



The Volunteer Teacher Series: The Effective Volunteer Teacher

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The Important Role of Volunteer Teacher

Volunteer teachers are important to community organizations of all types. These organizations rely on volunteers to teach a variety of topics. For example:

- A 4-H leader uses role-playing and demonstration to teach youth how to conduct a meeting.
- A lesson leader teaches a group about child abuse.
- At a civic organization meeting, a member of the League of Women Voters uses visuals and handouts to teach the principles of effective candidate forums.
- A unit manager in a company helps staff learn about interoffice conflict resolution through role-playing and case studies.

With the help of volunteer teachers, the effectiveness of Extension and other educational programs and organizations can be multiplied many times over.

If you've just said, "Yes, I'll teach that lesson" or "Yes, I'll give that presentation," you're ready to plan your presentation. This publication provides information for volunteer teachers of adults and older youth. As a volunteer teacher, you'll need to consider these things:

- the focus of your topic.
- the characteristics of the learners you will teach.
- appropriate teaching methods.
- helpful audiovisuals.
- an evaluation to help you see how well people learned.

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets
are also available on our website at:
<http://osufacts.okstate.edu>

Focusing Your Topic

Plan the content. Limit the topic to what you can teach in the time allowed. Organize the lesson to flow smoothly from one point to the next. Begin by answering the following questions:

- How much time will I have?
- What specifically do I want the participants to learn? By the end of the lesson, what do I want the participants to be able to do?
- What are my goals and objectives?
- What and how much content should I include given the time allowed? In what order?
- What will I use to introduce the lesson?
- What learning exercises can I use to emphasize the main points?
- How will I know if and when the participants have learned anything?

You may use the two-page form "My Teaching Plan" at the end of this publication to help plan your lesson.

Think about appropriate sources of information for the lesson. Materials that appear in the popular news media, books, and internet may or may not be from reputable sources. Some authors are convincing, but may not provide reliable information. For information related to family and consumer sciences, agriculture, community development, and 4-H youth development, check with your county OSU Extension professionals. The material from the OSU Cooperative Extension Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture is research-based, reliable, and unbiased.

Characteristics of the Learner

Successful teaching allows for the needs and characteristics of the learner. Because adults and children vary in their learning needs, your teaching should accommodate these differences. In general, there are differences between adults and youth as learners. Some of those differences include the reasons they are motivated to learn, readiness to learn, purpose for learning, and physical abilities. For example, adults tend to decide when they are ready to learn based on immediate real-life needs, while children's learning is generally determined by parents and teachers. For more complete information about these differences and the implications for your teaching, consult publication T-8202 *Teaching Adults*, available from your OSU county Extension office or visit our website at <http://osuextra.com>. Refer to the two-page chart in that publication as you refine your topic, select teaching methods, and make or select audiovisuals for your lesson.

Teaching Tips

Preparation: Allow time for preparation. Being well prepared is an important key to being an effective teacher. A good teacher spends more time in preparation than in giving the presentation or teaching the lesson. As a rule of thumb, invest at least three hours of preparation for each hour of teaching.

Presentation: Use a checklist to remind you of all the details needed for the presentation. Check ahead of time to be certain the room arrangement and equipment needed are available.

The first few minutes in a lesson are important. A good beginning gains attention, arouses interest, establishes a good relationship with the group, and leads the learners into the topic you are teaching. Devise a lesson opener, such as a game, puzzle, or other exercise to help learners transition from whatever they did before your lesson to the topic at hand.

Getting People Involved: Presenting ideas and information is basic to teaching and important; however, it is difficult for most people to just sit and listen. When interested, the learner wants to get "into the act" and do something. Each teacher is challenged to help the learner do more than listen. Learner participation helps them practice new ideas, clear their own thinking, maintain their interest, and build new skills.

Be certain that the method relates to the topic you are teaching. Some methods for learner involvement are:

questions	buzz groups	video
quizzes	tours	games
skits	brainstorming	discussion
mixers	roll call	demonstration

Keep the learners involved. Avoid reading to others; instead, tell the learners about the topic in your own words from notes. Add your personality to your teaching, and use personal stories to emphasize your point. Each teacher has his/her own style. Use your style to the best advantage.

Ending the lesson: The close of the lesson is just as important as the beginning, because it helps people remember and retain what they have learned. Good endings need to be planned. The last part of the lesson should allow the learners to do the following:

- Make comments and ask questions.
- Review important ideas.
- Identify what they've learned and gain a satisfied feeling.
- Recognize how they can use what they've learned in your session in their lives.
- Describe how they will use what they've learned to do further thinking.
- End the session in a positive way!

Audiovisuals – Helpful Teaching Aids

Effective audiovisuals help teachers explain concepts. They increase learning. They help to focus the learner's attention on what is being taught. Because people learn in different ways, teachers use a combination of audiovisuals.

As a volunteer teacher, you are concerned what you can do to help learners learn *and* remember:

Learning: About 85% of learning occurs through vision and includes reading, seeing demonstrations, seeing pictures and drawings, and observing daily life. About 70% of learning occurs through hearing. This includes lecture, hearing instructions on how to do something, and listening to everyday happenings. Taste, touch, and smell account for the rest.

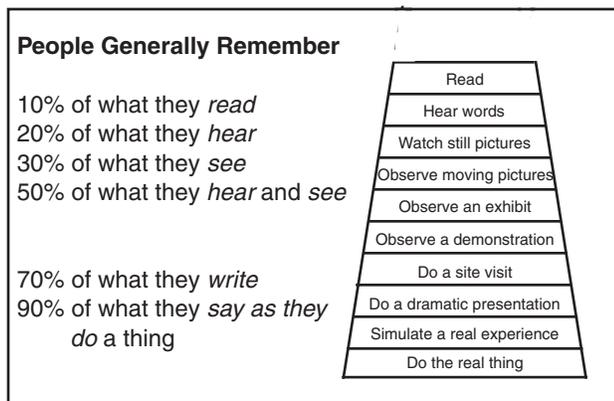


Figure 1. Dale's Learning Cone of Experience

Remembering: The important thing is to *teach* so that what is *learned* will be *remembered*. As you choose the audiovisuals and teaching methods you will use, refer to Edgar Dale's "Learning Cone of Experience." Use the list beside it to guide you as you prepare your lesson.

As a volunteer teacher, you may need to make your own audiovisuals. To do the job, an audiovisual must be well planned and prepared.

Choose audiovisuals appropriate for the learners and the topic you're teaching. The best teaching aid is the real object or experience itself, actually using, making, or seeing it. When you can't use the real thing, a model is the next choice. Moving pictures are next in line.

When the items above aren't available, well prepared simple visuals can be a good teaching aid. Simple visuals include still pictures and written words. They are often easy to make and inexpensive.

For more information about creating simple visuals, consult publication T-8203 *Do-It-Yourself Visuals*, available from your OSU county Extension office or visit our website at <http://osuxtra.com>.

Evaluation

The teaching process is not complete without evaluation. Evaluation can point out gaps in the lesson and guide planning for future lessons.

Judge the results of the lesson to determine its worth or value to the audience or learner. Consider two approaches to the evaluation of your teaching:

- (1) How well did you do as a teacher? How would you teach this lesson again?
- (2) Did the participants learn what you expected? What difference did the lesson make in their

lives?

Evaluations can point out your teaching strengths and spots where you may need improvement. Using a checklist or open-ended questions at the end of the lesson can be an effective method of self-evaluation. Participants can comment on your teaching style, preparedness, what worked well, areas needing improvement, and the lesson environment.

An important part of evaluation is measuring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes participants learned and if/how they will apply or have applied them in their lives. Surveys or interviews at the close of the lesson and/or several months later are often used. A test before the lesson and the same test afterwards are also effective in measuring what was learned. You can also adapt games, puzzles, and television game shows into evaluation tools.

As you plan the lesson, also plan the evaluation methods you'll use. Evaluation completes the teaching process. You gain information to help you improve your teaching, as well as determine the value of the lesson to the learner.

Practice What You Have Learned about Teaching

As a volunteer teacher, you will learn more from the lesson than anyone else. It takes time to plan well, consider the characteristics of the learners, select appropriate audiovisuals and teaching methods, and evaluate, so be generous with yourself as you set aside time to prepare your lesson or presentation. Enjoy the experience of learning and helping others learn, too!

References

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- Knowles, M. S., Holton, E., & Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (5th ed.). Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Company.

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy* (Rev. ed.). Chicago, Illinois: Follett.

Merriam, S. B. (Ed.). (2001). *The new update on adult learning theory*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. S. (1999). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Steinbach, R. L. (1993). *The adult learner: Strategies for success*. Menlo Park, California: Crisp Publications.

Suggested Readings

In addition to the useful items listed in **References**, the following are suggested readings:

Adult Education Quarterly. The research journal of the American Association for Adult & Continuing Education. <http://www.aaace.org/>.

Adult Learning. The journal of the American Association for Adult & Continuing Education. <http://www.aaace.org/>.

Creative Training Techniques, a monthly newsletter. Published by Lakewood Publications.

Draves, W. A. (1988). *How to teach adults in one hour*. Manhattan, Kansas: Learning Resources Network.

Fact sheets in The Volunteer Teacher Series

T-8201 The Effective Volunteer Teacher
T-8202 Teaching Adults
T-8203 Do-it-yourself Visuals

MY TEACHING PLAN—Part II

Learner Objectives – What the Learner Will Learn

List learner objectives in terms of what the learner will be able to do as a result of your lesson. Each objective should start with a verb. Learner objectives should be measurable – you should be able to evaluate your learners to determine if they met the objective.

Example learner objectives: As a result of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

1. Develop measurable learner objectives.
2. Select and use appropriate evaluation techniques.

How the Learner Will Learn It

List/ describe what teaching techniques you will use and what activities you will have the learners do.

Example:

- I will use the following:
- A 10-minute lecture with overhead transparencies
 - Small group discussion
 - Handout: “How to Write Learner Objectives”
- I will have the learners do the following:
- Complete the “Gold Watch” exercise
 - In small groups, discuss the exercise and list three factors
 - Report out the factors they’ve listed

How the Learner Shows Learning

List the desired changes in skills, attitudes and/or knowledge.

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Bringing the University to You!

The Cooperative Extension Service is the largest, most successful informal educational organization in the world. It is a nationwide system funded and guided by a partnership of federal, state, and local governments that delivers information to help people help themselves through the land-grant university system.

Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of agriculture, natural resources and environment; family and consumer sciences; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

Some characteristics of the Cooperative Extension system are:

- The federal, state, and local governments cooperatively share in its financial support and program direction.
- It is administered by the land-grant university as designated by the state legislature through an Extension director.
- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and research-based information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education for people of all ages. It is designated to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.
- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
- More than a million volunteers help multiply the impact of the Extension professional staff.
- It dispenses no funds to the public.
- It is not a regulatory agency, but it does inform people of regulations and of their options in meeting them.
- Local programs are developed and carried out in full recognition of national problems and goals.
- The Extension staff educates people through personal contacts, meetings, demonstrations, and the mass media.
- Extension has the built-in flexibility to adjust its programs and subject matter to meet new needs. Activities shift from year to year as citizen groups and Extension workers close to the problems advise changes.

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