

Virginia Cooperative Extension



notebook

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The Effective Volunteer Teacher

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The Important Role of Volunteer Teachers

Volunteer teachers are important to community organizations of all types. These organizations rely on volunteers to teach a variety of topics.

For example:

1. A social worker teaches a group of day care workers about child abuse.
2. At a civic organization meeting, a member of the League of Women Voters uses visuals and handouts to teach the principles of effective candidate forums.
3. A unit manager in a company helps staff members learn about interoffice conflict resolution through role-playing and case studies.

With the help of volunteer teachers, the effectiveness of Virginia Cooperative Extension and other educational programs and organizations can be multiplied many times over.

If you have just said, “yes, I will teach that lesson,” or “yes, I can give that presentation,” you are ready to start planning your presentation. This publication provides information for volunteer teachers of adults and older youth. As a volunteer teacher, you’ll need to consider these things:

- The focus of your topic.
- The characteristics of the learners you will teach.
- Appropriate teaching methods.
- Helpful visual aids.
- An evaluation to help you see how well people learned.



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**Reviewed and adapted with permission from Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service publication, “The Effective Volunteer Teacher” (Daughtry 2010).*

Planning the Lesson and Focusing Your Topic

Before you begin to develop a lesson plan for your proposed program, event, or demonstration, consult with your supervising Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension agent and/or Food and Nutrition Program (FNP) program assistant to complete any necessary preauthorization procedures if your program idea is not already offered through VCE.

Once approved, plan the lesson. Limit the topic to what you can teach in the time allowed. Organize the lesson to flow smoothly from one point to the next. Begin by answering the following questions:

- How much time will I have?
- What are my goals and objectives? What specifically do I want the participants to learn? By the end of the lesson, what do I want the participants to be able to do?
- What and how much content should I include given the time allowed? In what order?
- How will I introduce the lesson?
- What learning exercises and materials can I use to emphasize the main points? How interactive do I want my lesson to be?
- How can I check for understanding during the lesson?
- What type of evaluation should I use at the end of the lesson to measure what the participants have learned? How will I know if I have met my lesson objectives?
- What facilities, equipment, and/or additional resources do I need to direct the lesson?
- Can I teach this lesson alone, or do I need a teaching partner?

You may use the two forms, “My Teaching Plan” and “Developing the Lesson Plan,” in the appendix at the end of this handout to plan your lesson in more detail. A blank lesson plan template, VCE publication FST-103, is available from the VCE publications website at <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/FST/FST-103/FST-103.html>.

Think about appropriate sources of information for the lesson. Materials that appear in the popular news media, books, and Internet may or may not be from reputable sources. Some authors are convincing but may not provide reliable information. Consult with your VCE agent for more information on accurate, research-based sources.

Characteristics of the Learner

Successful teaching allows for the needs and characteristics of the learner. Because adults and children vary in their learning needs, your teaching should accommodate these differences. In general, there are differences between adults and youth as learners. Some of those differences include the reasons they are motivated to learn, readiness to learn, purpose for learning, and physical abilities. For example, adults tend to decide when they are ready to learn based on immediate, real-life needs, while children’s learning is generally determined by parents and teachers. In addition, be aware that participants may have different learning styles: auditory, visual, or kinesthetic.

For more complete information about these differences and the implications for your teaching, consult Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service publication, “Teaching Adults,” available at <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2371/T-8202web.pdf>. Refer to table 1, “Characteristics of adults and youth as learners,” in that publication as you refine your topic and select teaching methods and visual aids for your lesson.

Teaching Tips

Preparation

Allow time for preparation. Being well-prepared is an important key to being an effective teacher. A good teacher spends more time planning than actually teaching the lesson. As a rule of thumb, invest at least three hours of preparation for each hour of teaching.

Learning

About 85 percent of learning occurs through vision and includes reading; seeing demonstrations, pictures, and drawings; and observing daily life. About 70 per-

cent of learning occurs through hearing. This includes listening to lectures, hearing instructions on how to do something, and listening to everyday happenings. Taste, touch, and smell account for the rest.

Remembering

The important thing is to *teach* so that what is *learned* will be *remembered*. As you choose the visuals and teaching methods you will use, refer to Edgar Dale's Learning Cone of Experience diagram, featured in Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service publication, "Do-It-Yourself Visuals," available at <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2368/T-8203web.pdf>.

For more complete information about these learning differences and the implications for your teaching, consult Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service publication, "Teaching Adults," available at <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2371/T-8202web.pdf>. Refer to table 1, "Characteristics of adults and youth as learners," in that publication as you refine your topic, select teaching methods, and make or select visuals for your lesson. Use the checklist on the last page to guide your preparation.

Visuals and Handouts

As a volunteer teacher, your main concern is to help learners learn *and* remember. Effective visual resources help teachers explain concepts. They increase learning by helping to focus the learner's attention on what is being taught. Because people learn in different ways, teachers should attempt to use a variety of visual aids.

You may need to make your own visuals. To do the job, a visual must be well-planned and prepared. Choose visuals appropriate for the learners and the topics you are teaching. The best teaching aid is the real object or experience itself: actually using, making, or seeing it. When you can't use the real thing, a model is the next best choice. DVDs and PowerPoint slides are next in line.

When preparing your lesson, list any props, handouts, or additional resources needed for the program, event, or demonstration. Some examples of these may include the following:

- Additional copies of recipes used for a cooking program or demonstration.
- Food thermometers to demonstrate food safety principles and cooking temperatures.
- Dish already prepared to show as part of cooking program or demonstration.
- Canned product to show as part of home food preservation program or demonstration.
- Handouts from VCE, other Extension websites, or other research-based resources related to the program, event, or demonstration topic.

If you are planning a foods demonstration or farmers market demonstration, use the VCE publication FST-100, "Master Food Volunteer Foods Demonstration Guide," at <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/FST/FST-100/FST-100.html>, and VCE publication FST-101, "Leave 'em Star Struck," at <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/FST/FST-101/FST-101.html>, as guidelines to help you plan the steps of your learning activities. Be sure to include the basic food safety principles outlined in these handouts and be able to explain these steps as you prepare the food sample or dish. If necessary, refer to the Food Safety chapter in your Master Food Volunteer Notebook (FST-80) to guide you in preparing the steps to keep your food preparation techniques safe.

When the items mentioned above aren't available, simple, well-prepared visuals can be good teaching aids. Simple visuals include still pictures and written words. They are often easy to make and inexpensive. For more information about creating visual aids, consult "Do-It-Yourself Visuals," available at <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2368/T-8203web.pdf>.

Facility, Materials and Equipment

List any supplies you need for the program, event, or demonstration. Some of these supplies/items might include the following (depending on the resources available at the event facility):

- Facility for the program, event, or demonstration (work with your supervising FCS agent for assistance to ensure the facility meets ADA guidelines).
- Computer and projector.

- Extension cord.
- PowerPoint and/or DVD presentation (if applicable).
- Ingredients for a recipe (for cooking program or demonstration).
- Cleaning and sanitation supplies, including gloves (cooking program or demonstration).
- Cooking equipment and utensils.
- First-aid kit (for cooking program or demonstration).
- Virginia Cooperative Extension tablecloth and/or display.

Side note: Your supervising FCS agent may already have a program kit of materials and equipment that is kept on hand and ready for use as needed. Check these kits first to see what is already available. If need be, work with your FCS agent to construct a kit of materials.

Presentation

Use a checklist to remind yourself of all the details needed for the presentation. Check ahead of time to be certain the room arrangement is appropriate and the equipment needed is available.

The first few minutes in a lesson are important. A good beginning gains attention, arouses interest, establishes a good relationship with the group, and leads the learners into the topic you are teaching. Devise a lesson opener or ice breaker, such as a game, puzzle, or other exercise to help participants transition from whatever they were doing before your lesson to the topic at hand.

Getting People Involved

Presenting ideas and information is important and basic to teaching. However, it is difficult for most people to just sit and listen. When interested, the learner wants to get into the act and do something. Each teacher is challenged to help the learner do more than listen. Learner participation helps participants practice new ideas, check their own thinking, maintain their interest, and build new skills.

Be certain that the method relates to the topic you are teaching. Some methods for learner involvement are:

- Questions.
- Buzz groups (small groups of students formed to briefly discuss a topic).
- Videos.
- Quizzes.
- Tours (stations set up in classroom for students to visit as part of the lesson).
- Games.
- Skits.
- Brainstorming sessions.
- Roll call (poll students by asking questions, e.g., “how many of you...?”).
- Demonstration and practice.

Keep the learners involved. Avoid reading to them. Instead, tell the learners about the topic in your own words from your notes. Add your personality to your teaching and use personal stories to emphasize your points. Each teacher has his/her own style. Use your style to its best advantage.

Ending the Lesson

The close of the lesson is just as important as the beginning because it helps people remember and retain what they have learned. Good endings need to be planned. Try to re-emphasize three to five points that you would like them to remember. The last part of the lesson should allow the learners to:

- Make comments and ask questions.
- Review important ideas.
- Identify what they’ve learned and gain a satisfied feeling.
- Recognize how they can use what they’ve learned from the session in their lives.

- Describe how they will use what they've learned to do further thinking.
- End the session on a positive note!

Evaluation

The teaching process is not complete without an evaluation. Evaluations can point out gaps in the lesson and guide planning for future lessons. It should reflect the lesson objectives.

Evaluations can help the presenter judge the results of the lesson and determine its worth or value to the audience or learner. Consider two approaches to the evaluation of your teaching:

1. How well did you do as a teacher? How would you teach this lesson again?
2. Did the participants learn what you expected? What difference did the lesson make in their lives?

Anonymous paper and pencil evaluations can point out your teaching strengths and areas for improvement. Using a checklist or open-ended questions at the end of the lesson can be an effective method of self-evaluation. Participants can comment on your teaching style, preparedness, what worked well, areas needing improvement, and the lesson environment.

An important part of evaluation is measuring the knowledge and skills the participants learned and if/how they will apply or have applied them in their lives. Surveys or interviews at the close of the lesson and/or several months later are often used. A short test before the lesson and the same test afterwards are also effective in measuring what was learned. You can also adapt games, puzzles, and television game shows into evaluation tools.

As you plan the lesson objectives, also plan the evaluation methods you will use. Evaluation completes the teaching process. You gain information to help you improve your teaching, as well as determine the value of the lesson to the learner. Work with your supervising Extension agent for guidance with developing an evaluation.

Practice What You Have Learned About Teaching

As a volunteer teacher, you will learn more from the lesson than anyone else. It takes time to plan well, consider the characteristics of the learners, select appropriate audiovisuals and teaching methods, and evaluate, so be generous with yourself as you set aside time to prepare your lesson or presentation. Enjoy the experience of learning and helping others learn, too!

Resources for Further Reading

Reference

Daugherty, R. 2010. *The Effective Volunteer Teacher*. The Volunteer Teacher Series. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Publication T-8201. <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2369/T-8201web.pdf>.

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Part I: My Teaching Plan

Instructions: Start your plan by answering the following questions. Then organize your answers in the table in Part II: Developing the Lesson Plan. A blank lesson plan template, VCE publication FST-103 is available at <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/FST/FST-103/FST-103.html>.

- What topic(s) will I teach and how much time is allowed?
- What do I want the participants to **learn** from my teaching? The lesson objectives will be in the form of increased knowledge, attitude change, and/or improved skills, so be specific about what knowledge, what attitudes, or what skills.
- What are two or three main points I will teach in the time allowed?
- What activities can I use to teach the main points? What will the learners read, hear, see, say, write, and/or do to understand the lesson's main points?
- How will I know my presentation/lesson was effective? Will my program evaluation reflect the lesson objectives?

Part II: Developing the Lesson Plan

Program: Title of program, event, or demonstration	
<p>Learning objectives: List learner objectives (no more than two or three) in terms of what the learner will be able to do as a result of your lesson. Each object should start with a verb. Learner objectives should be measureable — you should be able to evaluate your learners to determine if they meet the objective. Work with your supervising FCS agent to develop these objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1: • Objective 2: • Objective 3: 	
<p>Materials and equipment: What supplies do you need for the lesson? These include PowerPoint presentations and other materials and equipment as needed.</p>	
<p>Visuals, handouts, additional resources: List any additional props and/or handouts here, including recipes. Be sure to print extra copies of any recipes used to give to participants.</p>	
Time:	Instructor:
Suggest amount of time for activity	<p>Introduction: How will the introduction get the attention of the participants? This could be a game, puzzle, question, or other exercise to help them transition from what they did before the lesson to the topic at hand.</p>
Suggest amount of time for activity	<p>Learning activities (list by step here): List/describe the teaching techniques you will use and the activities the learners will participate in.</p>
Suggest amount of time for activity	<p>Conclusion/closure activity: Good endings need to be planned. The last part of the lesson should allow learners to make comments and ask questions. Review important ideas, identify what they have learned (and gain a feeling of satisfaction), and end the lesson in a positive way.</p>
Suggest amount of time for activity	<p>Evaluation: Judge the results of the lesson to determine its worth or value to the audience or learner. See the Evaluation section of this handout for more specific information about developing an evaluation and work with your FCS Extension agent to develop it.</p>