Small Group Facilitation Skills
Objectives

• Describe key adult learning principles to be considered in instructional situations.

• Develop strategies for planning and implementing effective small group teaching.

• Identify strategies to facilitate learners’ active participation.
Planning and Implementing Small Group Instruction

1. Preparing for the Session
2. Establishing the Learning Climate
3. Managing the Session
4. Promoting Active Learning
5. Summarizing
1. Preparing for the Session

- Identify your target learners
- Determine the objectives
- Select content for discussion (patient cases)
- Determine tasks, activities, questions
- Allocate time for activities
Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

Before you start...

Who?

What?

How?
Small Group Session Work Sheet:

- **Who** are your learners?
- **What** do you want to accomplish in the session?
- **What** challenges do you anticipate?
- **How** will you meet your teaching goals?
- **How** will you know that they are learning?
Small Group Session Work Sheet:

- **Who?**
  - Chief Residents, experienced teachers; tired from sitting and listening to talks
- **What?**
  - Provide some specific, useful techniques, likely to be used, encourage experimentation
- **How?**
  - Interactive didactic, modeling some of the tips during the session
  - Take home points on the 3x5 card
2. Establishing the Learning Climate

- Introductions
- Ground rules
- Group responsibilities
- Objectives for the session
- Sitting arrangement
- Consider adult learning principles
The Adult Learning Process

Adult learners want:
- To help set the learning objectives
- To use what they learn right away
- To be respected
- To problem solve, not just learn facts
- To be actively involved in the LP
- Feedback, so they can evaluate their own progress
Adult Learning Process

• Collaborative
• Clinically relevant
• Practical
• Encourages self-assessment
3. Managing the Session

• Create a non-threatening and collaborative learning environment
• Recall prior learning to assist with the discussion
• Provide relevant information
• Monitor time
• Manage the group dynamic
• Share your expertise
• Assess learners’ thinking
• Provide feedback
4. Promoting Active Participation

- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask for clarification
- Ask learners to support their opinions
- Be quiet and give learners time to think and respond

- Rephrase questions
- Address learners’ questions
- Redirect questions
- Involve all learners
- Your role - facilitator
5. Summarizing

- Provide brief summaries
- Bring discussion to a closure
- Highlight “take-home points”
- Have learners summarize discussion
- Evaluate the session
What questions or comments do you have about what we discussed?
Advantages and Challenges of Small Group Instruction
Advantages of Small Group Teaching:

Opportunities for the teacher-

- To assess the learner’s needs and learning agenda
- To highlight misconceptions and individual knowledge gaps
- To observe learner’s reasoning skills
- To encourage self-assessment (metacognition)
What challenges have you faced in small group teaching?
Small Group Instruction: Challenges

• Unpredictability of the session - requires creativity and a tolerance for the unknown
  - Learner’s needs and interests may not be what you predicted
  - “Thinking on your feet” to refine or revise the learning objectives
  - Group dynamics
Small Group Learning: Challenges

- Group with learners with different knowledge levels
- The “Know it All”
- The “Bored Learner”--“Sleeping Learner”
- The “Shy Learner”
Small Group Learning: Keys to success

1) Plan ahead
2) Pay attention to the process, not just the content
3) Self-assessment: Learners AND teachers