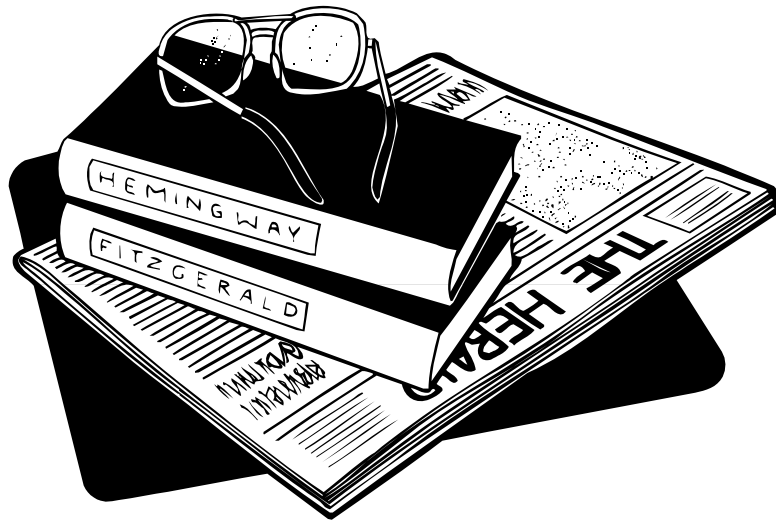


# BUILD

## Effective Training



Prepared by:

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# Introduction

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As a valued instructor in the USCG Auxiliary Boat Crew or Coxswain training programs, Public Education programs or Member Training programs, you have a unique opportunity to guide, influence, train, and help integrate complex skills and information for the learner. Not an easy job!

There are tools that can help you, however. These tools can assist you in presenting and demonstrating complex tasks to increase the proficiency of the learner and the retention and integration of key skills and knowledge.

## Learning Objectives

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At the end of this program, you will:

- **IDENTIFY** the six keys to facilitating adult learning
- **DESCRIBE** the elements of your program you should prepare before training begins
- **ESTABLISH** a personal action plan for continued development

## Participant Expectations

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**What would you like to learn from this program?**

# Adult Learning

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Adult learners have unique characteristics of learning and developmental patterns. In many ways, adults are “experts” in their own chosen field, and they need to be treated as having an expertise that is valued.

How then, do we increase the effectiveness of our training? How do we maximize the unique characteristics of the adult learner? If we capitalize on these unique characteristics, it will make learning relevant, enhance the learner’s experience, and increase the effectiveness of the outcome.



## Key #1 – Keep Anxiety Levels Low

Imagine: you walk into a classroom and for a moment, you “flash back” to those difficult days in junior high program. You are thrown back to an earlier time where you have not developed the competencies or confidence that you have as an adult.

This is a very typical experience for the adult learner, particularly one who has not had an educational or developmental experience in a while. Like “a fish out of water”, they are uncomfortable and insecure about performing in an arena that is unknown to them.

It is important to be aware of what adult learners bring to the program from their prior experiences, defuse the anxiety, and help them set realistic expectations.

## Practical strategies

## *...Worth Taking A Look At*

1. Present the overall agenda at the beginning of the program. If you are teaching skills in a small group, explain what you will be doing and what will be expected of the participants.
2. Take the time to describe what you will be doing, both activities and content. Many people enjoy surprises, but a training environment is not the place to put people “on the spot”. Create a climate that is “safe” for experimenting and risk-taking.
3. State clearly what you will be expecting from the participants. Adult learners want to know how to respond, what they will need to accomplish, and how class will be conducted.



**Write an example of a practical strategy that you've used successfully in training adults.**

Your goal is to have your adult learners feel comfortable, welcome, respected as adults, and confident in their own capabilities.



## Key #2 – Ask For and Meet Expectations

Adults will always bring their own needs and agendas to the training. Because these needs will not go away until they are satisfied, it is important for the instructor to understand what they are. These needs and agendas are expressed as “expectations”.

The first step in assessing participants’ needs and agendas is through a “needs assessment”. The needs assessment tells you where participants are in their learning. It tells you how much or how little training needs to happen to achieve the desired result.

Since adult education is a collaborative event; we must solicit the participants’ viewpoint, goals, and expectations to make the instruction valuable.

### Practical strategies

### *...Worth Taking A Look At*

1. Provide an opportunity at the beginning of the program for participants to share their expectations with each other and with the instructor. Listing expectations on a flip chart or having small groups share expectations and report to the larger group are two examples of eliciting expectations.
2. Refer back to expectations throughout the program to reinforce the immediacy of the learning.
3. At the end of the program, give the participants a chance to review their expectations and your objectives. What expectations were met? What experiences did they gain that went beyond their expectations? Ask for feedback on what could be done if expectations were not met.



**Write an example of a practical strategy that you've used successfully in training adults.**

Working with adults means being flexible. It takes confidence in your ability to both lead the participants and let them guide the program at the same time. The end result, however, will be successful for both participant and instructor!

### **Key #3 – Use and Reward Experience**

Adults are a rich source of experience – take advantage of it! Adults will come to your training with a history of personal and professional success and accomplishment. They are in training with a need to gain knowledge or expertise in a new discipline.

As an instructor for adults, you must feel comfortable and confident that you can teach adults new things, and learn from them at the same time. The level of participation in adult education illustrates that adults have experiences to share. This sharing enriches the learning for all. Adults want information, skills and knowledge when they come to training, but that information, skills and knowledge can come from the participants themselves.

## Practical strategies

1. Use an introductory exercise as an opportunity for participants to talk about their own experiences with the topic.
2. Small group exercises can provide opportunities for participants to share experiences on a variety of topics. Be sure the topic reflects “real life” issues so that the sharing can have value.
3. Case studies provide an environment where adults can use past experience to explore problems and present solutions. Case studies use a variety of skills and strengths, including analytical and conceptual thinking, decision-making, and exercising good judgment. Because of the variety of skills needed, each person has an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution.



**Write an example of a practical strategy that you've used successfully in training adults.**

When adults see that they have a wealth of information and that they are capable of sharing this expertise, they are more likely to adapt current skills and knowledge to the new learning. This helps them learn new information more effectively, and increases their confidence.



## Key #4 – Request and Reward Participation

Adults lead very active daily lives. They are accustomed to making decisions, being called upon to use their expertise, and self-directing their actions. Putting adults into a passive environment (like a lecture) is the most ineffective way to stimulate learning.

Adults learn more effectively and efficiently if they are fully engaged in the learning activity. Plan your training to allow time for active participation, “hands-on” activities, and sharing of expertise.

### Practical strategies

### *...Worth Taking A Look At*

1. Plan your overall training strategy to have numerous opportunities for participant involvement.
2. Use group exercises, role-playing, small group discussion, or “hands-on” demonstrations to involve participants.
3. Provide opportunities for the participants to give you feedback during the program. Encourage them to tell you how they feel about the learning process. This will give you valuable information on how to tailor your training going forward.



**Write an example of a practical strategy that you've used successfully in training adults.**



## Key #5 – Be Certain Your Content Is Relevant

Relevancy is a “must” for adult learners. They want to be able to put to use the skills and knowledge they have learned right away. They will dismiss as “unimportant” information that is not meaningful in meeting an immediate need or goal. Some questions you should consider asking as you develop training are:

- Is the content related to the participants’ goals?
- Is the instructional methodology appropriate for the content and the learner’s level of expertise?
- Can the participants use the material in the time frame they are expecting?
- Is the content appropriate to the participants’ level of experience?

Adults use their training activities to help reach goals, solve problems, and meet other needs in their lives. Their learning activities are driven by their lives, so the need for immediate application is important.

### Practical strategies

### *...Worth Taking A Look At*

1. Take participants’ needs into consideration when planning and designing training. A needs assessment is an important tool to gather this information.
2. Determine participants’ expectations as you begin training. This will help you tie your training back to the immediate needs of the participants.
3. Use real examples and refer to real examples and issues from the participants’ experiences as well as your own. This will help the participants to discover how to apply the learning to their own need.
4. Use exercises and small group discussions to help participants determine how new skills and knowledge can be applied to their issues.



**Write an example of a practical strategy that you've used successfully in training adults.**

Adults need to make sense of their learning and how it fits into their lives. Adults seek out education in response to changes in their lives. Learning that is relevant to an immediate goal or need will be valued by the adult.



## **Key #6 – Encourage Continuous Learning**

Because adults seek out learning experiences to help them manage change in their lives, then the learning helps them grow to meet the challenges of the change. It is the learning activity that helps adults expand their worlds and thinking.

When described this way, adult learning can be very empowering. As instructors, if we intend to facilitate growth in our learners, we need to respect their experiences and understand their needs.

If we are to facilitate growth, we must respect the adult learner as a person capable of discovering solutions for the changes in their lives, and that the instructor is a partner in that process.

1. Remember that adults are experts in many other areas of their lives. Building on that confidence can enhance the learning experience.
2. Provide positive reinforcement and encouragement throughout the activity. Support “risk-taking” by the participant, and help them understand where they are right or wrong.
3. Be open to ideas, suggestions, and feedback. In a collaborative training environment, participants partner with the instructor to provide the optimal training experience.
4. Understand that each adult learner is unique – with a different set of educational and professional experiences. Diversity can make the educational experience richer. Understand and capitalize on these differences.



**Write an example of a practical strategy that you've used successfully in training adults.**

Respecting the adult learner for all that s/he brings to the learning activity helps to facilitate growth and change for the learner.

# Tips for Effective Training

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As an instructor, you probably have some training techniques that have been effective for you. You are an experienced boater with a lot to share with other members of the Coast Guard team.

Listed below are some valuable tips to keep in mind to help your training be as effective as possible!



## Prepare, Prepare, Prepare!

The single most effective way to improve your training is to spend time **preparing** for the training session. When the trainer is not sufficiently prepared, the training is painful for both the instructor and the participants. Here are some things you need to consider.

**Think about your training design.** Adults learn best in an interactive, facilitated manner. If you're planning to lecture for a while, think again! How can you introduce discussion or exercises into your lesson to help adults learn more effectively?

**Write training objectives.** Training objectives are like a road map to your final destination. They describe how your participants will behave differently when the training is over. Here are some examples of behavioral objectives.

- **IDENTIFY** a junction buoy on a chart.
- **DESCRIBE** the process of working with a Coast Guard Helicopter during a medievac.
- **DEMONSTRATE** the correct way to tie a bowline.

Be sure to keep your training objectives simple, behavioral, and measurable. Ask yourself, "How will I know if the participants can do this task?"

**Prepare your handouts and visuals before the training.** Prepared material can help you “stay on course” as well as provide a written reference for the participants. Preparing your handouts in advance will help you organize your thoughts, and be sure that information is relevant to the needs of the participants.

Prepare your slides in advance, as well. Keep these basic guidelines in mind when creating PowerPoint slides.

- Your slides should be simple and uncluttered
- Use a dark background color and white (or very light color) text for maximum readability.
- Generally a sans serif font (like Arial font) is best. Use only one style of font in your slides. Be consistent.
- Keep to a maximum of six lines of text per page. This will allow you to use a 32 or 36 point font size for maximum readability.
- Pictures and clip art can help you make a point, but be sure that the graphic supports what you are saying, and does not distract or mislead the audience.
- Try not to use animation or sounds associated with bullets “swooping” on to a page, or typewriter clacking letters. They are very distracting, and most people overuse them.
- Graphs and charts can be very effective. They should be simple, uncluttered and fit into the slide’s text space. The text size should be as large as possible on your chart so the audience can read it.

You can use flip charts in a similar manner as slides. Prepare them with a few bullet points on each page. Use color to make them interesting. Be sure your print is large enough to be read by the entire class.

**Take time to rehearse.** Practice what you will say to make your points. The first time you go through your program, you will stumble and fumble. Don’t let your stumbling be in front of your class!

If you don’t want to “torture” your friends and family with your rehearsal, try going into a room with a mirror. Close the door (so they won’t think you’re crazy!) and practice in front of the mirror. You’ll be able to see your gestures and facial expressions to see if they are appropriate. Practice the program a couple of times until it feels comfortable and natural.



## Be Yourself!

A common mistake made by instructors is trying to imitate someone else's style, mannerisms, or language. It always appears unnatural and awkward. Since it is important to be sure that participants are comfortable, be sure your style contributes to that end. Many times, a *conversational style* is non-threatening and easy for the instructor and participants.

**Use humor appropriately.** Humor is a wonderful means to make a point, to discover a new application, and to retain important information. Humor can break tension, anxiety, inattentiveness and boredom.

Inappropriate humor has the adverse effect on participants. It will make them feel uncomfortable, and in some cases, may be considered rude. Don't let this happen in your training!

**Be clear and direct.** Be sure your language is simple, and unambiguous. Explain, support and clarify your training presentation. Your rehearsal will help you to crystallize your thoughts and comments.

If you are not being clear, how will you know? Blank stares, inattentiveness, and fidgeting are good signs that you've "lost" your group. It's also a good idea to "check in" periodically with the group. Sample questions that you can use to check in include:

- "What questions do you have?"
- "Let's stop here and see where people are. What is not clear to you?"
- "This is a complicated issue. Who can describe, in their own words, what I've just said?"

**Use stories to illustrate your points.** Storytelling has always been an effective way to illustrate a point. Fables, parables, and folk tales have taught valuable lessons to children and adults.

Often times, we'll use "sea stories" in our training. Our personal experiences are a rich source of learning. They are effective **only when they have a point that relates to your training**. When sea stories are used for any other purpose (fill the time, make the instructor seem important, etc.) they are a waste of the participants' time.



## Voice, Gestures and Words!

The words you use, how you say them, and your gestures complete the picture. Each of these needs to be appropriate in the context of your training and your natural style.

**Voice** – A voice that is easy to listen to is essential for a good instructor. Here are some things to keep in mind while speaking.



- Keep your tone pleasant, conveying a sense of friendliness.
- Speak naturally, reflecting your personality and sincerity.
- Speak with vitality, giving the impression of strength and confidence. This does not necessarily mean loud!
- Adjust the volume, so that you can be easily heard by all.

**Gestures** – The body language you use in training include your facial expressions, body movement, and gestures. Basic hand gestures can be used to show:

- Size, weight, shape, direction and location – These physical characteristics are appropriate for gestures such as the shape of your hands and pointing.
- Importance or urgency – Show your participants when you're making an important point.
- Compare and contrast – Move your hands in unison to illustrate similarities, and in opposite directions to illustrate differences.



**Word Choice** – Certain types of words can be misleading and harmful to communication. As an instructor, you are relying on your communication skills to help adults learn. It's important to watch out for these common mistakes.



- **The fallacy of “all” and “never”** – These are false generalizations. Participants will find the “exception” and point it out to you. Use words like “most”, “usually”, and “rarely” to describe frequency.
- **The abuse of jargon** – While using specialized words may be the only way to describe something, most of the time it is “exclusive” and harmful for communication. Be sure to define the meaning of jargon before using it frequently in training.
- **Words that end discussion** – While you are instructing, your goal is to use the expertise of the group. Phrases like, “The experts agree...” leave no room for a different opinion. Belittling statements like, “Everybody knows that...” hurt participants’ feelings and destroys confidence.

Our language should be immediately understood to the ear, without the need for contemplation and reflection. Your word choice should be clear, simple, direct, and appropriate for the audience!

## **Action Plan**

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In the space below, please identify which skill(s) you would like to improve as a result of going through this program.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## References

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Communication and Leadership Program, The Toastmasters International, Inc., Mission Viejo, CA 92960