

Selecting Instructional Strategies

How do you know when to use which type of instructional method? The following information is a collection of methods and a description of each.

Lecture/Discussion

- Best used for new information to which learners have not been exposed.
- Lecturer presents information, asks open-ended questions to help learners clarify and build on materials.
- Watch for: tendency to overuse, facilitators may have difficulty practicing open-ended questions or with silence.

Guided discussion

- Instructor identifies an issue and asks learners to draw out learning points.
- Requires pre-existing knowledge or concept on learners' part.
- Elaboration of points is instructor responsibility.
- Watch for: inadequate preparation of questions.

Behavior modeling

- In physical skill, is called demonstration/practice.
- In cognitive, is called behavior modeling.
- Skill is presented by instructor or media, learners practice, feedback provided according to specific criteria.

Simulation

- Requires creation of job-like or performance situation.
- Present performance or job specific constraints that are actually encountered.
- Watch for: Learners enact their role according to their own individual style—not as structured as a role play.

Role Play

- Learners act out a situation according to behaviors and roles established in the role they are playing.
- Observers often assess for effectiveness.
- Requires careful preparation of role sheets, observer checklists.
- Watch for: ineffective identification of options and consequences.

Case Study

- Scenario parallel to reality described or provided.
- Learners analyze to identify key issues, causes, solutions or other information as required by the exercise.
- Presentations required to score effectiveness.
- Length varies.
- Watch for: case study with inadequate information for questions

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Cooperative learning

- Requires provision of all supporting information (policies, existing procedures, processes, instruments, resources, etc.) the organization wants considered
- Learners work as teams to master material
- Mastery defined as required output
- Facilitator serves as resource
- Watch for: dominant group members disenfranchise others; build in mechanisms requiring everyone to contain all knowledge.

Structured exercise

- Instructor organizes learner activity in which learners discover, create, problem solve, or apply or otherwise use concept/knowledge/issue under review to create a new situation.
- Watch for: complexities of construction.

Instrumented learning

- Uses some form of self- or organizational-assessment tool.
- Identifies proficiency or deficiency.
- Follow on is to give feedback and plan corrective action.
- Discussion required.
- Watch for: ineffective use of tools based on lack of knowledge.

Mind maps/pictures/imagery

- Instructor gives situation in which learners imagine themselves.
- Learners fill in the gaps complete the picture.
- Discuss endings or completions learners imagine
- Watch for: closed eye exercises may intimidate or be off-putting to some.