



# Selecting Teaching Methods That Align With Learning Objectives

## Overview

Instructors should select training methods based on learning objectives that are developed at the outset of course scoping and development. This fact sheet describes various teaching methods and how the features of each can be leveraged to support the training's learning objectives.

## Understanding Learning Objectives

Well-articulated learning objectives provide a clear structure for both teaching and learning. Learning objectives should convey to learners and other stakeholders what the instructor expects the learners to know and be able to do as a result of the instruction. Selecting one or more appropriate teaching methods supports the course format, content and materials development, instructor selection and program evaluation metrics.

## Training Methods

The table below highlights some common teaching methods and their respective features. This information, when coupled with the training's learning objectives, can help Program Managers most effectively continue with the course design process. For more information on developing learning objectives, refer to the fact sheet "Developing High Quality Learning Objectives".

Teaching Method	Features
<b>Lecture</b>	Conveys information to supplement reading or self-study, responds to student misconceptions or difficulties, stimulates interest in a new area.
<b>Discussion</b>	Evaluate two or more positions on an issue, practice critical thinking on a particular discipline, draw on learner knowledge and expertise, form arguments and defend position.
<b>Expert panel discussion</b>	Relate knowledge to real world examples, understand discipline nuances and areas of debate, listen to different opinions on topic, reinforce other training methods, update learners on new knowledge.
<b>Case study or role play</b>	Practice problem-solving with relevant examples, practice skills or behaviors, demonstrate high-level cognitive skills (e.g. evaluation, analysis), relate knowledge to the real world, form arguments and counterarguments.
<b>Labs</b>	Receive and respond to immediate feedback, develop process skills, practice physical or manual skills, evaluate results of own work.
<b>Coaching</b>	Apply knowledge on the job, unlock participant potential, increase knowledge sharing, reinforce other training methods.
<b>Team-based activities</b>	Collaborate on problems, improve coaching and feedback skills among members, analyze different perspectives, increase knowledge-sharing, involve and engage team members of different skill levels, develop meta-skills (e.g. leadership, communication, conflict resolution), strategize on how to tackle problems.

These teaching methods can be implemented in a classroom or partially or entirely enabled by technology, as with the use of video, webcasts, podcasts and online courses. Traditional classroom formats offer learners an opportunity for personal interaction and direct application of the new material, but may have significant logistical and cost challenges. On the other hand, technology-based formats, the Internet and virtual classroom technologies permit wide learner access, especially for those who are in remote locations (e.g., Service members) but may restrict learners' real-time interaction and can tempt learners to multitask during the training.

Because each method has distinct advantages and challenges, including varying levels of interactivity, when feasible, a combination of methods may yield the greatest benefits for adult learners. Instructors for clinical subject matters often begin teaching with lecture and discussion, followed by case study, labs, coaching and/or team-based problem solving. To reinforce and update knowledge, clinicians must take continuing education courses. In these cases, use of an expert panel discussion could be used to teach a new technique or present a change in practice.

## Summary: Why Learning Objectives and Adult Learning Principles Matter

Training should be designed to clearly convey high-impact information in a time- and cost-effective manner. A program's learning objectives should help drive the selection of teaching methods and Program Managers should ensure that they are well-aligned.

### About the DCoE Training & Education (T&E) Directorate

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