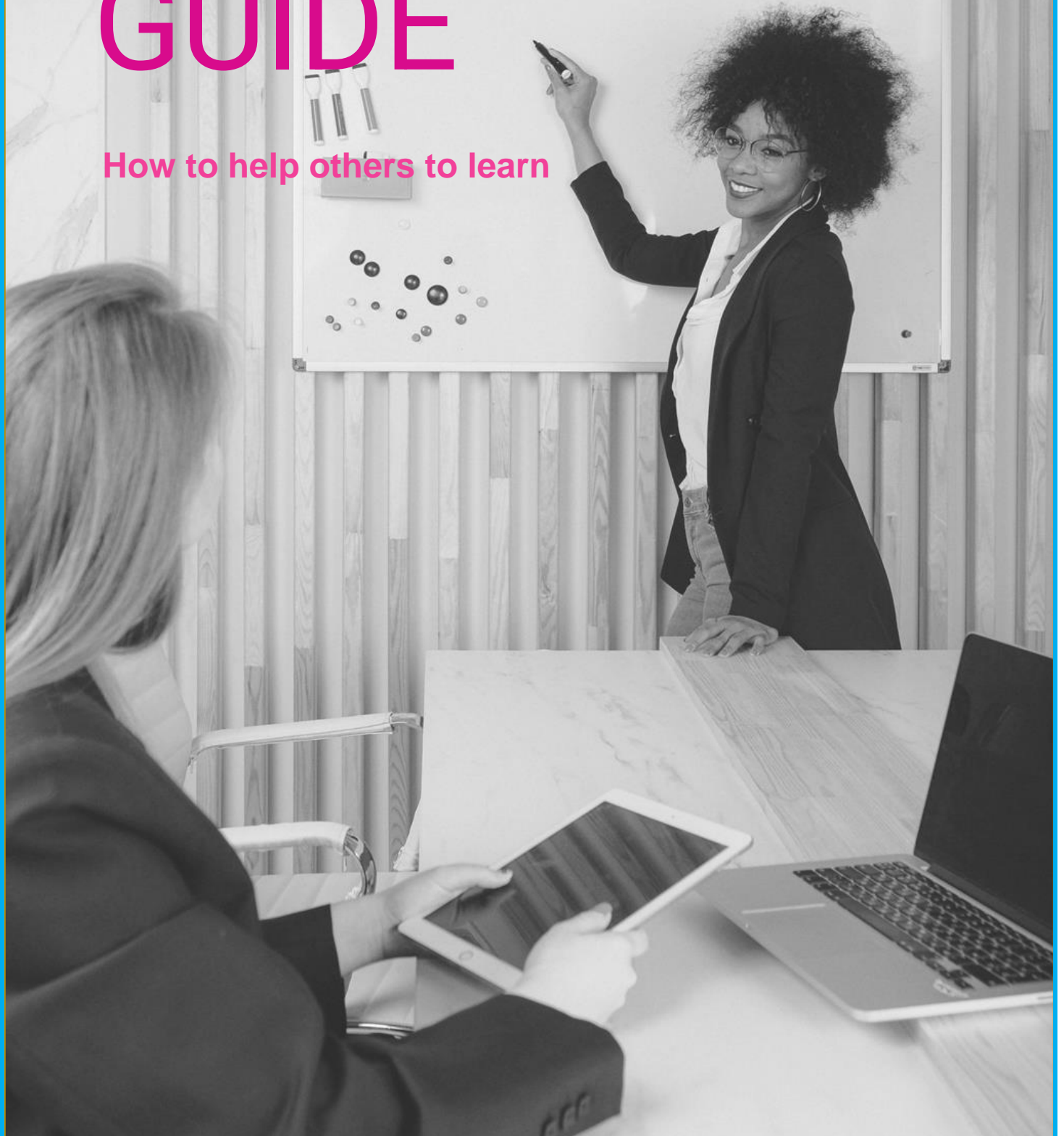


TRAINER'S GUIDE

How to help others to learn



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FOREWORD

This guide has been made as a part of a media literacy education project in Palestine (Empowered through Media Literacy in Palestine, 2021-2022) that was funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

During the project a group of local media professionals was trained and equipped with the latest teaching methods and their know-how on media literacy and how to teach it to people with no background in journalism was updated.

We would like to encourage you to help other people to learn! This guide serves as a **starting point for anyone who has little or no experience in training**. Although drafted for a media literacy project, this guide can be applied to training in any topic or subject. It will give you some basic ideas on learning, training and evaluation. Through a simple checklist, it will help you to design and carry out your training session. Lastly, we have added a chapter on media literacy. This guide is open-access so you are free to use it to improve and confirm your training sessions.

The authors of this guide are experienced pedagogues and media literacy trainers. Anne Tastula, M.A. and editor of the guide, also worked at the Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation as a project manager for the media literacy project that resulted in the guide. She has worked in multiple media literacy projects in Finland and Palestine and has years of experience in designing training courses and teaching the basics of journalism.

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LEARNING

Becoming a trainer requires understanding of the process of learning. **What does learning really mean? What does the learning process require? What are the good ways to learn? How can I as a trainer help my learners to learn?** Once you know the answers to these questions, you will become a great and versatile trainer and your training sessions will be very fruitful for your learners – but also for you. As a trainer, you are going to learn a lot too. The first chapter in this guide seeks to help you to understand how we learn.

What does learning mean?

Learning is actually a special skill, which we all need to stay alive. Without learning there would be no development in our societies. A very interesting and important question is: where do we learn? The typical learning environments for people are not only schools or learning institutions. Learning happens everywhere, for example at work, in hobbies, different kinds of communities and in relations with other people. It means not only studying the content but also a lifelong process called **lifelong learning**, which happens in different sectors in our lives, either consciously or unconsciously.

When considering someone's construction of identity and self-image, learning plays a very important role. Without learning processes, a person cannot construct his or her identity, develop or grow as a human being. Learning is a very holistic process and a person's background and previous experiences are constantly affecting learning. **Paulo Freire**, a famous Brazilian researcher and philosopher of education, used to say: "What the trainer does in training is to make it possible for the learners to become themselves." According to Freire's quote, training means getting to know the learner's identity, not only getting to know the content of the course.

What does learning require?

As a trainer, you need to be aware of what learning requires from the learner. It is important for the trainer to be aware that learning is not always an easy process. Learning is not just an increase in knowledge and skills, but a constant change and

development of thinking. That is why learning is **processing, understanding and applying the information and experiences** of learners. Because of this, both training and learning require patience and time.

The learning process also requires **motivation**. According to researchers of educational science, the process is the most fruitful when the learner has the motivation to learn. The important question for a trainer is how to motivate learners to learn? The trainer's very important mission is to inspire the learners to find the joy of learning. We hope that, with this guidebook, you can find some thoughts and ideas on how to motivate learners and maintain their motivation.

In addition to motivation, learning requires **learning aims**. Actually, learning aims are one of the most important issues in training; they are your guidelines. What do you want your learners to learn in your training? What do you want them to know after it? By answering those questions, you will find the right learning aims for your training session, but you must be aware of the **target group**, your learners' background and their previous knowledge. What do they know about the subject already? Do they have any special needs? What is the age level of the target group? Learning aims cannot be too easy or too difficult for your learners. Remember that you do not need many learning aims in your training; one to three are enough. Less is more!

As a trainer, always keep the learning aims in mind when planning your training session, and also during and after the training. It is important to introduce the set learning aims to your learners at the beginning of the course so that the learners can know what they are supposed to learn. After the training, you and the learners should evaluate how well those learning aims were accomplished. Learners can have their own learning aims as well as those that you created.

Learning always requires **interaction** with others or with the content. The next chapter considers more about learning as a social process.

About the learning process

Behaviourism is an old theory of learning in which the idea is that the trainer is a strong authority and knows everything about the content. The idea of a good training is that the trainer somehow transfers the information to the learners, and the learners do not question the information or the trainer's thoughts or methods. According to this concept, a learner plays a somewhat **passive** role. Although behaviourism was born as early as the 1910s, its impact on teaching is still visible around the world.

Learning by memorising and remembering instead of really understanding the content played a huge role in behaviourist learning. Even though this kind of behaviourist thinking in education has to some extent been avoided, you can still sometimes find it among trainers, educational institutions and learning environments. Do you still remember what kind of learning environment you had at school in your childhood? What about nowadays? Are the modern learning environments different to those in your childhood? How are they different?

Nowadays experts and researchers of education encourage trainers to train differently. A huge change has occurred in how we understand learning and its function for people. Training nowadays is not based on strong authority. Instead, trainers and learners are equals. This ideal concept of learning is called **socio-constructivism**.

First of all, it means that learning is a **social** and interactive process. It requires communication and dialogue with others, trainers and peers and, on top of that, with the content. It means that learners themselves actively **construct** or create their know-how and own reality and understanding of the world by learning. New information is constructed through the learner's previous knowledge, background and thinking. In other words, learning mixes old and new knowledge together.

An active learner

In the socio-constructivist concept of learning, the ideal learner is an **active** person who knows how to find the best tools to learn and how to combine the new information with previous know-how. For example, if you want to learn a new language, you need to attend a class, buy a textbook or perhaps watch some online videos, where someone teaches a new language online for free. So, a learner is always in interaction with something or somebody – either with the content, trainer or other learners.

But how do you learn a new language? Maybe you can already speak some quite similar language? Because of that, maybe you can understand some words already? What about grammar: are there some similarities in grammar with the languages you already know? Or what about pronunciation? Is the new language pronounced in a similar way to languages you already speak?

So, learning a new language requires you to link it to the languages you already know, in other words, your previous know-how. You construct your own way of learning the new language and speaking it.

As a trainer, it is important to be aware of your learners' previous knowledge and knowledge of the content, so that you can help them to find the best tools for their own learning processes. Your main mission is to **encourage them to be active learners**, so keep that in mind when you are planning your training session.

Another very important thing to keep in mind as a trainer is that you are learning, too – not only your learners. You and the learners are both simultaneously trainers and learners. There are no perfect answers even though you are the expert in your field. So challenge your learners, but you also need to remember that your learners can and also should challenge you. Before you start your training session, tell them that they can freely ask and doubt everything. Questions very often lead to fruitful discussions among your group.

How can I as a trainer help my learners to learn?

How can you help learners accomplish the best possible result in their learning? There are no wrong or right answers, because there are so many different ways to learn. Some training method may be suitable for some learners, but not for others. This is a big challenge for a trainer. That is why it is extremely important to use different kinds of training methods, so that as many of your learners as possible can find the most suitable tools for learning.

Different kinds of learners can be divided into three groups. This division is based on three senses: sight, hearing and movement. For a **visual** learner, the best and the most suitable way to learn is by seeing things. They can easily remember the content, like pictures and texts, from the book or notes. They can easily memorise the specific location of the information or an image from a book. This kind of learner likes to perceive things by creating things, for example mind maps or drawings. Visual learners like training methods where the trainer uses a lot of images.

For an **auditory** learner, the most suitable way to learn is by listening. They can easily remember conversations and like to listen to music, radio or podcasts. The best way to follow the training is through listening. This kind of learner likes to read notes and texts aloud and record them so that they can listen to them again afterwards.

A **kinaesthetic** learner learns easily through movement. They like to move, and sports are usually their hobbies. They can easily learn new movements and skills related to sports. Training sessions that utilise body movement work best for them. For example, the kinaesthetic learner can benefit from drama education as a means

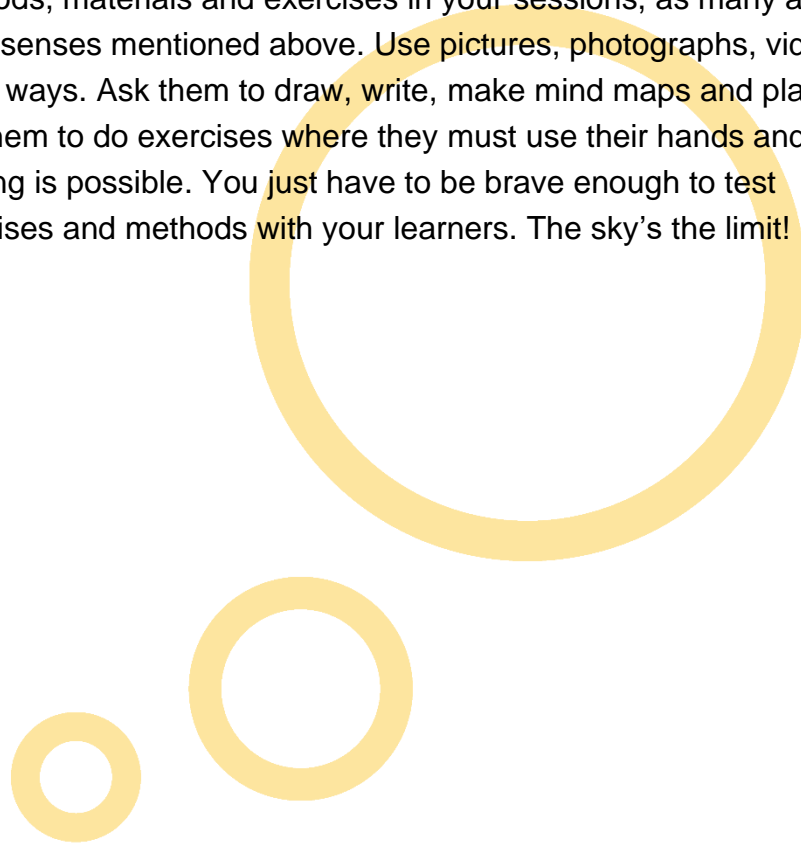
of learning. The sense of touch is also an integral part of kinaesthetic learning. Learning through touching and using the hands is suitable for this kind of learner. For example, if a teacher wants to teach geometric patterns to children at school, they can ask the children to form a triangle or other patterns together using their bodies.

Mixing methods

Do you recognise yourself as a learner from one of the styles of learning mentioned above? Do you remember an image you once saw a long time ago? Or do you remember conversations easily and every little detail in them? Did you like chemistry classes because you were able to do little experiments with your hands? Perhaps you can recognise more than one learning style as a good way for you to learn. Maybe you like to combine different styles?

Because all of us, trainers and learners, are learning together, a very good option is to ask your learners to work in pairs or groups. In an ideal training session, you ask them to work both independently and together with others. It is also possible to ask your learners to train each other, also known as **peer learning**.

The important point to remember as a trainer is that you must utilise diverse and different training methods, materials and exercises in your sessions, as many as possible. Utilise all the senses mentioned above. Use pictures, photographs, videos, audio and text in many ways. Ask them to draw, write, make mind maps and play games together. Ask them to do exercises where they must use their hands and move. Almost everything is possible. You just have to be brave enough to test different kinds of exercises and methods with your learners. The sky's the limit!



2. TRAINING

In this chapter, we concentrate on training and being a trainer. What kind of trainer is an excellent one? You can first ask yourself what kind of trainer you want to be. We hope that this guidebook will help you to analyse what kind of trainer you want to be and what kind of training you want to organise.

How to be an excellent trainer?

Think about your childhood or youth when you were at school. Also think about other previous experiences in your life when you were a student. Do you remember any good teacher or a trainer who impressed you with their skills of training? If you remember some excellent trainer from your past, or maybe more than one, what kind of trainers were they? What kind of qualities made them a good trainer?

An enthusiastic trainer

What kind of a trainer is good? There are no right or wrong answers to this question. Some learners like one kind of trainer while others like another. However, there are some qualities in a trainer, which greatly help the learning process. Of course, it is very important for you to **know the content** very well and have knowledge and know-how about it. On top of that, you will need some qualities, which help you to teach the content to others. But mere expertise on the content does not make anyone a successful trainer.

Your mission as a trainer is to help others to learn – and also to enjoy it. In addition to knowledge of the content, you also have to be **enthusiastic** about the topics and themes you are teaching. Your enthusiasm about the topic will ignite the joy of learning among your learners.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a good trainer **takes into account the different needs and backgrounds of the learners**. In other words, an excellent trainer constantly keeps in mind the target group, their age levels and previous knowledge. The trainer must also take into account individual needs in addition to the those of the group.

Creating a safe learning environment

When it comes to effective training, strong **communication skills** are a must. Training is communicating and interacting with your learners all the time. You communicate with your whole being, your speech, gestures, facial expressions, posture. Do you like to sit, stand or maybe move around the classroom? You must listen to and observe your learners and sense the atmosphere in the classroom.

Training is also **asking questions** of learners and **facilitating discussions**. Asking questions leads your learners to reflect and think about things from different perspectives. Actually, training is the art of asking. Encourage your learners to ask questions of you and each other.

An excellent trainer knows how to **create a safe learning environment**. That is not always easy because there are different kinds of personalities in the classroom. At the beginning of your course, you can tell your learners honestly that you want to create a safe atmosphere, and they can freely ask and comment on anything that comes to their minds. When the atmosphere is safe and positive in the classroom, the learning results are good.

Creating a safe learning environment requires **empathy** from the trainer. The trainer's mission is to treat each learner as an individual. You can be empathetic and understanding of what may be going on in their personal lives. You can also ask them kindly how they are doing. Are there perhaps some issues or concerns in their lives, which might affect the learning process? Often discussing such issues with learners is helpful. Empathy from a trainer not only helps them to create a connection with the learners, but can also directly impact the learning process in a positive way.

Encouragement and **patience** are also needed when training. Always thank and encourage your learners. You must tell them where they have succeeded.

Different kind of learning environments and materials

As mentioned before, a good and versatile trainer uses **different kinds of training methods and materials**. An excellent trainer is also like to try different kinds of **physical learning environments**. Training does not have to happen only in the classroom. What about if you go outside? Could you go to a park? What about training in nature? Or if you want to stay inside, where else could you go?

It is possible to do some tasks standing up, or in other positions they may suggest. You can also use different kinds of seating arrangements. For example, you can have people form a circle with you in it. Learning is possible everywhere! Changing learning environments leads to good learning results and nurtures creativity.

Learning materials can be everything you could ever imagine. In addition to textbooks and articles, it can be a video clip, audio clip, song, picture, comic, newspaper, board game or any kind of object related somehow to the theme of the session. Materials are supposed to be an inspiration for the learning process. Different kinds of materials aim to increase the appetite for learning and can be used at any time.

Maybe you could be **proactive** and prepare learners before the actual training session starts. You could give some exercises or some materials in advance. In the class, the learners can then discuss the materials and work forward with the basic information they have already received on the topic. This training style is known as **flipped learning**. The aim of the method is to emphasise and increase the learner's own activity in the learning process.

An excellent trainer is adaptable

Staying on schedule is important in any training. However, when it comes to versatile and excellent trainers, being **adaptable** is one of the most important qualities. Adaptable trainers are ready to make some changes to their plans, if needed. They do not have to stick to the plans, as they understand that change is constant. Trainers must be ready, for example, to change the plan if the learners are bored or something urgent happens.

What if your learners are fast in doing their exercises, there is still time left in the session and you do not know what to do next? What if the time runs out? How do you prioritise what kind of exercises or content to leave out of your plan? If discussion with learners is fruitful, is it better to live in the moment and continue the discussion instead of following your plan? A good trainer always has **a plan B** in their pocket and is able to change the plan.

Do you recognise these kinds of qualities mentioned above when thinking about you as a trainer? Every trainer has their own strengths and challenges. What could be your strengths and challenges? The most important thing is for you to be aware of your strengths and weaknesses.



3. EVALUATION

In this chapter, we explore evaluation and its importance to both learners and trainers. You will get tips on how to evaluate the success of a training course and see the importance of self-reflection for both trainer and learner.

When it comes to an excellent trainer, **evaluation** and **self-reflection** are always needed. Evaluation can be used to find out whether the learning aims have been achieved or not. And if the aims have been achieved, it is important to know how those aims were achieved and which training methods were successful.

Ask your learners to reflect on their own learning after the course. What did they learn? Were their own learning aims achieved? How did they achieve them? What kind of learning methods were suitable for them? Was something easy or difficult for them during the training? What do they want to learn more about? Keep in mind that it is also good to evaluate the learning during the course, not only after it.

Self-reflection is a skill

Self-reflection and evaluation help the learner to reflect on their learning process, and to recognise the learning tools and methods, which are most suitable for them. Through reflection, they will become experts in their own learning. As we have noticed, a trainer's work is creative. The sky's the limit when devising evaluation methods. You can ask people to write learning diaries, draw mind maps, describe their learning process through pictures or record their feelings and thoughts during the training. You can ask them to discuss, give feedback and evaluate with each other (**peer-to-peer** evaluation). Self-reflection is a skill that needs to be practised. Don't worry if evaluation does not work right away.

No trainer is ever perfect so there is always something to improve. Collect feedback from the learners and reflect on yourself, too. What was good in the training? What was not so successful and why? Which methods worked and which did not? Did I succeed in creating a safe and positive atmosphere in the classroom?

You can also ask yourself what you yourself learnt as a trainer? As a trainer, you can also set learning aims for yourself and analyse how well they were achieved. You can reflect on yourself as a trainer in ways that are suitable for you. Maybe you like to write? Maybe you want to discuss it with someone? If you evaluate yourself as a trainer each time, you will become an excellent trainer.

4. DESIGNING YOUR TRAINING

In this chapter we will focus on training design. We will take a closer look at designing a training course, and you will learn what a pedagogical script is. You will also find a checklist, which you can use when designing your own training.

Target group and learning aims

We would like to underline the importance of the **target group** and **learning aims** when designing your training. Without knowing the target group and learning aims, you cannot design a diverse and excellent course. Without learning aims, you cannot know what you want people to learn, so it is very difficult to learn or evaluate the learning. Both target group and learning aims are the starting point for the plan, just like the foundations of a house.

As already mentioned in this guide book, you must be aware of the target group, their age level and previous knowledge and know-how of the content. What do they already know about the content? What do they not know? The target group is also important because it helps you to define and outline the learning aims for your training.

How to define learning aims for your training? The learning aims tell what the learner should know after the training. They also tell what will be evaluated after the course.

You can think of learning aims as a compass when designing your training. You can always check the direction for each training-related choice. If you decide to do something (for example, some kind of exercise) in your training, you can check your compass (learning aims) and ask yourself whether the exercise helps to achieve the learning aims. These aims help you to focus on what matters most in your training. **Remember that you do not need many learning aims, one to three are enough.** Learning aims should be very concrete, clear and simple sentences.

Remember that it is also important for your learners to set their own learning aims for themselves in addition to the learning aims of the course: what do I already know about the content? What do I want to learn more about? What is interesting for me in this content and training?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, learning aims help you and your learners to evaluate the training and learning process. Your learners know what they are supposed to learn and can thus evaluate how well they succeeded in the learning process.

A pedagogical script is your guideline

The way you plan, organise and conduct your training sessions is also known as **pedagogy**.

So, what you first need to do as a trainer to help your learners to learn is to make a **pedagogical script**. That is your guideline for helping your learners to learn in the best possible way. It is a plan that tells you what is going to happen in your training, in what order and how much time to use for each section, exercise and method.

The pedagogical script creates a clear structure for the course and helps you to figure out if something essential is missing or something unnecessary is involved. You can make your own pedagogical script in the way that works best for you. There is no right or wrong way to do it.

The pedagogical script can be, for example

- a timeline
- a visual presentation
- a list
- an image

A pedagogical script is like a movie script. You can think of yourself as a film director when training. As a trainer, you are responsible for all that is happening in the classroom, just as a film director is responsible for making the movie according to the screenplay. The director is responsible for ensuring that everyone working on the film: cinematographers, actors, costume designers, scenographers, etc., do their work in the best possible way.

A film director is also responsible for ensuring that there is a safe atmosphere for everybody to work in. They follow the script but, if necessary, can also improvise to achieve the best result.

As a trainer, you can always change your script to achieve the best possible result for the learners. If people are bored in your training session, maybe you should improvise and change your training method a little bit at that moment? Perhaps you should somehow interact more with the learners, asking some interesting questions and leading them to fruitful discussion?

Checklist for your training plan

Here is a checklist that you can use when designing your own training. It is divided into three phases: **before** the training, **during** the training and **after** the training. In all the three phases, you will find some questions to think about. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The choices you make will depend on the topic, target group, learning aims, duration, etc. of the course.

Before the Training

1. **What is the type of your training?** For example:
 - a. Is it happening in real time, meaning that the trainer and learners are learning and interacting at the same time? (**Synchronous learning**)
 - b. Is it happening at different times, meaning that trainer and learners are not learning simultaneously and are not interacting in real time? (**Asynchronous learning**)
 - c. Will you use the flipped learning method, meaning that the learners will work with training material beforehand and convene in real time to discuss the material and interact with others? (**Combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning**)

2. **What are the learning aims of your training?** Do not take too many learning aims for training. The learning aims will depend on your **target group** and their background.

3. **What material will you provide for your learners?** Is the material already available or will you prepare it yourself? Remember copyrights and chop the material into smaller pieces.
 - a. videos, animations
 - b. photos, infographics
 - c. games, quizzes
 - d. presentations
 - e. audio, podcasts
 - f. text, websites

- 4. What learning and training methods will help your learners to reach the learning aims?** For example:
 - a. learning diary and self-reflection
 - b. group discussions and collaborative learning
 - c. project-based learning and learning by doing

- 5. How will you evaluate the learners during the training?** How will the learners evaluate themselves and self-reflect on their learning? Could you use peer-to-peer evaluation?

- 6. What is the schedule and duration of your training?** Are there enough breaks and varying training methods during the sessions?

- 7. How will you provide material and tasks?** Will you collect all the material somewhere online?

- 8. What tools will you use to activate and involve the learners during your training?** Are the learners able to use these tools?

- 9. What tools will you use for interaction, collaboration and discussions between learners?** Are the learners able to use these tools?

- 10. How will you make sure that your learners get help, guidance and information when they need it?** Where can they ask questions? Who will answer the questions and when?

- 11. What are the learners' wishes for the training?** What do they want to learn? How will you find this out?

- 12. How will you collect feedback from learners during and after the training?** Is it possible to give feedback anonymously?

During the Training

1. How will you **ensure that the learners have a feeling of psychological safety**? This means that everyone feels secure, respected and accepted in the group. At the beginning of the course, spend enough time on this! Ensure that the learners have the chance to get to know each other, the trainer (you) and the content. For example:
 - a. How will the learners **introduce themselves**?
 - b. How will they **get to know each other**? What kind of ice-breaker tasks will you use?
 - c. How will you help the learners in **the composition of the group**?
 - d. How will you ensure **engagement in the training**?
 - e. What are **the learners' wishes** regarding the course? How much can you change the plan accordingly?
2. How and when will you **tell the learners about all the training details** that you have planned? You can use the *Before the Training* check list at this point.
3. Are you **following your pedagogical script** that you made in the phase *Before the Training*?
4. Are you **interacting** with learners and **providing help** when they need it?
5. How and when will you collect **feedback** during the training? For example, at the end of the day or before the lunch break.

After the Training

1. How and when will you collect **feedback** after the training?
2. How and when will you **develop the training** based on the feedback? You can once again use the *Before the Training* check list. If some of the methods did not work, try something else next time.

As you can see, when you are training, **most of the things happen before it**. Spend enough time planning and creating the structure and pedagogical script for your training, then you will have more time for interacting with the learners, discussing, helping and solving problems during the course.

5. TRAINING ONLINE

In this guide, you have learnt about pedagogy, teaching and learning. All the principles you have learnt are also relevant when training online. When you are training in a classroom, you can use tables, chairs and a flip chart. When you are training online, you can use online meeting tools, breakout rooms and a digital whiteboard. **Technology is only a tool for better learning, so do not be afraid of it.**

In this chapter are some ideas to consider when you are planning training online. Some example tools are mentioned but, since online tools change quickly, you will not find the exact names of the specific tools in this chapter. You can search for them on the internet using **keywords** (for example, *digital quiz*). Remember also to use **the checklists** (*Before the Training, During the Training, After the Training*) in the previous chapter.

When thinking about how to provide the material and tasks for learners, you have many **online platforms** to choose from. For example, social media and websites, instant messaging applications, online meeting tools and learning management systems (LMS). When choosing the platform, you can ask yourself:

- **Is it free to use for learners?**
- **Is it possible to use it on mobile devices and computers?**
- **Is it easy to use?**
- **Are the learners already familiar with the platform?**

Before the training, ask yourself:

- Have I **prepared all the digital material** I will need in my training session? Remember the diverse materials: videos, animations, photos, infographics, games, quizzes, presentations, audio, etc.
- **Am I confident in using** all the online tools I that I intend to use?
- Have I ensured that **the learners can use** these tools?

- Have I **tested that all the links work**? When you are sharing links, check the privacy settings or sharing options. You can usually choose whether the learners can view, comment on or edit the material. When you start testing the links, remember to log out first or use another browser, or have someone else test the links for you.
- Have I **tested that I can share the sound in videos**? When you start screen sharing in an online meeting tool, you will usually find a feature “Share computer sound”.

If you are using online meeting tools, you can have a **pre-meeting** before the training session when learners can join to test their microphone, camera, chat, etc. In the pre-meeting, you can also provide help with the tools you are going to use in the training. At the beginning of your training, remember to tell the learners:

- How and when they will use their **camera and microphone**. When the microphone and camera should be on and when off.
- How they will use **chat**.
- When **the time for questions** will be.
- If possible, consider having **another person to help the learners with technical issues** during the training. In this way, you can better focus on training.

When training online, **pay special attention to the group composition and interaction between the learners**. Ensure that they get to know each other and have many possibilities to discuss with each other in small groups. When using online meeting tools, you can divide the learners into **breakout rooms**.

The optimal group size is two to four people in one break out room, **which** gives everyone enough time to express themselves and voice their opinions. Before launching the breakout rooms, give all the information in the main room. Remember to tell how long the groups will work in breakout rooms.

To activate and involve your learners during the online training, you can use different kinds of digital tools. For example, **digital quizzes, word clouds, polls, digital flashcards and pictures**. Remember to ensure that the learners can use the selected tools. In breakout rooms, the learners can have **conversations**, collaborate on **shared documents**, create content on **interactive whiteboards** or work on smaller **tasks**. When you vary between different kinds of tasks and tools, it is easier to keep the

learners interested in your training. Some of the tasks can be done in pairs, some of them in small groups and some of them in a big group.

Because training online is intensive, remember to have enough breaks. You will need them as a trainer and your learners will also need them. Training online can be really fun and rewarding, so keep a smile on your face and trust yourself!

6. TRAINING MEDIA LITERACY

This guide gives tips and guidance and is useful for training on any topic. The project that produced this guide seeks to promote the teaching of media literacy, which is defined below. As media literacy is such an essential skill on a personal and societal level, it should not be treated as a separate subject. Instead, critical thinking towards (social) media could also be adapted into any educational training.

What is media literacy?

Media literacy is an umbrella term for various skills. It includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a person to access the media, have a critical understanding of it and interact with it. It includes the ability to use media technology and platforms, the ability to critically analyse media content and the ability to review the effects of the media and its significance in everyday life.

In concrete terms, crucial media literacy skills can mean learning how to use a digital banking app and navigating social media etiquette or being aware of the influencing tactics used in advertising or marketing.

Media literacy entails various **critical thinking skills** such as recognising the difference between journalism and other kinds of information or, within the context of journalism, understanding the difference between news and opinion. These skills help **to evaluate evidence** presented and the **ability to distinguish biases** both in the media and its audiences. Underlying these skills, the wider aims of media literacy are to understand why it matters and appreciate the importance of reliable and free-flowing information in the society.

Media literacy means not only reading written texts but also reading and understanding visual and audio-visual texts. Media literacy is needed not only to receive and read media texts, but also to produce and share them.

Why media literacy?

Firstly, media literacy is a civic skill that enables people to participate in society. Secondly, media literacy is **imperative for a functioning democracy**.

As media sphere is in a constant state of flux, media content is multiplying and as digitalization enables anyone to produce media content effortlessly and free of charge, the need to separate, filter and evaluate media content is greater than ever.

Media literacy encompasses **the ability to determine the credibility** of news and other media content and to identify different types of texts and information. Through media literacy people are more aware to distinguish the agenda behind the media content.

Deliberatively fabricated disinformation is diverse and when combining facts with fiction, sometimes very hard to catch. Being media literate protects a person from disinformation and from **unwittingly passing it on to others**. Without adequate media literacy skills, people are more vulnerable to being manipulated and misled, which then can threaten the stability and democracy of a society.

Democracy demands a strong civic society where people want to and have the skills to participate in society. People cannot participate in society unless they understand it, and being able to access and critically evaluate information plays a huge role in this.

What kind of media education?

Media education comprises a very wide range of training sessions and contents. It can focus on, for example:

- the technical use of media tools and platforms
- the technical production of media; how images, videos, sound and different text types are processed
- how the audience is affected (argumentation, cuts, sounds, etc.)
- interpreting media content by means of critical thinking

In critical media literacy training, particular emphasis is placed on the skills that enable a person to critically evaluate media content and interpret media presentations. This is the part of media literacy that could easily be included in training on any topic.

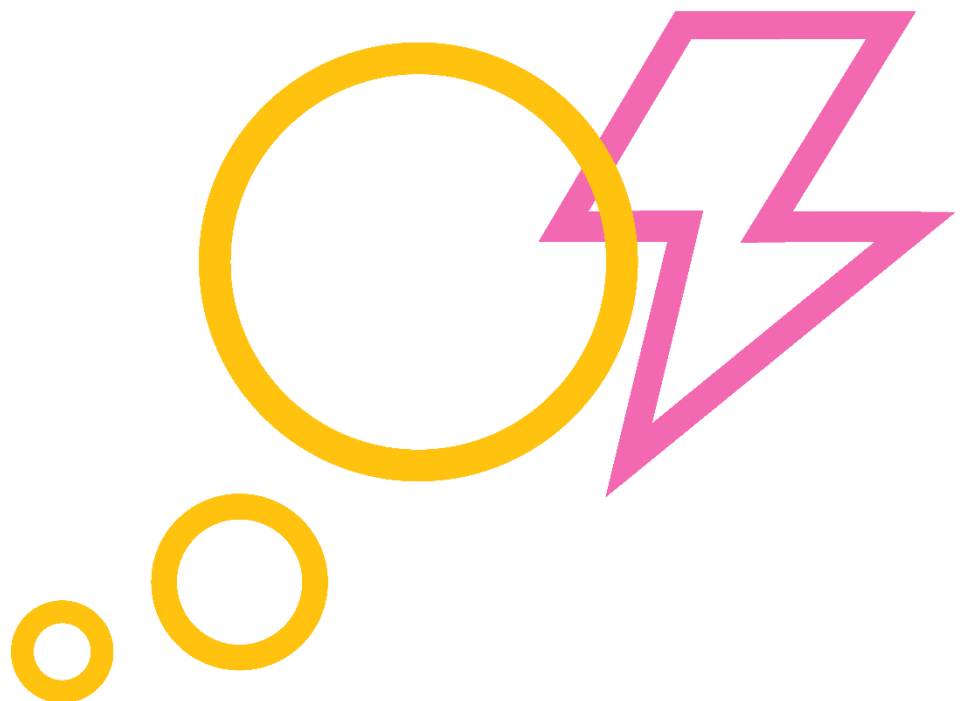
The core questions you could include in your training when encountering or talking about any media material could be as follows.

Reading media content:

- Who has produced the content and why?
- How is your attention attracted and interest maintained?
- What perspectives and values does the content convey?
- How can different people interpret the content?

Producing media content:

- What do you want to achieve with your message?
- What kind of image are you building about yourself and the topic you are dealing with?
- Whom does your message reach?
- What are you leaving out and why?
- What are the different ways people could respond to your output?



FURTHER READINGS:

This publication is based on and inspired by various printed and digital sources.

Here is a list of them – you may find them useful for further reading:

- https://mediaguide.fi/mediaguide/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/KVS_media_guide_web_2020.pdf
- <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/oer-news-literacy-why-news-literacy-education-adults-important-right-now>
- <https://mediakasvatus.fi/materiaali/tuota-ja-tulkitse/>