

Preparing your training materials and environment

General preparation - know when, where, what, who

These questions may help you obtain the right information to help you plan for your training program:

- **When:** When is the training? Day? Date? Time? Also, do you have enough time to prepare? Is the amount of allotted time adequate for the amount of content?
- **Where:** Where is the session? On-site or off? If off-site, is it easy to travel to the location? How do you get there? What's the address? Telephone number? Will you need to make travel arrangements? Is public transportation available? How do you get materials to the site?
- **What:** What kind of training is being expected? What resources are required? What kind of facilities are available? What will you need?
- **Who:** Who is the key planner? Who are the participants? How many? What's their background? Why were you chosen to deliver the training? Who is the contact person at the training site? How do you reach that person on-site and off?

Lots of questions; lots of answers. Write them down and keep them handy!

(List from: *Training for Dummies*, by Elaine Biech)

Training materials

- Slide presentations can be printed as handouts for participants to use for making personalised notes during the session. From PowerPoint, select the printing option **Handouts** and specify either 6 or 3 slides per page.
- Quick reference cards and other reference sheets may also enhance the learning process. An extensive range of Themis Quick Reference Cards is available on the Themis website: http://www.themis.unimelb.edu.au/support/help/ref_cards.html
- Learners should be encouraged to refer to (downloadable) online learning resources if they require further support. Electronic repositories for learning materials are effective because the information stored there can be updated or adapted as required, avoiding the problems associated with obsolete documentation.
- Be mindful of the fact that learners may be distracted by long and complex user guides if these are distributed during your session, resulting in a failure to absorb the essential messages of the training.

It is important that all handouts and additional materials are ready to hand when you need them. Make any printouts or photocopies well in advance, and have them in clearly labelled piles on a desk or on chairs nearby. Audience concentration is quickly broken if the flow of the presentation is interrupted due to a lack of trainer preparation.

In general, avoid long breaks for handing out exercise sheets and similar, and either distribute them before the presentation begins or during natural breaks in the presentation (eg: as participants log in to the computer to practice new tasks).

Room arrangements

Your room may have significant effect on your training session. Arrange the room to support the learning objectives and the amount of participation you desire.

You may not have the opportunity to select a room, but if you do, consider the attributes that will create the best learning environment for your participants.

- **Size:** Arrange for a room to accommodate the number of participants. Remember that a room that is too large can be as ineffective as one that may be too small;
- **Accessibility:** Ensure that the room is accessible to all, including those who have limited mobility;
- **Location:** If participants need to travel (either by foot or vehicle) to the session, the location should not pose a hardship, for example, walking in rain or parking difficulty;
- **Convenience:** Readily accessible toilets, telephones, snacks, lunch accommodations, etc. help ensure that participants return on time following breaks;
- **Distractions:** Select a room that is free of distractions and noise. Thin walls with a sales convention next door may not create the environment you're trying to establish for learning;
- **Obstructions:** Select a room that is free of structures such as posts or pillars that may obstruct participants' views.
- **Seating:** Select a location that provides comfortable, moveable chairs. Seating arrangements should further enhance the learning environment you wish to establish. Determine what's most important for the learner.
- **Furniture:** In addition to determining the seating arrangements and the kind of tables you prefer, check to ensure that there is a table at front of the room for your supplies and equipment.



Tip: Don't forget the rubbish bin! Training rooms and meeting rooms rarely have rubbish bins - remember to ask for one.

- **Lighting:** Lighting should be adequate. Dimly lit ballroom ambiance will not promote energy in a training session. Is the lighting bright enough? Is it natural lighting? If the room has windows, which direction are they facing? Can windows be darkened, if necessary? A morning sun coming up behind your projection screen will blind the participants and wash out the image on the screen. Know where light switches are located so that you can brighten or darken the room as needed.
- **Climate control:** You will never be able to please everyone in your session. However, if you have the ability to adjust the temperature yourself, you can try. Determine where the thermostat is located and whether you have any control over it. Experiment with it while you set up the room. Does it respond quickly or slowly? Do you need to contact someone to make adjustments?



Tip: When adjusting thermostats, make changes one degree at a time and give the equipment time to work. Large changes in the thermostat will cause a once too-cool room to become too warm and vice versa.

This material was adapted from the following sources:

- Biech, E., *Training for Dummies*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 2004
- Luscre, A. *Planning & Preparing Successful Technology Training: Session Design, Training Materials and Presentation*, Mogadore Local School Network online resource 2007
- Sheltercentre free online training services, 2007.