

7 Tips for Increasing Learner Success

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The goal of any learning situation should be enhanced knowledge and skills or perhaps a change in attitudes. To accomplish all of these requires a bit of planning and forethought by the trainer, supervisor, or educator. The following are seven proven strategies for tapping into the learning potential of all your participants and applying the concepts of brain-based learning that researchers have found to be effective. In doing so, attention can be attained and retained while helping learners better gain, recall and be able to apply concepts learned.

1. **Organize your room for learning.** When preparing your room in advance of learner arrival, position chairs and desks in a format conducive to idea exchange, mobility and accessibility. You and learners should be able to freely move about the room for activities and to get into and out of all areas of the room with relative ease. Just because chairs or tables are in rows or set up theatre style when you arrive does not mean they have to stay that way. You are the learning expert and should rearrange furniture as necessary to encourage maximum exchange of ideas and communication. One of reasons that you should always arrive 45-60 minutes before your learners is to make necessary changes to the room.
2. **Use music to stimulate the brain.** There are a number of excellent books on the topic available from experts like Lenn Millbower and Eric Jensen that can explain the brain research and theory behind using music before and during your session to set the right tone for learning. Much research has been done on the subject and we now know that depending on the type of activities in which learners are participating, you should select music that mirrors the desired tempo.
3. **Lighten up!** Researchers have found that light that is close in the spectrum to natural sunlight can stimulate the brain. Try to maximize sunlight in the room or learning environment without causing glare or shadows. Make sure that training aids are positioned so that they are clearly visible by everyone in the room without strain.
4. **Colorize your environment.** Adding color in a variety of ways can enhance the learning environment while stimulating brain neurons to aid learning. You can accomplish this goal easily by using multiple colors of markers when writing, printing handouts on multi-colored paper, adding pictures and posters to walls, adding toys, pencils and props of various color, and using party decorations that match the program theme (e.g. financial classes might have items based on money or money instruments [e.g. checks/bank drafts]).
5. **Refresh your learners.** Food and refreshments can do a lot to replenish the body and stimulate the brain. The key is to give options instead of just providing junk food (e.g. soda, donuts, candy, chips, etc). Offer juices, fruit, breads and water as alternatives. Also, have caffeinated and decaffeinated drinks available. If you are

planning a lunch, make it light and avoid heavy pastas or foods like turkey which have a natural enzyme in them that induces slumber.

6. **Get active.** Movement stimulates the brain. Make sure that you build in activity rather than just lecturing learners. Get them involved. Have them regularly respond to questions by raising their hand to answer and break into groups where they have to relocate and move. Also, do active reviews involving movement (e.g. tossing a light ball back and forth as they stand in line calling out a concept or idea learned in the session thus far). You can also use cross-lateral activities which engage both sides of the brain and body simultaneously.
7. **Stress learners.** By building in friendly competition, time limits, and other forms of subtle stress, you can peak brain stimulation and cause heightened awareness. Quizzes in the form of timed games or team activities, deadlines for task completion, interactive role play or simulations can all accomplish “good” stress.

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