

TIP 1

Give Participants Something to Do Before the Session Formally Begins

Your participants are gathering for the training session. Most trainers wait until they have everyone's attention and then launch into their design. Why not give your participants something, on topic, to do before you call the class to order? That action will get their brains active in the same way as a race car and motivated drivers when they hear "Start your engines!" If you are leading a multi-session program, make this your practice before every meeting. Your participants will come to class wondering what you've dreamed up next for them to do.

Let's explore some options that give participants something to do before you start.

1. Display a question in full view of gathering participants.

As participants enter the training session, display . . .

- a quotation to interpret (e.g., "What does this mean: 'Nobody washes a rental car.'")
- a provocative question to answer (e.g., "What kinds of employee recognition really work?")
- an interesting problem to solve (e.g., "How can this company be profitable with its current level of debt?")

Give participants a few minutes to ponder the question individually or in pairs before you formally begin.

2. Give out a pre-class activity.

Hand out to participants a sheet of paper containing a pre-class activity that involves words, problems, graphics, or other connections to the material you are about to teach. Some choices include:

- a brief crossword puzzle
- scrambled words
- brain-teasers (sometimes called “wuzzles”)
- a document riddled with errors
- a list of vocabulary words to define or translate
- a short, fun, quiz
- an interesting survey to complete
- a story that needs an ending

3. Ask participants to create a question.

Give participants an index card as they await the beginning of the session and invite them to write down a question they might have about the upcoming topic. They can write a question alone or together with a participant partner. The question could be about:

- the contents of a pre-reading assignment (e.g., “What kinds of companies were studied in Jim Collins’ book *Good to Great?*”)
- a pre-course assignment that was given (e.g., “What’s the answer to the third problem you gave us?”)
- something of curiosity to the participant about the topic to follow (e.g., “How can you read the social style of a person?”)

You can collect the question cards and read as many as you can before you begin. You can also shuffle the cards and redistribute them so that each participant receives someone else’s question. Then you can invite willing participants to read the questions on their cards and ask you to answer them or attempt to answer them themselves.

