



How to Start Being a Trainer and Like It: *Workshop Outline*¹

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What, Me Train? Are You Kidding?

Yes, you! To be a good trainer, you don't need 20 years of Girl Scout experience, a college degree, or a perfect command of "The King's English."

What Do You Need, Then?

A willingness to learn and continue learning

An eagerness to help others

An enthusiasm for life in general and Scouting in particular

A giving personality

A little talent for making things happen

Here are Some Things to Think About

Have you ever shown someone how, to do something new?

What qualities of yours helped the person want to learn?

How are life's experiences as great a teacher as formal education?

What experiences in your life taught you the most?

Hints for Trainers

1. *Set reachable Goals.* Keep in mind that training is really an unending process. A person can't possibly learn everything there is to know in one course. Finding out what the learner's immediate needs are and designing training sessions to meet those needs is much more effective than covering the whole waterfront. Also if you make learning fun and set a comfortable, varied learning pace, you will encourage the new leader or other volunteer to come again to other courses.

2. *Get started by getting to know each other and setting a relaxed mood.* Training sessions usually get off to a better start when both trainers and participants get to know each other and share expectations in a relaxed non-threatening way. An "icebreaker" might be a get acquainted game, finding out why the participants decided to become leaders, or determining why they have "come today."

3. *Encourage participation by all.* To help build confidence, you might relate the things she does in everyday life which relate to skills used by the leader. You might even discuss hobbies and how they might relate to Girl Scouting. The best way for you to reach people as a trainer and facilitator, is for you to be *you* showing others, who *you* are and where you're coming from. An effective trainer is not a human encyclopedia, but a real person with all kinds of feelings, desires, and behaviors. This includes:

- Expressing your feelings honestly (but in a non-judgmental way).
- Acting silly or funny if you need to. A good sense of humor can do a lot to put people at their ease.

¹ Ted Ward. How to Start Being a Trainer and Like It. Workshop Outline, Girl Scouts of America, 1970s

- Helping people with problems and showing them you sincerely care.
- Admitting when you don't know something and following through by finding out.
- Showing enthusiasm for what's going on.

4. *Help participants find answers to problems and difficult questions themselves.* When problems and difficulties arise, the truly helpful trainer gently leads learners to answers by helping, providing resources, nudging with a well placed question, but not always simply telling the answer. Also keep in mind that since you are not the solution giver, you don't need to know all the solutions. You can help groups learn by:

- 1) Providing resource material
- 2) Getting group involved in actual activities
- 3) Fostering as much participation as possible
- 4) Being accepting and open
- 5) Showing tolerance for other ideas especially when you don't agree. Remember to present alternative ways of doing things.
- 6) Encourage feedback from the group
- 7) Remember that a positive attitude is contagious

5. *Be flexible enough to make changes when you think something is not working with your group.*

Listening, looking, and feeling for signs of boredom, hostility, confusion, or fatigue will let you make repairs before much damage is done. Bruised feelings and discontentment are better aired, not allowed to simmer and swell beneath the surface. Problem signs in individuals are:

- 1) The sleeper
- 2) The yawner
- 3) The monopolizer of the conversation
- 4) The clock-watcher
- 5) A confused look
- 6) Sighs of impatience or irritation

Other signs of trouble are:

- 1) A quiet group
- 2) A lot of arguing
- 3) Whispered complaints overheard in the restroom

6. *A hidden agenda is a plan or priority that someone keeps to himself/herself.* It can cause all sorts of trouble if unexpressed. Example:

- 1) "I don't care about how the cookie sale works what I want to know is how to hold that first meeting."
- 2) "My kids will be home from school soon; when is this going to end?"

Encourage your group to share these agendas. Before making at home assignments ask first.

7. *Errors don't have to be failures.* Stumbling blocks can be stepping-stones. When problems occur keep your cool—work it out with the group. Remember when they don't like something you have done, they are not saying they don't like you.

8. *You don't have to do it all by yourself.* You don't have to carry the whole load. Try to make use of as many resources as possible. Work with a partner. Sharing the responsibility will make you feel a lot better.

Check the Library and the Girl Scout Library for additional ideas and activities, games, and techniques for your training sessions. **Keep Learning Fun!**

Use the learners themselves as resources. They all have skills and resources and abilities of their own they can share. Have a show and tell session; do flag ceremonies; do a fly-up ceremony, etc.

Some Final Thoughts

Consider that a lot of good feelings will be coming your way as a trainer. The people you help will appreciate your help and express their thanks. And think of all the girls' lives you will touch through the participants in your courses.

It's fun to watch people grow. You'll be helping people find new ideas, new ways of doing things—perhaps giving them a whole new slant or direction to life. Think of the results this could have.

And guess who will probably learn the most—bet it's YOU!