

# Spice Up Your Training

Here are nine proven techniques—four neat tricks and five quick tips—to engage learners and make your training memorable. **BY MARC RATCLIFFE**



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**F**or a trainer, there's nothing worse than a room full of bored should-be learners surreptitiously peeking at their Blackberries under the table. So how can you perk them—and your training—up? I've used these four neat tricks with much success:

**1. Choose games with frontiers:** I often am asked, "Aren't games just a waste of time?" Well, my short answer is, "No!" However, my considered rejoinder to this is: The right games, used correctly with the right audience, will enhance the content and promote learning. Of course, if you open your copy of "101 Games that Trainers Play," then close your eyes and randomly pick an activity for the day, you are unlikely to get bang for your buck. However, in most situations, a carefully selected game will support the trainer in attracting and maintaining interest in his or her session. Remember, games are not the antithesis of content. They help to challenge, reinforce, persuade, refocus, and reassure participants.

**2. Use tactile learning tools:** Some learners will need to keep something in motion throughout their interaction with the content and asking them to change is like asking them to stop breathing. Try placing some tactile learning tools (toys, stress balls, puzzles, highlighters, etc.) on the tables or in a basket at the front of the room and invite learners to take one. During the session, encourage the students to try different ones or swap with others at their table. At the end of the session, you may want to debrief by asking which ones helped and why. There are many benefits to using tactile learning tools in your sessions. They can relieve stress, improve focus, create a sense of calm, and

promote a creative and playful mind-set.

**3. Find the comfort zone:** Since motivation is not intrinsic for every student, trainers can be challenged to find ways to motivate them. Students need to find their comfort zone—that set of boundaries where an individual feels safe. To engage, students need to know they are not

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threatened. For some students, this can be achieved by greeting them by name or identifying that calling on them directly might cause anxiety. Others might need reassurance that it is OK to talk to the trainer after the session should they require extra help. Remember, students need to take risks to learn, but they are disinclined to take these risks when they feel threatened.

**4. Get buy-in:** When presenting, we need to find the balance between attraction and distraction. Essentially, we want to distract learners to our training, not distract them from our training. So rather than beating the group into submission with a content-heavy introduction, followed by a dozen slides outlining all the course assessment that needs to be completed, perhaps a well-timed ice-breaker or warm-up could get the buy-in you need and set the scene for a successful day of delivery. **T**

## QUICK TIPS

- An introduction should orient the audience to the context, purpose, and direction of the session.
- Slides should be easy to read and easy to navigate. Too many bells and whistles will detract from content.
- Encourage students to jot down additional notes to promote reinforcement and to create an enduring resource for later referral.
- Use relevant anecdotes and examples to reinforce points and make the content real.
- A quiz at the end of the session helps to reinforce content and supports checking for understanding.

To read "How To Create a Climate of Creativity," visit [www.trainingmag.com/creativity](http://www.trainingmag.com/creativity).