FOUR-STEP TRAINING PROCESS

There are a variety of teaching strategies in use today; each attempting to allow the learners to progress satisfactorily toward a set of predetermined performance objectives. For many years, instructors have been using a teaching plan which has proven to be very effective. This plan is referred to as the four-step training plan. The four-step plan, like any other plan, must allow for flexibility of instruction and application. Any plan that is inflexible may not be any more satisfactory than no plan at all.

The four steps of the four-step plan are:

- Preparation
- Presentation
- Application
- Evaluation

The four steps when properly used are applicable to any instructional situation but are most notably associated with the demonstration and lecture. In using the four-step plan, the trainer, first, gets the attention and interest of the learners; next, presents the information or skills to be learned; then, gives each learner an opportunity to apply what he or she has learned; and finally, determines whether the learner has learned to the proper degree of acceptance.

Preparation Step

The preparation step consists of a variety of activities that are planned to prepare the learner to receive the information or skills being presented in the training session or lesson. If the learners are not ready to learn, little benefit will come from anything the instructor or trainer will do or say in the lesson. Thus, the purpose of the preparation step is to prepare the learners so that they are receptive and ready to learn what the trainer is about to present.

Most adults who attend training sessions are at least somewhat motivated to learn and have elected to participate on a voluntary basis. Motivation is a critical element in learning. The learners must be motivated to learn before any learning will occur. If a learner does not see a need for the information being presented, it will be very difficult to have a positive learning experience develop. The instructor is responsible for creating a proper "climate" for learning and to establish a rapport with the learners before instruction begins.

During the preparation step, the instructor must determine the motivation level of the learners and must make sure that the learners see a need for the information or skill that is about to be presented. The instructor must secure the attention of the learners and establish a foundation for maintaining interest. The instructor should state what is going to be presented and make the learners aware of the objectives of the session. This may be accomplished in a
variety of ways. The following techniques may be helpful in preparing the learners for the presentation of the session:

- Ask interest-arousing questions.
- Display a completed job--ask questions.
- Stimulate short discussion among learners.
- Use photos or objects to develop interest.
- Describe personal experience(s) involving ideas or skills which will be covered in the session.
- Describe a situation that points out the need for the knowledge or skill.
- Conduct a short demonstration.
- Share the objectives of the session with the group.
- Set the tone for the session.
- Describe the expected outcomes and how the information will be of value to the learners.

The best way to enhance the motivation of learners is to meet their needs. An instructor should try to make every effort to meet as many of the needs of learners as is possible in the instructional process. From an instructional perspective, the more successful the instructor is in meeting the needs of the learners, the more motivated they will be to learn.

**Presentation Step**

The purpose of the **presentation step** is to present new information or skills to the learners. In doing this, the instructor or trainer should use a variety of methods to present different lessons. The main idea to keep in mind is that there must be flexibility in the selection of methods to present the material in the lesson. Remember, instruction is not adequate unless learning occurs. The following information regarding the presentation step will be divided into two parts: part one will address the **presentation of information** and part two will address the **presentation of skills**.

**Presentation of Information**

The **lecture** is regarded by many to be the easiest method of instructing. However, the lecture is quite often the least effective method of presenting information because the
instructor has no way of knowing whether or not the presentation is being accepted properly by the learners. The lecture is most effective when the learners are participating in some way. The lecture should be supplemented with models, illustrations, demonstrations, transparencies, and other visual aids.

Lectures are most effective when they are used to:

- Present new topics
- Present short talks and verbal explanations
- Give direction to a demonstration
- Describe a personal experience
- Supplement other methods of teaching.

The lecture is used to present information and should be given with the aid of a well organized outline. The following suggestions should assist the instructor or trainer in preparing and presenting a lecture:

- Develop an interesting introduction to motivate the learners.
- Avoid introductory statements like, "Today, we are going to learn a little bit about..."
- Use analogies, comparisons, sketches, gestures, and other techniques to hold the attention of the group during the presentation.
- Use simple, understandable words and sentences.
- Place the proper spelling of technical and unfamiliar words on the chalkboard or on an overhead projection.
- Use a normal conversational approach rather than an oratory style.
- Maintain proper eye contact with the learners.
- Develop a good outline to follow while making the presentation.
- Do not write out the content of the presentation in complete sentences.
- Do not try to memorize your presentation word for word.
- Do not use distracting mannerisms such as playing with coins in a pocket, leaning
on one foot, or flipping chalk while talking.

• Speak at a reasonable rate. An average of 100 to 150 words per minute is considered an acceptable rate of speaking.

• Put some enthusiasm into the presentation.

• Use humor if it will add to the presentation, but never use humor that will detract from the presentation or offend someone.

• Use questions to get feedback from the learners and to check their progress.

• Keep the lectures short—presentations up to 30 minutes in length would be adequate for most training situations.

• Always summarize at the end of the lecture.

• Repetition is always helpful in a learning situation.

• Encourage participation by asking questions and presenting problems for learners to think about and discuss.

• Develop and follow a predetermined sequential order of topics.

• Teach from the known to the unknown.

• Explain, illustrate, and teach one point at a time.

• Develop the topic one point at a time, and the trainee will learn information more quickly and more satisfactorily.

• Use words and explanations that are simple and easily understood by the learners.

Presentation of Skills

The demonstration is used to present new skills and procedures to learners. In a demonstration, the instructor or trainer uses actual tools, machines, and materials to show the learners what they are supposed to do by actually performing the task or operation.

The demonstration includes an explanation of the steps, key points, and safety factors required to successfully complete a task. The demonstration should not be considered as a separate and distinct method of training, but rather a technique which can be used in combination with other methods. The demonstration may be used to:

• Show the learner how to do an operation or task and how to develop a skill.
• Show proper standards of workmanship required to complete a task.

• Clarify a principle or theory.

The demonstration is used in the presentation portion of a lesson and requires a plan to insure that all the procedures are presented in the correct order. The following factors should be considered when making a demonstration:

• State the objective or purpose of the demonstration.

• Conduct the demonstration in such a manner that all the learners can see every detail of each step as it is performed.

• Use visual aids, if necessary, to clarify points, show hidden parts, etc.

• Use questions during the demonstration to check the understanding level of the learners’ and to stimulate interest.

• Demonstrate actual process at the normal production speed and then repeat the demonstration at a slower speed and explain each step. Possibly repeat the demonstration again at normal speed.

• Emphasize safety precautions at the time that the elements of danger occur in the demonstration.

• Keep the demonstration short. Break down longer demonstrations into several short demonstrations to assist the trainees in remembering the steps and key points.

• A Task-Breakdown Sheet should be developed for all demonstrations that contain a large number of steps or may be difficult for the trainees to learn.

To minimize the confusion that normally exists between a task (or operation) and a job, the following explanation is offered:

• A task (or operation) is one major step in the process of doing a job.

• A job is usually regarded as a completed project. A job is a completed piece of work, such as making a table, while one task or step in making the table, such as turning a leg, is an operation. A task or operation may be basic to many jobs.

When conducting a skill lesson, the instructor must present the skill in a manner that the learners can readily understand and remember each step and key point. The skills should be demonstrated to the learners in a step-by-step manner which shows how to do the task or operation. It is recommended that a task breakdown sheet be developed to help remind the trainer how to present the skills to the learners. This sheet lists the sequential order of the
major **steps** required to learn the skill and the **key points** to be emphasized in the demonstration.

The **task breakdown sheet** has two columns of information. The left-hand column lists the **steps** which advance the operation or task, and the right-hand column lists the **key points**. The task breakdown sheet helps to simplify the teaching of a task or operation. It also assures that nothing has been omitted in the planning process.

  - **Step.** A significant action which advances the task or operation toward completion.  
    (It is what the learner does)
  
  - **Key Point.** The key to doing the step correctly, safely, efficiently, or accurately.  
    (It is what the learner needs to know to do the step correctly)

A demonstration must be seen; yet arranging the learners so that all can see is a frequently overlooked step by instructors. The seating or standing arrangement will vary depending upon the type of demonstration being given. Seating learners in a semi-circle is often the best arrangement. Remember, the closer the learners are to the demonstration the more they will be able to learn and retain the information.

**Application Step**

Following the presentation portion of the lesson, the learners should be allowed to attempt to apply the information or do the task. The instructor or trainer must supervise the application activity and correct any misunderstandings by the learners. In some cases, it may be necessary to redirect the learners back through the presentation step before they can successfully make application of the lesson. In the application step, the learners actually put into practice or apply the skills or information that was presented in the lesson.

In planning for the application step, the following items should be considered:

  - Have the learners repeat the "how" and "why" points to make sure they understand how the task is done.
  
  - Observe and correct errors as early as possible.
  
  - Encourage and compliment learners to build their self-confidence.
  
  - Have the learners perform the job as completely and accurately as it was demonstrated.
  
  - Have the learner repeat the task over and over until you are sure that they can do it in the proper manner.
  
  - Check to see if the learners are observing all of the safety rules.
Evaluation Step

The fourth step of the four-step teaching process is the evaluation step. This step is necessary to determine whether the instruction has been effective. If the first three steps have been effective, the learners should be able to use what they have learned without assistance. The evaluation step enables both the instructor or trainer and the learners to determine if the objectives of the lesson have been met. When the learners are able to master the skills and information presented, they are ready to move on to a new lesson. The following points relate to the evaluation step:

- The learner must be asked to do the job or apply the information.
- Check the learner's work frequently to evaluate his or her ability to perform the job accurately.
- Develop an evaluation sheet or chart to use in rating the learner's work.
- Always use the evaluation step to check and improve performance. Never use it to embarrass or discourage the learners.

The steps of the four-step plan must lead smoothly from one step to the next. Each step should blend into the succeeding one. The steps are designed to enable the instructor to present information and skills in a logical order. In summary, the instructor must (a) prepare the learner; then (b) present the skill or information by showing, demonstrating, telling, and illustrating, one point at a time; then (c) help the learner apply the new skill or information until the standard is met; and finally (d) test the success of the teaching-learning process.