

## Classroom Rules



What rules are reasonable in an adult learning environment? A survey or trainers reports that the most commonly established rules focus on respect and learning.

Our job as trainers is to ensure the training environment is conducive to effective learning. Each participant is responsible for their own learning, and they're responsible to not interfere with others.

### Participant standards

The behavior we ask of our participants should help them learn and should not be a distraction to others.

1. Follow the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have others do unto you.
2. Don't comment on other students' participation..
3. During a lecture or directed questioning period, don't talk at length until you're recognized by the facilitator.
4. Show respect to everyone. Negative comments about the instructor or other participants are distracting and may, in extreme cases, incite a riot.
5. Participate fully in all exercises. Try to complete all tasks to the best of your ability.
6. Ask for assistance. No one's perfect, and it's expected that you'll ask for all necessary explanations.
7. No sleeping.
8. Keep your hands to yourself. Refrain from touching your neighbor's keyboard or mouse unless you're invited.

The more classes you present, the more likely you are to meet students that display truly rude behavior in class. Some people never learned to play nicely with others.

If you're presenting to adults who may display inappropriate classroom behavior, it's a good idea to clip a 5x8" card to every student's workbook with the expected standards of behavior. If you do distribute the student behavior card, make sure every student receives one. Treat everyone fairly.

### Trainer standards

I describe my presentation plan to each group that I train. When adults understand how I plan to conduct the class, the schedule, the methodology, they are more receptive to participating. I tell them where we're going and how we'll get there. I don't leave adults in the dark.

Some of the rules I've set include...

1. Write the day's schedule, including breaks and ending time on the board. I leave the schedule visible during our introductions so everyone has time to absorb the agenda.

Schedules are very important to adults, and many people will feel very uncomfortable until they know when they'll be able to get to a

phone to listen to voice mail or call home to check on their children.

2. Write each person's learning goals on the board. Keep the goals visible throughout the seminar.

3. Describe each of the audiovisual tools that will be used. Make sure everyone can see the board, screen, and flip chart.

4. Describe the presentation style. Are questions invited during lectures or only at the end?

5. Gently remind acquaintances who sit next to each other to refrain from chit chat.

6. Set the food rules. Is food and drink allowed in the classroom? I invite students to bring coffee and soda into class, and I joke that we have insurance to cover the cost of replacing soiled keyboards and mice.

I serve light refreshments at ITrain seminars, and I welcome students to eat during class. However, I ask that everyone refrain from crinkle-wrapped snacks because they can be distracting.

I also place a bowl of sugar-free candy within easy reach of each person. Candy has a wonderful calming effect during difficult lessons.

7. Welcome EVERY question. We were all novices at one time: there's no disgrace in not yet knowing how or why.

8. Encourage trial and error. Seminars are for practicing and learning new skills. Remember, it's better to make a mistake in the classroom than on the job.

### All hands on deck

Every facility has procedures that must be followed by all. They're usually simple, but they're also important.

1. Clean up each workstation at the end of the seminar; straighten the tables and chairs.
2. Give the next class a special surprise: leave the room in better shape than you found it.

### Post rules politely

If you must post rules, be considerate of other people's feelings and word the rules gently.

Rather than posting "NO FOOD ALLOWED AT ANY TIME," try writing "Please use the cafeteria's facilities when eating; this equipment is easily damaged by food and drink."

Treat your students as you would special guests who are visiting your home. Invite them to follow your standards.



*Dave Murphy*

ITrain  
International Association of  
Information Technology Trainers  
6030-M Marshalee Dr PMB 616  
Elkridge, MD 21075-5987  
410.567.5366 or 888.290.6200 or  
801.650.0423 (fax)  
itrain.org member@itrain.org