Train the trainer session: a 90-minute micro-teaching practice

A train the trainer session helps new trainers most when they teach, get specific feedback and try again straight away. In this 90-minute micro-teaching practice each person plans a five-minute lesson, teaches it to a small group, gets notes from an observer, revises the opening and teaches it a second time. The kit has the lesson plan, the observation sheet, a feedback order and a filled example.

90 minutes | 4–12 participants | Online and adaptable in person

Updated 2026-09-23

The outcome

By the end of 90 minutes each participant has taught a five-minute micro-lesson, has received written observation notes with times and exact words, has revised and re-taught the opening, and has written one change they will make in their next real session.

Before the session

- For learning and development teams, lead trainers and subject experts who are preparing new or occasional trainers, with 4–12 participants in groups of three. It does not certify anyone.
- Ask each participant a week before to choose a small topic they can teach in five minutes: a work task, a tool feature or a hobby skill. It must be something the learners can do or produce in two minutes, not only hear about.
- Send the micro-lesson plan and the filled example with the invitation. Plan groups of three. When the number does not divide by three, add one or two pairs, in which each person teaches the other and uses the observation sheet as a self-review.
- Prepare a timer that everyone can see or hear. Online, share the observation sheet as an editable document. Turn on captions and allow cameras off.

Included in this kit

A facilitator run of show, participant worksheets with real tables, reference tables, debrief questions, adaptation notes and a follow-up plan. Use the editable Word copy to tailor examples and prompts before delivery.

Original material by Superglue. Timings are suggestions; adjust them to your participants. This resource has not been independently evaluated.

What is inside

- Micro-lesson plan
- Observation sheet
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Micro-lesson plan

Plan five minutes: 300 seconds in total. Teach one idea only. The learners must do or produce something in the practice part.

My topic

_____

My objective: “By the end, you can…”

_____

Part	Seconds	What I do	What the learners do
Open	30		
Explain	90		
Practise	120		
Check	60		

Observation sheet

One sheet per lesson. Start a timer when the lesson starts. Write times and exact words. In the feedback, give your notes second, after the learner.

Trainer: _____ Topic: _____ Cycle: 1 / 2

What to record	Notes with times
The objective, said or shown	
The time the learners first did something	
How learning was checked	
Share of time the trainer talked, as an estimate	
One moment that worked: the exact words or action	
One change to try in the revised opening	

Feedback order and rotation

Use the same order after every lesson, so that the trainer hears the learner first. In cycle 1 each person has nine minutes; in cycle 2, four minutes.

Turn	Teaches	Learns	Observes
Turn 1	Person A	Person B	Person C
Turn 2	Person B	Person C	Person A
Turn 3	Person C	Person A	Person B

Learner, 1 minute: what I can do now, and where I was lost

_____

_____

Observer, 2 minutes: what I saw, with times and exact words

_____

_____

Trainer, 1 minute: the one change I will make

_____

_____

Common changes after cycle 1

Pick one change per cycle. More than one change at a time is hard to see.

What the observer saw	A change to try
The learners did nothing until minute three	Give the task earlier and explain after it.
The check was “Is that clear?”	Ask each learner to show or read their result.
Two or three ideas in five minutes	Cut to one idea. Put the rest in a handout.
The objective was not said	Say “By the end, you can…” in the first 30 seconds.
The example came at the end	Open with the example and let learners find the point.
The trainer talked most of the time	Replace one explanation with a question.

Next-session plan

Fill this in at the end. Keep it private, or share one line with the group.

The change I made in cycle 2, and what it did

My next real session: the title and the date

The one change I will make in that session

How I will check that the learners can do what I taught

Who could observe me, and what I will ask them to watch

Filled example: micro-lesson plan

A fictional micro-lesson. Topic: writing an email subject line that asks for action. Objective: “By the end, you can rewrite a vague subject line so that it shows the action, the topic and the date.”

Part	Seconds	What I do	What the learners do
Open	30	Show two subject lines: “Update” and “Decision needed by Thu 12 Nov: venue for the away day”. Ask which one people open first, and why.	Say which one, and why.
Explain	90	A useful subject line has three parts: the action, the topic and the date. Point to each in the second example.	Find the three parts.
Practise	120	Paste two vague subject lines in the chat: “Question” and “Slides”. Learners rewrite both.	Rewrite both in the chat.
Check	60	Each learner reads one rewrite. The trainer checks the three parts aloud.	Read one rewrite.
Total	300		

Filled example: observation notes

The observer’s notes on cycle 1 of the same lesson, and the result of the revised opening in cycle 2.

What to record	Notes with times
The objective, said or shown	Not said. The trainer began by explaining the three parts.
The time the learners first did something	At 2:50, when the rewrite task started.
How learning was checked	“Is that clear?” One learner said yes, but their rewrite had no date.
Share of time the trainer talked	About 70%.
One moment that worked	The two example subject lines side by side. Both learners laughed at “Update”.
One change to try	Show the two subject lines first and ask the learners to find the difference, before you explain the three parts.
Cycle 2 result	The revised opening showed the examples in the first 20 seconds. The learners named the three parts themselves, and the task started at 1:40.

Facilitator run of show

1 Open and agree how to practise | 7 minutes

Explain the purpose: “Each of you will teach twice. The second time is where the learning shows.” Agree three rules: the observer describes what happened with times, feedback is about the lesson and not the person, and anyone can pause. Show the timing of the two cycles.

2 The micro-lesson plan | 8 minutes

Show the four parts of a five-minute lesson: open for 30 seconds, explain one idea for 90 seconds, practise for 120 seconds and check for 60 seconds. Show the filled example. Point out the two most common problems: the learners do nothing until minute three, and the check is “Is that clear?”

3 Prepare your micro-lesson | 10 minutes

Each person fills in the micro-lesson plan and writes the objective as “By the end, you can…”. Walk round or visit the rooms and ask one question: “What will the learners do in the first two minutes?” Tell people to prepare any example for the chat now.

4 Cycle 1: teach and observe | 27 minutes

In each group of three, each person has nine minutes: five to teach, four for feedback. Rotate: one teaches, one learns, one observes. Use the feedback order: the learner speaks for one minute on what they learned and where they were lost, the observer gives two minutes of notes with times, and the trainer takes one minute to say what they will change. Call the time for each change.

5 Break | 5 minutes

Five minutes away from the screen. Observers hand their sheets to the person they observed.

6 Revise the opening | 6 minutes

Each person reads their observation notes and changes one thing in the first two minutes of the lesson. Most changes are one of three: start with an example or a question, get the learners doing something sooner, or replace “Is that clear?” with a check that shows the result.

7 Cycle 2: teach the revised opening | 12 minutes

In the same groups, each person teaches the first two minutes again and gets two minutes of feedback, with the same observer. The observer answers one question: “What changed, and what did it do for the learner?”

8 Group debrief | 10 minutes

Bring everyone together. Ask for changes, not people: “Which change to an opening made the biggest difference?” and “What checks showed that the learners could do it?” Write the useful changes on a shared list that everyone keeps.

9 Plan the next real session and close | 5 minutes

Each person writes one change they will make in their next real session and the date of that session. Ask each person to share it in one line, or to pass.

Debrief and next steps

Questions for reflection

- Which change to an opening made the biggest difference for the learner?
- Which checks showed that the learners could do it, and which only asked whether they felt ready?
- What did you notice as a learner that you did not notice as the trainer?
- What will you change in your next real session, and who could observe it?

Adapt the session

- For 3 people, run one group. When the number does not divide by three, add one or two pairs: each person teaches the other, and cycle 1 takes 18 of the 27 minutes, which leaves time to rehearse.
- For 10-minute lessons, hold cycle 1 in one meeting and cycle 2 in the next.
- Online, use breakout rooms of three, a visible timer and the chat for the practice task. The observer shares the sheet in the room's document. Learners may keep cameras off.
- For people who find teaching to peers stressful, let them choose a hobby topic, teach seated, and hear the feedback order before they start. Nobody is graded.

After the session

Ask each participant to make their one change in their next real session and to invite a colleague to observe the first ten minutes with the same sheet. Two weeks later, hold a 30-minute follow-up: each person reports what they changed and what the observer saw.

Questions people ask

What is a train the trainer session?

A session that prepares people to teach others: subject experts, new trainers or managers who run training. This kit covers one practical part of that preparation, a micro-teaching practice in which each person teaches, gets observed feedback and teaches again. It is not a certification course.

What is micro-teaching?

Teaching a very short lesson to a small group, then getting feedback and teaching again. Keeping the lesson to five minutes makes it safe to try and easy to observe, and the second attempt shows the effect of one change.

How long should each micro-lesson be?

Five minutes in this kit: 30 seconds to open, 90 to explain one idea, 120 to practise and 60 to check. With groups of three, that gives nine minutes per person in cycle 1, including feedback.

How should peers give feedback?

In a fixed order: the learner first says what they can do now and where they were lost, then the observer gives notes with times and exact words, then the trainer names one change. Feedback describes the lesson, not the person.

What is included in the free and editable files?

The open PDF has all the participant sheets, a filled example and the 90-minute facilitator plan. Subscribers also receive the editable Word file, an Excel workbook with a micro-lesson planner that adds up the seconds, and a CSV of the plan.

Use and sharing

Free to use and adapt in your own training sessions, including paid client work. Do not resell or redistribute the unmodified download as a standalone product. Share the resource page instead.