# Guidance note no. 5 – Training techniques

The choice of training technique should be aligned with the learning objective. Virtually most training techniques can be used in relation to any material or topic, you just need to be creative. What follows is an overview of the main participatory training techniques and some tips on how to use them.

**Brainstorming**

**What it is?** An exercise to generate ideas around a specific interest area.

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| **How does it work?** Participants are invited in an informal way to list ideas or solutions to challenging problems. All ideas are noted down on a flipchart by the trainer and are not criticized. Only after all the responses are recorded is there subsequent analysis or categorisation, and a discussion on the appropriateness of the ideas.  **Why should you use it?** This is a useful technique for reaching agreement on terminology or generating creative ideas by encouraging everyone’s contributions in response to an idea or question.  Particularly if you do not set rules, it allows participants to think freely and move into new areas of thought.  **In a nutshell:**   * Brainstorms can be used in a variety of ways, ranging from ice breakers, idea creation, finding solutions, to assessing people’s existing levels of attitudes, skills and knowledge. * Clarify the use of the brainstorm for participants, so they know what to expect and can see the purpose of the exercise. * The role of the trainer is that of facilitator, only setting the original structure of the exercise and having little direct contribution to the information that is collected. * All brainstorms should have a purpose, that should be clarified to participants, even if it is only a way of introducing a topic. * Ideally brainstorms should be followed by an exercise that uses the information gathered in the brainstorm.   **Tips for using brainstorming:**  • Define the topic/problem/issue as a statement or question.  • Give people time to think (and write if necessary) on their own, or in a pair or group.  • Summarise long answers into one word, and check that any changes are approved  by the person offering the contribution.  • Allow people to pass if they cannot contribute.  • If you wish to set clear parameters, do it before doing the brainstorm: will it be controlled, in other words  will you only accept contributions that seem relevant, versus uncontrolled or all contributions will be accepted without judgement? |

**Snowballing (pyramiding)**

**What is it?** It is a way of elaborating issues, involving participants in the following group architecture:

1. the participants work alone;
2. then in pairs;
3. then in groups of four;
4. then in groups of eight.

**How does it work?** The tasks for the participants might be to:

1. answer a specific question;
2. list key words related to a topic;
3. agree or disagree with a certain idea.

The trainer invites a representative from each group to present the outcomes of their debates to the other groups by presenting their findings on flipchart sheets.

**Why should you use it?** To consolidate learning or to encourage collaboration in the development of new ideas, share learning and galvanise participants.

**Tips for using snowballing**

* Ensure that you have room large enough for small groups to work together and materials for them to capture their ideas (flipcharts, whiteboards, paper).
* Facilitation is needed to encourage the group to work collaboratively.
* Clear instructions are needed.
* Feedback session in plenary is required.

**Main advantages:**

• promotes a good, shared level of analysis of a problem, including listening to the views of other participants and developing the ability to summarize the views expressed to achieve a common vision;

• prompts participants to be creative by setting the framework for dynamic discussion;

* It is ideal if you have a large audience, as it breaks it down into smaller

groups and all trainees have the chance to speak.

* It is quick to organize, and works with almost any topic.

**Presentation/lecture**

**What is it?** It is an educational talk that facilitate acquisition of new knowledge acquisition. Lectures are the most widely used training method, not always appropriately.

**How does it work?** It is structured presentations, aiming at knowledge transfer.

**Why should you use it** Lectures, as a direct training method, represent a valuable and efficient instrument to explain ideas and theories in a short time. They are also ideal if you want to provide input from a leading practitioner to underline practicality issues or panel members to open up a comparative or interdisciplinary approach to the topic under discussion.

**Tips for using lectures**

* Be aware of the risk of lectures turning the training into a “mere didactic” teaching;
* Remember that the attention span of the audience is a maximum of 20-30 minutes;
* The different learning styles of the audience might affect information transfer;
* Choose language, speed (pauses), volume, tone of voice and body language (gesture), also to emphasise important points;
* Visual and other support material should be used to facilitate absorption of new information;
* The composition of the audience will determine how formal or informal a presentation should be.
* Lectures must follow a clear and logical structure (introduction, main body, and conclusion)
* Get the timing right or, better aim for your presentation to be marginally shorter than the allotted time so as to ensure time for questions or for embroideries to your planned speech.
* Observe body language of participants and react accordingly;
* Don’t read from a text

**Do not forget!**

Voice, eyes, technology and training materials are all to be prepared in advance and practised prior to the event!

**Puzzle**

**What it is?** It is a technique that simulates participatory learning and discussions in couples. a debate between opposing parties and aims at developing advocacy skills and empathy.

**How does it work?** Print out separately statements related to a certain issue that you want participants to discuss about. Cut in half (or so!) the statements and put them in a hat or other container. Ask participants to draw a certain number of slips of paper from the hat and tell them they have to complete the sentences by looking for the right match. Provide glue or tape and a flipchart paper hung on the wall where participants can compose the sentences. Go through the results and debrief in plenary,

**Why should you use it?** This exercise can be used to stimulate cooperative learning and works very well also as an energizer.

**Remember!** This exercise works best if statements are worded in such a way that participants could end up with more than one possibility.

**Tip** In order to ensure the needed level of interactivity and discussion, make sure that each participant get at least 3 “half sentences”!

**Opinion poll**

**What it is?** It is a technique that aims at the identification of a proposition, which is a statement about a logical conclusion in relation with a situation, incident or observation.

**How does it work?** For example, participants are given a poem which expresses disappoint with a failed assassination against a head of state, who is considered by certain segments of the society as a brutal dictator. The proposition could be that the author of this poem should be convicted on the grounds of praising a crime or criminal. Multiple propositions can be presented.

**Why should you use it?** This exercise is particularly useful for increasing the skills and competences of judges and prosecutors in developing well-reasoned judgments and decisions. It helps to create lively discussion environment to elaborate on the different aspects of legal regulations and how those should be implemented into concrete situations

**Tips for running an opinion poll**

• Write the proposition on the flip chart paper – do not disclose it until you have presented the incident or situation.

• Facilitate the poll by hanging, in advance, on 5 different spots on the walls the following cartons: I Completely Agree, I Agree, I am Undecided, I Disagree, I Completely Disagree.

• Invite participants to take a position after you have read the proposition.

• Invite participants to state their reasons for being on that particular spot.

• invite participants to change spot following the explanations given by their peers.

**Remember**

• At the end of the exercise make sure that you wrap up, and that you include in your wrap up some reference to how people who seem to have the same view because they stand at the same place, may actually be doing so for many different reasons.

**Resource person**

Resource person is generally defined as someone who has knowledge, relevant skills, competence and expertise to give a talk, guidance or first-hand info in a given subject or area If the time allocated for this training permits and the relevant resource person is available, either a respected media professional or a judge from the ECtHR can be invited as a resource person.

When a resource person is invited, trainers should pay attention to some delicate matters.

• The facilitator should be present in the room during the session and only when the group is off the topic, s/he should intervene;

• When benefiting from a resource person, trainers will form their own values concerning the subject matter. At this point, the resource person may deviate from the aim and try to make the trainees accept his opinions. The facilitator should be careful against such situations, by reminding everyone that the point of the exercise is not to reach a consensus, but to raise awareness of different points on the subject matter.

**Experiential exercises**

**What is it?** Experiential learning is learning through reflection on doing, which is often contrasted with didactic learning. It focuses on the learning process of the individual who is going through an experience very similar to what happens in real life situations.

**Why should you use it?** This method can be particularly fruitful in training events focussing on values and attitudes. The process can result in changes in judgment, feeling or skills for the individual.

**Tips for running experiential exercises**

• The learner should be willing to be actively involved in the experience.

• The learner should be able to reflect on the experience.

• The learner should possess and use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience.

• And the learner should possess decision making and problem solving skills in order to use the new ideas gained from the experience.

Experiential exercises can take different forms, such as those listed below.

**Group works**

**What is it?** Group work involves 2-4 people (in any even no more than 5!) formally working together on a project, topic, assignment. The group discussion is normally followed by a report to the plenary.

**How does it work?** It is usually enough to ask the participants to discuss the topic with the person next to them. Small groups should be given a clear topic to address and allowed a short amount of time to discuss it. They are effective in the early stages of a training course when participants may still be experiencing some uneasiness in talking to their peers. After the discussion, a selected number of groups can be asked to give feedback to the whole group so that views can be shared and, where appropriate, this may be recorded on a flipchart.

**Why should you use it?** To complement lectures, to interrupt disruptive behaviours (which are better dealt in small groups than in plenary, to facilitate everybody’s active participation. It facilitates the development of a friendly atmosphere.

**Tips for using group works**

* Provide clear instructions – if need be write them on a board.
* Be realistic about the assigned task
* • Oversee the works of the groups, also to ensure that leading participants do not dominate;
* Forms groups that are balanced in gender and expertise
* Praise the work of the group, also in case of wrong answers.

**World Café**

**What is it?** It is a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action in groups of all sizes. The technique builds on the notion of group intelligence. By organizing several discussion rounds where people are invited to discuss a topic of mutual interest in small groups, the technique enables bringing together individual ideas into one comprehensive message.

**Why should you use it?** To ensure participations when you have a large audience

**How does it work?**  Create a "special" environment, most often modelled after a café, where people feel invited to contribute i.e. small round tables, plenty of paper or a flipchart paper tablecloth, coloured pens. There should be 3-6 chairs at each table. Small group sizes are essential. The process begins with the first of a few rounds of conversation for the small group seated around a table. At the end of the round, each member of the group moves to a different new table. Only the table host stays to welcome the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round, using the flipchart tablecloths as a visual reminder of the previous conversation.

**Why should I use it?** The World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue and stimulate ideas in a snowballing way.

**Tips for using the world café**

* Each round is prefaced with a question designed for the specific context and desired purpose of the session. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction. The question is at the heart of the conversation so make sure it matters for all participants.
* When bringing together the discoveries and insights of the small groups, the group gets an opportunity to see and link all the harvested information from a broader perspective. Patterns can be identified and the collective wisdom becomes visible. Also possibilities for action might emerge.

**Debate**

**What is it?** Debate is a method of formally presenting an argument in a disciplined manner.

**How does it work?** In contrast with lectures, debate uses hypothetical questions to ask trainees in the judiciary to draw conclusions through their own reasoning process. There is no correct answer from the trainer’s standpoint. The hypothetical question only offers trainees a mechanism to process the ideas leading to a conclusion. At the end of each successful debating session, each participant will adopt a standpoint on the issue (either voluntarily or as directed).

**Why should you use it?** The aims are to stimulate thinking and reasoning, as well as understanding opposite perspectives, particularly when given roles (i.e. patient, victim…) are given. They can very well be complemented by a lecture (in the form of debriefing).

The debate is didactically important if the trainer is looking at the framing of the concept and logical motivation in the reasoning process.

**Remember**

* to provide clear instructions
* to debrief the participants by using their arguments to present conclusions.

**Alternative**

You can stage the debate as a TV show. After debate is over you can ask the audience to express their opinion and/or cast a poll.

**Case study**

**What is it?** It is the presentation of a specific incident, or scenario, with relevant background information, that is analysed in detail with a view to the identification of a solution. They can cover a wide range of subjects: substantive law, procedural and evidential issues, case management, managing behaviour, fair treatment or a mixture of these.

**How does it work?** Participants sit or work on their own or in small groups and develop a solution to the case proposed.

**Why should you use it?** It creates the opportunity to understand and apply principles and rules to a real or imaginary scenario. Case studies do not usually provide clear-cut answers. They are intended to raise questions and allow trainees to work through the decision-making process to find their preferred solutions. A lecture, in the form of debriefing, may complement a case study.

**Tips for running a case study**

• Content should be designed to achieve clearly defined aims and learning outcomes;

• Unreal atmosphere and lack of background detail may encourage impractical decisions;

• Small groups are ideal, as trainees can learn from each other’s experiences and analytical approaches and thereby reflect upon their own approach;

if large groups are established, facilitation is needed;

• Writing a case study is difficult and time consuming;

• Facts should be sufficiently detailed and contain concrete elements that allow trainees to discuss the case on their level of knowledge;

Guiding questions and points of discussion should be elicited;

**Remember!**

• Give groups enough time;

• Give groups the opportunity to debrief: have rapporteurs to report to the group the findings of the small groups;

• Be aware that it might become boring for the trainees if too many groups worked on the same case study. If this is the case, tell the rapporteurs to focus on one issue only and not to repeat what already has been said;

• Ensure sufficient space and support material (flipchart paper, markers) are available.

**Role-plays**

**What is it?** It is a training technique that either demonstrates the theory or that helps the trainees to put in practice what they learned and to find out if the theory works as supposed.

**How does it work?** Participants are given a role and a task/instruction/case-study and are asked to sustain their role in a real-life simulation. Role plays and moot courts are also examples of problem-solving exercises.

**Why should you use it?** This type of group work involves co-operative group work and collective formulation of strategies. It plays out realistic situations, and brings concepts to life. It is advisable to use moot court technique in the very end of the training programme, so that trainees could practice all the knowledge and skills that they gained during the implementation of different modules. It is also very good to build on attitudes and values. As this activity has the potential to consolidate learning, it is a very good opportunity to celebrate what has been gained during the whole training.

**Tips for running a role-play**

• Careful briefing is essential.

• Realistic time limits are needed: too short, and the group will get frustrated; too long, and the group will become bored;

• Ensure all members of the group are involved;

• Encourage division of labour: the task may be too large for the time allocated, and splitting the task up may encourage more involvement;

**Debriefing or feedback**

• Feedback is essential in this exercise: the trainees tried to apply new theory and need feedback in order to know how they have done. Ensure that the feedback is constructive, objective, concrete and specific;

• Don’t overdo! Feedback is two way communication: allow the trainee to debrief: let him/her tell if s/he is satisfied, what was significant for them, barriers to apply what they learned and how they felt during the role play/moot court;

• Be aware that a role play or moot court could be a stressful event for the trainee: s/he might feel exposed to the regards of others. Even more so when they are in a group with ‘peers’: they risk to make mistakes and loose face in front of others.

**Practical demonstrations**

**What is it and how does it work?** In skill-based training when using the demonstration method, the trainer shows the logical step-by-step procedures in doing the job, the principles that apply, and any related information.

**Tips for using practical demonstrations**

* Use language that can be easily understood, not jargon;
* Effective demonstrations require the possibility for participants to practice in turn: consider time and resources needed.

**Circle talks**

**What is it?** It is a technique aimed at sharing emotions and personal thoughts on a given topic or issue.

**How it works?** People sit in circle, without desks or any other “protection”. The order of contributions can be suggested by the trainer or may be determined by an object (a small sea shell, ball of yarn, a stick) The one who holds the object talks and then passes it to the next trainee. Participants have the possibility to decline their turn..

**Why should you use it?** A circle talk is ideal to tackle with and explain the emotions, and show empathy towards a person who is in a certain “situation”. During this exercise, trainers may tell a story and then ask “what does the person in the story feel”? After the “object” is passed on by everyone in the circle, you may ask another question which is “what would you feel if you were in his/her shoes?”

**Tips for running a circle talk**

Never use it at the beginning of a training, as it requires everybody to feel comfortable sharing personal feelings with others:

• Rules set at the outset might include: You should sit in the circle and talk only when you receive the object. Do not forget that you are an equal member of the circle.

• Make sure that you create an environment where a person who has the most difficulty in expressing his opinions and feelings is respected.

• Do not rush the trainees to give a reply. Be patient.

• Say thank you and encourage the words which are uttered in a shy and slow manner.

**Questions**

Questions can be used throughout a training in a planned way to elicit information, encourage thinking processes and to assess levels of knowledge and understanding. They can be a direct and immediate way of clarifying, gaining factual information, allowing participants to share their experience or knowledge and it is an excellent way of starting discussions. Although trainers will usually be the one asking questions, and handling answers this need not always be the case. It can also be useful to throw questions from participants back to the group, and give the control to the group.

**Different types of questions**

• Open questions – allow learners flexibility in their answers and thus give the trainer a clearer idea whether a learner has understood a topic. These questions are often prefaced by who, what, why, how and when?

• Closed questions – will provide the trainer with yes, no short answers. These are useful if you need facts i.e. is this an aim? However they are not generally useful for checking more complex understanding or learning i.e. Do you understand?

• Pick up questions – to return to a previous point/discussion. These can be useful at quiet moments, or to encourage participants to make links between subjects.

• Direct questions – these are normally directed at one individual with the purpose of inviting them to join in or wake up! Obviously these questions can be intimidating, although this may be the effect you desire, however they can also give someone the chance to shine when a trainer knows they will be able to answer.

**Creative training**

The methods available for a training are endless. Those listed and explained above are only a minimum part and can be developed and adapted according to your creativity and the specific environment and audience of the training. Educational and instructional games can be developed on any topic: do not be afraid to be audacious and, considering all that is being illustrated in this Manual, develop your own training style.

**Do not forget:**

To use **visuals** (videos, cartoons, power points, images…). Video clips can provide diverting material and can often illustrate a point more realistically

then a case study, for example. Images can send powerful messages in a much shorter time, and often more effectively, than words. They also appeal to the visual learners and change the dynamic of the training.

Consider **e-education opportunities and tools**, particularly those available on the CoE’s HELP platform (<http://help.elearning.ext.coe.int>)

Make use of **supporting material** (hand-outs, quizzes, tests…). Make your presentations available after the training.

**Do not be afraid of silences**. It is easy to imagine that you should fill a silence; however silences can seem longer than they really are. Give space for participants to come up with a suggestion or answer, rather than immediately moving on.

**Share** your passion!

**Tips for using power point presentations or other visuals**

PowerPoint’s are not the script of your lecture! They should only summarize the key points or concepts that you develop in the course of the session.

Make sure you do not simply run through the slides like an automaton. Inject questions or stories to illustrate your points.

Show one or two slides and then do a short exercise/other activity.

Resist the temptation of showing large pieces of text – use hand-outs instead!

Make sure that your slides are readable: adjust your font size, avoid too much information, choose cold colours

Images (also called distractors) are helpful unless you abuse them.

Test your presentation before the training starts!