



Appendix 1

Seven Simple Strategies for Improving Group Instruction in Adult Education Settings

1. The layout of the room is critically important to successful group instruction. Avoid seating learners in rows; have them sit so that they can see one another's faces.
2. If the learners in the group don't know one another's names, have them display name tents during the session. Designing colorful, personalized name tents is a fun way to get a session going, and the tents dramatically increase the likelihood of learner-to-learner conversation.
3. Sit at the same level and in the same kinds of seats as your learners. Try sitting somewhere other than in front of the room. All of these things reduce your symbolic authority and empower learners to express themselves.
4. In guiding group discussion, your ultimate goal is to get learners talking among themselves. Try to get learners to react to one another's ideas by asking questions such as "Has any one else had a similar experience?" and "Does anyone want to react to that?"
5. Try not to talk too much. Think of yourself as the conductor of an orchestra whose job it is to get *all* of the instruments playing in an orderly fashion.
6. Make sure everyone is taking part in the conversation. If someone is silent, gently ask, "What do you think about that?" Some people will have wonderful things to say if you create a space for them, but will remain silent if they have to fight their way into a lively discussion.
7. If one or two people are dominating the group, try to control them by saying, "Okay, let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet," or by "going around the room" to have each person respond to the topic under discussion.

Tom Valentine, November 1996