

## How to Be an Effective Workshop Teacher

There's a lot more to teaching than simply knowing your topic. This page is meant to help you be the best workshop presenter you can be. Think of it as a checklist to refresh your memory about the elements of teaching that distinguish the really great teachers.

### Respect Your Group

Find out who you're talking to and why they are taking time from their lives to listen to you. What you want to teach is less important than what they want to learn. You are there because you know about your topic — it's your job to render what you know understandable to them. You work for them.

### Be Prepared But Flexible

Start every workshop with an agenda, on paper. Go into the day knowing where you'll start, where you'd like to be by lunchtime, and what the workshop will cover by the time it ends. Pay particular attention to the first half hour because this will set the tone for the day. As important as it is to have a plan, it's equally important to be flexible. Groups have their own dynamic, and a good teacher will go with the flow. Having a map shouldn't prevent a tourist from taking an interesting side trip.

### Pacing

Present information in bite-size pieces. Typically no component should take longer than 30 minutes; half that is better. Shifting from one activity to another allows participants to break their day into manageable sections, just as this page is divided into paragraphs. Use physical movement to make a break between sections (and to allow people to get their blood moving). For instance, after 15 minutes of lecture, ask people to come up to the front to see a demo. After a few minutes of that, return the students to their seats. Moving from one room to another, from sitting to standing, and from inside to outside are all helpful.

### Read the Signals

If the group is tired or restless, it really doesn't matter how exciting your demo is — they'll miss it. Resist the urge to plow ahead and, instead, deal with the issue directly. If the group is tired, get them on their feet for some mild calisthenics. If there is construction noise from outside, pull them into a tight huddle. If they are wiggling in their seats, take them outside to sit on the grass. A good teacher is always on the alert for these signals.

### Say it Several Ways

It is well documented that we each learn in different ways. A good teacher will cover the vital information at least three ways:

- As written text, through handouts or on a blackboard or large tablet.
- Verbally, preferably through a concise, easily remembered phrase.
- Physically, but "acting it out". Use arm gestures, facial expressions, and stage movements to illustrate the point being made.

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