



The Volunteer Teacher Series: Being a More Effective Volunteer Teacher

Donna S. Cadwalader, Ph.D.

Leadership Development Specialist

Renee A. Daugherty

Media Specialist

So You're Going to Be a Volunteer Teacher

Volunteer teachers are important to community organizations. These organizations rely on volunteers to teach a variety of topics. For example:

- A 4-H leader shows youth how to wire an electrical lamp.
- An Extension Homemaker teaches an E.H. group about the causes of child abuse.
- A Sunday school teacher helps preschoolers learn about the importance of telling the truth.
- At a Rotary meeting, a member of the League of Women Voters explains how city government works.

With the help of volunteer teachers, the effectiveness of a limited professional staff can be multiplied many times over.

So you've just said, "Yes, I'll teach that lesson." You're probably wondering how to begin planning what you're going to teach. 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 audiovisuals.
- an evaluation to help you see how well you did.

Read on for more about each of these topics.

Focus of Your Topic

Plan the content. Limit the topic to what you can teach in the time allowed. Organize the lesson to flow smoothly from one point to the next. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I going to teach?
- What do I want the participants to learn?
- What are my goals and objectives?
- What and how much information should I include?
- What should I talk about first?

- What activities can I use to emphasize the main points?
- How will I know if and when they have learned anything?

Following is a chart to help you to get organized for your presentation:

What Learner Will Learn	How Learner Will Learn	How Learner Shows Learning

Think about where you'll get your information. Materials that appear in newspapers, magazines, etc. may not be from reliable sources. Certain authors are convincing, but may not be giving reliable information. For home economics information, check with your County Extension Home Economist. The information from the OSU Cooperative Extension Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture is research-based, reliable, and unbiased.

Characteristics of the Learner

Successful teaching allows for the needs and characteristics of the learner. Adults and youth vary in their learning needs. Your teaching should accommodate these differences.

The following chart highlights the differences between adults and youth as learners. Refer to this information as you choose a topic, select teaching methods, and make audiovisuals. Remember—the list describes youth and adults *in general*; there are always exceptions.

Characteristics of Adults and Youth as Learners

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Adults as Learners</i>	<i>Youth as Learners</i>
Similarity within age groups	many different background experiences among people in the same age group	generally, much similarity within age group
Life experiences	have experienced much	limited life experiences
Motivation to learn	self-motivated	motivated by rewards or punishment
Readiness to learn	decide when ready to learn based on immediate real-life needs	readiness of when and what to learn determined by parents and teachers
Reasons for learning	value learning that has immediate use in real-life	learn for the future, generally
Conflicts	learning done along with many other responsibilities	learning is the main responsibility
Behavior	more rigid patterns of behavior; more bound to stereotypes	flexible patterns of behavior
Reaction time	slower reaction time, yet greater power to learn	sharp; quick
Physical abilities	declining ability to see and hear; slower physical reactions	generally sound physical condition
Concept of future	realistic	Children see the future as vague, but just ahead; adolescents see it as vague, but unlimited.
Concept of Time	view time as important	"all the time in the world"

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 in preparation than in doing the presentation. Each hour of teaching requires at least three hours to prepare.

Presentation: Use a checklist to remind you of all the details needed for the presentation. Check ahead of time to be certain the room arrangement and equipment needed are 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 should lead the minds of the learners into the topic you are teaching.

Getting People Involved: Presenting ideas and information is basic to teaching and important. However, it is hard 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; audience participation helps them practice new ideas, clear 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 audience involvement are:

questions	buzz groups	tapes
quizzes	tours	games
skits	brainstorming	discussion
mixers	roll call	

Strive to keep the audience interested. Do not read; tell in your own words from notes. Add your personality to your presentation and use personal stories to emphasize your point. Each teacher has a style of his/her own. Use your style to the best advantage.

Ending the lesson: The close of the lesson is just as important as the beginning, because it helps people remember. Good endings need to be planned. The last part of the session does the following:

- offers the group a chance to make comments and ask questions.
- reviews important ideas.
- helps the group identify what they've learned and gain a satisfied feeling.
- reminds the group how they can use what they've learned in their lives.

- challenges the group to use what they've learned to do further thinking.
- ends the session in a positive way!

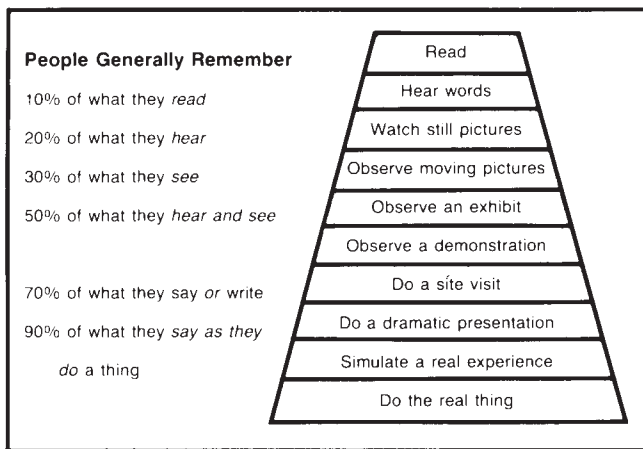
Audiovisuals — a Helpful Teaching Aid

Effective audiovisuals help teachers explain concepts. They increase learning. They help focus the learner's attention on what's being said. Because people learn in different ways, teachers use a combination of audiovisuals.

As a volunteer teacher, you are concerned with how learners learn *and* remember:

Learning: About 85% of learning occurs through vision. This includes reading, seeing demonstrations, seeing pictures and drawings, and observing daily life. About 10% of learning occurs through hearing. This includes lecture, 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 audiovisuals and teaching methods you will use, refer to Edgar Dale's "Learning Cone of Experience" below. Also use the list beside it to guide you as you prepare your lesson.¹



As a volunteer teacher, you may need to make your own audiovisuals. To do the job, an audiovisual must be well planned and prepared. Here are some tips to help you develop effective aids.

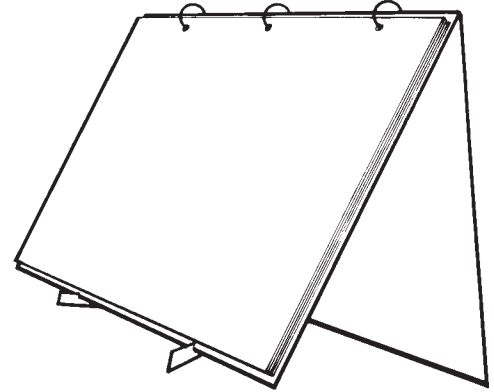
Planning: Choose audiovisuals appropriate for the learners *and* the topic you're teaching. The best teaching aid is the real object or experience itself, actually using or making or seeing it. But that's not always possible. When you can't use the real thing, a *model* is the next choice. *Moving pictures* are next in line.

When the items above aren't available, well prepared *simple visuals* can be a good teaching aid. Simple visuals include *still pictures* and *written words*. They are easy to make and inexpensive.

Simple Visuals: You can choose from several types of simple visuals, such as:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| posters | flashcards |
| flipcharts | flat maps |
| photographs | charts, graphs |
| drawings | |

flipchart



Effective simple visuals take some good planning. To design your aids, use the six tips that follow.

1. **Understanding**—Visuals should have a point. Organize ideas so that they make sense. Use familiar words. If you use a new or technical word, print it clearly and correctly.
2. **Simplicity**—Limit each visual to one or two ideas. Use few words. Short phrases are better than complete sentences.
3. **Neatness**—Keep your visuals neat. Make them in a clean area using clean hands and materials. Leave borders of two or three inches around the edge. Allow open space on the visual—avoid clutter. The openness is more pleasing and makes reading easier.
4. **Color**—Use color to do several things: attract attention; emphasize or contrast; set a mood; and identify something (like green for 4-H). Limit each visual you make to two or three colors, including the background. Use cool pastel colors (blue, violet, green) for backgrounds. Use warm colors for your message (red, orange, yellow), since they seem to advance and emphasize the message. Use bright, bold colors on a neutral background.
5. **Readability**—There are several things you can do to make your simple visuals easier to read.

Use readable colors—Contrasting colors make visuals easier to read. This list gives color combinations with good contrasts. All are good choices.

Easier to read:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Black on yellow | 6. Black on white |
| 2. Green on white | 7. Yellow on black |
| 3. Red on white | 8. White on red |
| 4. Blue on white | 9. White on green |
| 5. White on blue | 10. White on black |

¹Wiman and Mierhenry, *Educational Media*, Charles Merrill, 1969.

Use readable letters—Use upper case (capitals) and lower case (small letters) on your visuals. You may use all upper case letters for titles or headings but don't overdo it—they're harder to read. Print your lettering—it's easier to read than handwriting.

Use readable words—Print words across the page, not up and down. Space letters and words so they're easy to read—don't spread them out too much or crowd them too close together.

6. **Size**—Letters, pictures and figures should be large enough to be seen clearly by those in the last row. A good rule of thumb is 1" in height for each 10' in distance. For example, let's say the learner sitting farthest from you is 20 feet away. For that distance, the lower case letters on your visual should be about 1 1/2 to 2 inches tall.

Evaluation

The teaching process is not complete without evaluation. Evaluation can point out gaps in the lesson, share information, and guide planning for future lessons.

Judge the results of the lesson to 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 audience learn what you expected? What difference did the lesson make to the participants' lives?

Evaluations can point out your teaching strengths and spot where you need improvement. Using a checklist at the completion of the lesson can be an effective method of self-evaluation. Ask your County Extension Home Economist for a self-evaluation checklist for teaching others.

Measuring the knowledge, skill, and attitudes participants learned and if or how they applied them in their lives is an important part of evaluation. Surveys or interviews at the close of the lesson and/or several months later are often used. A test before the lesson and the same test afterwards is also effective in measuring what was learned.

Plan the evaluation methods you'll use as you plan the lesson. The method should get information which will give you proof (evidence) of what people learned, how people applied it and what difference it made in their lives.

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.

Now—Practice What You've Learned about Teaching

As a volunteer teacher, you'll learn more from the lesson than anyone else. It takes time to plan well, consider the characteristics of the learner, select appropriate audiovisuals and teaching methods, and evaluate. Enjoy the experience of learning and helping others learn, too!

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