

10 Training Mistakes To Avoid

You may be quite knowledgeable about your training topic, and yet still fail to deliver effective training to your class of executives or managers. The following ten mistakes can erode the quality of any training initiative. Ask yourself if you are guilty of any of them:

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## 1. Insufficient workspace

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In addition to providing ample space for your students, make sure to allow sufficient room for yourself. For example, if you are using an overhead projector, you need a table large enough to hold your overheads, manuals, props and so forth—about six feet long. You also need from six to eight feet of space between your table and the audience. More than that separates you from the audience; less may make you and your audience feel claustrophobic.

If you are working off-site, give detailed instructions to those in charge of the facility—even provide a sketch—and arrive early to make any adjustments.

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## 2. Ignoring those forced to attend

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Some trainers call these individuals “hostages.” These persons were forced to attend, and they can make your training task more difficult if you don't acknowledge their presence at the start of the program. Don't ask for them to admit to their situation. Rather, point out that many times those who least want to attend a training session end up the most grateful once they've completed the program.

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## 3. Hiding behind the lectern

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Trainers who do this place a barrier between themselves and their audience. Step away from the lectern and move around the room. Your movement will keep learners more alert. If you must be near a lectern, keep your notes on top of it and stand to the side.

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## 4. Being impersonal with your audience

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When you don't make personal contact with your audience before you start, you appear to be unapproachable, which will decrease your audience's comfort level with you. Your students will feel they can't speak with you during breaks. So talk with people in the room at every opportunity. Ask trainees to wear name identification cards or use tent cards, and call them by name when you answer their questions.

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### 5. Failure to make eye contact

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Lack of eye contact makes your students feel uncomfortable and distrustful of you. So, as you speak, look directly into someone's eyes for a few seconds and then move on to someone else.

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### 6. Making excuses

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So the workbooks aren't collated or the group can't do the exercise you planned because your dog ate the master copy—the class won't know. When you point out these shortcomings, your class will begin to question your professionalism. Try to ward off sticky situations by not waiting until the last minute to prepare your materials. When the unexpected does occur, just behave as if everything is progressing as planned.

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### 7. Mumbling or speaking in a monotone

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A dull delivery will sabotage your presentation. Learn to articulate clearly. Practice your presentation with a tape recorder or on video. Listen carefully and ask yourself how you can add pizzazz to your voice by varying the speed or volume or by pausing before making an important point.

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### 8. Jumping from one topic to another with no transition

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Trainers who move from topic to topic without tying each new subject together can easily lose their audience—and lose their audience's interest. Build bridges into your program notes. Use breakout sessions to move the group from one subject to the next after you have summarized the past subject and set the stage for discussion of the new one.

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### 9. Avoiding questions

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When you ignore questions from participants, or discourage them (“We'll get to that later”), you stand in the way of the learning process. Ask for questions as you go through your material. If you would prefer questions at a specific point in the discussion because of the nature of the material, state this preference. And paraphrase questions before answering so everyone understands what has been asked.

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## 10. Unconnected icebreakers

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Some icebreakers work, others don't. Rather than having your audience hop around on one foot to wake up the group, ask trainees to identify themselves and talk about what they hope to gain by the end of the training program. If you use an icebreaker, select one that your participants won't find humiliating or threatening and always try to close the loop, meaning how does that icebreaker help us in our cause. How does it get us to grow closer together, etc...