

Instructional Training for the Public Health Professional

Challenges to Effective Instruction

Instructional Training for the Public Health Professional

CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

Module 5

This module will identify physical and human challenges associated with instruction and provide ways to overcome challenges.

Module Objectives

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By the end of this module, participants will be able to identify challenges to effective instruction and determine methods and tactics to overcome them.

- Recognize physical challenges in the instructional setting
- Determine the best way to arrange a room for optimal learning
- Describe participant/learner challenges
- Determine methods to overcome challenges with the participant/learner

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Performance Objective

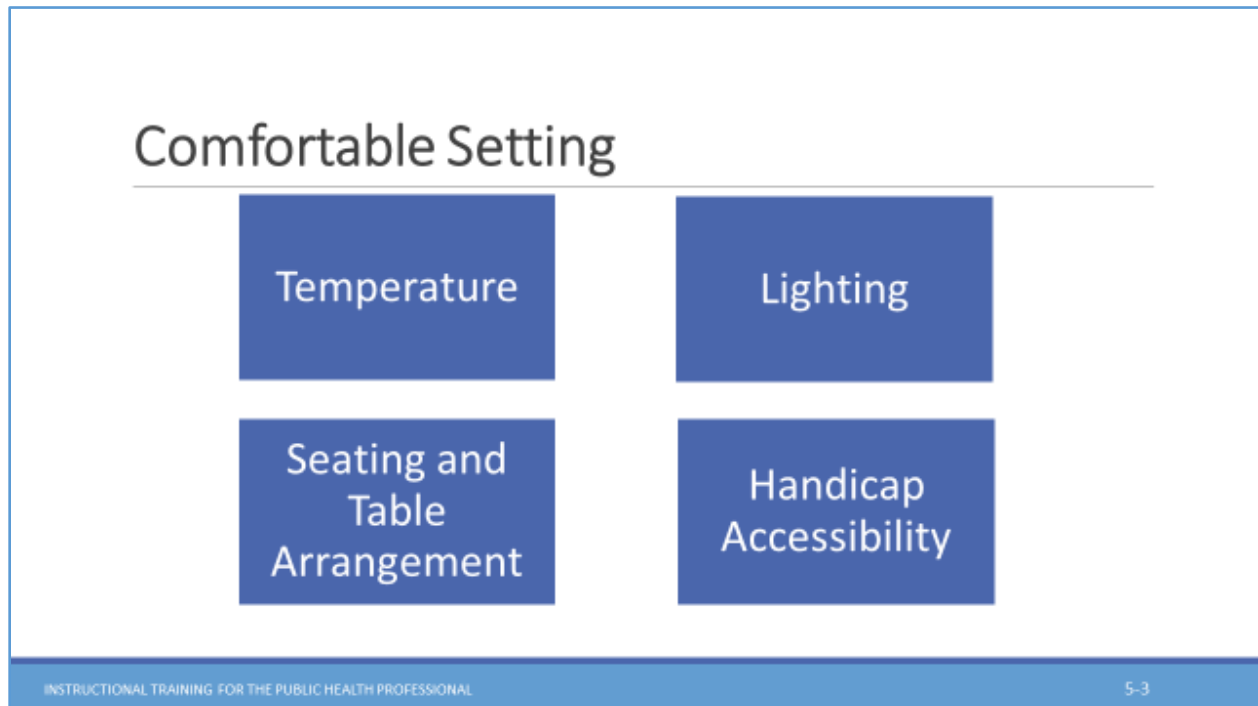
By the end of this module, participants will be able to identify challenges to effective instruction and determine methods to overcome them.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, the instructor shall accomplish the following learning objectives in support of the performance objective:

- Recognize physical challenges in the instructional setting
- Determine the best way to arrange a room for optimal learning
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Comfortable Setting



When we consider the optimal learning environment, we must consider the characteristics of the adult learner and their expectations in a learner-centered environment. The adult learner expects a comfortable setting in which to learn. Comfort is a state of being which takes into consideration the physical aspects of the learning setting. Physical aspects of the environment may have a profound effect on learning. Things to consider:

- Temperature of the instructional setting. Temperature is a concrete measurement. Feeling warm or cold is more relative measurement of comfort. Remember, the instructor is moving and generating warmth. The instructor should not set the temperature for their comfort as it may not be a reflective of the participant's comfort. Observe and assess the learners to understand a comfortable temperature for the majority of the class. Remember that there may be limitations to adjusting temperatures. Work with the POC for the delivery to get a better understanding of temperature control. Be upfront with the participants about how much control over temperature is available and suggest they dress for comfort.
- Lighting in the instructional setting. The challenge to instructors is to reduce the lighting so that presentation slides are easily visible while maintaining enough light for the learner to see the printed material in front of them. Poor lighting may have a dramatic effect of the learner causing distraction from the subject matter. If the lighting appears questionable through the instructor personal feeling as well as by what is being observed in the participants, adjust lighting to gain consensus with the majority of the class.
- Handicap accessibility must always be considered when establishing a place for instruction. Accommodations must be considered and established
- Seating and table arrangement in the instructional setting. If you want to move participants to the front of the room, place the comfortable chairs up front. When given the choice between a

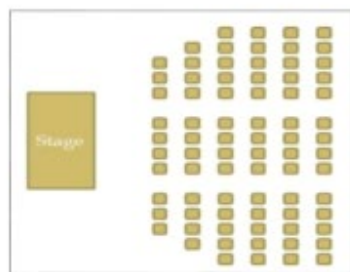
comfortable chair and a less comfortable chair, the adult will choose comfort. There may be no way to control the type of chair available but, if possible, use the same chair for all participants. If this is not a possibility, vary the chairs throughout the room. Table setting can be very important in a learning setting and may be indicated by the type of instruction delivered. A few of the more common setups are provided below.

Seating and Table Arrangement

Instructional Note

The next five slides show various ways to set tables for different learning settings. Go through the slides and capture the uses of each of the setup. At the end of the slides, ask participants what setups they have used and which seems best in a learner-centered environment.

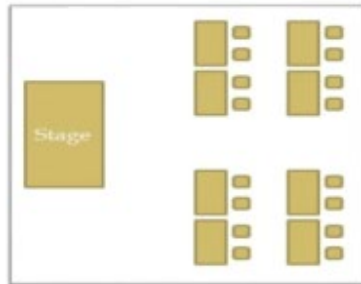
Theater Style



- Suitable for Seminars and Lectures
- Shorter Presentations
- Not a setup for Notetaking

Theater style setup. Seats are oriented in rows with no tables. This style of arrangement may be suitable for seminars or classic lectures, preferably for shorter presentations where notetaking is not considered a high priority.

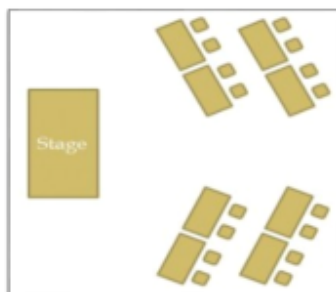
Classroom Style



- Good for conducting traditional classroom activity
- Used for lecture and training

Classroom style setup. Rows of table and chairs face parallel to the front of the room. The table provides space for each learner to conduct classroom-related activities. This type of setup is used lecture and training.

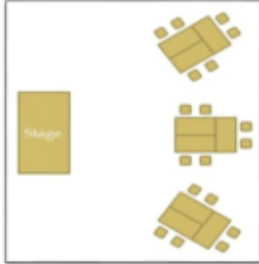
Chevron Style Classroom



- Participants pointed toward instructor
- Effective style for lecture, training and instruction

Chevron style classroom setup. Tables and chairs are arranged in rows slanted inward to form a “V” and separated by a center aisle. Tables are set perpendicular to the point where the instructor is located creating a focal point. This is an effective style for lecture, training and discussion.

Cluster or Pod Style



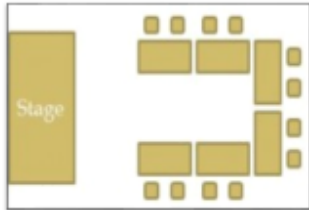
The diagram shows a rectangular stage on the left labeled "Stage". To the right of the stage, three clusters of rectangular tables are arranged. Each cluster consists of several tables connected at their corners, forming a shape that is roughly U-shaped or pod-like, with the open end of the U facing the stage.

- Participants pointed toward instructor
- Participants clustered in a “U” shape
- Effective for lecture, training and team building

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Cluster or pod style setup. Grouping of interconnected rectangular tables with participant arranged in a “U” shape facing the instructor. This style is used for lecture, training, discussions and, most importantly, team building.

“U”-Shape Style



The diagram shows a rectangular stage on the left labeled "Stage". To the right of the stage, a large U-shaped arrangement of rectangular tables is shown. The U-shape is open on the side closest to the stage, allowing participants to face the instructor. The tables are interconnected at their corners.

- “U” is open to instructor/presenter
- Used for seminars, lecture, training and team building

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U-shape style setup. Series of rectangular tables connected to form a U with chairs set along the outside of the U. The U is open on the instructor side. This style can be used for seminars, lecture, training and team building.

Participant/Learner Challenges

The instructor may be faced with challenges to effective instruction directly by participants.

Time Management

In the instructional setting, if you are not managing time you are not managing one your most critical resources. Time management is a shared responsibility of the learner and the instructor.

Time Management Tools for the Instructor

- Practice the material to be presented
- Post a schedule for instruction
- Build in some extra time
- If you run late, make a new “contract” with participants
- Timekeeper

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The instructor that does not manage their instructional time will convey that time is irrelevant to the adult learner that time is irrelevant. This disregard for time will cause a cascading event where learner-participants will disregard start times and extend breaks to the point that instruction time is reduced and essential concepts may be lost to the learner. Some important time management concepts for the instructor follow:

- Understand how much time is necessary for the material to be presented and practice. If you are responsible for a specific set of material to be delivered within a specific timeframe, practice!
- Post the schedule for instruction. This will act as a contract between the instructor and adult learner. As the instructor keeps their time commitment to the adult learner, the adult learner will be more apt to keep their commitments.

- Instruction time blocks should have some extra time built in for learner-instructor interaction and for group discussion. From the learner’s perspective, finishing early is a reward and finishing late feels like punishment – especially when very little learner-instructor interaction occurs.
- If you run late, make a new contract with the adult learner and get back on schedule. If learner-instructor interaction created the lost time, remind the learners of the great interaction that caused the loss of time and that the lost time will be made up without the loss of break time. If the lost time is not a result of interaction with learners, it is likely the instructor had not adequately prepared for instruction and apologies are warranted. It may be possible to modify activities to make up time without losing content. Changing activities from group work to whole-class activities may make up time.
- If you are instructing with others, appoint a timekeeper and go over the cues necessary to keep on time. If the only cue you get is that time is up, your instructional partner has failed you.

The adult learner has an equal share of responsibility in time management. Unlike the child learner, the adult learner is oftentimes managing a family and work while attending training. An adult learner that is not fully engaged will be challenged with managing time as competing priorities may get the best of them. The following activity will identify some time management challenges and address methods that may be used to overcome these challenges.


Activity

This is a whole class discussion that will identify some time management challenges and address some methods that may be used to overcome these challenges. Space is provide in your manual to record responses.

How do you address the participant that continues to ask questions and take up precious instruction time?

How do you address the participant that is always showing up late from breaks?

How would you address a participant that must miss two or three hours of a two-day training? How much time is appropriate to miss?



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Instructional Note

This exercise is a whole class activity to address some time management challenges. The questions are revealed by a mouse click. Once the question is revealed, give the participants a minute to think about the question and call for responses. Encourage participants to record response in the space provided in the manual. Some of the more appropriate response are provided in the instructional note that follows the question.

How do you address the participant that continues to ask questions and take up precious instruction time?

Instructional Note

The instructor may want to initially address the participant in the instructional setting and state that these are great questions, but we need to follow the timeframe allotted. Use the parking lot and tell the participant that we will get back to the question as time permits. If the questioning continues, you may need to address the participant on a one-on-one basis. If the questioning is reasonable then the instructor may not be as prepared as they should be!

How do you address the participant that is always showing up late from breaks?

Instructional Note

The first thing that should occur prior to any instruction is to make it clear that we will start and end on time. The instructor must set a good example and be ready at the appropriate time. If tardiness continues address it directly with the participant in a one-on-one setting. Mention that it is not respectful of the other participants to be waiting for them to be ready for instruction.

Be aware of cultural aspects of time management. Ask them how they would address a department head being late back from a break.

How would you address a participant that must miss two or three hours of a two-day training? How much time is appropriate to miss?

Instructional Note

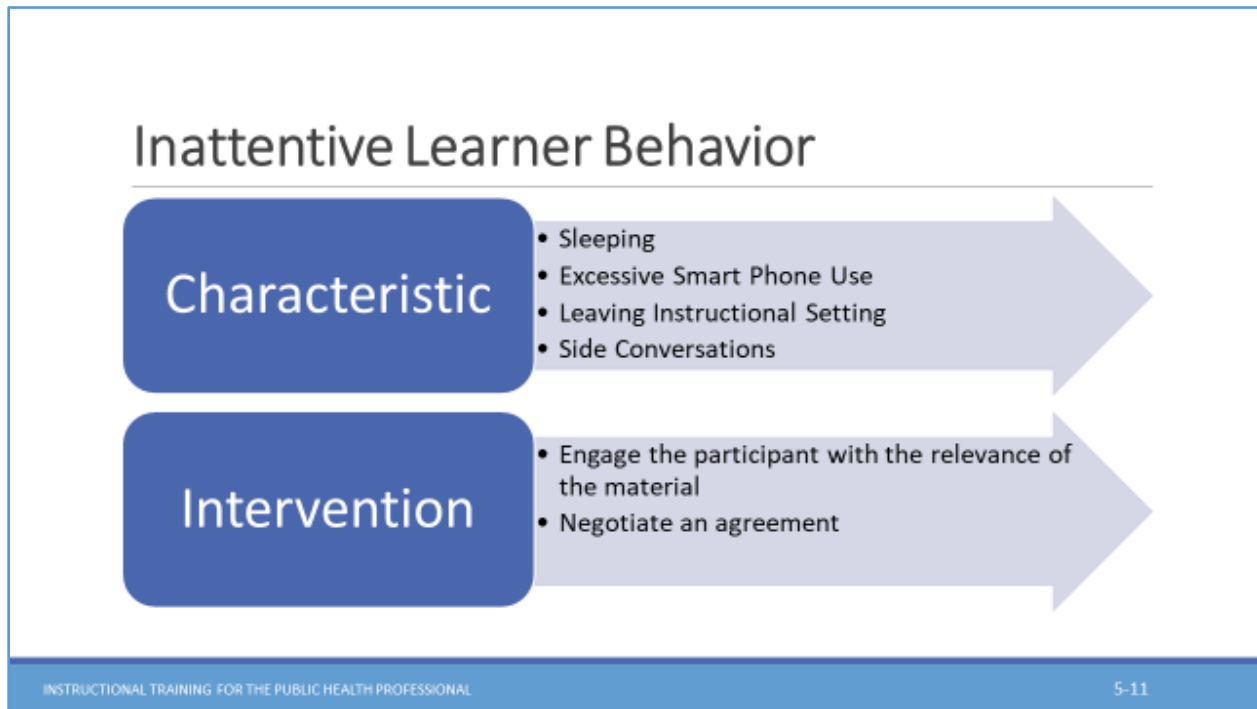
The adult learner is busy and may have other commitments. Missing time within reason is probably acceptable and should be a contract between the instructor and the learner. The instructor should address what material will be missed and make sure the participant understands they are responsible for material missed. The instructor may wish to confer with the Point of Contact as they may have information regarding the participant and their need to miss instruction time.

Missing more than 20% of instruction time is usually not acceptable. Ask participants if they feel that is an appropriate cut off point.

Disruptive Behaviors

Disruptive behaviors are a complex and multifactorial problems. Two of the more commonly identified disruptive behaviors and ways to address the behaviors are provided below. These behaviors must be identified early in instruction and addressed so that the learning environment does not degrade into a miserable setting with poor outcomes for the learners and the instructor.

The Inattentive Learner

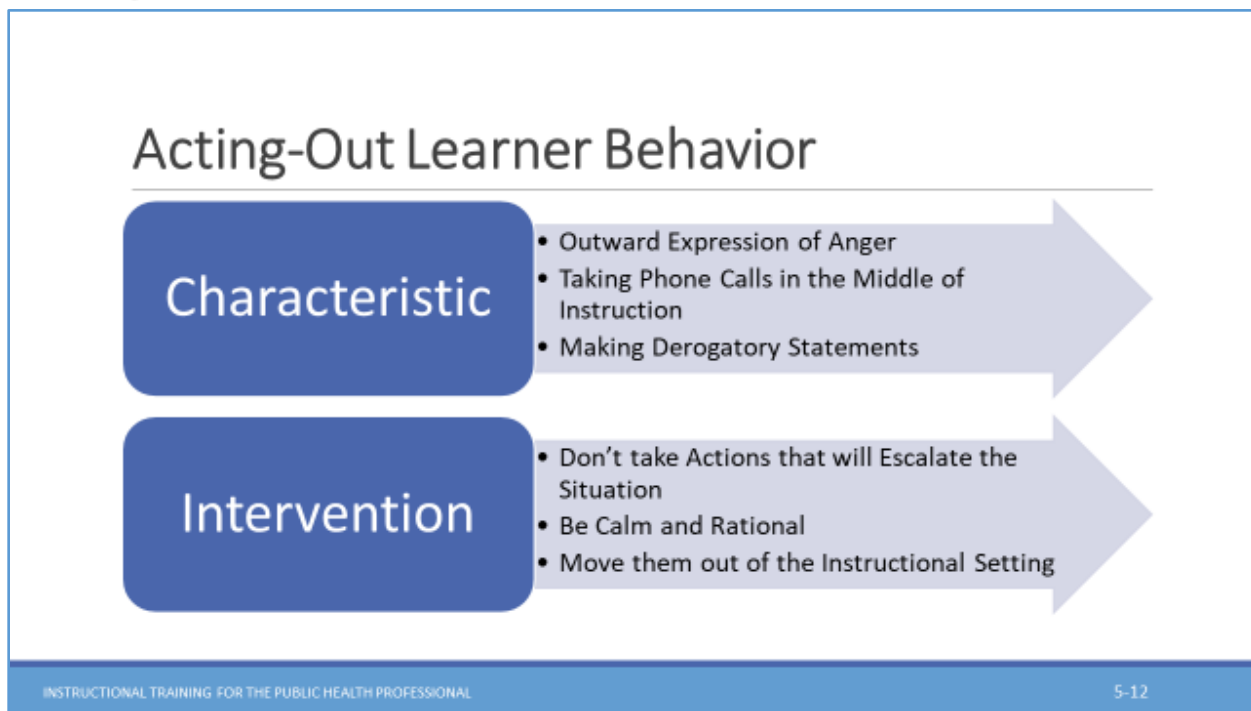


Inattentive learner is characterized by behavior that interferes with the learning process due to lack of focus. Although there is no intent by the learner to be disruptive or offensive, their lack of attention draws increasing attention by the instructor as well as other learners. Examples of this type of disruptive behavior would be sleeping, conducting side conversations with other participants, gazing out the window and leaving the classroom.

Overcoming the inattentive learner must start with the instructor. The adult learner must understand the relevance of the subject matter and be able to understand why learning is important. The inattentive learner may need to form a linkage with the instructor – a form of engagement that builds relationally. The instructor should take non-instructional time during breaks and prior to the commencement of instruction to meet and discuss the subject matter with participants. Use these opportunities to understand why they are participating and give them a personal goal or objective that may be met if positive participation occurs. The downfall to this activity is that the instructor may find that the person has no desire to attend the instruction and was forced to attend by their boss with no concrete award for participating. They feel like prisoners and there may be no way to reach these learners. In these situations, and where the outcome of learning will not be measured, it may be best to negotiate an agreement that they remain in class and limit their disruptive behavior to a minimum to respect the other participant that are there to learn. The instructor may even consider moving the

inattentive learner to the back of the room so that their actions are not so easily observed by other participants.

The Acting-out Learner



Acting-out is a problematic behavior characterized by breaking rules and being offensive to others. These behaviors are characterized by the outward expression of anger when asked to participate, taking phone calls in the middle of instruction and making derogatory statements about the instruction – including the instructor. This behavior may be the result of temporary stressors in the learner’s life that may have occurred recent to instruction or it may have been triggered in the instructional setting as a result from a learner feeling slighted, ignored, or humiliated by the instructor or by another learner. The behavior may also be the result of a social learning disability and may not be able to learn appropriate behaviors or recognize and modify inappropriate behavior.

Instructors must recognize the disruptive behavior and work towards resolution. It is important to involve other instructors and the POC as appropriate. Make no actions that would make the learner feel threatened and possibly escalate the situation such as raising your voice or getting too close. Everyone will recognize the disruptive learner. Asking the disruptive participant to talk outside the learning setting will be less disruptive than addressing the matter in front of other participants. Be thankful that this escalated behavior occurs infrequently in an adult learning setting but if it does occur a calm, rational approach will be the best chance to de-escalate the situation.

Summary

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- Recognize physical challenges in the instructional setting
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This module identifies some challenges to effective instruction and methods to overcome them.

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Coming Up Next

Coming Up Next



Instructor Competencies