



# WHAT'S A TEACH-BACK?

You've been asked to teach others about a subject of interest to them. You're an expert, and you know you have the knowledge to help you do a good job. Now it's time to prepare and practice for your teaching role!

After you have developed your lesson and engaging activities for your students, utilizing the teach-back technique is an opportunity for you to practice in a safe and constructive setting. Teach-backs can be done in front of your peers who have teaching responsibilities too and in front of adults who also teach or who know about the content you are teaching.

Depending on time available for practice, you may present your entire lesson to your mock class of students, or you may also just present the most important content as a subset of the entire lesson plan. The goal is for you to practice the material, become familiar with the use and management of any supplies needed to teach your content, learn how to determine and share roles when teaching in a pair or on a team, and respond to questions from your audience.

You are not the only person, though, who has important responsibilities during your teach-back. Audience members are to provide you constructive input on your teach-back and on what it was like for them to be in your class. If they are also knowledgeable about the content covered in your lesson, they should comment on the accuracy and relevance of the information you shared.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when you teach-back:

- 1) Be yourself** – the most important thing is to be yourself. If you need to use technical terms, practice explaining to others what they mean.
- 2) Be comfortable** – find a way to stand, move, and use gestures that is relaxing to you. Remember to breathe!
- 3) Be honest** – if you don't know the answer to a question, admit it. Your credibility is at stake,

and if you know there are content experts in the audience, ask them to help you answer questions you cannot answer yourself. That respects their presence and helps you discover the correct answer at the same time.

- 4) Be brief** – keep your narratives short and simple by getting right to the point. Clear and concise is better than long and drawn out.
- 5) Be personal and human** – don't be afraid to use humor to promote a friendly and approachable image. If you make a mistake, don't get flustered. Just apologize and continue. That's why you are doing a teach-back anyway!
- 6) Be positive and consistent** – keep your goals in mind, maintain control, and focus all of your material. Talk loud enough for everyone to hear.
- 7) Be attentive** – concentrate on what you're teaching, ignore distractions, and listen wisely to your students' comments and questions.
- 8) Involve your audience** – ask your students questions, ask for volunteers, or urge audience members to take action.
- 9) Be energetic** – use gestures, facial expressions, and body language to add vitality to your words. Keep your voice conversational, and imagine it has a "face" with different emotions and expressions.
- 10) Be committed and sincere** – speak convincingly, don't be afraid to pause, and show interest and passion!

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