

## **Anything but Lecture! How to Use Other Training Approaches and Methods**

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### **Introduction**

Too often trainers use lecture as their sole training approach. Lecture is a relatively ineffective method and is not learner-focused. There are many other training methods to choose from as learning approaches that engage their students more and make the training fun and participative. This paper will discuss 20 other, non-lecture methods and approaches. Some learning objectives for the reader include that at the conclusion of this paper readers will be able to:

- ✓ Choose/select an appropriate training method or approach for a particular training session;
- ✓ Modify a training method to suit the situation;
- ✓ Explain the value and benefits of non-lecture approaches used during training; and
- ✓ Demonstrate or try a different method in their next training course.

Other non-lecture approaches and methods include the following:

- ✓ Ice Breakers,
- ✓ Demonstration,
- ✓ Role-playing,
- ✓ Question and answer (Q&A),
- ✓ Game-playing,
- ✓ Pairs or dyads,
- ✓ Triads,
- ✓ Small group work,
- ✓ Case studies,
- ✓ Fishbowl,
- ✓ Video,
- ✓ Brain-storming,
- ✓ Large group, open discussion,
- ✓ Co-training,

- ✓ Safe experiments,
- ✓ Tours,
- ✓ Hands-on,
- ✓ Pre-/Post-tests,
- ✓ Problem-solving,
- ✓ Ad lib or spontaneous training, and
- ✓ Others!

## Icebreakers

There are two basic types of icebreakers – the ones where students perform an exercise that typically introduces them to each other in a fun way and there's the other type where the leader tries to start off with a funny or interesting video or other non-participative approach. Here are 27 different ones of the first type:

1. **“Self-introductions”**: Ask each student to introduce themselves and add what they want to get out of the course, see discussed, questions they have, etc.
2. **“Paired Intro’s”**: Break up class into pairs to interview each other for typical info – name, job, company, and what they want to get out of the course.
3. **“Lies, Lies, Lies!!!”**: Ask the students to create an “alter ego” for themselves. Embellish and be creative. Then each will give a brief intro of their alter ego. Very fun. Allows creativity. Let’s people create a new persona for themselves.
4. **“Only 1 is a lie”**: Similar to #1 above, but have each tell their partner 3 interesting things (or “likes”) about themselves. The hook is that 1 of the 3 is a “lie” and the class has to guess which it is. Fun guessing which is the lie!
5. **“Millionaire for a Minute!”**: During their introductions the students say what they would do with a million dollars. Fun, makes them think, be creative.
6. **“A Picture’s Worth 1000 Words”**: Hand out blank copy paper and crayons (or markers). Ask each to draw a self-portrait and then to show and “explain” it to all. Fun and creative!
7. **“Who’s Who?”**: Have each write a brief intro of themselves. Put them all in a hat (or other similar receptacle). Pull them out one at a time and read them. Have the class try to guess whose is whose.
8. **“Party Mingling”**: Put pairs of names of famous duos, teams, and couples in a hat and have them each draw one out. Then they have to find their “partner”. Examples include Batman and Robin, Martin and Lewis, Laurel and Hardy, Tracy and Hepburn, Bogart and Bacall, Burns and Allen, Rowan and Martin, Kermit and Miss Piggy, Jake and Elwood, Lucy and Desi, Fred and Ethel, etc.
9. **“What’s the Question?”**: Facilitator writes some facts on the board, e.g., purple, Japan, 16 months. Participants try to find the question that matches each fact.  
 Purple - What's your favorite color? What color is your car? What color are your toenails?  
 16 months - How long have you lived in this city? How old is your child? How long have you been married?  
 Japan - Where were you born? Where have you worked? Where are you going on vacation?  
 When participants have discovered all of the questions, place them in small groups (3 - 4). Repeat the process. Have participants introduce each other to the large group.
10. **“Alliterative Introductions”**: Introduce yourself to the group with an alliterative sentence based upon the first letter of your name. Example: "I'm kooky Katherine. I like kissing kittens." (Pattern: I'm adjective name. I like action-ing noun). Participants introduce themselves to the group with alliterative sentences.

"I'm vivacious Vesna. I like volunteering vodka."

"I'm generous George. I like giving gifts."

**11. "Name Chain":** You can play "Name Chain" as a follow-up to "Alliterative Introductions." Introduce yourself, and the person to your right.

I'm kooky Katherine. This is vivacious Vesna.

The person to your right repeats previous introductions, and introduces the person to their right. She's kooky Katherine. I'm vivacious Vesna. He's generous George.

Continue with the next person to the right, until all names have been repeated.

Challenge volunteers to rhyme off all names quickly!

This game can be repeated for a few days, moving around the group to the left, or in random order, until participants have memorized each other's names.

**12. "Seating Plan":** Ask participants to arrange their seats according to some factor that requires them to talk with each other to determine their correct order:

- \* Alphabetically, according to first name,

- \* By years of experience,

- \* Sequentially, in order of birthday month and date,

**13. "Do You Know Me?":** Each person is given a nametag and an index card. The name tag has the name of another person in the group on it. Everyone is told to circulate, meet, mix and mingle to gather information, insights or stories about the person on their tag from group members. The opening line "Do you know me?" is used to help generate clues and conversation. The index card is to be used to write down the information collected. At the end of a designated time - about 15 minutes, each participant introduces their "name tag" and its person to the group.

**14. "Logos":** Each person is given a blank name tag. Explain to the group that corporations are recognized by a specific logo or symbol. (McDonalds arches, 3M, Apple Computer's Apple, etc.) They are given 2 minutes to draw their personal logo. This logo should reflect their personality, their interests, major or any thing they would like other people to know about them. Then give the group time to mingle and see what each others logo looks like. When it looks like the entire group has mixed, instruct everybody with a similar logo to form a small group. You may be surprised at how many similarities there are in your group.

**15. "You Really Want to Know?":** Each participant is asked to give his/her middle name and tell how or why that particular name was chosen for them. The facilitator should begin the process and if appropriate, do it with a little bit of humor to encourage others to share.

**16. "Colors of the Rainbow":** The object of this small group exercise is to get the group to quickly meet the other members. The facilitator calls out a color of the rainbow: Red: typically is the stop/turn- off color - so each member of the group quickly tells what is the one thing (that they can disclose in public) that is really a turn off to them. Orange: is the motivation color - what motivates them. Yellow: is the inspiration or creativity color - what was the best idea they've had. Green: is the money color - what they plan to do for money, or the dumbest thing they ever did for money. Blue: is the sky's the limit color - what is your favorite fantasy about your future. Indigo: is an odd, or different color - what is the most daring thing they ever did. Purple: is the color of royalty - if you were ruler of the universe for a day - what is the first thing you would do?

**17. "On the Hunt!":** Create a list of descriptions on a sheet (e.g., find someone bilingual). Give them a defined time to mingle and find all they can. Only one person used per sheet.

**18. "My Movie Bio!":** If they made a movie of your life, what kind of movie would it be and who would be cast as you? Are you Bond...James Bond? Or more the Ahnold type? Maybe you're like Scarlet in "Gone with the Wind". Or Cat Woman. Is your life an adventure, drama, romance, or horror flick? Entertain us.

**19. "Tattoo":** What tattoo(s) do you have or would you get if you were getting one?

20. **“Super Powers!”**: Which super power would you choose? Wouldn't it be great to have super powers? If you could have one super power, which one would you choose? Invisibility, flight, strength, others?
21. **“Fortune Cookie”**: Have them write their own fortune cookies. Put them all in a hat, pull them out one by one, read, and guess who wrote each.
22. **“I Won the Lottery!”**: What would each do with \$10m?
23. **“Play-Doh”**: Pass out Play-Doh to them and have them make a model of themselves.
24. **“Beach Ball Blast!”**: Have a little beach fun without leaving your classroom. Write questions on a beach ball and pass it around. Students have to read and answer the first question they see.
25. **“Would You Rather...”**: As in the board game, a “no-win” choice. Would you rather find true love or win the lottery? Would you rather be completely hairless or completely hairy? Would you rather tell your best friend a lie or your parents the truth?
26. **“Everyone Loves (and Hates) Food!”**: Find out what your students or guests like to eat and what they never want to put in their mouths like on “Bizarre Foods”!
27. **“These are a few of my favorite things”**: Just like the song. Ask students to list their own favorites. See if any will sing it (you can play the music softly to help).

Here are several of the non-participative types:

1. Show a funny video while checking out the A/V equipment. I use short video clips and they are already “cued up”. So I always bring a “test tape” for the VCR – one that I’m not using and doesn’t have to stay cued. I like to use “Underdog” or “Rocky and Bullwinkle”. Just let it run!
2. Show a series of funny (or other) video clips that show “accidents”. Nothing shocking or gross though. Think more in terms of “Funniest Home Videos”.
3. Tell something personal that is self-deprecating. The time you made some faux pas. It humanizes you.
4. Give them a riddle or brain teasers to figure out.
5. Give them a crossword puzzle, word search, jumble, etc. on the subject.
6. Put something “out of the ordinary” at each person’s place – like a pickle (my 5th grade school teacher did just that on our first day and it was the best year.

## Demonstration

Demonstration is just that; to demonstrate or “model” a particular skill, task, or other learning activity. Demonstration can be as basic as how to work the laser pointer to something complex such as how to properly facilitate a group of rowdy students. It is typically important for the teacher to first demonstrate the desired activity before having the students attempt it.

## Role Playing

Role playing is a highly interactive approach very much like acting out a scene without a script. In it the trainer sets up the role play by giving the student participants (usually two or more) a situation to act out. They are given “roles” and a description of the situation. They then start to act in their roles until such time as the trainer decides to end the exercise. Role plays are especially effective for training in areas that require interaction such as communication skills, supervisory training, customer service, accident investigation, and behavior- based safety.

## Question and Answer (Q&A)

In training it is better to ask than it is to tell. Why one might ask? Well, it gets the students to participate more. Why not just tell them and then ask for their additional comments or ideas? If we did that then the students would be less likely to come up with their own ideas. Q&A can be a very effective approach and teaching tool.

## Games

Games are a highly interactive and trainee-participative training approach. The students are the game “players” and the trainer is the facilitator, referee, or game-show “host”. Here are 24 training games with their brief descriptions.

**1. Jeopardy! ®:** Perhaps the most common training game. This game seems to be naturally well-suited to be adapted for training purposes. Categories are flexible. Use key points for “answers”. Use it for review before a post-test. Some general tips for ease of use and play (for many training games):

- a. Create “teams” of multiple players.
- b. Give them (or have them choose) creative team names.
- c. Use kids’ “squeaky” toys instead of “lock out” buzzers.
- d. Call yourself “Alex Tyvek ®” for fun.
- e. Use Post-It’s ® for your questions/board. They stick to a lot.
- f. Decide ahead if they have to say “What is...?” or not.
- g. Give everyone a prize (not just the “winners”).

**2. Family Feud ®:** Another “spirited” fun game that is obviously well suited for “teams.” Again, use (large) kids pop-up (or other) toys as the buzzers. Use easel and paper, overhead transparencies, or Word, Excel, or PowerPoint for the “board”.

**3. Hollywood Squares ®:** A great game that involves the whole group – no matter how big it is! Just like the game show – basically tic-tac-toe. Get two contestants from the group – one is “O” and one is “X”. Make a page with a big, bold “O” on one side and an “X” on the other side. Make copies and distribute to all in the group. Take a couple of rolls of crepe paper (or colored rope, etc.) and divide them into the requisite 9-squared tic-tac-toe board. The two contestants take turns choosing a “square” which will be a group of students usually. Ask the “square” to answer a question, then ask the competitor if s/he agrees or disagrees with the square’s answer. If correct they get the square, if not their competitor does – except for the win which the competitor must get themselves. Remind persons in the “squares” to have fun and that they can “bluff”.

**4. Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? ®:** Obviously needs some adapting. Can make the player a team or the others can be the “life lines”. Important to directly involve all of the students for it to be a useful learning experience. Allow more than 3 “lifelines”.

**5. Wheel of Fortune ®:** Another obvious game well suited to adapting in training. Choose a “letter-turner” (Vanna) to help you (choosing a man can make it very funny). Have it spell out a key point. Make your “wheel”, use one from a board game, or use slips of paper drawn from a hat.

**6. Training Charades:** Lots of fun and silliness. Gets students up and physically active (great for the afternoon). They have to pantomime (or silently act out) a key part of the lesson (e.g., fit-testing a respirator). Their team has to guess the answer. The two (or more) teams give each other the clues to demonstrate or you prepare a variety that they draw from a hat.

**7. Pictionary ® or Win, Lose, or Draw:** Teams are made and they have to try to draw the hazard, personal protective equipment, emergency response, etc. Post the drawings and enjoy the “artistic renditions”. Lots of fun as most folks are not really artistic especially under pressure.

**8. Blind Man’s Bluff:** Not exactly like the kid’s game. In this version one person is blindfolded and his team tries to help him perform something physical (e.g., disassembling and reassembling a respirator) but only with verbal help. Great for communication skills and team building.

**9. Clue ® or Who Done It?:** Played like a murder mystery, only in this game they’re investigating an accident scene. Allows for group interaction. Lots of ways to go with this one – be creative in your “set-up”. Either create a board version or better to have them take on roles – more active!

**10. Baseball:** Teams are chosen and either a physical diamond in the room or a “virtual” one on a board can be done. Players get on base by answering questions correctly. Three strikes (wrong answers) make an out. Close answers are balls. Correct answers are hits, but the other team can get the player out by answering a related question. Play the anthem, sing “Take Me Out...”, etc.

**11. Football:** Similar to Baseball with set up and basic construct. Teams progress with yards by answering questions correctly and get stopped with incorrect ones. Interceptions and fumbles happen when the other team answers the question correctly. Four in a row is a first down. Best to set up a “virtual field”, so all can see where the teams are, etc. Do a coin toss, half time, etc.

**12. 20 Questions:** This is the game that always starts “Animal, mineral, or vegetable?”. Although that query isn’t used, teams (or “panels” like in the game shows of old – think of “What’s My Line?”) ask yes or no questions. They have to guess the “course aspect” (perhaps “safety don’ts”) in 20 questions (or fewer). Have the numbers 1-20 to “flip” over like in the show.

**13. Bingo:** Make different Bingo cards and a “Clue” sheet. You should cut the “clues” out and place into a box and then pick them out randomly. After you read each clue, the trainees should look for the answer on their Bingo card. If they have it, then they should cross out that square. The first person to get 5 across or 5 down (or a “T” or “X” shape if you want the game to go longer) wins.

**14. Concentration:** This is the one where you have to find pairs of matching items (under cards usually). The matched pairs can be such things as a regulation and a requirement of it, a hazard and control, PPE and its limitation, etc. The nice thing about this one is you can give the same decks of cards to several pairs of students or they can be divided into (small) teams (of a few students in each). Better as a group game. Teams can pick squares (instead of one trainee).

**15. Whose Line Is It Anyway? ® (Role Playing):** I know what you're thinking – it's not a "game". Well it can be a game if presented that way (also, it does have the word "playing" in its name). Make the contest into which team or group can do the funniest role play (easier than drama).

**16. Telephone:** This is the one where one person whispers to the next who whispers to the next, and so on to the last one. Then what was said first is compared to what was heard last. It is obviously useful for training on communication. Be sure they repeat what's heard, not what they know.

**17. Hot Potato:** Use a soft or squishy ball or bean bag. Students throw it and when caught they have to give an example of whatever the lesson is about. Good for reinforcing a list of key points that was just reviewed or discussed. Nice physical aspect – do it when they need a break – PM.

**18. Musical Hot Potato:** The students get in a circle and begin to toss the hot potato to each other while music is playing. When the music stops, whoever has the hot potato has to answer a question. If they get it wrong, review the correct answer and they leave the circle. This continues with harder and harder (more obscure questions) until the last person remains and wins the game.

**19. Brain Teasers/Riddles:** These are often pictograms with words and/or symbols that make up a well known word or phrase. Great for reinvigorating folks and getting their creative, brain juices cooking (what an awful metaphor!). Can be done as individuals or as teams. Be sure to include the answers on the back (for them and for you!). Nice mental "stretch" break.

**20. Crossword Puzzles:** Pretty self-explanatory. You can create your own or there are software programs that will create the actual puzzle grid for you (very easy to use). Crosswords are great when you want individual games or as a "take away". Be creative in the clues.

**21. Jumbles ®:** Another word puzzle type game. Can be done with singles or as teams. Great for term recognition. Can be a "take-away" for later.

**22. Word Searches:** An obvious inclusion after the previous two entries. Like # 19. Use Excel.

**23. Shapes Puzzle:** Create a puzzle with several pieces. Make several sets. Create teams of the same numbers as pieces. Each team member gets one piece, can only touch theirs, and can't speak. Compete to finish theirs first. Great for team building, cooperation, and communications skills.

**24. Create your own game!:** One of the best games I've played was a board game we created in grad-school for group process class. It was fun to design and to play. We got an "A" on it, too. Can be done as a group in class – especially if the course goes more than one day or they have a break with time to work on it. Provide supplies such as 3x5 note cards, large easel paper, markers/crayons, small toys for "players", etc. Have some fun!

## **Pairs or Dyads**

Let's face it – adult learners like to talk, and one of the best ways to accommodate this is to pair them up and have them discuss it with their partner. It has also been demonstrated that adults learn better if they are able to discuss what they are learning. Being able to have a semi-private conversation with one's partner gives the trainees a chance to synthesize the lesson, key point, or general discussion item. It's also nice in that it allows some privacy instead of having to discuss it in front of the entire class or group.

## **Triads**

Triads are merely dyads plus one more. There are two main benefits to triads. First of all by adding a third person to each dyad you create a different dynamic. Now there are three different opinions instead of just the two – admit it, a discussion involving three is different from a talk between two partners. Secondly, the trainer can divide up the class into fewer, slightly larger groups.

## **Small Group Work**

If one is a student or trainee, two is a pair or dyad, and three is a triad or trio, then what is a “small group”? Most of those in my train-the-trainer courses seem to say somewhere between four and six. Similar to how triads are expansions of dyads, small groups are expansions of triads. Small groups allow for even more discussion among a greater number of students or trainees yet still allow for a “semi-private” conversation.

## **Case Studies**

Case studies are examples (either actual or invented for training purposes) of situations that allow for student application of class discussions. These case studies can be repeated in a controlled setting where mistakes don't “count” and are just learning experiences instead of real world, high risk situations.

## **Fishbowl**

The fishbowl is a variation on a role play. But instead of acting out a scene or situation a fishbowl is somewhat more scripted or directed. The trainer forms two concentric circles. The outer circle are just observers and don't participate – at least not at first. The inner circle includes the active participants who engage in the exercise – usually a non-facilitated discussion on the training topic. Afterwards the observers get to comment on the dynamics of the conversation. The fishbowl could be used for conversation based skills such as accident investigation or other communication based training.

## **Videos**

Videos are very varied (yes, the alliteration was on purpose). First, a trainer can show a funny video as part of an ice-breaker exercise or as an incentive for students to come back from break on time. Second, a trainer can show a pre-recorded video to the class as part of a discussion.



Currently I am showing the CBS TV show “Undercover Boss” to my graduate students in my Organizational Theory & Behavior class and then I facilitate a general discussion on it. Third, a trainer can take a video camera out into the field and video a task, work, hazards, etc. and use it for discussion, demonstration, or other exercises.

## **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is a great energizing, participative exercise. It’s popular and easy to do. The trainer explains the rules and gives the group the topic. The rules are simple – any idea gets listed without evaluation or comment. As a result lots of ideas are generated with some likely of questionable quality – it is definitely quantity over quality. “Piggy-backing” is encouraged – that is an idea related to a previous one. Then after the idea generating part is done, they can be evaluated. The ideas can be listed on chart paper for a small group and can be done using the laptop and LCD projector for a large group.

## **Large Group Open Discussion**

Some people (both trainers and others such as conference organizers) believe that a large group is too big and “unwieldy” for an open discussion. I don’t and neither did Malcolm Knowles, the “Father of Adult Learning”. My approach is in keeping with the adage that as the trainer I can be better described as the group’s facilitator, and not as the sole teacher. As I like to say, “Give me a room full of people who will talk, and I can get some learning done.”

Years ago at a conference in Maine for adult educators, Malcolm Knowles gave the keynote talk. He was introduced and then began his talk. He basically said, “Hello, thank you for the warm welcome. What would you like to know?” One can imagine the awkward silence that followed. Eventually a brave soul spoke up and asked, “Would you please discuss your theory of adult learning?” He did. Then another asked about another aspect of adult education, and on it went. It is very effective and well controlled, doable and not daunting.

## **Co-Training/Trainer**

Having someone else assist as a co-trainer can be quite effective and helpful to the training quality in several ways. The amount of co-trainer involvement can vary from as little as an assistant who helps with mostly or totally administrative duties to one who shares actual teaching duties pretty evenly to one who does most of the teaching freeing us up for other duties. Benefits of using a co-trainer include the following:

- ✓ Balances the load of teaching.
- ✓ Reduces the likelihood of “trainer burnout”.
- ✓ It can be easier for students to concentrate on discussions if it’s more of a conversation between two (instead of a monologue by one).
- ✓ Gives a more even or balanced view.
- ✓ One trainer is always free to take care of something leaving the other to keep teaching.

## Safe Experiments

Do you remember high school biology, chemistry, and/or physics? If so, then you likely also remember the lab portion of the course and how it allowed you to apply the lesson. It's still a very good method in training. Instead of hearing or reading about the pH scale, try creating an experiment using vinegar, baking soda, and pH test strips. Instead of a slide presentation on electrical safety try building a wiring safety training aid using lights and buzzers.

## Tours

Why stay in the classroom when you can go on a tour! Take a tour of the worksite, plant floor, and/or other work area. Can't bring the students on a tour? Bring the tour to the students! Make a video of the worksite or area and bring it into the classroom.

## Hands-On

Hands-on is a must for any sort of physical task or learning objective. It's obviously great for tactile learners and is a learning domain that almost all trainees both enjoy and can benefit from as it is quite effective. Instead of discussing how to inspect, don, doff, and fit check a respirator, give each one a respirator and have them practice it. Instead of discussing training skills, try having them practice it. Get them up and moving to do some actual or mock training.

## Pre-/Post-Tests

Do you have to give a test in any of your training? If so, then give a pre-test at the start of the training course. Many of our typical trainees haven't been in a classroom in years or even decades and are scared stiff at the idea of a test or exam. A pre-test can be an effective tool in many different ways:

- ✓ It can be good preparation for the post-test.
- ✓ The difference between a student's pre-test and their post-test can be a valid measure of their learning gained during the training.
- ✓ A pre-test can be used as part of the training – as a teaching tool and not just an activity to be done before the training course.
- ✓ It can help the students gauge their expertise level of the materials.
- ✓ It can be used as a “challenge” exam for students with previous experience.

## Problem Solving

Adult learners typically love to solve problems. It makes for a natural approach to many training topics. Just create a situational problem and have the trainees work on solving it. It can be done as individuals, pairs, and/or in small groups. They can work on ways to improve a training course with non-lecture methods and approaches, how to appropriately design problems for a training session, what training topics are the most and least likely to use problem-solving as an approach, and/or how to convince trainers to use more problem solving.

## **Ad Lib or Spontaneous Training**

On occasion you might be called upon to do some spontaneous training or the training exercise you're doing just isn't going according to plan. Sometimes you just have to "punt" or do something ad lib. The students will know and if you are open and honest with them, they will typically relate well to it. Sometimes spontaneity works well – and sometimes it doesn't.

## **Summary**

There you go, 20 approaches and methods besides lecturing. The nice thing is that there are even more approaches and methods. If you, the reader, have any other suggestions, questions, or would like to share yours with me, please feel free to get in contact with me at the contact information below.

Thanks and good training!