

# The Volunteer Teacher



## Effective Teaching for Effective Learning

**C**ongratulations. By accepting the position of volunteer teacher you will help others gain important knowledge and skills. Present an effective program by using these principles of preparation and presentation.

### Preparation

**Attend special training or secure prepared study packet guide**

#### Plan the lesson content

Learning is faster and more comfortable when teachers present information in a well-organized way. For the program to proceed smoothly from one point to another, the following questions need to be answered:

- What important points should be emphasized?
- How much of the given material should be included?
- What comes first, second, and third?
- What can be done besides talk?

*Allow plenty of time for preparation.*

An effective teacher spends more time preparing than presenting. Time for adequate preparation and practice is essential.

*Think about whom you will be teaching.* Keep your audience in mind as you plan a session. Remember their needs and interests, likes and dislikes. Decide what you want them to learn from this session and select content and methods to meet their needs.

*Review material and identify the "important ideas."* Go through your materials accumulated on the subject: notes from a training meeting, maga-

zine articles, bulletins, books, your experiences. Write the three or four ideas that will be most important to your audience and arrange them in logical order. Add essential details that support each important idea.

#### Plan the lesson area and setup

Make arrangements with the contact person for space, tables, chairs, audio visual, and other equipment. When you teach the lesson, plan to:

- Practice beforehand and have all materials handy.
- Arrive early to orient yourself with the arrangements and set up materials before audience arrives.
- Arrange for an assistant to help as needed. Arrange examples or illustrative materials conveniently and have notes in order.

### Presentation

#### A strong beginning

The first few minutes are the most important ones. You must stimulate audience interest and help them focus on the topic. A strong beginning is important because it:

- catches the interest of group members.
- focuses thinking on the subject.
- draws them away from competing thoughts.
- establishes rapport with the group.
- tells your audience what the presentation is about.

Often people are not completely "tuned in" when a session begins. Some carry worries with them that command a part of their minds. Others feel drowsy and aren't really thinking.

Some are thinking about a bit of news they heard on the way to the meeting. Your words will be wasted, unless you are able to reach learner's ears, eyes, and minds in a way that challenges them to start thinking with you.

Never assume your audience wants to learn what you teach. Most learners need an incentive before they are willing to make the effort to learn. A strong beginning gives that "extra push."

#### Ways to stimulate interest

Good beginnings gain attention, arouse interest, establish a relationship with the audience, and lead the minds of learners to the topic at hand. What you *do* is as important as what you *say* when you begin a meeting.

There are many different ways to catch interest at the beginning of a session. A few suggestions are:

- Ask a related question to get participants involved.
- Present an example or story that has relevance to the subject.
- Present a problem to be solved.
- Read an applicable thought-provoking quotation.
- Show a picture or object related to the topic.
- Read an applicable headline from a newspaper or magazine.
- Bring a surprise idea (something in a sack or box).
- Present a written word or symbol.
- Tell about a personal experience that relates to the topic.
- Show a pertinent cartoon.
- Show a "finished product."

Use a short and clearly related method. Be comfortable using it.



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Practice your first sentences aloud several times—if you can do them well, the rest of the session will be easier. Since you know the material better than the audience, avoid beginning with an apology.

Once you catch the attention of your audience, explain or show what will be covered in the session and emphasize the value of the information. Some teachers find the following techniques helpful:

- Develop a personal statement. “I’ve been trying these techniques at home and they really do work. Today I want to share these ideas with you.”
- Build awareness of the problem and indicate that you’ll help with a solution. “How many times have you heard the expression, ‘I don’t understand what lawyers say when they talk about estate planning?’ Today we’ll discuss a list of estate planning terms and what they mean.”

Well-planned beginnings are fun to do and fun to take part in. But frequently teachers start with a weak, “Well, ah, our subject for this afternoon is...ah...” or “I’ll do my best to tell you about...” Is it any wonder the audience fails to become interested? Like any other part of a successful learning experience, good beginnings take careful planning.

## Content Development

Presenting subject matter content is basic to teaching. But it’s difficult to sit and listen for an extended time period. When we are interested, we want to get “into the act” and do something. Every teacher is challenged to help the audience do more than listen.

### Audience participation

Participation helps individuals practice new ideas, clarify thinking, and develop problem-solving and issue-resolving skills. Audience participation

must be planned into the presentation. Examples of involvement include:

- Roll-call mixers
- Quizzes
- Discussions
- Skits
- Buzz groups
- Story problems
- Role playing
- Tours (field trips)
- Show and tell
- Action plans and follow-up

Successful participation results when a teacher provides direction and keeps the discussion focused on the topic.

### Visual aids

Visual aids maybe real objects, pictures, words, or symbols. Visuals attract and hold attention, illustrate points, clarify information, and aid in remembering facts. Visual aids should be:

- simple
- easy to read
- neat
- colorful
- large enough to be seen by all
- relevant

## Summary and Application

The ending is as important as the beginning because it reinforces new ideas. An “effective ending” needs to be planned. It should allow the audience opportunity to:

- review important ideas presented.
- discuss information and how it can be used.
- make comments and ask questions.

Endings tie together what has been covered and brings together the teacher and the audience.

## Evaluation

Teachers aren’t finished when the meeting is over (you’ll want to know if you have accomplished what you set out to do). Questions and activities in the session may furnish this information, or you may want a follow-up session to find out what changes and accomplishments resulted from your teaching.

You may think teaching principles are tedious, but they really work. Time spent in preparation pays off in audience satisfaction and your feeling of accomplishment.

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