

Trainer's Warehouse Book of Games

Fun and Energizing Ways to
Enhance Learning

Elaine Biech
Editor

Pfeiffer
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About This Book

Why is this topic important?

Trainers, educators, consultants, and presenters depend on Trainer's Warehouse to supply them with creative as well as practical, exciting as well as useful tools, props, materials, and, yes, toys for their learners. This book takes that service one step further, providing activities and games that customers can use with the wonderful array of tools they have purchased from the company. Did you purchase a boomwhacker? Wondering how to use it? Check the Trainer's Warehouse Materials List at the end of the book. It will lead you to activities during which you can use it.

What can you achieve with this book?

This book offers you a selection of over one hundred activities, games, and trainer tools and techniques. Every activity is supported by materials from Trainer's Warehouse and was tested by satisfied customers like you. Turn to *Trainer's Warehouse Book of Games* for a rich source of ideas and to try out new classroom tools, toys, and approaches that others in your profession have found successful. The activities will add loads of learning and fabulous fun to your next training session.

How is this book organized?

The book is divided into three sections and twenty-two chapters. Section One, What's Ahead, helps you understand the purpose of the book. Section Two, Training Tools and Techniques, includes ten chapters. Each of the chapters represents training techniques that may be incorporated into many training sessions, including openings; icebreakers; energizers; participation encouragement; comprehension and retention; time and people management; training techniques; rewards and recognition; review of knowledge and skills; and closings. These chapters are ordered in the typical chronological appearance of these techniques in a workshop or training session. All will enrich your training design. Section Three, Training and Consulting Topics, also includes ten chapters. Each chapter represents a specific training topic: change management; communication and trust; creativity; customer service; organization knowledge; personal development; problem solving; process and projects; supervision, management, and leadership; and teamwork and team building.

About Pfeiffer

Pfeiffer serves the professional development and hands-on resource needs of training and human resource practitioners and gives them products to do their jobs better. We deliver proven ideas and solutions from experts in HR development and HR management, and we offer effective and customizable tools to improve workplace performance. From novice to seasoned professional, Pfeiffer is the source you can trust to make yourself and your organization more successful.



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For Shane and Thad,
thanks for energizing me.

—Elaine Biech

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Editor

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Preface

Who'd have thought that a father-daughter team, a Williams College physicist and a Yale graduate, would manage a catalog company that strives to bring fun and inspiration to trainers, facilitators, educators, and presenters? Trainer's Warehouse's mission is to be a full resource of hard-to-find and innovative products that do just that.

In 1994, Michael Doctoroff left a secure job and began making picture frames in his basement, and Office Images, Inc., was born. Orders for one to twenty-five frames for office cubicles arrived weekly. One day, two orders arrived, each requesting over five hundred frames. To his surprise, Mike learned that both buyers intended to use the frames for training certificates. Within months, Mike renamed the company Trainer's Warehouse and committed to finding and creating products that enabled trainers to do their jobs better.

Susan Doctoroff Landay joined the company in 1997. Her experience in training and marketing and as a Ringling clown provides a solid background for the Trainer's Warehouse strategy. The company's first twelve-page two-color catalog featured thirty items. Today, the full-color catalog has multiplied in size and offers over 350 products, including more than one hundred exclusive items.

Many trainers, educators, consultants, and presenters depend on Trainer's Warehouse to supply them with creative as well as practical, exciting as well as useful tools, props, materials, and, yes, toys to "entertrain" their participants.

This book features learning activities used by many of the company's satisfied customers. Here's what you'll find in the book's three sections.

- Section One serves as an introduction to the activities. One chapter shares some insight into activities and learning offering some great debriefing questions for any game or learning activity. The second chapter sets the stage and creates an environment of fun and experiential learning.
- Section Two focuses on Training Techniques. Every trainer and educator who has a need for a new and different icebreaker or energizer, searches for better ways to ensure participation and retention, and wants creative ways to review material and close sessions, will find ideas here.
- Section Three provides a collection of activities geared toward specific workshop topics using the many items found in the Trainer's Warehouse catalog. Topics are in alphabetical order and range from Change Management to Teamwork and Team Building.

Already own a number of Trainer's Warehouse items? Looking for new ways to use them? The Trainer's Warehouse Materials list at the end of the book will lead you to other techniques to use with the same items. Additionally, at the back of the book, there is a grid of Primary and Alternative Uses for Activities, so you can see how some of your favorites might be applied to other topical areas.

Like the Trainer's Warehouse mission, this book will bring ideas, fun, and inspiration to trainers, facilitators, educators, and presenters. Enjoy!

Appreciation

Thanks to the contributors who have added substance and functionality. Your constructive contributions have produced a work that will be appreciated by your colleagues.

Susan Landay and Michael Doctoroff, thank you for entrusting me with your resource-rich catalog and loyal customers. Here's another product for your creative catalog.

Martin Delahoussaye, editor, thank you for another inspirational idea for the profession.

Lorraine Kohart, ebb associates inc, this is more your book than mine. Thanks for your extraordinary effort, persistent prodding, and your fresh focus.

Dan Greene, thanks for your steady support.

Susan Rachmeler, developmental editor, thank you for your practical ideas and your uncommonly common sense.

The background of the slide is a light gray color with several puzzle pieces scattered across it. The puzzle pieces are a slightly darker shade of gray and are arranged in a way that suggests they are part of a larger, incomplete picture. The pieces are of various orientations and positions, some overlapping and some not.

Section 1

What's Ahead

This section introduces Trainer's Warehouse and presents the purpose of this book.

The section helps you set the stage and create an environment conducive to experiential learning and introduces the concept of using fun when learning.

It also offers several key background tips so that you can be successful in introducing, conducting, and debriefing an exercise.

Experiencing Learning: The Whys and Hows of Involving Participants

Training and developing others is one of the most exciting and rewarding jobs anyone can have. You can affect the lives and work of many people, and influence individuals abilities to be successful, while at the same time have a significant role in increasing your company's bottom line.

This chapter introduces you to a couple of concepts that will ensure your success as a trainer. It acquaints you with the concept of experiential learning activities, sometimes called ELAs. It also provides several tactics for working with participants who believe they are “too serious” to have fun while they are learning.

Using Experiential Learning Activities

Experiential learning happens when a learner participates in an activity, processes the activity, identifies useful skills or knowledge, and transfers the learning to the workplace or life in general. ELAs attempt to imitate daily life experiences. Participants “experience” what they learn before processing or discussing the activity.

To be successful, ELAs must have all of the following characteristics:

- Have a structure, including specific steps and a process that will lead to anticipated results
- Focus on a specific goal
- Incorporate a high level of participation

- Provide concepts, information, and data for participants to review and analyze
- Require processing or debriefing so that participants can uncover the learning that occurred

The Experiential Learning Cycle (*Reference Guide*, 1999) identifies five required steps of experiential learning activities: experiencing, publishing, processing, generalizing, and applying.

Step 1, Experiencing. Participants complete a defined task, often using props, toys, and materials such as those from Trainer’s Warehouse. The activity may be associated with a game or fun. If the process ends here, learning is left to chance. Therefore the trainer or facilitator leads the participants through a series of questions.

Step 2, Publishing. Participants share their observations of what happened during the activity. Generally the trainer or facilitator guides the discussion with carefully crafted questions. Participants have an opportunity to share what they observed and experienced and how it felt. The trainer usually begins with a broad question such as, “What happened?” and then focuses on the more specific questions that lead participants to the learning outcome for the specific activity.

Give participants an opportunity to share observations. You may begin with broad questions and then focus on more specific concepts. Here are some examples:

- What happened?
- What did you observe?
- What helped or hindered the process?
- What results did you see?
- Did anything surprise you? What and why?
- How do you feel about what happened?

Step 3, Processing. Participants have an opportunity to discuss the dynamics and results of the activity. In some cases observers may also be used to help define what occurred. This step helps participants interpret why something happened.

The key here is to allow participants to discover this for themselves, avoiding your desire to “tell” them why. Ask questions such as these:

- Why do you suppose that occurred?
- What did you learn about yourself? About others?
- What can you glean from this activity?
- What principles might be true based on your experience?

Step 4, Generalizing. This step helps participants connect what they learned to real life. It uses questions to help participants identify why what they are learning is important. It uncovers the “so what” related to the activity. The following questions may be used to help participants connect their experiences to real-life situations:

- How does this relate to your situation?
- What does this suggest to you?
- What patterns and similarities come to mind? Are there exceptions?
- How does this experience help you understand others like it?
- What if . . . ?

Step 5, Applying. To be most effective, an ELA must allow participants to plan effective change based on what they learned during the activity. This step requires that participants move from “so what?” to “now what?” Trainers assist learners to apply what they learned to real-life situations at work or in their personal lives. Participants may establish goals, contract for change, make promises, identify potential workplace changes, or initiate other actions that result from their experience.

By this point, participants will have a greater understanding of the purpose of the activity. Facilitate a discussion about how they will apply their learning back at the workplace or in their personal lives. This application step brings closure to the activity. Questions such as these will get at the answer to the question “now what?”

- What will you do differently as a result of this experience?
- How will you transfer your knowledge and skills to the workplace?
- How and when will you apply your learning?
- How will this help you be more effective in the future?
- What support would make this change easier to implement?
- What’s next?

Your role is to help participants discover the learning from what they have completed. Remember that your task is not to tell them, not to assign your learning on them, but—through a series of questions—to help them uncover the lesson themselves. The lesson they need to learn may not be the lesson you want to teach. This is called experiential learning.

Note: As you gather the group’s feedback, record the answers on a flip chart so you can refer to them or perhaps even distribute important learning points later.

Every trainer should be skilled in using experiential learning activities. It is a powerful tool that turns fun into action, games into skills. All of the activities in this book are not formal ELAs. However, it is important to note that the activities that qualify as ELAs will likely require more attention and processing than others.

Working with Serious Participants

Many trainers, consultants, facilitators, teachers, and others in the field of workplace learning and performance fully embrace the concepts of fun and interactive training to accelerate the learning process. Others pass up the opportunity to use props and toys such as those found in the Trainer's Warehouse catalog and lament, "I wish I could use your 'toys,' but I teach engineers (or accountants or bankers or doctors) and they're too serious for that."

This comment heard by Trainer's Warehouse, was so prevalent that they wondered whether new teaching theory was required for these serious-type learners or whether trainers and facilitators simply needed new language and tools to sell the concept of playful learning to these serious learners, while still maintaining their credibility and professionalism. At the same time, Trainer's Warehouse had heard hundreds of testimonials about how using reinforcement games, fiddles, and other playful toys creates positive energy in the classroom, improves retention within the learning environment, and translates into greater productivity outside the classroom. So the question was, how to help all trainers to experience the same success, whether their participants were "serious" or not.

Susan Doctoroff Landay, company president, uses an approach developed by Roger Fisher, author of *Getting to Yes*, to help trainers and facilitators be more successful. She has identified several tactics that can help you convert serious and skeptical students to active and laughing learners. These tips might prove helpful to gain buy-in from skeptical learners.

Tactic 1: Be Open About Your Interests and Theirs Right from the start

Don't wait until the end of an exercise to address participants' concerns and goals. Instead, lead your group into an activity by articulating both their concerns and your interests. You might say, for instance, "I understand you may be a bit skeptical about my crazy games and toys. In fact, if you're like others I've taught, here are some of the thoughts that might be in your head." Read from the column of Participant's Interests and Concerns in Table 1.1. Then ask, "Before I go on, do you have other thoughts you'd like to share with the class and me?"

It is important to start with *the participants'* perspective. Once they feel heard and understood, they'll be more likely to listen to an alternative perspective. After they have expressed their concerns, list some of your interests and concerns.

Table 1.1. Interests and Concerns

Participant's Interests and Concerns	Trainer's Interests and Concerns
This is a waste of time.	Need to prove success to managers
I don't want to embarrass myself.	Learning needs to be fun to be successful.
This is beneath me.	I don't want to look stupid.
I'm smart; just tell me what I need to know and I'll remember it. I don't need stupid games.	They're smart. . . . I don't have all the answers, but I can help them share their learning.
I have other, more important things to do.	The organization has spent a lot just to get people into training—it has a purpose.
I won't learn anything. This trainer has never done my job, so what can she add?	When people experience emotion, the learning is memorable.
I won't learn anything new.	If all I do is lecture, nobody will remember anything.

Tactic 2: Allow Participants to Experience Control

Allow participants to feel some control and involvement in selecting the teaching method. This doesn't mean that you will need to redesign the training session. When offered options, chances are high that the group will select the same things you did. Their participation in the selection process means they'll more readily buy into the creative teaching methods, without you having to "sell" the idea.

You might say something like this: "I've given a lot of thought to the format of the session, but think that input from a group like you could be extremely valuable. Let me share some of the components, then you can add to the list. Let's brainstorm a list first and then decide what to do. If we take five minutes to get a solid start, it will make the entire session more successful. Here are some options I've thought of:

- Lecture
- Role play
- Simulation games
- Q&A sessions
- Working in small groups"

At this point, invite the group to continue adding to the list, with suggestions such as:

- Senior employees help junior employees
- Junior employees help senior employees
- Use magic tricks
- Tell content-related jokes
- Play some music

Tactic 3: Use External Standards or Criteria to Choose Among the Options

Identify third-party assistance or some “blue book” standard to add support to the decision. You may wish to share some of these data points with participants and invite them to supplement with their own experiences.

- Retention can increase up to 800 percent if humor is used when presenting (Ziv, 1984).
- Students using lots of visuals did 12 percent better on short-term recall and 26 percent better on long-term retention (Meier, 2000).
- Standing speeds up information processing 5 to 20 percent, compared to sitting down (Jensen, 1996, p. 150).
- Four-member teams rewarded based on the group’s average scores performed significantly better than trainees rewarded on individual scores only (Hagman & Hayes, 1985).
- Data shows that tasks that are interrupted mid-process are more memorable (Allen, 2001, p. 13).
- Each of us might be a different type of learner. Some are visual (they need to see something to remember it). Some are auditory (they need to hear something to remember it). Some are physical (they need to do it to learn it). And some are kinesthetic (doing something with their hands helps them to remember) (Russell, 1999).
- Data shows that the presence of “happy chemicals” in the brain, like serotonin, stimulates memory. Serotonin is naturally produced in response to music, laughter, and physical activity (Jensen & Cabney, 2000).
- Sixty percent of what is presented in training is forgotten if it’s not used immediately. Seventy-five percent is lost with six months, and 85 percent within one year of training (Broad & Newstrom, 1992).

Together, choose among the options. Given the brainstorm of options and data shared, ask the group members which learning formats they most want to use in the session. When polling the participants, mark down their responses so they feel heard. Let them know that you'll adjust your session accordingly.

Tactic 4: Communicate the Training Process

Although most of your training time will be utilized in talking about the content, it's always okay to take a break and explain the process. The “process” is:

- The method by which you're teaching
- The pace at which you're teaching
- Topics that will be covered next
- Questions that remain unanswered
- Agenda for the remainder of the session

Tactic 5: Build a Relationship with Your Learners

Relationships are built on mutual respect. Remind participants that you, too, have lots to learn. Invite them to share their knowledge with you and to approach you at a break with important feedback, questions, or comments.

Whether you're teaching doctors, accountants, engineers, software developers, scientists, bankers, or financial analysts, remind yourself of the old cliché, “everybody's different.” No two individuals and no two learners are alike—each has a different familiarity with your topic, sense of humor, ability to communicate, and so on. Don't make assumptions about your participants without checking in with them. You might surprise each other!

These five tactics will help you create support for using activities, props, and toys to teach skills and knowledge in your sessions.

Whether you are looking for a process to ensure learning occurs or tactics that prepare participants for the learning they are about to experience, Trainer's Warehouse can provide the materials, and this book offers over one hundred ways to use them.

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Setting the Stage for Playful Learning

Trainers committed to incorporating experiential learning activities into their session plans can do a lot to create a total room environment, or ambience, that is conducive to laughter, play, and enhanced learning. What we call “playful learning” goes by lots of names, all of which sound a bit serious and scary—but they are not. You may have heard a few of these terms:

- Accelerated learning
- Right-brain, left-brain learning
- Kinesthetic learning
- Whole body learning

All of them refer to the trainer’s need to facilitate learning for all kinds of people—those who learn by hearing, by doing, by seeing, by experiences, and by feeling. Why? Because, as many who write on these topics remind us, we all learn more when all of our senses are engaged. That is, when we are feeling good; when we have positive emotional experiences; when our hands are occupied; when our surroundings are pleasant; and when we’re happy.

Establishing a climate conducive to learning is key to every successful training event. You can set the stage for having fun and creating an atmosphere of playful learning right from the start. Welcome your participants to a room that is colorful and exciting, that has tactile items on the table and posters on the wall, that meets participants with music and tempts with toys. A room that shouts “fun” is the perfect setting. Once the session starts, your opening activities will set the tempo and the tone for the session. An interactive and playful icebreaker, for example, tells participants that it is safe to have fun.

As a trainer, you are the key to setting the stage for playful learning. Trainer traits that encourage playful learning include:

- Demonstrating a sense of humor
- Being open to new ideas
- Encouraging participation
- Showing that you are people-oriented and approachable
- Building trust with participants and among participants
- Displaying subtle competence
- Exhibiting sincerity
- Using tools and toys to support your training design and playful learning climate

Trainer's Warehouse offers a range of tools, gadgets, and goodies to create a classroom that makes learners feel welcome and invites them to relax and get ready to learn. These include:

- Using fiddles for tactile learners
- Playing music to set the stage
- Posting signs to create a theme, provide reminders, and deliver messages
- Providing welcome items to create an inviting climate
- Using balls and other throwables
- Taking frequent breaks

Fiddle While You Work

Every trainer and facilitator has been faced with the dilemma of providing tactile experiences for those participants who prefer a kinesthetic learning style. “Fiddle” is a term used to refer to any small toy that participants can manipulate in their hands or “fiddle” with. Although fiddles may look like toys to the untrained eye, they can be serious learning tools,” states Sharon Bowman, author of *Presenting with Pizazz*. Fiddles can enhance for learning environment by:

- Promoting a relaxed, playful mindset—setting a creative-friendly tone in your session.
- Improving focus—kinesthetic learners will focus better and absorb material more quickly if they have something to do with their hands.
- Relieving stress—playing with toys and hand-held manipulatives is believed to relieve stress.
- Engaging the whole brain—discussions are left-brained; toys tap into the creative right brain.



How can you use fiddles?

1. Leave a pile of fiddles in a basket in the front of the room or on each table.
2. Invite learners to take one. If it makes you feel more comfortable, you can explain some of the benefits of having “toys” in class. However, it may create a more experiential opportunity if you wait to explain until after the learners have had some time with them.
3. Proceed with your lesson or learning point while students handle the fiddles.
4. At the end of a session, engage your group in a discussion about the effect of having the fiddles on the tables. You may wish to ask questions, such as:
 - Who used a fiddle?
 - Did some of you tend to use them more or less than others?
 - What was the perceived value to those of you individuals who used them?
 - Were some of the fiddles preferable to others? If so, why?
 - Can you identify other ways that people fiddle when not given an “official” fiddle? (e.g., doodling, twirling pencils, tapping the table, playing with rings or hair)
 - Did “fiddling” enhance learning or interfere with listening?

Your debrief may teach learners about themselves and their own learning styles, sensitize them to different ways that others learn, and introduce learners to the value of making kinesthetic learning tools available in their own meetings.

The Trainer's Warehouse collection of fiddles or kinesthetic learning tools have been "specially selected for quiet mindless 'fiddlebility.'"

Play Music to Set the Right Mood

Lenn Millbower and others have written extensively about the use of music in the training room to energize, relax, and engage learners. Experts match the "beats per minute" (BPM) to the learning goal. For instance, 120 to 165 BPM songs are known to activate the production of adrenaline and increase heart rates if you want learners to get going, speed it up, move quickly into groups. 60 to 70 BPM songs stimulate the production of serotonin, a common neurotransmitter that helps us feel pleasant and cheerful. These songs are best to play when you'd like to reduce stress, but encourage productivity. Finally, 40 to 55 BPM (just below the resting rate) songs will slow the pace of learners' heart rates and help them de-stress, unwind, and slow down.

In addition to mood-setting music, Trainer's Warehouse recommends using songs with humorous lyrics to introduce breaks, bring people back from breaks, encourage out-of-the box thinking, request that cell phones be turned off, etc.



With the right songs, music is a wonderful way to send an important message in a non-threatening way. As such, Trainer’s Warehouse developed a CD entitled “Laughable Lyrics,” which promises just that—funny songs for training and other meeting events.

Another Trainer’s Warehouse product is a musical tool called a Boomwhacker. Boomwhackers provide you with a host of training applications. You may use them to develop group spirit; build employee rapport; introduce participants; learn effective team planning; experience the satisfaction of achieving an objective; appreciate the interdependence of group members; focus on the importance of communication skills; enjoy making music together; and simply have fun.

Use Boomwhackers in teams of (ideally) eight players—with each person holding one of the eight Boomwhacker tubes. The eight Boomwhackers in each set are perfectly tuned to play eight different musical notes when “whacked” against a table, wall, or floor. The notes are clearly marked on the tubes. Assign a challenge to your groups and have them perform their creations for the rest of the class. You may wish to incorporate several of these challenges into your exercise.

- Create a rhythmic pattern in a specified time-frame (2 to 10 minutes)
- Play a familiar song
- Make up a new song
- Repeat the exercise, requiring the groups to work without speaking

Whether you play a CD, use Boomwhackers, or produce music in some other way, remember that it helps to tap into the playful aspect of learning.

Post Signs

You can also engineer a positive environment for learning with signs. Signs can be used to send playful yet serious messages. Trainer’s Warehouse has a line of traffic signs that tactfully request that students turn off cell phones, be quiet, listen to others, ask lots of questions, and more. While those signs may be already made, you can also make up your own signs or look for other humorous ways to convey information. For instance, Delta Song Airline put a whole new spin on the traditional safety presentation at the beginning of each flight by delivering it as if it were a New Age relaxation experience.

Signs can also be used to welcome participants to the session. By posting a session sign outside the door, you can ensure that participants will know that they

are in the correct location. Signs that present quotes can motivate and stimulate participants. And finally, signs may have graphics or pictures that add color to the training room.

Welcome Participants

Participants should feel the positive energy right from the start. That is why it is important for you to be prepared to greet even the earliest participant's arrival. Tables and chairs should be arranged, equipment tested and ready to roll, materials organized on the tables, participants' places arranged, music set to the right tunes and at the correct sound level, posters hung, flip charts prepared, and refreshments set out. When all these things have been completed ahead of time, you can be relaxed and ready to greet your participants.

Ensure that your participants feel welcomed to the training room. Plan ahead so that they walk into a relaxed atmosphere and an environment that sings "fun." The room says you took the time to get ready for them and that you care about their learning needs. If you have prepared ahead, you have time to greet them and welcome them to a great training session. Trainer's Warehouse offers several products that can help you establish a welcoming environment.

The Welcome Kit is intended to inspire participation, open-mindedness, and fun. It includes things such as a slinky, a noisemaker, a foam question mark, and other toys that represent metaphors of important learning messages. Wouldn't your participants be surprised to see a carryout box packed with these items sitting at their places? You can delight your participants with other items as well, such as fiddles mentioned earlier, Koosh® balls or other throwables, crayons, colorful paper, neon bright Post-it® Notes, or two-sided index cards.

Investing in your welcome sets the stage right from the start and tells your participants that this learning experience is going to be worth their while and also a playful experience.

Play Ball!¹

Once the stage is set, you will want to continue to create an environment of playful learning. What better tool to use than balls?

Balls are playful by nature. Since childhood, we have been taught to have fun with balls—playing catch, dodge ball, 4-square, SPUD, kickball, soccer, and more.

¹This discussion about balls was written by Steve Sugar for Trainer's Warehouse.

They are also terrific teaching and learning tools. Trainer's warehouse believes that the best balls used in training should be S.A.F.E.:

Soft: They shouldn't hurt (people or things) when thrown hard.

Aesthetically pleasing: They should look fun!

Feel: They should be pleasant to touch.

Easy: They should be easy to catch.

Using balls in the classroom provides many benefits. Balls can:

- Create a relaxed playful mindset.
- Engage the whole brain, since discussions are left-brained and toys tap into the creative right side.
- Provide versatility when used for stress relief, games, team selection, and reinforcement.
- Encourage participation, since many people can't resist playing with them!

Listed here are a few general ways you can use balls in learning activities:

Tactile learner prop or stress relief. Leave a few balls on learners' tables so they can pick them up and occupy their hands.

Icebreaker. At the start of a session, introduce yourself, what you do, something you like about your job, something you don't like, and a favorite pastime, for example. Then toss the ball to another person and ask that person to introduce him- or herself in a similar manner. Keep the ball moving around the room until everyone has been introduced.

Lesson reinforcement and discussion summary. At the close of a discussion or session, tell the group you're going to throw the ball out to someone and ask that person to share a learning point or other relevant comment with the rest of the group. That person then passes the ball to someone else. Continue until everyone has had a turn.

Team selection. Have an assortment of different kinds (or colors) of balls. Have every participant pull a ball out of a bag or box. When all have been distributed, ask participants to find all the people who have similar balls. At the end of the game or exercise, let players take their balls as parting gifts.

Role play. Role playing can be anxiety-producing for participants. Use balls to make the exercise more fun and less scary. Give the person in the "hot seat" three balls. When that person gets stuck and needs a suggestion for what to say (or do) next, invite him or her to throw a ball to someone for help.

Brainstorming. Toss a ball from person to person (quickly). Whenever someone catches the ball, he or she needs to state a brainstorming idea. Remember,

don't mix creation of ideas with evaluation of ideas—the goal is to put as many ideas on paper as possible, and at this pace you might identify a few funny suggestions. There will be plenty of time to weed through them later.

Play “What If?” The goal is to have your group dream up a success story. The holder of the ball makes up an opening sentence of the story, then passes the ball to another person. The recipient adds a sentence to the story, building on what's been said, then passes the ball to someone else. Play continues until the story comes to a close. Follow up the exercise with a discussion of the story that was woven together by the group.

Teach juggling. Introducing a physical challenge is often a useful way to balance the mental challenge that learners experience in class. Frequently, it also results in role reversal—the “pro” is not necessarily the boss or supervisor. This can be incredibly refreshing for individuals who are better at something than their “superiors.”

Assign roles. Divide the group into teams of three or four. Give each team a ball. Ask the teams to play “Hot Potato” or “One Potato” to pick a leader, an observer, or a person to “go first.”

- *One Potato:* Have the group pass the ball from player to player while chanting, “one potato, two potato, three potato, four, five potato, six potato, seven potato, more.” Whoever has the ball at the end of the chant is “it.”
- *Hot Potato:* Play music for 7 to 10 seconds while the ball is tossed from player to player. When the music stops, the person with the ball is “it.”

Energizer. Play catch. That's right! When you take a break, ask your group to go outside and play catch.

Take More Breaks

More than eighty years ago, Bluma Zeigarnik, a Russian psychologist, studied the consequences that occur when tasks or learning are left undone. When out to lunch one day, Zeigarnik noticed that a waiter had better recollections of still unpaid orders than of those that were paid. This led her research into a Gestalt phenomenon that demonstrates that tasks which are interrupted seem to be most memorable. Today we find the effect is widely used as a plot device in TV series and movies for maintaining viewer interest by using cliffhangers.

This same Gestalt psychology, the Zeigarnik effect, has been used to demonstrate why learners remember material better when they leave learning unfinished. In addition, researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology say

regular breaks are key to forming memories. David Foster and his colleagues say that when rats take a break while exploring an unfamiliar area, their brains instantly replay the information they have just experienced. This occurs in the human brain as well, in a place called the hippocampus that plays a key role in memory. Foster learned that when the rats took a break after running a track, the cells fired in reverse order, replaying multiple times, but up to twenty times faster.

Findings such as these suggest that if you want participants to remember the content of your training session, at times it may be better to leave learning unfinished before breaks and to take breaks more frequently.

Summary

Have these ideas and products from Trainer's Warehouse piqued your interest? Ready for more? The rest of this book presents over one hundred activity ideas for using these and other products from Trainer's Warehouse. Try them as written or adapt them to address your content and your participants' needs.

Once you become familiar with the products available from Trainer's Warehouse, create your own activities. Susan and Mike would be delighted to hear from you about how you use their products.

References

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Zeigarnik and Foster's research is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeigarnik_effect.

The background of the slide is a light gray color with a pattern of scattered, interlocking puzzle pieces. The pieces are a slightly darker shade of gray and are arranged in a way that suggests a larger puzzle being assembled. The text is centered on the slide.

Section 2

Training Tools and Techniques