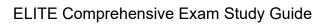# TRAINING MANAGEMENT & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT DIVISION

EMPLOYEE LEARNING INSPIRES TRUE EXCELLENCE (ELITE)

1 October 2024
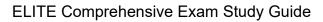
Contents

INTRODUCTION

ELITE Comprehensive Exam

The Employee Learning Inspires True Excellence (ELITE) Comprehensive Exam (CE) is a timed, 150-minute criterion-referenced test aligned to the web-based content covered in the ELITE Prerequisite Instructor Training Course (ITC). The exam consists of 50 multiple-choice and matching questions covering six competencies:

- Introduction and Overview

- Questioning Techniques

- Active Learning Environment

- Learning Assessment

- Presentation Techniques and Delivery Skills

- Classroom Management

Candidates must achieve a score of at least 80% to pass the exam. Candidates may take the exam three times to achieve a passing score. As part of the ELITE CE, candidates are given feedback on their performance in each of the six competencies.

ELITE Study Guide

The Study Guide provides candidates with a summary of key content from the ELITE ITC. The topic-level headings represent the six competencies, and the second-level headings divide the corresponding competency into greater detail. It is recommended that candidates use the Study Guide to prepare for the ELITE CE.

The Study Guide can also be used for remediation in the event that multiple exam attempts are needed.

LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Learning Defined

According to educational psychologist Richard Mayer, learning can be defined as a permanent change in knowledge or behavior based on an individual's experiences.

- Learning is long-term.

- A cognitive or behavioral change must occur.

- Learning is dependent on personal experience.

How Adults Learn

Adults are motivated in a different manner than children when it comes to learning. Key adult learning principles are as follows:

- Adults are self-directed and need to be free to direct themselves.

- Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences.

- Adults are goal oriented.

- Adults are relevancy-oriented and must see a reason for learning something.

- Adults are practical and tend to focus on aspects of a lesson that are most useful.

- Adults need to be shown respect during the learning process.

Fundamentals of Training

Incorporate the three fundamentals of training: feedback, modeling, and coaching.

Feedback

- Feedback provides information about performance. Effective feedback accomplishes three things:

    - Feedback motivates the student.

    - Feedback promotes learning.

    - Feedback reinforces or changes behavior.

- Feedback types

    - Positive Feedback: Positive feedback is also known as motivational feedback, which involves the instructor telling students what they did correctly.

- o Negative Feedback: Negative feedback is also known as developmental/corrective feedback, which involves the instructor telling students what they need to do to improve.

- Use an appropriate blend of positive and negative feedback. Be careful not to deliver too much of one type and not the other.

- Deliver feedback that is specific and prompt.

- Use the signaling technique, which is simply a cue that prompts students to focus on a particular point or topic. For example, by saying, "Pay attention to what I'm about to say next because it's very important for the lesson," you prompt students to pay extra attention to what you're about to talk about.

Modeling

Modeling is the process of demonstrating how to perform a behavior or solve a problem.

Coaching

Coaching a student effectively involves the following steps:

1. Understanding the current knowledge and skill level of the student.

2. Identifying the learning outcome.

3. Providing just enough instruction so the student understands, and then gradually tapering off assistance when no longer needed.

Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are detailed descriptions of what students will know or be able to do after they complete training. Objectives give students a framework against which they can measure their own success.

Learning objectives have four primary purposes:

- Help instructors prepare by providing a clear understanding of what the training should accomplish.

- Provide focus for the students.

- Emphasize the key aspects of the lesson.

- Help instructors and students determine if the training accomplished what was intended.

Objectives also provide a basis for:

- Selecting the methods and materials most likely to help the students achieve the desired outcomes.

- Aligning instruction and assessment to ensure instructors test what they teach and teach what they test.

Learning objectives have three parts:

- **Condition:** The condition is simply the conditions under which the behavior is to be completed, such as what tools or assistance will be provided.

- **Behavior:** The behavior describes what the student is expected to know or do at the end of the training. The behavior should be specific and observable. It is sometimes called the "action" or "action statement."

- **Criterion:** Sometimes called the "standard," the criterion describes the desired level of performance.

Example: Given a car on an obstacle course, drive the road test without knocking over any traffic cones.

- The **condition** is "Given a car on an obstacle course."

- The **behavior** is "drive the road test."

- The **criterion** is "without knocking over any traffic cones."

TRAINING PREPARATION

Lesson Plan

A lesson plan is a written outline for the instructor to use to disseminate information to students. It ensures the instructor covers all of the content within the allotted timeframe. Lesson plans:

- Help instructors prepare in advance.

- Remind instructors of key points to make during the training session.

- Provide instructors with a written record of the lesson.

- Record what will be taught so that a back-up instructor can disseminate the same information in the primary instructor's absence.

- Allow instructors to plan the length of the training session.

- Tell the instructors how to assess student learning.

Lesson plans typically include the following information:

- Lesson Title.

- Date Created.

- Version.

- Purpose of the Lesson: An overview about the lesson for the instructor's own knowledge.

- Time for Training.

- Prerequisite Training Requirements: Students' previous experience and training requirements.

- Target Audience: A description of who should be taking part in the lesson.

- Lesson References: A trusted resource to refresh the instructor's understanding, clarify doubts, or verify previously learned concepts.

- Lesson Objectives: Statements that indicate how students will achieve the purpose of the lesson.

- Instructor Notes: Detailed notes for the instructor, including an overview and summary of the lesson.

- PowerPoint Slides with Instructor Activities.

- Lesson Wrap-up: Guidance on wrapping up the lesson, including lesson references, summary, questions, and Talent Management System (TMS) assessment and survey information. Instructors should review the objectives to ensure that the students feel comfortable with what they were supposed to have learned according to the objectives.

Common Time Wasters

- Introductions: Develop a plan for conducting introductions to align with the time you can devote to that task. If there are several students enrolled in the training and little time is set aside for introductions, name tags or tent cards may suffice under those conditions. If more time is allotted, that time may be spent on allowing each student to introduce themselves, along with some of their background or motivation for being part of the training.

- Demonstrating the use of virtual classroom software.

- Questions and Answers (Q&A): Plan for Q&A beforehand by allotting a specific amount of time for questions in your training plan per topic.

Gagne's Nine Instructional Events

1. **Gain attention:** Obtain students' attention so that they will watch and listen while the instructor presents the learning content. Strategies to gain attention include:

- Using an abrupt stimulus change.

- Raising your voice suddenly.

- Gesturing grandly in front of the class.

- Starting the class with an anecdote that is relevant to the content.

- Using an icebreaker.

- Introducing a task that cannot be completed without content that students will learn during the lesson.

2. **Inform learners of objectives:** The students need to know upfront what they are expected to be able to do after the training. Knowing the end goal helps to motivate the students. Learning objectives help set the stage for how students will be assessed, as well as what they will learn.

3. **Stimulate recall of prior learning:** Encourage students to build on previous knowledge or skills. New learning occurs more readily when it can be connected with previously learned information. Regardless of the type of learning, the prior learning must be accessed from long-term memory before it is available in working memory, where it can be integrated with the new learning.

4. **Present the content:** New information is provided to the students.

5. **Provide "learning guidance":** The goal is to organize the information and make new information meaningful so it can pass into (and become a part of) students' long-term memory.

6. **Elicit Performance:** This event is also referred to as "practice" where students have a chance to practice what they have learned so far. Practice may involve asking students to demonstrate or apply what they just learned, restate the information, or solve a problem using the new information.

7. **Provide Feedback:** After the student has performed, there must be communication to the student about the correctness of his or her performance. That communication may come directly from the instructor or from other means. If feedback is not built into the performance, it is up to the instructor to observe performance and provide feedback based on preset criteria.

8. **Assess performance:** Instructors determine if students have mastered their newly learned knowledge or skill by conducting a test or final assessment. Students should be able to pass the test or assessment without assistance. The test questions and

format must match the objectives, so that there is no disconnect between what students have learned and how they are expected to demonstrate that knowledge.

9. **Enhance retention and transfer:** Retention is the ability to perform a learned behavior after a period of time has elapsed since it was last performed. Transfer is the ability to apply a learned skill in situations different than the one in which it was learned. To maximize retention and transfer, provide job aids, refresher training, and written action plans, and use instructional methods such as role plays and simulations if the learning objective is at the application level or higher in Bloom's Taxonomy.

Classroom Training Preparation

- **Facility:** Schedule training based on the availability of a facility that will easily accommodate the number of students enrolled in the training. Travel, transportation, facility accessibility, equipment and training strategy requirements, etc. are all important considerations when scheduling face-to-face training. Keep in mind that time is needed for rehearsing and setting up for the training event.

- **Materials and equipment:** Review the lesson plans and training roster early so there is ample time to request all the needed materials. Email students any necessary advance materials, including prerequisite course list, advance assignments, course logistical information (e.g., date, time, location), and required course materials. Consider any alternative materials that may be needed in the event a problem occurs during the training. Even if a lesson plan does not specify backup plans, it is always a good idea to be prepared for any potential issue.

- **Number of students:** The number of students can impact several aspects of a training event, including physical/logistical considerations (e.g., room layout), quantity and type of materials, presentation media, and activities and discussions.

- **Classroom:** Proper placement of presentation equipment is important. Consider where students are seated to ensure everyone is able to see the presentation easily. If necessary, consider the use of dual screens or flipcharts. Set up the course materials, instructor materials, and any content or supplies for conducting the training beforehand.

- **Co-facilitator:** Review the lesson plan together to discuss the presentation strategies, decide who will cover which topic, and discuss roles and responsibilities during the session.

Planning Instructional Time

There are several steps to take before instruction begins:

- Carefully plan the course, including durations.

    o   Allot time for student Q&A and group discussions for each segment.

- o Record the times to be finished with each segment in the lesson plan or training outline.

  - o Note in advance which segments can easily be shortened if the need arises.

- Prepare different versions of your presentation or supplemental materials with varying levels of complexity, so the training may be modified as needed.

- Have a contingency plan to circumvent any technological issues that cannot be immediately resolved.

  - o Having a plan in place to deal with any such issue increases confidence in the training and instructor credibility in the eyes of the students.

  - o Handouts, lecture-style presentations, and group discussions or activities could be used in the event of a power outage.

  - o Screen captures, alternative websites, and alternate training media could be used in the event of hardware or software problems.

Common Technological Challenges in Distributed Learning

Some possible solutions to the most common technological challenges that occur in distributed learning courses are as follows:

- Instructor/presenter cannot log in.

  - o Ensure instructor and co-facilitator are logged in before opening the webinar to students.

- Host exits session prematurely.

  - o Ensure both the host and instructor always log in as hosts.

- Audio issues are present.

  - o Provide instructions during introduction to select the proper connection speed.

- VoIP lags.

  - o Allow for the lag by pausing regularly.

- Student's screen image is cut off.

  - o Provide instructions during introduction to use full screen.

- Network goes down.

- o Provide instructions that in the event of an outage, you will take a 15-minute break and attempt to log in again at that time.

- Phones go down.

    - o Use chat features.

- Handouts do not download.

    - o Email handouts to students before training begins.

- Students are unable to log in.

    - o Quickly create and ask students to log into a new session.

Distributed Learning Logistics

There are more technical logistics to keep in mind for distributed learning courses than traditional, face-to-face training courses. Consider the following logistics:

- **Scheduling the session:** Consider the time zone differences for instructors and students when scheduling the training.

- **Distributing course materials to students:** Distribute necessary pre-course materials beforehand; however, wait to distribute PowerPoint slides until after the training event in an effort to increase student attention and participation.

- **Establishing co-facilitator's role:** Co-facilitators may solely assist with course management activities or have alternate facilitation duties as in any other course.

- **Preparing distributed learning elements:** Preload any supplemental websites or materials and prepare all interactivity tools and placeholder slides.

- **Preparing distributed learning classroom:** A disorganized workspace may cause an instructor to lose track of the course flow. Consider the placement of items such pens, pencils, highlighters, paper, clock or watch, lighting, and ergonomics (e.g., chair, keyboard, and mouse pads).

- **Ensuring all required materials and equipment is ready and available:** Review the lesson plan to ensure the computer meets all technical requirements and review the roster to be able to recall students' names.

- **Practicing the session:** Review the lesson plan, use all training materials, and test the actual equipment and features to be used in the course with the goal of being very familiar with the flow of the course, how materials and equipment function, and how best to employ resources.

CREATES A CONDUCIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Managing Training Time

The three main areas to monitor in order to manage time while conducting a class are:

- Pace.

    o If running short on time, consider reducing the time allotted for breaks or lunch. Students are typically more willing to lose break time if they can still leave on time.

    o Distribute and abide by the schedule.

- Questions.

    o Avoid using open-ended questions or telling long stories when trying to cut time.

- Breaks and lunch.

    o Remind students of break durations.

    o Start and end training on time for the day, as well as before and after breaks. If a student is consistently tardy, speak with that student privately.

Checking on Pace

It is important to check the pace in classroom and distributed learning training to help determine how to tailor instruction and encourage student participation.

- Watch for clues.

    o If several students seem bored or are doing other things, it may be that the training is too slow or low-level for them. Consider modifying the presentation for additional interactivity or opportunities for direct application of content.

    o If, on the other hand, students seem confused, are asking several questions, or are not answering questions, the training pace may be too fast, and students may be having a difficult time grasping the content. In this case, shorten another section of training and pause to get the students back on track.

- Ask content-related questions.

    o If several students respond to questions with in-depth answers, the majority of the class may have grasped the concept or had pre-existing knowledge of the material, and training pace may be too slow.

- On the other hand, if students hesitate with their answers or only some of the students seem to have grasped the concept, consider spending additional time discussing the topic at hand and slowing the overall pace of the training.

- Use pacing tools or strategies.

    - Use a one-time pulse check.

    - Use an ongoing feedback system for longer, more complex courses.

Managing Training Time in Distributed Learning

Demonstrating every virtual classroom software feature can often be a misuse of training time. Tailor the software demonstration to the students' level of experience and focus on the features to be used during the training event.

Consider the appropriateness of open-ended vs. close-ended questions and plan how much time to spend on Q&A. If responses are drawing out too long or are getting off track, try to summarize the point the student is trying to make and move on with the agenda. If everyone's response to a question is needed, use a polling method rather than an open-ended question that is up for discussion.

COMMUNICATION AND PRESENTATION SKILLS

Tell 'Em Model

- **Tell 'em what you are going to tell them:** At the beginning of the course, display the learning objectives to let students know what to expect. Address the relevancy of the content to the students as well.

- **Tell 'em:** This portion of the model involves the actual teaching, including training activities, media, and methods.

- **Tell 'em what you told them:** Remember, adults learn best with repetition, so summarize, repeat, and reinforce. This is a good time to answer outstanding questions.

- **Have them tell you:** This phase involves assessing student acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Elements of Effective Training

The VBA Professional Development Academy defines training as "the presentation of controlled information and practice in a manner that allows for evaluation." Effective training is most dependent on the instructor, not the subject matter. Effective instructors are:

- **Connected:** Build rapport with the students.

- **Balanced:** Present broad concepts with specific examples; present information in chunks or small bits.

- **Aware:** Students filter what they see and hear to suit their own needs (i.e., selective perception), so introduce and continually reinforce how the content relates to the students.

- **Appropriate:** Use words and grammar appropriate to your audience; avoid terms that are too technical or too simple.

- **Relative:** Use stories, anecdotes, and analogies that relate the content to students and the job they will be performing.

- **Focused:** Keep the learning objectives in mind and stay on topic; use the "parking lot" technique for questions or comments that are beyond the scope of the course.

Communication Model

Elements of the communication model:

- Sender.

- o Person who is speaking.

- o Encoder of the message.

- o Uses language and visual aids to send the message to the receiver.

- Receiver.

    - o Person who is intended to hear the message.

    - o Decoder of the message.

    - o Must have the same frame of reference as the sender or the message cannot be decoded properly.

- Message.

    - o Idea or concept the sender wants to transmit to the receiver.

- Medium.

    - o How the sender transmits the message; an essential element for successful interpretation of a message.

- Feedback.

    - o Verbal and nonverbal cues that let the sender know the message was received and understood.

Verbal Communication

Effective verbal communication is impacted by:

- **Vocal variety:** Differ the pitch of the words and sounds being made in order to convey meaning.

- **Volume:** Speaking too softly may be difficult to understand or appear to lack confidence; speaking too loudly may be frightening or rude.

- **Pace:** Consider how fast or slow the speaking voice sounds.

- **Vocal emotion:** Portray enthusiasm, confidence, and a positive attitude through speech.

- **Verbal grammar:** Use language correctly (e.g., avoid double negatives, spell out acronyms).

- **Verbal fillers:** Avoid words or sounds that create a verbal space or provide time to think, such as "ah", "um", and "like."

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is sending the message without speaking. The more skilled instructors become at controlling personal body language messages, the better they become at accurately interpreting the body language of others.

Nonverbal communication factors include:

- **Overall appearance:** Dress professionally and mirror the students' attire.

- **Eye contact:** Naturally work the room with your eyes; eye contact creates an atmosphere of conversation.

- **Hand movements:** Use natural hand movements and avoid pointing at students. If nervous, keep hands behind the back or in pockets away from view until nerves subside.

- **Body movement:** Use movement to keep the class focused; move near students who appear disengaged but be mindful of respecting their personal space.

- **Energy:** Consider that personal energy can be associated with presentation style.

- **Body language:** Utilize appropriate body language to help control the message; leaning forward indicates interest in the message.

Effective Presentation Styles

- Natural.

- Sincere.

- Dynamic.

- Relaxed.

- Interactive.

Inappropriate Presentation Styles

- **Conceited and condescending:** Avoid detailing degrees, qualifications, and experience or talking down to students.

- **Overly friendly:** Students want to learn, not attend class to become an instructor's new best friend.

- **Comical:** Use humor only when it relates to the topic and will not, or could not, offend anyone.

- **Boring:** Project the emotion that students should reflect.

- **Reader:** Continuous reading from a script, guide, or notes appears boring, incompetent, and unqualified.

- **Nervous:** It is natural to be nervous; practicing and reviewing the course content is the best remedy for nervousness.

- **Emotionally overloaded:** Tone down feelings and maintain an even tone.

Communication and Presentation in Distributed Learning

Prepare before delivering a course:

- Perform a practice session to gather feedback from others on:

  - Voice.

  - Word choices.

  - Pace of class.

  - Activity instructions.

  - Course material.

- Review the course material.

- Prepare technology and course material.

- Develop a routine.

- Focus on students and their needs, not your anxiety and concerns.

It is important to connect with students even though they cannot see their instructor. Increase interest and engagement by:

- Using video technology, such as a web camera.

  - Look into the camera to give the illusion of eye contact.

- Posting a picture of self.

- Using interactivity tools.

It is important to obtain student feedback while presenting. Ask students if:

- Volume level is appropriate.

  - To have a powerful vocal delivery, sit up tall, breathe deeply, and articulate your words.

- Self-talk is being used.

- Pace is appropriate.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Types of Disruptive Personalities

- **Challenger or Skeptic:** Challenges and questions instructor's skills and competence.

- **Class Clown:** Displays disruptive antics that impact the flow of the course and the ability to learn.

- **Disengaged:** Is a non-participating student.

- **Expert or Know-It-All:** Questions the instructor, knows the answers to every question, works ahead of the pace of the course, possibly feels that the course is a waste of time, often makes mistakes.

- **Lost or Overwhelmed:** May not have the required background for the course or lacks confidence in their skills; needs extra guidance.

- **Multitasker:** Attempts to handle more than one task at the same time, which can be disruptive to other students.

- **Sleeper:** Has little hope for comprehension, let alone retention.

- **Socializer:** Is a side conversationalist.

- **Tardy:** Arrives late at the beginning of the session or after a break.

Dealing with Disruptive Behavior

There are three key techniques to deal with disruptive behaviors:

- Mitigate or avoid the behavior.

    o State expectations of students at the beginning of the course.

    o Maintain a professional and enthusiastic demeanor.

    o Keep students involved and active throughout the session.

- Ignore the behavior.

    o Sometimes, the behavior goes away if it does not get attention.

    o The class "corrects" the behavior.

- Take action to address the behavior.

- Immediately address behaviors such as unrelated side conversations, not abiding by the schedule, and students dominating the discussion.

- Privately address behaviors that would embarrass the student or make the situation worse, such as students who do not participate, do not work well in groups, or are disinterested or inattentive.

Guidelines for Intervention

The most important goal when addressing disruptive behaviors is to eliminate or minimize the problem. Use the following steps when addressing disruptive behaviors:

1. **Determine the problem:** Describe the behavior, frequency, and the impact on training and other students.

2. **Determine the proper timing:** In general, discussions related to disruptive behavior should occur as soon after the behavior as possible.

3. **Determine the outcome:** Identify the options for resolving the behavior prior to the intervention.

Classroom Management in Distributed Learning

The same personalities that may affect classroom training may also affect and disrupt distributed learning courses. Be aware of cues for these disruptions and address them appropriately.

- **Tardy:** Students logging in late may miss the very valuable orientation to the virtual classroom software, which can impact the ability to participate in the course. Further, to catch up the tardy student, the co-facilitator spends time orienting the student to the features of the system, taking the co-facilitator away from assisting with the course.

- **Socializer:** This student may send several private, sarcastic, or inappropriate chat messages during distributed learning courses, which could be a source of distraction to the instructor and the other students. Prevent this behavior by establishing ground rules early on regarding appropriate course participation. Directing questions to specific students may help resolve this behavior.

- **Non-participating/multitasker:** If a student is not sharing thoughts or opinions or responding to questions or polls, ask the co-facilitator to send a message asking whether the student is having difficulty with the system. Be sure to include this in ground rules upfront and make the training as interactive as possible to keep students from doing other things.

- **Distracted:** Provide a thorough introduction to the course in the beginning, including how the content students learn will help them on the job. Let students know about the course ground rules, including respect, attention, and participation.

Although one goal of training is to create an interactive learning experience, too much participation—specifically, disrespectful talking over one another—can be as common in distributed learning as in the classroom environment. Always discuss respect toward each other in the training ground rules; however, if this issue persists during a distributed learning session, direct questions to specific students or have students electronically "raise their hands" so that one student may speak at a time.

Questioning

Questioning is an easy way to:

- Engage/reengage students in the learning process.

- Check for student understanding.

- Determine motivation levels.

- Increase class discussion.

Question Types

Being good at questioning involves proper technique and good use of the pause.

- **Redirecting:** These questions are designed to get the same response, redirect questions to several students by phrasing questions differently to allow for multiple answers, generate discussion, and reduce monotony.

  - If asked a relevant question that someone in class can likely answer properly, redirect it back to the class as a teachable moment.

- **Rephrasing:** Reword the same question differently to assist in developing a better understanding of the question.

- **Probing:** Check for deeper understanding by asking a series of questions, starting with general questions and ending with more specific questions.

- **Pausing:** Pausing allows students a chance to think and organize their thoughts. Pausing also demonstrates confidence as an instructor. Effective instructors are comfortable with pausing for 3 to 5 seconds after asking a question.

  - Avoid answering your own questions. If students become accustomed to the instructor answering his or her own questions, they will be less inclined to answer them.

Responding to Answers

When a student's answer is completely wrong:

1. State that the response is incorrect and rephrase the question.

2. Thank the student for trying.

3. Direct attention away from that student by immediately calling on another student.

When a student's answer is partially incorrect:

1. Encourage the student and ask a leading question to guide the response.

2. Elaborate if the student still answers incorrectly, elaborate on the correct parts of the student's response to elicit further class discussion.

3. Redirect the question to another student in the class.

Responding to Questions

When asked a question that is not relevant to the lesson, defer the question using the "parking lot" technique. Pending questions can be revisited at the end of class.

When asked a question and you are unsure how to answer:

- Redirect the question to the class as a teachable moment using the following steps:

    1. **Redirect:** Ensure understanding of the student's question and redirect it back to the class.

    2. **Response:** Call on students until a correct response is provided.

    3. **Reinforcement:** Provide positive reinforcement for the correct response.

    4. **Confirmation:** Confirm whether the response answered the student's original question.

- Admit that you do not know the answer.

Direct Questions to the Class

Direct question to the entire class if the goal of asking the question is any one of the following:

- Stimulate thinking of the entire class.

- Increase the level of class engagement.

- Give students a chance to voluntarily demonstrate their knowledge to the class.

- Avoid putting an individual student on the spot.

When you ask questions to the entire class, follow these 3 steps:

1. Ask

2. Pause

3. Call

If no one raises their hands, even after you pause for 10 seconds, then one of three things is occurring:

- **The question is not clear:** Rephrase the question and ask it again.

- **The question is too difficult**: Make the question easier by asking a leading question.

- **Students are not motivated to volunteer an answer:** Keep the class "on their toes" by randomly calling on students.

Direct Questions to an Individual Student

Direct questions to individual students in order to:

- Determine whether a particular student is learning the material.

- Re-engage a student who appears distracted.

- Break the routine of asking questions to the entire class.

- Keep the class moving forward by asking the "expert students" in the class in order to receive a specific response.

When directing a question to a particular student, follow these three steps:

1. Call

2. Ask

3. Pause

Questioning in Distributed Learning

In a distributed learning class, ask questions frequently and effectively to keep class engaged and interactive. This is important because:

- Students know the instructor cannot see them.

- Students may multitask on other things during instruction.

- The instructor cannot use body language to gauge student motivation and understanding.

During distributed learning instruction, use these two principles when asking questions:

- Be specific in directing the question to the entire class or to a particular student.

- Indicate exactly how the student(s) should respond (e.g., microphone, chat, raise hand icon).

Students tend to be a lot more responsive to questions in distributed learning because of the environment:

- There is a low risk of embarrassment in distributed learning if a student answers incorrectly.

- Responding to questions is quick and easy—all students have to do is click a button.

- If a student has a question, it does not interrupt the flow of the class.

  - If deferring answering questions, follow up with students whenever they are all working on an assignment.

Four ways students can respond to questions using interactive features:

1. **Yes/No icons:** Use these icons with closed-ended questions aimed at the entire class.

2. **Poll:** This feature works well with both closed-ended and open-ended questions aimed at the entire class, as it provides immediate feedback on questions and encourages participation.

   - Avoid double-barreled questions, which are two questions disguised as a single question.

3. **Chat:** This feature works well with in-depth open-ended questions aimed at one student (or very few), allowing participants to communicate in real-time.

   - Read or rephrase a student's response so that the rest of the students hear the answer.

4. **Whiteboard:** This feature works well with open-ended questions.

IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES

Training Approach

Instructor-centered training is the direct transfer of knowledge from the instructor to the students. The instructor is the active supplier of knowledge, and students act as passive recipients during the learning process. This training approach should be used sparingly, since most students tend to tune out during long periods of instructor-centered training, such as a long lecture.

Student-centered training is the indirect transfer of knowledge from the instructor to students. Students take a more active role in the learning process. The instructor is viewed more as a facilitator of knowledge, as opposed to strictly a supplier of

knowledge. A student-centered approach should be used whenever possible. It is the preferred approach because students have more control and ownership in the learning process, they are more involved in constructing their own knowledge, and they become more engaged due to active involvement.

Training Methods

Training methods are techniques that instructors use to help students accomplish learning objectives. The purpose of training methods is to keep students engaged and promote the learning process. Some examples of training methods are:

- **Lecture:** Lecturing is a method where instructors deliver information directly to students. Delivery of content has a clear introduction and summary and should be audience-specific and include examples. This method is useful for large groups.

- **Question & Answer:** This method of instruction creates an interactive learning opportunity. Students are provided with a chance to question, clarify, and challenge new concepts being delivered. Instructors should anticipate difficult questions and prepare appropriate responses in advance.

- **Case Study:** A case study is a good "real-life" problem-solving activity. It promotes discussion of important training issues. Students can use case studies to evaluate real-world scenarios with relevant information that is directly related to the case, so the student does not go off topic.

- **Demonstration:** During a demonstration, the instructor shows the preferred way to perform a task, behavior, or procedure, providing students with a model to follow. When conducting a demonstration in a class, it is best to divide the demonstration into small instructional steps. At the end of each step, engage the students in discussion and ask questions to check for understanding. Demonstrations are a great way to appeal to a variety of learning styles.

- **Practice Exercises:** Practice exercises allow each student an opportunity to practice the objective taught. The instructor must give clear instructions and prepare discussion questions. An advantage of practice exercises is that students are actively involved, which enhances learning retention.

- **Group Discussion:** A group discussion is a discussion amongst a group of students that is facilitated by the instructor. Group discussions must have specific tasks and parameters. During a group discussion, students exchange ideas and information on the agreed-upon topic.

- **Games:** Using a game is an interactive method that serves many purposes in training. Games are particularly useful as an activity to enhance retention or apply new knowledge. Games are also used to evaluate learning. Be careful when using games because they can become overly competitive. Instructors must facilitate the game in a smooth manner and ensure that the game promotes learning at all times.

- **Role Plays:** Role Plays are instructional techniques where students assume roles and act out a situation, condition, or circumstance. One advantage of role playing is introducing a problem dramatically. Role playing also allows for exploration of solutions, provides opportunity to practice skills, and allows others to appreciate another point of view.

- **Situational Exercises:** Situational exercises occur in training environments that allow students to practice a task during a scenario-driven activity. This type of exercise often mirrors the conditions of the actual situation and is effective for sustaining task proficiency.

Activity Breaks and Energizers

Activity breaks are noneducational activities that allow for a fun activity with student interaction to help refocus and re-energize students. It is important to manage breaks in instruction.

- In classroom training sessions, breaks should be used every 50 minutes of continuous learning.

- In distributed learning training sessions, breaks should be used every 60 to 90 minutes of continuous learning.

- Breaks should allow students to enjoy social interaction.

- Activities should require minimal instructions.

- Use energizers as motivational activities to increase attention and focus, communication, competitiveness, and creativity, as well as to reinforce learning. Some examples of energizers include:

    o **Brain teasers:** Consists of puzzles, such as word scrambles, riddles, and pattern recognitions, which can be done individually or in small groups.

    o **Brainstorming:** Encourages students to think creatively and collaborate.

    o **Team building:** Helps students learn about each other through sharing information.

    o **Making connections:** Is used to assess level of comprehension and memory.

    o **Warm-up:** Encourages students to think "outside of the box."

    o **Level set:** Ensures students are at the same level.

    o **Physical movement:** Encourages students to get out of their seats.

    o **Ice breaker:** Fun non-competitive activity that "breaks the ice" in a classroom.

Group Strategies

Group activities are an ideal way to encourage student collaboration and add a social element to learning. The key to a successful group activity is preparation and planning. Groups can be formed randomly or based on certain criteria. When forming groups, consider the size of your class and the amount of time to complete the activity. Limit groups to 2 to 5 members and be sure there is enough space for each group to complete the activity.

Some examples of group activities include:

- **Buzz Groups:** Small groups are given an assignment to complete in a short time period. Each Buzz Group records its output then reports to the larger group.

- **Think-Pair-Share:** Students think about a question, share with a partner, and then discuss their thoughts with the class.

- **Jigsaw:** Students become experts on an assigned topic, then form a group with experts on other assigned topics. Each expert shares his or her knowledge with the group.

Communicating Activity Guidelines

To avoid wasting time in both classroom and distributed learning training environments, use the following guidelines to provide detailed directions on how to complete an activity.

- Develop thorough instructions for all activities and include them in the instructor guide, as well as in student handouts.

- Review the activity instructions with the entire class.

- Describe the materials needed for each activity and demonstrate how to use them, if appropriate.

- Describe the expected results of the activity in general terms.

- Provide students with a time limit, and provide intermediate time notifications, if necessary.

Training Media

There are several media tools that can be used to deliver instruction. Some examples include:

- **Handouts:** Are used to organize presentations and enable students to focus on the presentation and take notes.

- **Computers:** Allow students an opportunity to practice and increase retention of the content.

- **Video:** Introduce an additional instructor, provide standardized content delivery, and take the students outside of the classroom in a visually stimulating manner.

- **PowerPoint:** Is a flexible choice that can support text, graphics, animations, and video; can be used with any training mode.

Implementing Activities in Distributed Learning

Providing explicit instructions has shown to promote student achievement for all students and increase student satisfaction in the virtual classroom. A distributed learning environment has more technical logistics than a traditional classroom setting. Provide explicit instructions for:

- **Icons/Buttons:** Explain all the tools available and how the students should use them from activity to activity.

- **Responses:** Make sure students know where to type their responses because being unfamiliar with various tools may affect the pace of the session.

- **Time:** Provide the time allotted for the activity, and ensure students know exactly when to rejoin the virtual classroom to continue the lesson.

ASSESSMENT, FEEDBACK, AND WRAP-UP

Assessment

Assessment is used to determine whether students are making learning progress and whether students achieve learning objectives. Assessment is a tool used to improve learning by determining if stated goals have been met. If students complete a pretest and a posttest, the two scores may be compared for a good indication of training effectiveness. Higher test scores on the posttest indicate the training improved and strengthened student skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Assessment is also an ongoing process. Assessments allow for collecting data to gauge a student's progress to provide feedback for improvement.

The goal of assessment is to improve student learning. In short, the purpose of an assessment is to identify areas of strength and improvement and to use that information to improve learning.

Assessment Types

Informal assessment allows an instructor to gauge whether students are making progress in learning. Two methods for informal assessment are reading students' body language and by asking questions. In a distributed learning course, include periodic

"check on learning" questions to reinforce lesson objectives, as well as to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding of the content. Informal observations also assist in gauging student participation.

Formal assessments, often referred to as tests or exams, are developed prior to training delivery and are typically administered at the end of a topic, lesson, or module of instruction. Formal assessments are usually graded and count toward an overall course standard.

Formats for Assessments

- **Essay:** Students are asked to prepare a composition on a broad topic or issue in response to a question or prompt.

- **Fill-in-the-Blank or Short Answer:** Students are asked to complete a sentence with an appropriate word or phrase.

- **Matching:** Students must match the items from one list to the corresponding items in a second list.

- **Multiple Choice:** Students select the best answer from several possible responses to a question or statement.

- **Presentation:** Students present a verbal response in front of an audience.

- **True or False:** Students indicate whether a statement is true or false.

Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is to gather information on how the overall course can be improved. Evaluations help to determine whether the intended outcome matches the actual outcome.

Informal evaluations are conducted by instructors. They should informally evaluate a course they are teaching by keeping notes, documenting strengths and weaknesses of the content, presentation material, and media.

Formal evaluations are often referred to as surveys. The VBA conducts surveys for every training product it delivers. Students must complete the survey in the Talent Management System in order to receive credit for the training. The surveys evaluate both curriculum and instructional delivery.

Feedback

Feedback is information provided to students comparing their actual performance to an ideal standard, such as a posttest. The two main goals of feedback are to encourage improvement and increase learning.

- Motivational feedback, or "positive feedback," reinforces good performance. This type of feedback lets the students know what they did well or where they excelled.

- Developmental/corrective feedback, or "negative feedback," is intended to help students improve or correct their performance. This type of feedback lets the students know what they could have done differently or better.

When giving feedback, many instructors use the "feedback sandwich."

1. Start with something positive (the bread).

2. Include the areas for improvement in the middle (the meat).

3. End with something positive (the bread).

Starting with the positive sets the tone for the feedback and ending with the positive leaves the student feeling more optimistic about improvement.

BOOST Feedback Model

Feedback directs behavior and motivates performance on the job. When giving feedback, ensure it is:

- **Balanced:** Include strengths as well as areas for further development or improvement.

- **Observed:** Provide feedback both verbally and nonverbally.

- **Objective:** Avoid judgments and inferences.

- **Specific:** Provide examples to reinforce your feedback so students have actionable ways to improve.

- **Timely:** Provide feedback as soon as possible while the information is still fresh in the students' minds.

Remediation

Remediation is the act or process of correcting a deficiency. In training, remediation refers specifically to the process of furnishing additional information to bridge the gap between student performance and the standard for ideal performance.

When conducting remediation, an instructor helps students do two things:

- Identify the misunderstanding that led to the error.

- Develop a new and correct understanding of the course material.

Tips for Classroom Assessment and Feedback

Use these tips to effectively incorporate assessments into classroom training:

- Begin with a positive atmosphere and maintain it throughout the training session.

- Make sure all organizational requirements are met; the classroom is free of distractions; equipment and materials are in good working order; and the testing area itself is conducive to learning.

- After assessing student learning, provide prompt and constructive feedback. Remember BOOST. Ensure feedback is balanced, observed, objective, specific, and timely.

- Use both motivational feedback and developmental feedback to help students meet course objectives.

- When giving feedback in the classroom:

    o Be at eye level with the student.

    o Speak to the student privately.

    o Use proper nonverbal communication, especially remember to smile when speaking.

    o Speak at a steady, calm pace.

    o Be direct—that is, do not try to sugar-coat the feedback.

Tips for Distributed Learning Assessment and Feedback

Use the following tips when incorporating assessments into distributed learning environments:

- Begin with a positive atmosphere and maintain it throughout the training session.

- Make sure all students can access the test, and any other programs required to complete the test.

- Upload an "Assessment" graphic or slide to the distributed learning platform to let students know that the class is currently in testing.

- Follow up with prompt and constructive feedback once the student has completed the test. Remember BOOST. Ensure feedback is balanced, observed, objective, specific, and timely.

- Use both motivational feedback and developmental feedback to help students meet course objectives.

- Be on camera so the student can see your face, if possible. Set up an individual session with the student for "face-to-face" feedback. Otherwise, use the phone or other audio tools to communicate verbally, so the student can hear your voice.

- Use proper nonverbal communication. Remember, even if students cannot see you, they can hear a smile in your voice.

- Speak at a steady, calm pace.

- Be direct—do not try to sugar-coat the feedback.