

# WHICHCRAFT: WRITE ACTIVITIES TO MAKE BORING LECTURES DISAPPEAR!

By Jean Barbazette and Maria Chilcote

You know them. You've sat through them. You've felt the pain. Training *so lecture laden* that you wish you had a magic wand to make it all go away!

Well, NOW you can! We'll show you how to use your powers for GOOD and change up how you write activities so that your learners will be engaged instead of disengaged.

We'll give you five activities (alternatives to lecture) that will help you produce high learner involvement and retention! They include:



- learning tournaments
- course pre-work
- information search activities
- observation activities
- demonstrations

In this highly interactive session, you learn how to:

- Write directions and rules of a learning tournament
- Prepare the learner BEFOREHAND for the learning that is to come
- Develop information search activities with processing questions
- Create the components of an observation activity
- Craft demonstrations with skill performance checklists to be used in the training environment and back on the job.



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**Acknowledgments:**

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*With special thanks to all of our talented instructors for their contributions and valuable suggestions and to our participants from whom we learn so much.*

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# LEARNING TOURNAMENT

## Writing a Learning Tournament:

A learning tournament is a technique to review newly learned information in a competitive setting. Use the material from lecture, self-study, or printed materials and write questions for the learner or teams of learners to answer. Depending on the type of learning tournament, select appropriate questions: multiple choice, true/false, sentence completion, etc.

Write the rules of the tournament. How many points are awarded for a correctly answered question? Is there a point penalty for an incorrect answer? If one team does not answer the question correctly, does the other team have a chance to answer the question? How many points are needed to win the game? Learning tournaments made up of competing teams are less threatening to learners than tournaments that demand individual answers.

## Learning Tournament Example Rules and Questions: New Employee Orientation

### TOURNAMENT RULES

**Players and Judge:** Up to five individuals or five teams of two or three players each can play the tournament game. A judge (non-player) may be selected to verify answers. The facilitator can also be the judge.

**Deciding Who Starts:** Each player rolls the die. The player with the highest number begins first, play proceeds clockwise.

**Selecting a Game Piece:** Each individual or team selects a game piece.

**Starting the Game:** Each player or team places their game piece on or near the START game space. The first player or team representative rolls the die and moves the game piece the number of spaces rolled on the die. To remain at the new space, the player or team must correctly answer the question on the Question Card from the card stack. If the answer is incorrect, the player returns to his or her previous game space. If a correct answer is challenged, the judge or facilitator can cite the organization resource to support the correct answer.

**Variation:** If a question is incorrectly answered, the judge or facilitator can provide the correct answer, or the next player can answer the question and advance the number of spaces on the die, if answering correctly.

**The Winner:** The player or team that first circles the game board once (or a selected number of times, as determined by the facilitator) and reaches or passes the game space just before the START position wins the game.

# LEARNING TOURNAMENT

## TOURNAMENT QUESTIONS

Prior to asking the questions, identify the correct answers and note the organization's resource where the correct answers are found. This information can be printed on the reverse side of the question card.

- When was our organization started?
- Who founded our organization?
- Name four paid holidays our organization celebrates.
- Where are you allowed to park?
- Does our organization have a carpool or vanpool program?
- How does our organization's carpool or vanpool program work?
- Where can you eat lunch or take breaks at work?
- Where can you store personal items during work?
- Who is the head of our organization?
- What are our business hours?
- Who do you call when you are sick?
- Where are the restrooms located that are nearest to your work area?
- Where is the nurse's office?
- How long are lunch and break periods?
- Who do you call if you are going to be late?
- What behaviors can cause immediate termination from employment?
- How long is your probationary period?
- What award can you receive for above-average work performance?
- Who is eligible for life insurance paid by the organization?
- Which medical plan allows you to choose your own doctor?
- Which medical plan requires the least contribution by the employee?
- How long must an employee work here before qualifying for medical plan benefits?
- When is the weekly/monthly work schedule available?

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## COURSE PRE-WORK

### Writing Course Pre-Work:

There are four common types of course pre-work assignments: reading, completing an assignment, gathering and bringing a work sample/product, and completing and returning a survey. To be effective, consider what should be written to direct the learners to complete this type of assignment. Draft a letter, memo, or email that welcomes the learners to the class they will soon attend; describe the business need for the training event; state the type of pre-work assignment and the reason you are asking the learners to prepare this type of assignment. The reason for pre-work assignments is often to save class time for high levels of learning, sharing ideas that participants have had time to consider, etc. Decide whether the letter would be better received if it came from the learner's manager or the course instructor.

Second, decide how you will determine whether or not the learners have completed the pre-work assignment, and decide on optional or substitute activities for those who do not complete the pre-work assignment. Will learners complete an activity, a worksheet, or a test or will they bring materials to the workshop. If participants do not complete the pre-work assignment, will you develop a generic example or case study? If the use of a pre-workshop assignment follows a rest break or lunch break, learners who did not complete the assignment can use this time to complete an inventory or other type of pre-workshop assignment.

### Pre-Work Assignment Letter Example: Effective Presentation Techniques Workshop

Workshop dates: June 1 and 2

Workshop hours: 8:30 to 5:00 each day

Dear Workshop Participant,

Congratulations! As someone who will be giving presentations to our board of directors, you are scheduled for an upcoming session of the two-day workshop, Effective Presentation Techniques. To make this workshop a productive and fun experience for you, you will need to do some planning. Please prepare the following and bring them with you to the workshop:

A topic for a 5-minute practice presentation—a topic of your choice that is something other than a work topic. You will have the opportunity to present this topic on the first day of the workshop. Here are some ideas to start your creative thinking:

- My favorite sport
- Coping with difficult people
- How to do or make . . . anything
- My first “public appearance”
- The biggest lie I ever told
- My favorite character in fiction
- What I want to be when I grow up

- You are what you eat
- My pet superstition
- How to handle stress
- How I spent my summer vacation
- Teaching your teenager to drive
- This diet really works!
- My pet peeve
- Why I gave up golf (tennis, jogging, etc.)

A topic for a 10- to 12-minute practice presentation—this one can be a work-related topic, a different non-work topic, or it can be a more in-depth version of the first topic. You will have the opportunity to present this topic on the second day of the workshop.

For each of the topics you choose, please plan the following:

- *A specific objective:* What do you want your audience to know or be able to do after your presentation?
- *A basic outline of how you will present the topic:* We will be discussing a variety of ways to organize presentations in class so you will have some time to refine your plan.

In addition to the topics and a bit of planning, the only other things you will need to bring to the workshop are your enthusiasm, your current strengths, an interest in continuing to develop your skills, and a willingness to give and receive feedback.

If you have questions or concerns about these requests, call me at [phone number] or email me at [email address].

[name of facilitator]

## INFORMATION SEARCH ACTIVITIES

### Writing Information Search activities:

Self-study materials, printed materials, and information search methods all use existing materials that were created for a different purpose other than as part of a training program. The key to success when using existing materials is to write instructions and processing questions to set up the learning activity and debrief it using the five steps of adult learning.

### Information Search Activity Example: Product Information and Warehousing

*Objective:* Identify five types of cleaning products we manufacture and where each is stored.

*Directions:* Use the worksheet below and after each brand name, write the type of material this product is intended to clean, the shelf life of the product, and hazardous warnings about the storage of this product. Enter the section, shelf and bin number on the worksheet to identify where the product is stored.

*Time required:* 30 minutes

*Resources required:* Product catalog (printed or online), warehouse schematic, Product Storage Worksheet

Product	Intended to clean what type of material?	Shelf life in months	Hazardous storage warnings	Section, shelf and bin number
Product 1				
Product 2				
Product 3				
Product 4				
Product 5				

### Debriefing/Discussion Questions

- What made it easy or difficult to find the intended use of each product?
- What is the importance of knowing the shelf life of each product?
- What special storage considerations are suggested for hazardous materials?
- How comfortable do you feel about how the warehouse sections, shelves, and bin numbers are organized?

## OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES

### Writing Observation activities:

Having learners make an observation, participate in a real or virtual field trip (application sharing), or watch a video can be successful methods for learners to acquire information. How much is learned and retained can be enhanced by job aids and observation checklists. Create an observation checklist to guide learning and feedback.

### Observation Worksheet Template

Topic, site, or name of video: \_\_\_\_\_

Objective of observation/visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Key points to watch for:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Debrief Discussion Questions

- Which of the key points made this a successful example of the objective of the activity?
- What was the main point of the observation? What did you learn from it?
- How easy or difficult will it be to use the information learned from the observation?
- What barriers need to be overcome to make this information useful?

## DEMONSTRATIONS

### Writing Demonstration activities:

Many materials developers and trainers think of demonstration as a method to practice a new skill. That is true of return demonstrations and skill practice methods. Demonstrations are really a presentation of the process or procedure to use a skill. It is very much like watching a video or making an observation. Below is an example of a checklist that can be used during a demonstration. Notice that the learning objective is stated first, followed by background information about the demonstration and a checklist of behaviors to be rated.

### Demonstration Checklist Example: Call Center Customer Service

*Learning Objective:* By the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to, given a recording of a real customer's call, correctly answer all questions and complete all required steps in answering the call.

*Demonstration:* You will listen to a customer service representative (CSR) at an appliance repair and service center. The CSR's job is to answer questions about the types of appliances your organization repairs, the cost of a service call, and when service might be available as well as to troubleshoot repairs in progress. The caller is an owner of a laundromat who is a "good" and recurring customer. Your task is to evaluate how well the CSR identifies the repair need that the owner is calling about and offers an appropriate repair option that satisfies the customer.

#### *Skill Performance Checklist*

Instructions: As you observe a customer call, complete this form. Rate each step or task in the demonstration using the scale below.

- 1 = did not complete this step
- 2 = partially did the step, not to standard
- 3 = did the step, completed the standard
- 4 = did the step, exceeded the standard

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Greeted the customer appropriately, giving name and title.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Asked open questions appropriately to gain information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Asked closed questions appropriately to control the conversation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Gave correct information regarding troubleshooting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Made appropriate acknowledging statements to the customer's complaint.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Did not promise undeliverable service.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Was courteous and polite.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Handled customer's negative reactions appropriately.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Used appropriate closing comments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Completed the call within required time limit.

List any additional comments to improve the performance of this CSR when dealing with this type of call.

## KNOWLEDGE METHODS TEMPLATE

1. Identify the business need that these materials will meet. How will you build a partnership with the learners' management?
2. Identify the class: What is the primary focus of the program? What is the time limit of the class, if any?
3. Identify the target population: Who will be attending the program? How many at a time? Will different levels attend the class at the same time?
4. Write the learning objective: What do you want the learners to be able to do by the end of the session? Be sure your objective is specific.
5. Decide how you will evaluate whether learning objectives are reached. The specific verb in the learning objective can help you decide which evaluation tool is appropriate.
6. Select the delivery medium (classroom training, online learning, blended mediums, etc.).
7. Find existing materials that can be adapted or modified. If none exist, brainstorm content ideas using either a linear format or a mind map format. Sequence the ideas. Begin to write your ideas with a statement of purpose. Free-write each idea and then edit your materials using "big picture," "what's the point," and "detail" revisions. Check the readability of the materials using an average sentence length of fourteen to sixteen words per sentence and 150 syllables per one hundred words.
8. Complete Step 1 of the five steps of adult learning by writing instructions to the learners on how to set up the activity, including what the learners will do following the activity, why they are completing the activity, and how they will do that. For example, "You will be able to identify five types of cleaning products we manufacture" (what the learner will do following the activity). "You will be able to locate five types of cleaning products we manufacture" (why learners are listening to this lecture). "You will listen to a brief lecture accompanied by slides and programmed notes" (how the learner will do this activity).
9. Step 2 of the five steps of adult learning is the learning activity: lecture, learning tournament, self-study materials, etc.
10. Complete Steps 3, 4, and 5 of the adult learning process by writing debriefing questions for the learners to answer. In our example, these types of questions would be appropriate:
  - What made it easy for you to locate each item?

- What did you notice when you were trying to distinguish the differences among the five types of cleaning products?
  - What key point did you recognize in how our products are stored that will help you locate any product we manufacture?
  - How will you use this information when you begin work in this section of the warehouse?
11. Repeat Steps 1 through 5 of the adult learning process for each content piece of the class.
  12. Identify how much practice is required to learn this material so the task can be performed on the job at the required achievement level.
  13. Avoid using any activity for longer than 15 minutes. Break up lectures and self-study materials by asking the learners to respond to questions.
  14. Write a knowledge test that demonstrates the learner understands and has achieved the learning objective.
  15. If appropriate, write programmed notes for learner handout material and create slides that support major points of the lecture, self-study materials, etc.
  16. Write a leader's guide for the person who will facilitate this lesson. Types of leader's guides:
    - **Scripted** – Provides a written narrative for the instructor to use, has complete lectures and answers to activities, etc.
    - **Outline** - Provides learning objectives, description of activities and special notes for content outside awareness of the instructor.
    - **Overview** - Lists learning objectives and activities with time frames and material required.
    - **Combination** - As the name implies, has some of each of the other three types. For example, it might have scripted in places where absolute consistency is required (policies, laws, etc.), outline where simple directions are appropriate, and overview in parts where the instructor is considered a subject matter expert.

# STEPS OF ADULT LEARNING

This is a general description of what takes place during the five steps of adult learning. Adults need to progress through these five steps for any type of activity, including a lecture.

## 1. Instructor sets up the learning activity by telling what, why and how

Set up the learning activity so the participants understand *what* they are going to do (for example, read a case study and individually prepare answers for a discussion) and why they are doing it (learn about how to give a performance review). Adult learners become motivated when they understand the benefit to them of learning something new or the importance of objective for themselves. To understand *how* the objective will be met, give directions and ground rules regarding how the learning activity is to be conducted. The set-up of a learning activity can include such things as:

- Tell participants the purpose of the learning activity and why they are going to learn from the activity without giving away what is to be "discovered"
- Explain what the participants are going to do
- Review the written directions and answer questions about the activity
- Divide participants into small groups or explain the amount of time to prepare individually for a group activity
- Assign small group roles such as recorder, reporter, small group discussion leader
- Give other ground rules

## 2. Learners participate in a learning activity

For a learning activity to be successful, involve learners as much as possible. Consider how learning from a specific activity will appeal to different learning styles. This step might include individual reading of a case study, reading background information for a simulation, or other preparation, such as following the written directions given at the beginning of the activity or reading questions to be answered as the class watches a video or, following the learners' discussion, asking a reporter from each small group to share each group's answers.

## 3. Learners share and interpret their reactions

This step is essential to help conclude the small group discussions and gives learners the opportunity to identify what happened in different small groups. Ask the group additional questions to help learners analyze the discussion and then develop individual and group reactions to the activity. Have learners share their reactions by identifying what happened to them and to others, and how their behavior affected others during the small group discussion. Sample facilitator processing questions are:

- "What made it easy or difficult to find a solution to this problem?"
- "What helped or hindered the progress of the discussion?"
- "Let's summarize the key points from the case study."

Sometimes, it is appropriate to have participants write down their reactions to the learning activity so that others do not influence their thinking before they share reactions to a learning activity. In this way, the reactions come from the learners, not from the facilitator.

Sharing reactions is the beginning step of reaching a conclusion. If participants do not take this step, it is difficult to end the activity and move on, as there may be unfinished business that spills over into later activities. Some learners have difficulty moving on without the "right" answer.

#### **4. Learners identify concepts**

This is the "So what did I learn from the activity?" step. If this step is left out, then learning will be incomplete. Up to this point, participants have been actively learning from a specific situation and they may not be able to generalize their learning to similar situations outside the classroom. Questions that help learners develop concepts, include:

- "What did you learn about how to conduct an interview, discipline a subordinate, teach a new job, etc. from this learning activity?"
- "What is appropriate behavior for a new supervisor?"
- "What does the successful sales person do to close the sale?"

When concepts are fleshed out from a discussion of the learning activity, adult learners are ready to apply these concepts to future situations. Ask questions to elicit concepts from the learners, rather than tell them the concepts they should have found.

#### **5. Learners apply concepts to their own situations**

This is the "So what now?" step in the adult learning process. Ask participants how they can use and apply the new information they have learned. Ask questions like:

- "How will you use this skill the next time a subordinate asks you for a favor?"
- "What are some situations in which you would be more effective if you used this technique?"

If this step is left out, learners may not see the relationship between the learning activity and their own jobs or situations. This step stresses practical application and helps learners find the personal benefits from the learning activity.

To effectively facilitate a case study discussion, ask the learners questions about the learning activity, rather than suggesting applications. When learners discover the concept, they are more likely to apply it to their own situation. Following are Facilitator Processing Questions to elicit discovery learning using steps 3, 4, and 5.

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# FACILITATOR PROCESSING QUESTIONS<sup>1</sup>

## Questions for Step 3: Learners Share and Interpret Their Reactions

- What happened when you tried out that function/step as part of the case?
- What surprised you?
- What part was easy? Difficult? What made it easy? Difficult?
- What did you notice/observe? How was that significant?
- How was that positive/negative?
- What struck you most about that?
- How do these pieces fit together?

## Questions for Step 4: Learners Identify Concepts from their Reactions

- How does this relate to other parts of the process?
- What might we conclude from that?
- What did you learn/relearn?
- What processes/steps are similar to this one?
- What else is this step/process like?
- What does that suggest to you about \_\_\_\_\_ in general?
- What's important to remember about this step/function?
- What other options/ways do you have for completing this step/function?
- How can you integrate this step into the larger process?
- What other functions are impacted by this step?

## Questions for Step 5: Learners Apply Concepts to Their Own Situations

- How can you use what you have learned?
- What is the value of this step/function?
- What would be the consequence of doing/not doing step?
- How does what you have learned fit with your experience?

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from J. William Pfeiffer, UA Training Technologies 7: Presentation & Evaluation Skills in Human Resource Development ©1988, pages 66-68. Used with permission from Pfeiffer.