

## Induction, icebreakers and ground rules

### This handout will cover:

- The induction process
- Creating an induction checklist
- Using icebreakers
- Types of icebreaker
- Using energisers
- Establishing ground rules
- Maintaining ground rules
- Reading list
- Website list

### The induction process

When you begin teaching a new group or an individual, there are certain points you must explain regarding your organisation, the programme and the facilities available. This is known as an *induction* and will usually take place during the first meeting with your learners.

### Creating an induction checklist

It's useful to have a checklist to ensure all aspects are covered. Giving your learners a copy of the checklist will act as a reminder to them of the information they have received (either a hard copy or electronic). Often, so much information is given out during the first session that learners can easily forget some important points. Asking learners to sign the checklist proves all areas have been covered. If an inspector asks a learner if they have had an induction, a learner might say 'no' as they are not familiar with the word 'induction'.

There may be some administrative aspects to be completed during the first session such as filling in forms; don't let this take over - your learners will want to leave having learnt something interesting about the subject. If you do have a lot of things to complete, inform your learners in advance that the first session will be the induction session, and that they will not be commencing the subject until the second session.

If you have any learners who commence the programme at a later date, make sure you spend time with them to cover all aspects of the induction process.

You might like to create your own induction checklist if there isn't one available at your organisation. It might contain aspects such as:

### Organisation:

- an introduction to the organisation
- tour of the site
- who's who within the staff, i.e. names, roles, responsibilities
- where to go for help and advice
- evacuation procedures/first aid
- enrolment/form filling

### Programme:

- programme/qualification details
- attendance dates
- break times
- assessment details and target dates
- coursework/homework
- icebreaker
- ground rules

### Facilities:

- toilets, refreshments, parking, smoking
- disabled access and facilities
- crèche and childcare facilities
- rooms and learning environments
- computer and library facilities and access
- opening and closing times of buildings
- travel arrangements
- learning and learner support

## Using icebreakers

Some learners can be quiet, shy, nervous or apprehensive when they first commence. An icebreaker is a good way of everyone getting to know each other's name and encouraging communication to take place.

Carrying out an icebreaker with your learners will help ensure they get to know each other and you early on. It could be carried out as part of the induction process at the commencement of the programme. A non-threatening activity should be used which can include everyone and encourage communication to take place.

Some learners may already know each other, or have carried out an icebreaker with another teacher they currently have. Knowing this beforehand will help you decide upon an appropriate and suitable icebreaker to carry out and saves repetition.

You could carry out the icebreaker before covering the induction requirements as this will encourage your learners to relax, and give them confidence to speak or ask questions in front of others.

Whichever way you use an icebreaker, it should be designed to be a fun and light-hearted activity to:

- break down barriers
- build confidence and establish trust
- create a suitable learning environment
- encourage interaction, teamwork and inclusion
- reduce apprehension and nervousness.

Your organisation might have icebreakers for you to use or you could design your own, or search the internet for ideas. Keep your icebreaker short and simple and always evaluate how it went to enable you to modify or improve it for the future.

If you don't have time for introductions or an icebreaker, you could issue name badges for learners to wear or name cards to place in front of them. This is a visual reminder to each other, and helps you remember and use their name when speaking to them. Always introduce yourself first otherwise learners may be wondering what your name is, or whether you are their permanent teacher or just someone facilitating the icebreaker. First impressions count therefore you need to portray that you are a professional, knowledgeable teacher who is competent and approachable.

### **Types of icebreaker**

Icebreakers can be quite simple, for example, asking your learners to introduce themselves in front of the group. However, this can be quite intimidating if none of the learners have met before. A way round this is to form the group into pairs and ask them to talk to each other for a few minutes about their hobbies, interests and reason for being there. They can then introduce each other, which is a lot less intimidating. People may not feel comfortable talking about themselves to a group of strangers, so another person introducing them may take any anxiety away.

A good idea is to note down your learners' names when they introduce each other, on a rough sketch of a seating plan. This will help you remember their names as it's likely they will return to the same position at the next session. You could also note something about them, which you could use in a future conversation. This shows that you are taking an interest in each learner.

More complex icebreakers can involve games or activities, but the outcome should be for your learners to relax, enjoy the activity, communicate and ascertain each other's names. Icebreakers can help retain attention, keep motivation high and help

the group to work together. All learners should be included and you should manage the activity carefully to ensure everyone can actively take part. You may wish to include yourself in the icebreaker, or just observe what is happening. If you include yourself, don't get too personal, resist the temptation to be everyone's *friend* and remain professional throughout.

## Using energisers

Icebreakers can also be used during an established session, perhaps after a break to help learners refocus. These are also known as *energisers* and can be subject specific (or not) such as a quiz, or a fun activity or game which gets learners moving about. Always have a contingency plan in case any equipment you planned to use isn't available, or if some learners finish before others.

Energisers can be used to revive learners, particularly after lunch or at the beginning of an evening session. Always ensure they are inclusive and appropriate.

## Establishing ground rules

Ground rules are boundaries, rules and conditions within which learners can safely work and learn.

Establishing them with your learners during the first session will help underpin appropriate behaviour and respect throughout their time on the programme. They should ensure the session runs smoothly and prevent problems occurring.

Ground rules should always be discussed and negotiated with your learners rather than imposed upon them. Using an activity to create the ground rules will help learners feel included, take ownership of, and hopefully follow them. It is best to agree the ground rules during the first session, perhaps after the icebreaker once everyone is feeling more relaxed.

Some ground rules might be re-negotiated or added to throughout the programme, for example, changing the break time. Others might not be negotiable and must be imposed, for example, health and safety requirements. These might already be listed in a learner handbook, agreement or learner contract and you would need to ensure all learners have a copy, and know that they are in addition to any rules agreed as a group.

If ground rules are not set, problems may occur which could disrupt the session and lead to misunderstandings.

A combination of both teacher and learners working together by a process of discussion and negotiation should ideally be used. This enables the learners to

recognise what is and is not acceptable, giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility. It also enables learners to begin working together as a group and encourages aspects such as listening, compromise and respect for others.

Alternatively, learners could write down the rules individually, then discuss in pairs and join into fours to create a poster or a list. One or two learners could present this to the full group and agreement can then take place. Depending upon the age of your learners, you could use the term *group contract* instead of ground rules.

Ideally, the ground rules should be on display each time the group meets, and/or a printed version could be given to each learner, e-mailed, or uploaded to a virtual learning environment (VLE) if applicable.

When establishing ground rules, you will need to have an idea of what needs to be non-negotiable and what could be negotiated.

Non-negotiable:

- no smoking on site
- returning from breaks punctually
- no anti-social behaviour, offensive language or swearing
- respecting others' views and beliefs
- following health and safety regulations.

Negotiable:

- no eating or drinking during sessions
- switching off mobile phones and electronic devices
- break times and lengths.

### **Maintaining ground rules**

Keeping the ground rules visible throughout the sessions will act as a reminder of what is not acceptable, and enable them to be amended or added to as necessary. If a learner breaks a rule, they must be told how their actions impact upon others and the session.

You could refer to the ground rules when they are not broken as positive reinforcement of good behaviour.

Any learners who have commenced the programme late will need to know what the ground rules are. Always refer to the rules at the beginning of the session and when a rule is broken.

If a learner breaks a ground rule you may find their peers reprimand them before you need to. You might like to ask your group to decide upon penalties or consequences for when a ground rule is broken. This could be a token penalty, for example, donating 50 pence to a group fund. Your learners can then decide what to do with the fund at the end of the programme. Alternatively, if it's more serious, you could write their name on a wall chart and allocate a point every time a rule is broken. Three points could lead to disciplinary action.

Ultimately, you will need to find your own strategy for dealing with learners who break the ground rules, depending upon the age and maturity of the group. At the end of your session you could thank your learners for following the ground rules; this will act as a reminder of their existence.

If you can lead by example you will help create a culture of mutual compliance which should lead to effective teaching and learning taking place.

### **Reading list**

Francis M & Gould J (2014) *Achieving your Award in Education and Training* London SAGE

Gravells A (2014) *The Award in Education and Training (Revised)* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2013) *Passing Assessments for the Award in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Wallace S (2011) *Teaching, Tutoring and Training in the Lifelong Learning Sector* (4th Edn) Exeter Learning Matters

Wilson L (2014) *Practical Teaching A Guide to teaching in the education and training sector* London Cengage Learning

### **Website list**

Icebreakers - <http://www.icebreakers.ws/>

Energisers - [http://www.trainerbubble.com/Products.aspx?Category\\_ID=38](http://www.trainerbubble.com/Products.aspx?Category_ID=38)

Ground rules - <https://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/building-inclusive-classrooms/establishing-ground-rules.html>