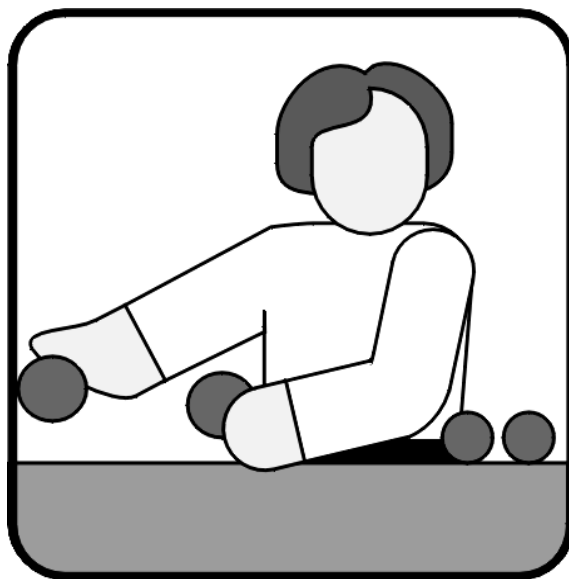


# **Learner-Centered**

## **Icebreakers, Ideas,**

### **and Innovations <sup>1</sup>**



# Learners remember.....

10% of what they **read**.

20% of what they **hear**.

30% of what they **see**.

50% of what they **see + hear**.

70% of what they **say**.

90% of what they **say as they do it**.



★ You motivate people by providing a motivating environment.

★ People do things for “their” reasons, not “your” reasons.

## How To Motivate Adults<sup>2</sup>

- Create a **NEED**.
- Develop a sense of **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**.
- Create and maintain **INTEREST**.
- Structure **EXPERIENCES** to apply content to life.
- Give recognition, encouragement and, **APPROVAL**.
- Foster wholesome **COMPETITION**.
- Get excited **YOURSELF**.
- Establish long-range **OBJECTIVES**.
- See the value of **INTERNAL** motives.
- Intensify interpersonal **RELATIONSHIPS**.
- Give them a **CHOICE**.

## Eight Dynamite Motivators<sup>2</sup>

1. Describe an incident
2. Ask for a show of hands.
3. Ask a question.
4. Make a promise.
5. Get them laughing.
6. Make a provocative statement.
7. Cite an unusual statistic.
8. Use a visual aid or prop.



## Teaching Children vs. Teaching Adults

### CHILDREN...

depend on teachers to decide what should be learned.

accept content as reliable.

are taught information for long-term use.

have little or no experience with little ability to serve as resource.

are taught content-centered.

are taught standardized learning.

learn in an authoritative environment.

are not responsible for planning what they learn.

are taught with fear as a motivator.

### ADULTS...

participate in deciding what should be learned.

evaluate content's validity based on beliefs and experiences.

are taught information for immediate use.

have past experiences with ability to serve as a resource to others.

are taught problem-centered.

are taught learning paced by ability/readiness.

learn in a collaborative environment.

share in the responsibility for planning what they learn.

are taught with needs as a motivator.

**Note:** This description on teaching children may not represent some of the newer teaching methods used for teaching children today. Often, children are taught in groups, given some choices of what they want to learn and do take active roles in planning what they learn.

## NEEDS OF THE ADULT LEARNER

- ◆ Positive feedback
- ◆ Interaction between group members
- ◆ Opportunities to participate
- ◆ An appropriate learning environment
- ◆ Feel comfortable in group learning
- ◆ Praise/recognition of accomplishments
- ◆ Set personal goals
- ◆ Set personal learning objectives



# 🍷 CREATIVE TEACHING IDEAS 🖋️

## Classroom Guidelines/Rules & Agendas

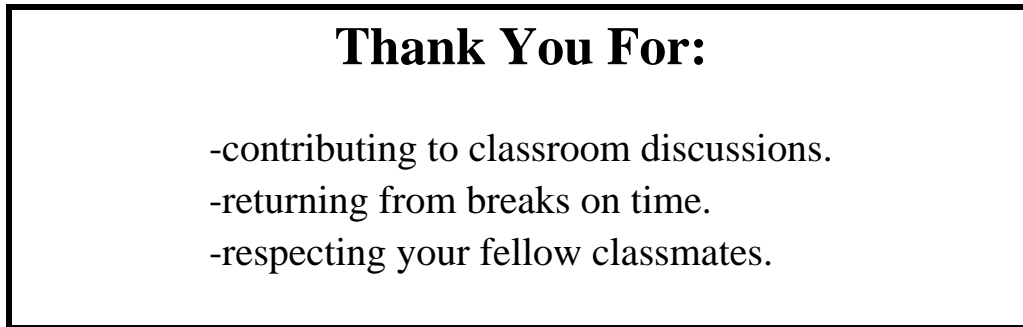
### Classroom Rules Poster

Make a poster stating the classroom rules.

*State politely and positively what is expected of the participants.*

Display the poster in front of the class where it is visible to all participants.

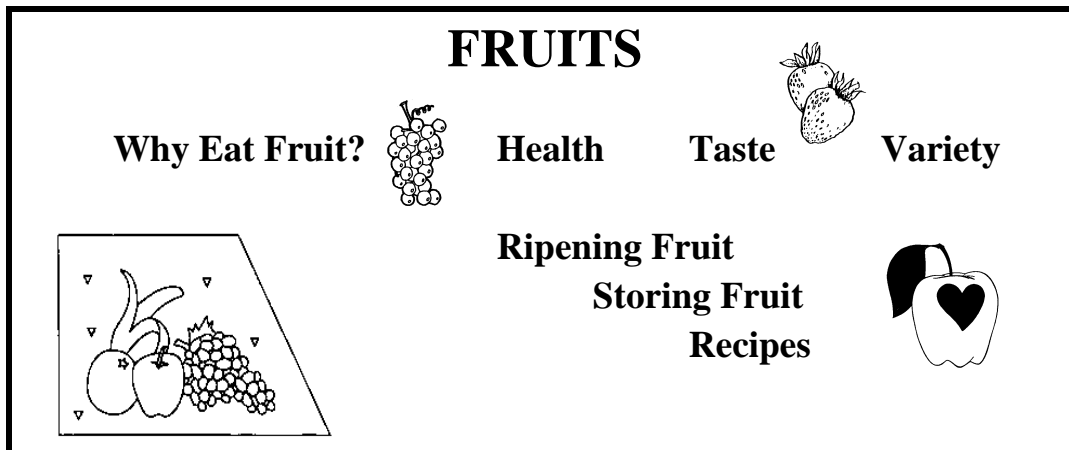
Example of Classroom Rules Poster:



### Place Mat Agendas

Put the class agenda (or an outline or review of the lesson plan, etc.) on a sheet of paper (use letter landscape page format). This paper can serve as a place mat with the class agenda or lesson plan visible for the participants to look at throughout the class period. This will be helpful for reviewing materials, helping the participants to stay on track, and a place for them to take notes during class.

Example Place Mat:



## **PARKING LOT Poster**

Purpose: As an instructor it is important to be FLEXIBLE, like answering questions from your participants. However, sometimes questions can sidetrack the class when questions are off-the-topic and/or one or two people seem particularly eager to be heard. Using the PARKING LOT Poster prevents inappropriate or excessive number of questions from one or two individuals jamming up the class agenda. This method keeps the group on task and marks all questions (ideas and contributions) as important. **NOTE:** (You may not need to use this method of handling questions with all of your classes. Allowing participants to directly ask questions throughout class time may be appropriate and most beneficial for some of your classes.)

Provide sticky notes to the participants at the beginning of class. Tell the participants to write any questions they may have during class on a sticky note. Instruct them when they are permitted to place their questions in a parking lot slot on the poster. Instruct the participants at the beginning of class when you plan to address the questions on the parking lot poster.

Example PARKING LOT Poster:

<b>PARKING LOT</b>		<b>Park Your Questions Here</b>			



## **Building Self-Confidence**

If the participants in your class need to build their self-confidence, try the Potato & Straw activity. It is fun and easy. Give each participant a raw potato and a plastic drinking straw (do not use flexible/bendable straws). Have them place their thumb over one end of the straw. Instruct them to keep their thumb on the end of the straw and raise that hand above their shoulders as high as their head. While holding the potato away from their bodies with the other hand instruct them to quickly and forcefully stab the straw through the potato. They will be amazed that they are able to do this. **NOTE:** Have them carefully hold the potato around the edges. **Do not** place the potato in the palm of the hand. The straw will go all the way through the potato. Have them hold the potato so the straw will not stab their hand as it goes through the potato.

## Reviewing and Revisiting Information

95% of the people remember the first thing they are taught.

65-90% of the people remember the last thing they are taught.

20% of the people remember the middle information they are taught.

When teaching, enhance the students retention of new material. Your lesson plan should look like this:

1. **Begin class** with the new material.
2. During the **middle of the class** give some practical application of the new material.
3. At the **end of the class** review the new material.

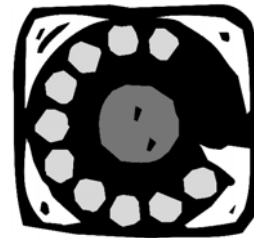
### Telephone Activity

This activity is good to use when the material you are teaching may seem routine (familiar, dull, etc.) to your participants. This will demonstrate that they haven't necessarily mastered every aspect of even the most familiar objects or activities. **Example:** Ask the participants to draw the face of their telephone at home. Have them include the numbers, letters, pound symbol (#) and asterisk (\*) that go on the buttons of the phone pad or on the face of their rotary dial telephone.

Example of Telephone Phone Pad:



<b>1</b>	ABC <b>2</b>	DEF <b>3</b>
GHI <b>4</b>	JKL <b>5</b>	MNO <b>6</b>
PRS <b>7</b>	TUV <b>8</b>	WXY <b>9</b>
*	OPER <b>0</b>	<b>#</b>



## Addressing Cultural Diversity

### “Benefits from differences...”

An interesting way to start any session - particularly one dealing with diversity issues - is with an exercise to get people thinking about differences and similarities between themselves and the other participants.

Divide participants into groups of four and give them two minutes to discover two ways that all of them are alike and four ways they're different. The time limit is optional, but tends to add a level of excitement to the exercise. Then spring into a discussion of how groups benefit from their differences and similarities, how those characteristics apply to actual workplace situations, or simply to recognize the importance of acknowledging that diversity exists.

# Program Planning To Reach Culturally Diverse Audiences <sup>3</sup>

1. Are your materials relevant to your audience?

- Graphics.....
- Foods / recipes.....
- Food guide approach.....
- Learners' needs.....
- Learning style.....

In what other ways can you make your materials more **relevant**?

- a.
- b.

2. Do your materials recognize other cultures?

- Words / phrases / jargon / quotes.....
- Language / **translation**.....

In what other ways can you **recognize** other cultures in your materials?

- a.
- b.

3. Are your materials **respectful** of other cultures?

- Program **format**.....
- Environment**.....
- Staff**.....

In what other ways can you **respect** other cultures in your materials?

- a.
- b.

4. Do you use good, basic design techniques?

- Content is **focused** (5-7 points).....
- Simple language** is used.....
- Graphics** reinforce content.....
- Concrete** examples are used.....
- Design is **uncluttered**.....

## **Opener, Group Division, and Motivational Techniques**

### **Trash Can**<sup>4</sup>

This warm-up is a good way to focus people on the task at hand. It can be especially helpful for those individuals who attend a class you hold in the late afternoon or evening. Start by telling participants that you know that they have likely come to the presentation with a dozen things on their mind. While those things are certainly important, you want them to free themselves from extraneous thoughts. Ask them to take out a piece of paper and write down the things they are thinking about (it could be what to feed their family for dinner; how to resolve their children's constant fighting, worrying about paying bills, etc.).

Now walk around with the trash can and ask them to crumple up the paper and throw it in the can. At the same time, tell them to imagine that they are throwing their troubles away, so that they can better focus on the presentation.

### **Foods I Have Tried**<sup>4</sup>

This works well as an introduction to the topic of food. Have participants think about a time and place where they had tried a new food. Ask them to think about what it tasted like, whether they liked the food, and whether they have eaten it again. Have them share this experience with someone else at the table. Afterwards, ask a few people to share their experience, and use this as an introduction to the importance of variety in the diet or likes/dislikes, and individual preferences.

### **Play-Doh's "What is it?"**

Give each person a can of Play-Doh (it works best if there are chunks of different colors in each can). Have them sculpture something that represents the topic of the day. For example: If you are teaching about fruits, as an opening activity you may ask them to sculpt their favorite piece of fruit. Then ask everyone to share their sculpture and ask them to name one thing they would like to learn about fruit. Write these on a blackboard or flip chart for everyone to see. This will help you develop an agenda or make changes to your agenda so your lesson will address the needs and interests of your audience.

### **Poker Chips**

As the participants enter the classroom, give each person a poker chip with a "keyword" written on it. The keywords are words related to the lesson. Go around and ask each person to share their keyword. Write these keywords on a blackboard or flip chart so everyone in the class can see them. Group the words under specific topics. Then ask the class to vote on the topics ranking them according to interest. This will help you to determine the needs and interests of your audience.

### **Facts, Facts, Facts**

Handout out M&M's (5 to 10 pieces) to participants as they enter the classroom. At the same time ask the participants to pick their favorite M&M color. Instruct them to keep one M&M of their favorite color and tell them to eat the rest. There are several things you can do with this M&M activity.

Once the participants have chosen their favorite color M&M:

- 1) you can group them according to their colors for group activities, seating arrangements, etc.  
OR
- 2) you can display a poster that you made ahead of time that describes what each M&M color represents. Have the colors represent a keyword or topic for that day's lesson.

Example: If your are teaching about fruits your M&M Color-Keyword/Topic poster may look something like this:

<u>M&amp;M Color</u>	<u>Fruit Topic</u>
Green	Why we should eat fruit.
Brown	How to ripen fruit.
Yellow	How to store fruit.
Orange	Favorite ways to prepare fruit.
Red	Ways to add fruit to your diet.
Blue	The different kinds of fruit.

There are several activities you can do with this M&M Color-Keyword/Topic poster. Tell the participants they are assigned a topic according to their M&M Color-Keyword/Topic poster.

Once their topic is assigned, there are several things you can do.

a.) Tell the participants that they must take notes about their topic during class. For a review of the class material, each person will need to state one thing they learned about their topic. Each person should try not to say the same thing as the other participants with the same topic.

OR

b.) Once the participants know their topics, group your class according to their topics. As a group have them work on their particular topics.

This can be used to:

- ① see what your participants know about their topics before you teach them. Ask the participants to get into their groups and write what they know about their particular topic.
- ② find out what they are interested in learning. You can ask them to tell you what they want to learn about their particular topics.
- ③ review the day's lesson. Ask the groups to present what they have learned about their topics. They can do an oral report or write their material on a flip chart, etc.

### **Opening Statements**

In an effort to spice up a tired opening, use a set of 4 x 6 index cards, each with one sentence of your standard introductory remarks printed on it. The cards should be numbered in sequence. Handout the cards to the participants as they enter the class. At the start of class, ask the participants to read their cards aloud. Invite the participant holding card #1 to stand and read their card. The person with card #2 follows and the round robin continues until all the cards have been read. The last card says, "Now back to the presenter." This strategy has been proven quite successful in getting participants actively involved in the program and has saved introductions from sounding dull and uninteresting.

### **Name Tags**

This can make forming groups for group learning fun. Before class, create name tags that have names related to your lesson. Choose words that can be grouped. Randomly give a "name tag" to each participant as they enter the classroom.

Example: Lesson on fruit.

	<u>Citrus Group</u>	<u>Berry Group</u>	<u>Apple Group</u>
<b>NAME</b>	Orange	strawberry	red delicious
<b>TAG</b>	Lemon	raspberry	yellow delicious
<b>NAMES</b>	Grapefruit	blueberry	granny smith
	Lime	blackberry	Macintosh

You can either group your participants by the group name (Citrus, Berry, etc.) or form groups made up of one fruit from each fruit group (orange, strawberry and red delicious).

### **Treat Bags**

Forming groups for group learning can be fun. Choose a ready-to-eat snack that might be related to your lesson. For example, for a fruit lesson you might choose to use apples, oranges, bananas, etc. As the participants enter class, ask them to choose a piece fruit for a snack during class. You can group your participants according to their fruit choices. Example, the apples would be in one group, oranges in another, etc.

### **Puzzle Pieces**

Using puzzle pieces is a great way to group your participants and it is a fun opening activity. Make puzzles by photocopying pictures that are related to your lesson. You will need several different pictures because each picture will form a group. Cut the pictures into several large pieces. The exact number of pieces will be determined by the size of your class. For example, your lesson is on vegetables and you have 20 participants. You may want 5 different pictures of vegetables. Cut those pictures into 4 pieces. Each picture/puzzle will form a group with 4 participants in each group. You will hand out these puzzle pieces as the participants enter class. As class begins, instruct the participants that each person has a piece to a puzzle. Tell them how many puzzles there are as well as the puzzle themes (vegetables). Ask them to find the other individuals in the class that complete their puzzle/picture.

### **Visible Assessment of Group Interest Levels**

Instant evaluation is helpful in gauging participant interest. Determine how well you are keeping participant's interest during a training session: Fold a piece of heavy construction paper into thirds and stand the "tent card" on end (or on its side, depending on the method). Ask participants to draw an obvious happy face on one side, a sleepy face on another and a confused face on a third side. Throughout the class, ask participants to show the face that reflects their interests in the material being covered. This keeps them active in providing feedback and allows those who are less comfortable speaking up in a group the opportunity to voice their opinions.

### **Your Assignment is...**

Participants often feel uncomfortable about asking questions. Use this technique to get them immediately involved and focused on class material. Type questions concerning class content on index cards, one question per card and one card per participant. After class introductions, pass out the cards and explain that each participant is responsible for answering the question on his/her assigned card. Assure everyone their question will be covered in class before they are called upon for an answer.

## **Review Techniques**

Reviewing material with participants may be done anytime during class as a change of pace and to reinforce new material. There is no need to use the word "review" because it often sets a threatening atmosphere for many students.

### **"Popcorn Review"**

Setting up your review sessions before a class begins is a great way to keep energy levels up and avoid the trap of announcing, "Let's review." Done well, this technique may not even be recognized by participants as a review tool.

As participants enter the classroom, pass out a series of index cards. Some of the cards are blank, but seven others have a single letter that, together, spell the word "popcorn." When it is time to review, ask those participants with the lettered cards to "pop up" in sequence and state one key thing they learned. Keep the pace of the review going fast - like kernels of corn popping - for as long as the seven participants can keep it up. Then redistribute the cards to get a fresh set of participants for the next review session.

Note: There are two "p" cards and two "o" cards. You can place either small numbers in the corners of each to indicate the order those people should stand, or you can let the confusion exist, the better to imitate the "popcorn" effect.

### **"Three-Minute Exercise"**

This "Three-Minute Exercise" is an effective review tool that keeps participants from suffering from information overload. Split your class into two teams. Post flip charts, each labeled with the name of a topic around the classroom. Each team is then given a stack of Post-it Notes with statements pertaining to the different topics they have learned about. The goal of the activity is for the teams to place as many statements as they can on the appropriate flip charts within three minutes.

### **Mystery Index Cards**

Write words or concepts you will cover during class on colorful 3x5 index cards. As the participants enter the class, greet them at the door and have each person pick an index card. (Hold the cards fanned out, face down.) Halfway through class time or at the end of class, explain the “mystery” of the cards. Whoever holds the card or concept that completes a phrase or definition you read aloud should hold that card up and read it aloud. You may choose to give participants some reward (post-it-note pad, pen, etc.) for a correct response.

### **Easter Eggs Anytime**

Plastic, colored Easter eggs are useful to make review more fun. Insert slips of paper numbered according to class size inside the eggs. Give each student an egg. Have an equal number of small prizes, numbered correspondingly. Ask each participant, near the end of the session, to compile a list of 4-5 questions and answers related to the course material, using notes or other resources.

Ask participants to sit in a circle, and one person is selected to begin the review by tossing their egg to someone else. The person who throws the egg, then asks one of their questions.

If the recipient answers correctly, he or she keeps the egg that was thrown, tosses the other egg to another person, and asks a different question. If however, a participant fails to answer correctly, the egg is tossed back to its original owner, who throws it to someone else and asks the same question.

When everyone - time permitting - has had a chance to participate, stop the game and have students open their eggs, and give them the numbered prizes that match the numbers they find in the eggs. Students enjoy the method more than a traditional question-and-answer session, and also benefit from formulating their own questions. The instructor, in turn, gets a chance to observe rather than facilitate.

### **Sequencing**<sup>4</sup>

This strategy is an excellent way to assess learning, and is also lots of fun. However, it requires the attention of all the participants.

Draw up a list of questions and answers pertaining to the content of your presentation. Keep the questions simple. On small card (3"x5") write the first question at the top, and the answer to the second question at the bottom. On the next card, write the second question at the top and the answer to the third question at the bottom, and so on to the end of the questions. On the last card put the last question at the top, and the answer to the first question at the bottom. Hand out the cards randomly throughout the room, so that for example, a person at the front of the room might get the first card, while someone at the back gets the second, and so on. The presenter should get the last card. Now ask the person who has the first question to read out their question. The rest of the class must listen to see if the answer at the bottom of their card is the correct answer.

When the correct answer is read out, then that person must read out their question. This continues around the room until all the questions have been answered.

## Closures

### Action Plan/Journals <sup>4</sup>

We have all attended conferences or workshops and discovered some good ideas. However, we often go back to work and promptly forget them. A way to re-enforce new learning and increase the chances of it being used is to include an Action Plan in your handouts. An action plan is a sheet on which participants can record an idea which they think will be useful in their daily life. After each session have the participants ask themselves:

- What is the most significant thing I have learned.
- How can I apply it in my life/job?

If you will see the group over a series of several classes, consider having them keep journals of what they have learned.

### Flying With a Friend

Flying paper airplanes around the classroom is a constructive exercise. Have participants write on a piece of paper an action plan to be completed when they get back home. The action plan should include objectives, goals, a date to be contacted to check progress on the goals, and participants' name, address, and phone number. Have participants fold their action plans into paper airplanes and "fly" them across the room to another participant. The participant who catches the plane is responsible for calling whoever's "action plane" they caught, on the date specified, to discuss their progress and outcomes.

## References

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from "Creative Teaching Techniques" workshop by Mary Ellen Blackburn, Extension Faculty Development Specialist, The University of Georgia, Cooperative Extension Service, Athens, Georgia.

<sup>2</sup>Robert W. Pike. Creative Techniques Handbook. Lakewood Publications. 1994

<sup>3</sup>Adapted from materials written by Ellen Schuster.

<sup>4</sup>Donna Weldon, Catherine Smith and Elaine DeGrandpré. "The Nutrition Educator's Training Tool Kit: *Facilitation Skills for Adult Education*". SNE Conference, Montreal, Canada, July 26, 1997.