve as a good outline for what each learner may wish to discuss with his/her boss.