

TRAINER'S CHECKLIST

It's difficult to always remember everything we need to take into account when designing and facilitating learning processes. So this checklist could be helpful for remembering all the elements. It's also fine if you don't manage to fulfill all of these things, as the learning contexts can be different and not all is needed every time. Plus none of us are able to create perfect learning sessions.

This checklist can be used when planning your training session and also when analysing it. It can also be used to brainstorm ideas on how to embed each element into the session. If it feels overwhelming, just pick a few which you'd like to focus on and practice.

You can first answer these questions with your own ideas and then consult with the other chapters from the handbook, to get more ideas from there.

What is the intended learning outcome (what is the new knowledge or skill the learners should gain)?

Make realistic estimations, take into account the length of your session, how much time is available for deep thinking and practicing, how much or little do learners already know about the topic, what could be the misconceptions that first need to be tackled.

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What do you want the learners to start thinking about during the session?

In order to reach the planned learning outcome, what is the thinking process the learners should go through, what should they realise and think about first? What should you ask and do to get them thinking about it?

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Do you activate learners' thinking? How? When?

Easiest way to activate the brain is to let people speak, let them ask questions and give answers themselves. Learners' brains should be active and construct the new knowledge from the beginning of the session. How much and what kind of interaction is there with the learners? When and how often do you ask for their input?

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Do you get to know learners' pre-existing knowledge and their misconceptions? How? When?

Is there a possibility to get some information about their opinions and knowledge before the session? That could already help to prepare the session which takes into account some existing misconceptions. In any case, asking people their opinions and knowledge at the start of the session also helps to adjust your session content on the go. What kind of questions could you ask to get the best overview of the pre-knowledge and misconceptions?

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Do you help the learners to challenge their misconceptions? How?

There is not always time to correct the misconceptions, but raising the right questions, offering comparative data, asking to give examples and comparing different options could help to make learners question their misconceptions.

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Do you create possibilities for effort and mistake making for learners?

Having to solve some problem or task where the learners lack some skill or knowledge is a good way to create mental effort which is needed for learning.

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Do you help the learners construct new knowledge? How?

Solving a problem is knowledge constructing, but also asking to explain something or compare different options, or creating opportunities when learners need to phrase a principle based on examples or create definitions or find principles on their own.

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Do you help to analyse and reflect on mistakes made and give expert feedback so that learners understand what would be the right approach? How? When?

Providing expert guidance is a crucial part of mistake making, so that the learners won't leave the session confused and without full understanding of the issue. Reflection should have enough time after problem solving, so that there can be discussion between educator and learners. Another option is to do it after the session in writing.

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 **Do you assess if learning happened? How? When?**

If we want the things we have taught to stay with learners for a longer time, we should assess it after some time has passed, maybe with a follow up call or questionnaire. If that is not possible, what could be the ways to test if the learners are able to put the learned things into practice during the learning activity?

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 **Do you make sure that learners later also retrieve the learned things? How? When?**

In order for information to stay in our long term memory, retrieval needs to be practiced – trying to recall information from the memory. Of course it can be done right at the end of the session, but it is impactful only if it is also done after there has been time to forget the info. So it has to be some time after the session, which is not always possible to organise. If possible, reminder questionnaires can be sent or the retrieval exercise made at the beginning of the next session.

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 **Do you create relatedness with learners? How?**

Relatedness means that the learners feel that you as the educator like and accept them. Creating relatedness starts from the beginning of the session, how you create relationships with them and what attitude you have towards all of them. And it needs to be kept throughout the session.

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 **Do you support the autonomy of learners? How?**

Autonomy means that the learning activity is meaningful for the learners, they understand its importance for them and/or can find that meaning during the session. This means their point of views should be heard, and they should be allowed to find that meaning themselves, and they have the possibility to create and discover solutions themselves.

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 **Do you support the competence of learners? How?**

Competence means that learners understand what is happening in the learning activity, what tasks they need to do and how to do them, and the tasks are at the right level (not too easy, not too hard). This means giving clear instructions, being present to help and guide.

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EXAMPLE LEARNING SESSION FORMAT

In order to create some understanding how this all could work in reality, we have made this example. This should not be taken as universal form, it is simply one example how these principles could be put into practice. Timeshare can really depend on the specific group of learners and how the flow of the session goes, where some activities may need more time than others.

Timeshare	Activity	Purpose
Before the session	Small questionnaire with open questions for learners about what they know and find important about the topic	Getting to know learners' pre-knowledge and possible misconceptions
5%	Asking everyone their name, keeping eye contact, asking why they are here and their connection to the topic, telling how you will merge it with what you had in mind for the session	Creating relatedness, supporting autonomy
10%	Asking how they define the problem or issue, what examples do they have	Getting to know learners' pre-knowledge, activating their thinking, supporting competence and autonomy
20%	Asking questions about their opinions and thoughts – why do they think so? Probing more with questions, giving your examples, info, data, asking to compare contradictory data or information	Challenging misconceptions, supporting autonomy and relatedness
25%	Dividing participants into groups and giving them a problem to solve on the topic	Creating effort, room for mistakes, allowing participants to construct their own knowledge
25%	Discussion and feedback based on the group work, asking input from other groups, if they solved things differently, asking more probing questions	Allowing participants to construct their own knowledge, supporting autonomy
15%	Giving expert feedback and factual input on the correct solutions and data, asking participants to reflect upon it, guiding with questions	Analysis of the mistakes made, constructing new knowledge, supporting autonomy
Throughout the session	Trying to see things from the perspective of your participants, before saying their understanding is wrong, asking why they think so, correcting it politely and explaining why, staying calm and warm towards participants, acknowledging their emotions	Supporting relatedness and competence
1-2 weeks after	Sending feedback questionnaire, asking to recall from memory also main takeaways and how to put them into practice	Retrieval exercise, assessing the learning

Not everything is always possible to put into practice and sometimes we need to choose priorities in our workshop design.



**What would be the few priority things you absolutely need to do?
What would you pick from the text above?**

These are the few things we recommend and that are doable in almost any situation:



- Ask for learners' pre-existing knowledge and build relatedness – open with questions about what they know about the topic, if and what interests them about it. If nothing else, at least you will learn something about them and how they think about the topic.
- Delay your own answers and knowledge. If someone has questions, ask first if someone else has an answer, what they think the answer is, give them time to think, and only then give your thoughts.
- Even if you are presenting to a big audience where interaction possibilities are limited, you can ask people to write down their own answers first or ask them to have a short discussion with a person next to them or use different digital tools like Mentimeter to get their input.

Few finishing thoughts:

The one who speaks most, gets to learn most. It should be the learners, not the educator. We as educators are there for the learners, not the learners there for us. Learning activity is their process and should be accommodated to their needs.

And finally:

*Don't forget to breathe and tell yourself: none of us can control everything.
Some things we simply must let go. And it's also ok :)*