

What Not to Do: 5 Big Mistakes in Designing Learning Programs

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Avoid the 5 Big Mistakes in Designing Learning Programs

Find out how you can design powerful learning experiences and train more effectively.

Knowing 'what not to do' clarifies your 'what to do' to facilitate more effective learning.



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Mistake #1 The criteria box

Too often, trainers focus analytically by producing features and technicalities that fit specifications, just to tick the criteria box, rather than start by imaging themselves in the learners' shoes. They don't ask themselves what benefits learners want to get out of the training, and how knowing this information and acting on it could benefit them.

Don't train just to tick the box. It's boring! And it will be as dry as the paperwork you are just aiming to complete.

Trainers need to focus on answering the learners' WIIFM or **'What's In It For Me'**.

So, keep the content real. Let your content show that you understand the real-life problems they want to solve, and provide the solutions to solve them.





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Mistake #2 The blah blah blah

Have you ever attended that talk where the trainer drones on and on? You probably have because 80% of instruction is delivered orally⁴.

The instructor hopes that by saying it, saying again, and then saying it again, whoever's listening will get it. Good luck with that!

Another study reports that 65% of workplace training is mandatory compliance training, where training seems like 'must do', not a 'want to do'.

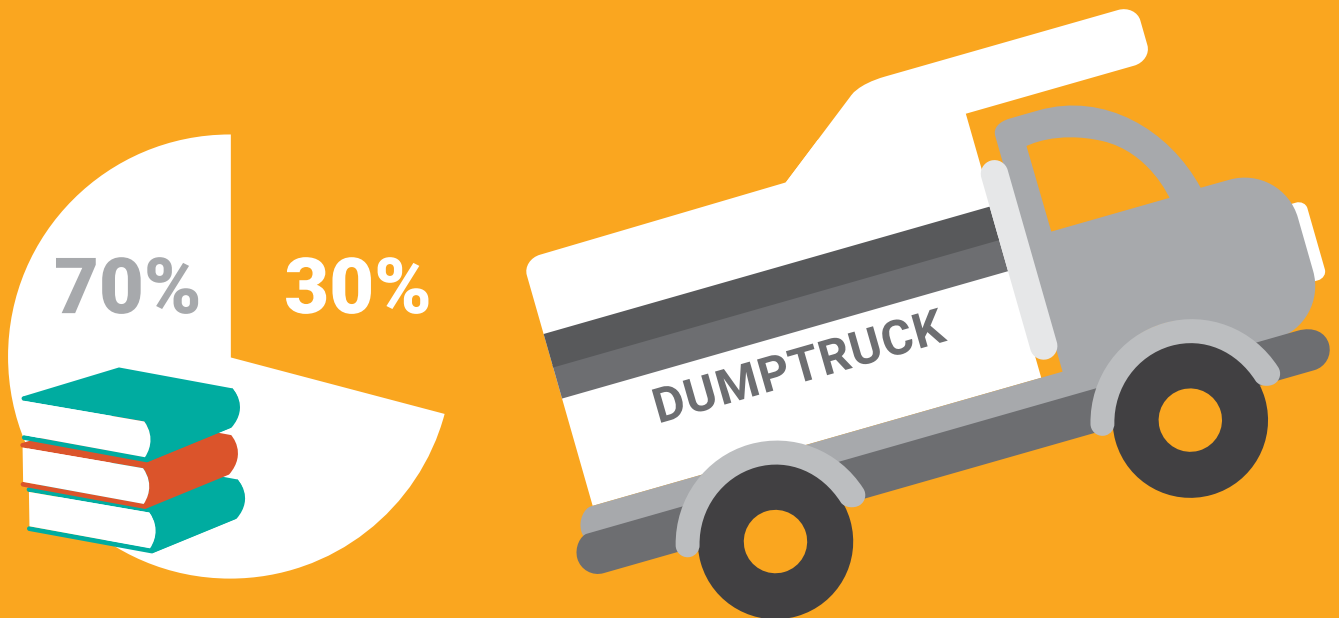
Whether in person or online, monotonous training delivery causes listeners' brains to switch off. Some might even feel that their brain cells were dying.

This is because learning by listening, or what we call the auditory learning style, is only dominant in 8% of people.

In another study, the majority of learners preferred bimodal instruction, or teaching that stimulates two senses, and neither of these preferred sense was auditory. Most prefer to **acquire knowledge kinesthetically** (through experience and practice) and visually⁵.

To be effective, training has to be brain friendly and engaging, not just heard.

Too often, trainers don't do simple things to engage the brain. Your training, including your training environment, has to be multisensory if you want to maximise recall.



Mistake #3 The dumptruck

Experienced trainers know a lot.

How could they possibly impart all the wisdom they have gathered over the years within a few short workshop hours? That's why many are inclined to to dump all they know on bewildered learners.

If you really want your training to have impact, a powerful brain-friendly rule to follow is this:

- ◆ Spend only **30%** of training time giving information (for learners to consume), and
- ◆ Spend **70%** of the time letting participants do something with that information.

Keep learners actively engaged.



Mistake #4 The missing link

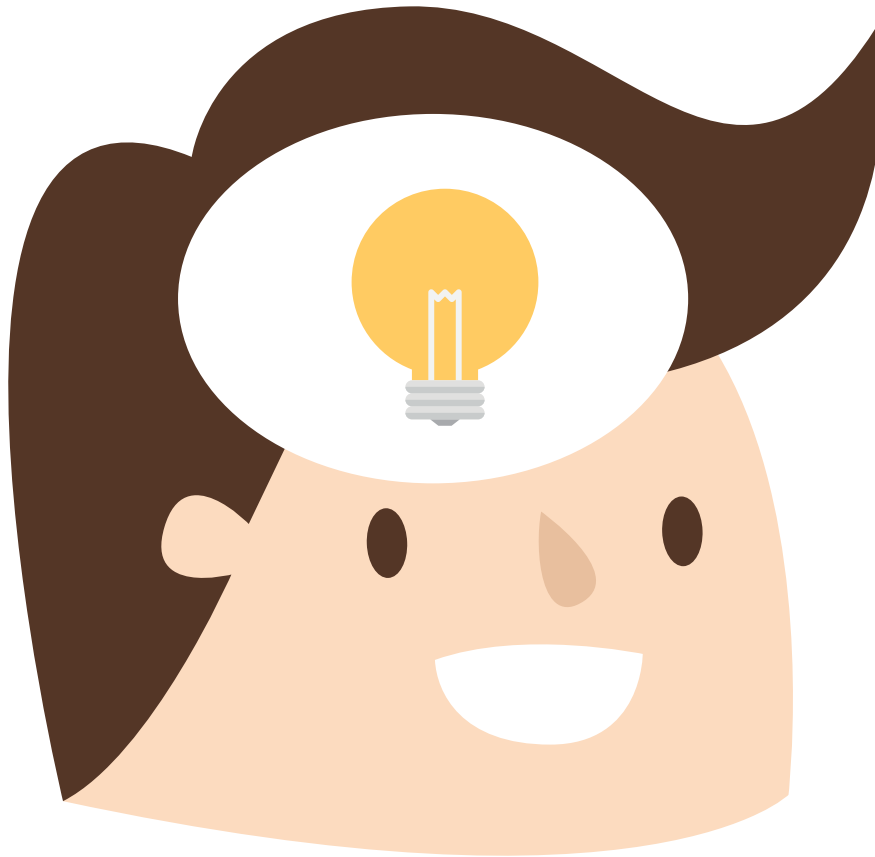
80% of brain neurons are pattern-finding.

This means learning is more effective when trainers **link** the new information to past experiences that learners can relate to, for maximising understanding and the transfer of knowledge.

What is more powerful than the 'what do they already know' questionnaires used traditionally by trainers? The real 'fire power' of neurolinguistic programming or NLP techniques like Universals and Conscious Convincers, as well as simple movement activities using masking tape.

Yes, masking tape.





Mistake #5 The walk before the crawl

The biggest mistake trainers can make is to focus primarily on their subject matter rather than on the mental readiness of their participants.

Brain-friendly trainers have to be first and foremost Master Manipulators!

This concept may seem discomfoting, yet manipulation is actually about **skilful influence**, handling and control. Our first job is to do the right thing—get participants in a state where they are ready to learn.

What do you need to do?

Get them focused. Engage the frontal lobes in charge of thinking, learning, memory, analysis and decision making.

Get them curious. Stimulate their brain's reticular activating system (RAS) to filter the most important information into their thinking brain. Use arousal, humour, anticipation and even confusion to get them curious.

Add the WOW factor. Excite their emotional brain to release excitatory hormones like noradrenaline which increases the heart rate and breathing, pumps more oxygen to the brain, and releases sugar to fuel muscular energy.

Create a Yes! experience. Let your learners taste success. Excite dopamine or reward hormones that make them feel victorious.

Issue a friendly challenge. By inviting learners to step up by answering quizzes, solving puzzles, or participating in friendly competition, you excite enough cortisol in their system to create a healthy amount of stress (not too much) that helps them learn effectively.

Inspire personalisation. Satisfy their WIIFM and Conscious Convincers. Help them transfer the concept into their own experience—what it feels like to benefit from learning what you teach and using it in their daily lives.



To recap, you now know how to avoid the **five big mistakes** made by trainers in designing learning programs:



Don't create content just to tick the criteria box

Design with participants' needs in mind.

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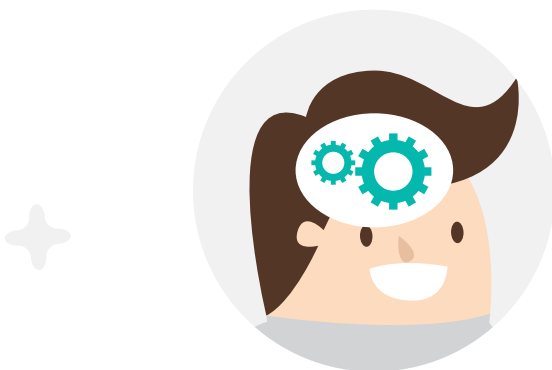
Don't blah blah blah

Cater to auditory, visual, and kinaesthetic learning styles.



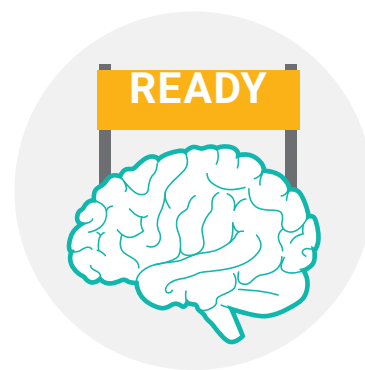
Don't dump content

Allow **70%** of your training time for learners to apply knowledge.



Do help learners link new information

with their existing knowledge.



Do get learners into a state of learning readiness

before you start to teach.



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