

5 Strategies for Enhancing Your Learning Environments

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Learning environments come in all sizes and shapes. The better ones have been planned using what researchers have found about how the brain best processes information. If you want to increase the overall learning outcomes for your trainees and students, consider doing what the experts do:

1. Configure your furniture so that learners can effectively interact with you and their peers throughout the learning event. Use of round tables that seat 5-6 people (with no one having their back to the front of the room), rectangular tables joined together to form team seating, and semicircular chair configurations facing the trainer or teacher are good for encouraging dialogue and making the experience more collaborative.
2. Add visual stimulus to the environment by including audio-visual aids (e.g. flip charts and slides) that include colorful graphics, animation, sound, and complimentary backgrounds or borders. Choose a title line color and two additional complimentary colors with which to alternate lines of text in order to highlight information and attract attention. If you add graphics, make sure that they complement the text and send a congruent message.
3. Use various music selections that relate to your learning theme, stimulate learners and encourage memory retention throughout your session. Choose upbeat music to play before the session begins and during breaks, and instrumental music that mirrors the human heart beat of approximately 60 beats per minute (e.g. classical Baroque) to encourage reflection and retention.
4. Create a fun learning environment by incorporating games and small group activities into your delivery format. You can modify classic board games or create your own to focus attention on session content or build team camaraderie. Hundreds of books, articles and websites offer ideas for doing this.
5. Build in Interim Reviews throughout your learning events in order to reinforce key concepts and cause learners to reflect on what they have learned. You can add a bit of novelty and fun to your reviews by using props, incentives, music, and a bit of team competition. Since the storage capacity of short-term memory is limited, build in brief reminders periodically to cement ideas in the brain. You can do short reviews in which learners provide answers to questions after each major section of material is covered. You can also include more substantial review activities after a brief period (e.g. ninety minutes).

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