

## **Safety Training Games and Activities for Everyone**

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### **Introduction**

Safety training is too important to be boring. Even with carefully planned slides, great content and a great video, safety trainers are still likely to see trainees dozing off or not paying attention. When safety training is not interactive and trainees focus on something else, they are not learning the important information that is being presented. Safety training games and other interactive activities are one way to keep the trainee involved while increasing his or her learning and retention of the material. Safety training games and activities make learning interactive by making the trainee an active participant and making mundane information something enjoyable and memorable.

The whole idea of using fun and games in safety training comes from the principles of accelerated learning. Whatever learning tools work to increase and enhance learning can be called accelerated learning methods. Alternative learning should not be confused with "fluff" activities that are often used as icebreakers. Everything in an accelerated learning class is focused on the results and not the materials or activities themselves. For example, a safety trainer announces that everyone is going to get up play musical chairs with the goal of getting everyone relaxed and "ready to learn." While this might seem like a fun icebreaker, a musical chairs game is fun only for the sake of being fun. None of the information to be covered in this training is being reinforced by this activity. In an accelerated learning class, we might also play games but the games have a different focus – on the results, instead of the activity. For example, a crossword puzzle could be completed by class teams, where the clues of the puzzle are really a review of the material covered in class. This game is still fun and gets everyone involved but accelerated learning principles are in action, especially when you have small teams work on each puzzle instead of individually.

### **Effective Games and Activities**

What makes an activity effective? Safety training games should incorporate a combination of chance and skill whenever possible. If too much chance is involved, the game becomes nothing

more than a waste of time and a mindless activity. Imagine tossing dice for twenty minutes straight just for the purpose of trying to get the highest number. That would be boring. If a game involves too much skill, it quickly becomes a quiz and although quizzes have their place in safety training, you do not want a safety training game to turn into a test.

Effective safety training games should also be flexible and easily adaptable. If you find that the activity is too challenging for a particular class, you should be able to quickly modify it based on the abilities of the class you are currently training. Good safety training classes should also be flexible enough so that you can do them in a variety of locations.

Is your game easily understood? If there is any confusion at all as to what the teams should be doing after you give your instructions, you will lose the group. and the game will not have the desired results.

The game should also be fun. If it is enjoyable, trainees will want to take part and will be more involved in the activity, which will result in greater learning. Fun games will also keep their attention longer.

## **How and When to Use Games**

Games can be used in most safety training classes with a little foresight and planning. To keep trainees' attention, an activity should be introduced approximately every 12 minutes. These activities can be as simple as a question-and-answer period or a detailed game. To use games effectively in safety training classes, consider the following guidelines.

Give your class attendees problem-posing and information accessing exercises that get them to think, make connections and make meaning for themselves. As mentioned earlier, it is very important with safety training that we help trainees learn to take the information that is presented to them and then have them customize it for their specific needs. For example, in a hazard communication training class, you would not just review a sample MSDS but you would have the trainee: (1) locate the MSDS for a product he or she actually uses on their daily job; (2) ask them to determine which types of personal protective equipment are required when using that chemical; and (3) where they would find that personal protective equipment. Strive for total learner involvement, i.e., having the trainee totally and actively involved with full responsibility for his or her own learning.

Games can help provide opportunities for the attendees to collaborate with one another and be social. When your trainees work together, they will use more of their total brain and learning will increase. If you present the class with a problem, an exercise or even a game, have them complete it in teams so they can work together on finding the solution.

Have plenty of opportunities for people to get up and out of their seats and move around. Activity can increase the learning process, keep the attendees more involved, and help chase away boredom. Getting people physically active and using as many senses as possible will help awaken the body and improve circulation. This will have a positive impact on learning. The part of the human brain involved with movement is the motor cortex and it is located right next to the area used for problem solving. If you restrict bodily movement, you restrict the total brain from functioning at its best. Learning is hampered when we separate the body from the mind. Many

people find it difficult to concentrate when their bodies are not doing something physical. Think about the people you sit next to in training classes that are constantly doodling, twirling their pen or bouncing their leg up and down. These are probably people who learn better when they are active.

## **A Few Great Safety Training Games and Activities**

As a proactive, forward-thinking safety trainer, you already have an open mind when it comes to trying new activities that can benefit others in the workplace. You should continue to have an open mind when it comes to using a variety of games in safety training classes. Some of these may at first seem outlandish, and others might immediately click with you. Before you rule anything out, think about how you could modify it so that it would still be useful in your facility. Some of these games are for very specific topics, like hazardous waste labeling or OSHA Log recordkeeping, and others are stated in general terms to be modified for almost any use.

**Better Bingo:** A modified BINGO game is a great way to review information on any safety topic. Think of 25 questions that are related to the topic. The questions should have short (one- or two-word) answers. These answers will be the keywords. If you are designing the BINGO game yourself, make a grid 5×5 and write a keyword related to the topic in each box. It is preferable to make up a variety of different sheets, using the same words so trainees do not have the same BINGO card. Alternatively, you can give each trainee a blank matrix and then read off each of the keywords while instructing them to place each word in any box on the matrix they choose. This should help to make as many sheets as possible different. Cut the questions out and place them in a box. Pick one question randomly, and read it to the class. If the trainee knows the answer, he or she finds it on their BINGO card and marks it off. Continue until someone has "BINGO."

**High Roller:** Give each team a pair of dice. (Extra Large dice make this more visual.) Post 18 review questions, numbered 1-6 in columns A, B, and C, on a flip chart or a board. Each team takes turns rolling the dice. The value from one die will be the points they can get for answering the question correctly, and the face value on the second die will be the question number they must answer. They can pick from any of the questions with that number as long as it hasn't been answered before. Teams should answer the question as a group, and there should be group consensus before an answer is given. If a team rolls two numbers that have already been answered in all three columns, they lose their turn. Teams continue to take turns and accumulate points until all questions have been answered. When this occurs, tally all the points, and declare a winner.

**It's in the Bag:** Collect several opaque bags (4-6). Place a variety of small objects related to the safety topic you are training inside each bag. (Make sure there is no object in the bag that could cause an injury if someone were to grab it without seeing it.) Each team must pick two objects from the bag. They must think of one reason one of the items is important to the topic, and a second reason why the other item could present a danger related to the topic. After a set amount of time, go around to each team and ask for their explanations.

**Safety Consultant for a Minute:** Every trainee is given one sheet of paper and asked to write across the top one question they have about the topic or about an area where they need help.

Tell the trainees that they are all Safety Consultants for this exercise. With a large timer in view, tell the class that when time starts, they need to pass their sheet to the right. When they do this, they will also be getting a sheet as well. They will have one minute to answer the question at the top of the paper they received before time is called, and the process is repeated. When they get the second sheet, they need to first quickly read the other answers and then add something new before time is called again. The process is repeated every minute until everyone has had everyone else's paper. When each trainee gets their original paper back, give them time to review all of the comments. Ask the class if anyone can share an idea they received that they might never have thought of and also ask what the benefit is of getting others' input into specific situations that they are addressing.

**Picture Perfect:** Explain to the class what a pictogram is, then ask the class members, in pairs, to draw a pictogram representing a topic of the training class. After 10 minutes, ask each pair to present their pictogram to the group without announcing what the pictogram represents. Ask each team to guess and keep a record of the answers. The team that had the pictogram correctly identified most frequently wins.

**PPE Partners:** This activity can be used for almost any type of personal protective equipment (PPE). This particular example is designed for a hand safety class. Before the class arrives, gather rubber gloves, vinyl gloves, canvas or work gloves, a grease-based product, a corrosive product, an alcohol-based product, an object with sharp edges or one that may splinter, and other products as available. Place the chemical products and objects on a table in the front of the room. Divide the class into teams, and give each team one each of the various types of gloves. Tell the group that each team should place the appropriate glove for the product in front of it; whichever team gets all five products right first wins. Tell the class that some products might share the same type of glove. After all groups have finished placing their gloves in front of the various products, review and discuss the different decisions made by each group (if any). Review each product and state the appropriate type(s) of gloves that should be used when working with that material.

**Hidden Pictures:** Go out into your work area and stage some unsafe things in an area where no one is working (or at least with the appearance of being unsafe). DO NOT set up anything that could put yourself or others at risk. If you could put many things in one picture, that would be great. Take a good, well-lit, clear photo of the area and then blow up the photo to at least 8.5" × 11" and make enough copies for each team. Divide the class into teams and then give each group one photo. Tell them they have five minutes to write down all of the good things they see, as well as all of the hazards that are present. At the end of the five minutes, the groups should compare their lists. Each team gets one point for each item identified, and an additional bonus point for each item that did not appear on any other team's list.

**The Case of the Careless Carpenter (Case Studies):** Write out 4-6 different scenarios that involve a carpenter who was injured while performing his job tasks but don't give details about how he was injured. Only the background, the surroundings, the tools being used and the injury should be described. Give each team a scenario card, and ask them to determine the cause of accident. After no more than 10 minutes, the groups will need to present their case to the entire class. An alternative is to give each team different details about the accident. For instance, give one team a card containing the scene details, one containing the medical information, one team the damage, and one team the task description. Teams take turns asking yes or no questions to

each other until one team thinks they are ready to guess the answer. If they guess wrong, they lose their turn on the next round.

## **Practical Information for all Games and Activities**

Before using any game in a safety training class, practice the game to make sure that: (1) it works; (2) the game is not threatening or too difficult; (3) you have adequate time allotted; (4) the necessary materials are available; and (5) you have the answers to any quizzes or other game where an answer is the result. You should also check that safety game instructions are clear and complete. If you need to stop to correct yourself or the directions, you will lose the trainees' attention and your credibility. For longer activities, clear written instructions might be necessary. Additionally, you should have more materials than you think you will need. "Fun" props used in safety training games may get lost, break, or inevitably travel home with some employees. Basic materials include flip chart paper, pens, a laptop, and markers. Finally, make sure you will have enough room in the planned training space to have the trainees perform the activity. If they need to split up and work apart from each other, is there space in the room or will you have to send them elsewhere? Beware of this; you could lose control of the group. If the teams need to spread out and work on large sheets of paper, is there enough table space? By working through the activity ahead of time, you will have an idea of the space required.

Dividing the training class into teams works well for most training games. Studies have shown that the social interaction that is involved with a team leads to greater learning. Teams also encourage more participation and ideas. The number of members on each team will affect the activity time. Teams of four or more often need a leader and usually take longer to work on an activity than a team of two or three.

## **Openers and Closers**

### Warm-Ups and Icebreakers

If you have delivered safety training classes in the past, you might be familiar with that awkward feeling that sometimes precedes the start of a safety training class. Your trainees come to class less than ready to learn and you can just tell by the look on their faces that they would rather be someplace else.

The warm-up is important because if you do not get the attention of trainees in the first few minutes, you will most likely have "lost" them for the class. Once their minds become preoccupied with other thoughts, it might be very hard to get them back on track. Also, unless you have built some fluff into the beginning of your class (and this is NOT recommended) you will need to have your trainee paying attention from the very start. The sooner you can engage the trainee and get them involved in their own learning, the better the training experience will be.

Warm-up activities are sometimes called icebreakers or openers. Are these the same? The terms may be used interchangeably but they are actually quite different. An icebreaker generally refers to an activity that is in place to get trainees to get to know each other a little better. Many trainees dread this part of the class since they most likely have memories of being asked (or more likely told) to participate in an activity that either embarrassed them, made them feel uncomfortable or had no relation to the class content. For some reason, some trainers believe that

these types of activities bring the trainees closer together. Usually, the opposite occurs. The trainee ends up feeling awkward and uncomfortable; this is exactly the opposite of what trainees need to experience in order to learn.

Trainees are most receptive and learn best when they are relaxed, feel safe, and feel comfortable in the learning environment. This is why games and activities are great to use in training. If a trainee is having fun, it will be difficult for them to tune out what is going on and in fact, they may be learning without even realizing it.

So are all icebreakers bad? First of all, true icebreakers are really best used with classes that consist of trainees that do not know each other or do not know each other very well. If you are training a group of employees that work together and eat together every day, an icebreaker is probably not needed. If you are training a group of people that may not have ever met, such as the safety personnel from various plants around the country, an icebreaker is a better idea but you should be careful. It is still important to make sure the activity is not embarrassing in any way or makes anyone feel uncomfortable. The best type of icebreaker would still incorporate the theme of the class or the general topic of safety if at all possible.

One possibility for such an icebreaker would be a variation of the “Millionaire for a Minute” activity. For this activity, you would need to post the name of the activity and instructions on a flip chart or slide before the trainees start to enter the class room. Your instructions would state: “If you had a million dollars to spend on safety in your plant, what is the first thing you would spend it on? Be ready to share your answers.”

When the class starts, if it is a small enough group, ask individuals to go around the room, and say their name, their company or location, and their “million dollar purchase.” This is a gentler way of asking trainees to do introductions because it allows them to share ideas with others.

Another type of safety icebreaker is called “Rapid Reporter.” With “Rapid Reporter,” you pair up trainees as they enter the room. Again, you should have the instructions posted so trainees should see them when they enter. Your instructions should state: “Ask your partner their name, location, amount of time in safety, and another question that will get them talking such as “What is the worst accident you ever had to investigate?” or “What is the biggest safety challenge in your plant?”

When the class starts, you will ask each person to take turns giving a “Rapid Report” on their partner, sharing the information they just learned. Again, this removes the need for trainees to share personal information with the class, plus helps to avoid an individual giving an excessively long narrative of their life story.

Finally, when planning icebreakers, never ask trainees to do something you would not want to do yourself. Have you ever noticed that most trainees will often do whatever you say? They trust you and believe that your instructions will serve a higher purpose. Do not break this trust by asking the trainees to do something you would not want to do. The key is to know your audience.

Contrary to icebreakers, which are generally used only when the trainees do not know each other well, openers should always be used. What is an opener? An opener is an activity that: (1) gets the trainees interested; (2) gets the trainees ready to learn; and (3) introduces the topic. Openers should grab attention, establish the climate, set the pace, relax people (including the trainer), and provide a starting point and transition for the rest of the class material. Finally, a good opener should make the trainees understand why they are there and make them really want to learn the information.

Why else should you use a “warm up?” Icebreakers and openers help set the tone, and show the trainees from the beginning that you expect participation. If you start the class off with an activity, they will see quickly that this is not the typical training class. Another good reason to use an icebreaker or opener is that the activity will give you a chance to observe trainees. This can be especially useful if you are unfamiliar with the trainees, which might be the situation if you are a consultant presenting at a client’s location for the first time or if your class has trainees from other locations that you do not know. Is there someone who is very hesitant to participate? Is there someone taking charge from the beginning? Is there someone in the class that seems particularly competitive?

When planning your icebreakers and openers, keep the law of primacy and recency in mind. Your trainees are going to remember best what you do first and last (this is why openers and closers are so important). This is also the reason why you must choose your icebreaker or opener carefully. If you choose the wrong activity, you can throw off the rest of your training class.

When you are selecting your opener, think about whether it will break up preoccupation. If someone is attending a training class in the middle of the workday, they are probably at least slightly preoccupied with what is going on outside the class. A good opener will get the trainee focused on the topic. Your opening should also get people relaxed and comfortable.

Any openers or closers you select should also allow the trainee to be impressed with themselves and their knowledge. The activity must also be related to the class content and, although this can be especially difficult for technical topics such as those covered in safety training, it is not impossible.

Finally, whenever possible, the activity should be fun. Fun leads to positive emotions, which are very important in enhancing learning. If someone is sitting endlessly in a lecture, they probably won’t have positive emotions for very long. Fun can help to increase these positive emotions. If someone is stressed or bored or angry, their learning will be inhibited. If learning is positive, relaxed and engaging, learning will be increased. Fun activities can help to keep the trainee engaged. Examples of “openers,” or “warm-ups” you can use in safety training classes include:

**Ask in the Airplane:** Ask the trainees to write down one question about the topic on a piece of paper, then do their best to make the paper into a paper airplane. (Some people will be much better at this than others!) You could also provide paper airplanes for the class and have them add their question. After you welcome your trainees, you will ask them to throw their airplane across the room. Everyone will need to collect an airplane that is not their own. Sometime during the training class, it will be that person’s job to find out the answer to that

question. At the end of the class (this is used as a closer as well), you refer back to the airplanes and go around the room, asking every person to read their question and the answer they have discovered.

**Crazy Crossword:** A crazy crossword is simply a crossword that you are going to do backward. Instead of giving your trainees a blank puzzle with a set of numbered clues, you are going to give them a completed puzzle with a blank set of numbered clues. The trainees' job is to write an appropriate clue for each word in the puzzle.

**Back to Basics:** As your trainees enter a class, tell them you are putting a word related to the class on their back with a sticky note (extra-strong PostIt® notes work well with this activity). The trainee's goal is to find out what the word is by asking yes or no questions of the other trainees. When they figure out the word on their back, they can sit down. This activity works best for refresher classes where employees are familiar with the specific vocabulary to be used.

**Lone Ranger:** The Lone Ranger usually sparks a great deal of dialogue. Teams are required. Before the class, you need to develop a list of 10 facility repairs that could be related to safety, and preferably, to the class topic. Each team has five minutes to put these ten items in order of priority for repair by the "lone" maintenance employee at the plant who must fix everything himself. When each group is through, ask each team to report on their ranking, and write the number order on a flipchart. Do this with each team and you will likely see great differences, which should lead to an energetic discussion that you can tie into your content.

**Safety Hangman:** Safety Hangman is played like the reverse of regular hangman. You start with a hangman wearing various items of PPE. A word related to the training topic should be used in the game. As with regular hangman, a letter is guessed and if it is not part of the secret word or phrase, one piece of PPE is removed. If the letter is part of the secret word or phrase, it is written into the appropriate space. The game continues until either the word is guessed correctly or all PPE is removed.

### Closers

What about the end? Now that you have opened your class properly, presented the class materials thoroughly with ample opportunities for class interaction throughout the class, it is time to "wrap it up." The closing, or wrap up, can be very difficult, especially on a long day. Most trainees will know the end is near and will start to have trouble paying attention or focusing but this is one of the key times to reinforce the concepts and tools you just presented. You need a final activity that summarizes what you have just told the trainees, why it is important, and emphasizes the action they will take in the future, i.e., after they have left your training class. Closings can also motivate participants to practice what they learned. Many safety trainers simply end when the class material is covered. One of the worst presentation mistakes you can make is to say "Well, that's it." Although most closers involve some type of review, you also do not want to come right out and say "Let's review." The trainees will tune you right out. You know the trainer's saying, "Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you have told them." Closers are reminding the trainees what they just learned.

Unfortunately, without a proper ending, much of the information that you just presented will either not be understood, or quickly forgotten or never used. You can take this thought a bit further by thinking of different topics presented during a longer training class as individual



modules that each need their own opening and closing. All of the techniques we discuss here for openings and closings can be used in this manner as well with slight modification.

Some of the best closers involve competition but be careful. Depending on your particular trainees, you might want to modify the activities slightly so that problems do not occur when very competitive employees are involved.

Closers are as important as openers. Bob Pike, author of *Creative Training Techniques*, recommends that all closers serve three purposes: to tie things together; to form a basis for making action plans; and to celebrate the close of the class. Celebrations are probably the thing that seems most unusual to you as a safety trainer. Have you celebrated at the end of a safety training class? Especially if your trainees have just completed a multi-day class or even a class that has met over several weeks, the trainees (and you) deserve to celebrate. Celebrations can consist of small prizes or awards or inexpensively made certificates of completion that you present to each trainee. Celebration activities do not have to be extravagant, just something that brings closure to the class. Some closing, or “wrap up” activities you can use in end your safety training classes appropriately include:

**A-Z Race:** A-to-Z Race is a great way to review the class content, while adding a bit of competition to the group. You will need to give a large sheet of paper (like flip chart paper) to each team and ask them to draw a line down the middle. They should write A-M down one side and N-Z down the other. The goal of the activity is for each team to come up with a word or phrase related to the class content for each letter of the alphabet. The teams can use their notes for the activity. This is a race so all teams should be striving to finish first. The first team to fill in words or phrases for each letter wins. After one team finishes, post their answers and review with the class.

**Brain Dump:** To have your trainees participate in the Brain Dump closer, you first divide the class into teams of 2-4. Give each team a piece of paper and tell them to number it 1-20. (For longer classes, you can have the teams number their pages 1-40 or 1-50). Tell the team they will have three minutes to write down as many key items or phrases they can think of that relate to the information just presented (and no word or phrase can be repeated). If they can think of more than 20 items, they should keep going. At the end of the allotted time, check to see which team has the most words or phrases. Share the winning teams list with the class and, if time allows, ask the other teams to share words or phrases that the winning team may have missed.

**Team Test:** For a Team Test, you first divide the trainees into teams of 4 or 5. Instruct the teams that their job is to make up a set of ten test questions for another team. After every team has completed their questions, the tests should be collected, and then redistributed among the other teams. Teams can work on their test questions as a group.

### Debriefing

Finally, we need to say a word about debriefing. Debriefing is a term often used to describe the time when you help the trainees, through the asking of specific questions, to reflect upon an activity. After all is said and done, people are going to learn from the activity when they are able to reflect on the experience. When the trainees are wrapped up in the activity, they may be laughing or deep in a team discussion, so they probably aren't thinking about what they are

learning. Debriefing is the most important part of the exercise but unfortunately, it is also usually the most overlooked. Many safety professionals have never even heard of the word.

Debriefing should encourage discussion. It is suggested that you have a list of questions developed that will help you to achieve the particular learning objectives for the class that you are delivering. For example, imagine the learning objective of a safety leadership class was for supervisors to choose between different forms of communication (like acknowledgement, parroting, or paraphrasing). Based on this objective, you could come up with the following possible debriefing questions:

- What form of communication did you use in this activity?
- What occurred in this activity that you could use back on the job?
- What did you like least about the method of communication used in this exercise?

It is good to start off with generic debriefing questions such as, “What did you like most about this activity?” Also, make sure you have a question or two that is going to help them take the training they received and apply it back in the workplace. In the above example, you could ask “When would paraphrasing be good to use back on the job?” Keep in mind that you always want debriefing to lead to a two-way conversation. Do not ask questions that can be answered with a yes or no. Also, never tell someone that their answer is wrong. An answer to a debriefing exercise is based on a person’s perception of the experience, so there is really no right or wrong answer. If you do get an answer that does not reflect what you saw, try to ask the question again in a different way. When you are in the planning phase of your training class, create more debriefing questions than you think you will need. Remember, debriefing is really a way for the trainees to discover for themselves what they have learned.

## **Can Everyone Participate?**

Most experienced safety trainers know the importance of incorporating opportunities for interactive class involvement into their training classes. There are a wide variety of games and activities available. These games and activities can be a great addition to safety training classes if the activity is well planned and is directly related to the class content. While interactive activities are a great addition to training classes, most of these activities are based on the premise that the trainees can read and write English.

### Participation by Non-English Speakers

The challenge of providing safe workplaces for non-English speakers has been recognized by industry professionals and government organizations alike. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), language barriers contribute to about 25% of all workplace fatalities. Groups such as OSHA have dedicated a great deal of time and money to providing education and materials for Spanish speakers, since this is the fastest growing demographic in America. Additionally, statistics have shown that these non-English speakers have a greater number of workplace accidents.

### Illiterate Workers

This leads to another group that is largely overlooked. These are illiterate American workers who are native English speakers. Illiteracy is a big problem in many areas of the United States. A five-year, \$14 million study conducted by the United States government interviewed over 26,000 adults. The study proved that more than 92 million people (more than 47% of U.S. adults) cannot read and write well enough to hold an above-poverty-level-wage job. This study also proved that more than 40% of employees in U.S. businesses are functionally illiterate.

When safety training is conducted in the native language of the trainees, whether that is English, Spanish or any other language, the training will still be flawed if it does not account for the literacy level of the audience.

A study by Elizabeth Szudy at the University of California at Berkeley found that most training materials are written at a college reading level and many materials, like Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs), are written only in English. One of the suggestions that came out of her study was to design training materials that rely less on reading.

Sherry Baron, M.D. of NIOSH has reported that the form of the training and not just the language is important. She also emphasizes that foreign-born workers may not be literate so that visual aids are more effective than the written word.

Very often, safety concerns and regulations can be conveyed without words by the use of pictures or other visual clues. A good example is the standard red, yellow and green traffic light. Most people in America recognize these signs and understand that red means stop and green means go. Even when these colors are used on workplace equipment controls, most people associate red with stop and green with go. When workers from other countries begin to work in American workplaces, it is important that these colors mean the same things.

### Games for Non-English Speakers and Illiterate Workers

A few suggestions for safety training games and activities that can be used with trainees who do not read or write English well, either because they are non-native English speakers or because they are illiterate, are described below.

**Safety Lotería:** Safety Lotería is a version of a popular Mexican game called Lotería. If you have played Safety Bingo, you know that the game boards have words or short phrases related to the class topic. Safety Lotería is like Safety Bingo but instead of words on the game boards, there are small pictures. The game can be played very simply by the trainer randomly selecting a picture and then showing the card with the picture to the trainees. If a trainee has that picture on his or her card, they mark it off. Just like in regular Bingo, the first person to get all of the pictures in a line (across or down) marked off, wins. While this is an amusing game, it does not do a good job of teaching new skills related to safety. To make the activity more educational, the picture selected should not simply be shown but a hint or even a small riddle should be said that describes the picture. (If your audience is not English-speaking, this description or riddle will need to be said in the language of the trainees.) When the game takes place in this way, trainees need to think about the class content before selecting the appropriate square on the board. An effective game in safety training is one that is an equal mix of chance and skill. Without the short description of the picture, Safety Lotería is all chance. By asking trainees to figure out what

safety picture you are talking about by a short description or question, skill is involved and the game is more effective as a safety training aid.

**Safety Sequence:** Safety Sequence is a good activity for training topics that include a series of steps or a safety procedure, such as lockout/tagout or confined space entry, Safety Sequence (with pictures) can be a real learning tool. To organize the game, you will need to find a simple illustration or photo (one you take yourself is fine if the picture is clear and clearly shows the step) of each step of the procedure. For a simple lockout/tagout exercise, the photos you might want to include would be: (1) determine the hazards; (2) notify others; (3) isolate energy sources; (4) remove potential energy; (5) verify lockout; (6) perform work, (7) prepare to start up again; (8) remove locks and tags; (9) test equipment; and (10) notify others when work is complete. Make copies of these photos or drawings so you can put one step on a small card, and make several sets of cards (one set for each group of trainees). After the material has been presented, shuffle the cards and give a set to each group. Tell them they have one minute to get the cards in the proper order, with the first step of lockout first in the pile and the last step in the lockout/tagout procedure should be last. After one minute has passed, tell the groups to stop and review the steps in the proper order. Ask each group if they have the same order or if they disagree. If the groups complain about having only one minute to do the exercise, begin a discussion about how difficult it can be to make important decisions when rushed, and why it is very important to thoroughly understand critical safety procedures.

If trainees speak basic English and can read and write, even at a low level, there are some things safety trainers can do besides just using visual aids. There are techniques that can help anyone to improve their communication, and these classes could help safety trainers to develop training materials that enable trainees to comprehend more information. Writing and developing training materials that are at the appropriate level can be done with a little planning and possibly training on the subject for the safety trainer.

In the study conducted by Elizabeth Szudy, she suggests that when illustrations or photos are used, they only be used if there is a very clear connection to the training material. For example, if you wanted to add a visual aid to a PowerPoint presentation on electrical safety and thought that a graphic of a tombstone might help reinforce the message that electricity can be dangerous, this type of indirect relationship might be confusing for the trainees. Graphics or illustrations that are more directly related to the slide would be more effective.

The number of employees that need good safety training will only continue to grow. This is especially challenging since much of this group may not read or write or even speak English very well or at all. By incorporating interactive training activities that rely more on visual aids than written materials, safety training will be more effective for everyone.

## **Summary**

Interactive games and activities used in safety training classes can make training more effective. It can also decrease the amount of time necessary to create training materials as well as decrease the amount of times that attendees must be in class in order to learn and retain the information. Although interactive class activities may be very different from the way we usually learn as adults, these principles can greatly improve your safety training efforts. Safety games and

activities can make training classes more fun; can help trainees remember information longer; and can make safety training classes something that employees finally get excited about.

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