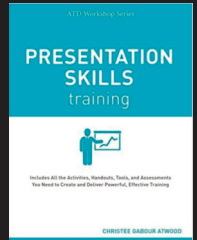


# Presentation Skills Training

## The ATD Workshop Series



Book by Christee Gabour Atwood

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## Synopsis

Are you training people to hone their presentation skills? Perhaps you're interested in facilitating presentation training for the first time? You need comprehensive training ideas and concepts to apply to your training style, and an understanding of how to choose what's best for you—and your trainees. These elements combine to provide presentation skills workshops that are second to none.

**Presentation Skills Training** (Association for Talent Development, © 2017) builds your understanding of how to create an effective training program for aspiring presenters.

Author Christee Atwood presents a comprehensive look at various workshop designs, including how to create a custom training program, and what to consider when doing so. The author also provides handy training documents, such as learning activities, assessments, and hand-outs, to give you the structure and support you need to create seamless training sessions.



The key concepts of *Presentation Skills Training* can be distilled into the following practices:

### Be an Adept Presenter

You should be comfortable with presenting. Know your topic, connect to the trainees, and understand that training is an interactive process, not a lecture.

### Do Your Homework

Be prepared and knowledgeable about more than your topic. Understand the relevant learning theories and practices, as well as how to best engage with adult learners.

### Build Rapport

Develop a relationship with your trainees. This helps the workshop run more smoothly, creates a collaborative atmosphere, and allows you to discover the trainee's expectations.

### Tailor Your Program to Fulfill a Need

Once you know what your trainees want and need, you can adjust your plans accordingly. It's important to be prepared before the workshop begins, but be flexible to meet your trainees' needs.

### Evaluate and Follow Up

You can structure feedback so that trainees test their learning and evaluate the usefulness of the workshop material.

“Great presenters instill trust, engage our minds and hearts, deliver ideas and information, and inspire and captivate us. Consider the great leaders of history. If they had not been persuasive speakers, would they have been able to affect the future as they did?”

Based on *Presentation Skills Training: The ATD Workshop Series* by Christee Atwood, we discuss presentation training skills, concepts, and materials for running training workshops. The author is passionate about facilitating training sessions and believes that anyone can be taught basic presentation skills. We share our interpretations of these ideas in the following pages.

## Building Successful Workshops

What are the nuts and bolts of your presentation training? Understanding what to use, and how to use it, is essential. *Presentation Skills Training* outlines the basics of each workshop and the necessary materials you require for each. Knowing how these aspects work and being confident and capable of altering them to suit your training purposes, from tweaking workshop length to finding the perfect activity to fit trainee needs, is up to you.

### Understanding What You Should Deliver

One way to understand what your trainees require is by asking them to complete a needs analysis, so that you understand what presentation skills they're lacking. This gives you an idea of which areas you need to focus on. So, if employees regularly present to clients across cultures, you could include a session on appropriate cultural behavior.

The structure of needs analysis can lend itself to a loose workshop structure, following the principles of:

- **Analysis:** Research and understand both individual and organizational needs.
- **Design:** Plan how to deliver the content to achieve the necessary learning.
- **Development:** Create activities and assessments concerning the content.
- **Implementation:** Deliver the material.
- **Evaluation:** Research and understand how well the content has been learnt, and why.

When assessing an individual's needs, be wary of analyzing needs that you can't provide for. Always talk to trainees directly and understand that they may need more time than the workshop allows to properly develop their skills. You can address this through follow-up sessions.

After completing the needs analysis, you can use a cross section of strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-and-threats (SWOT analysis) to establish strengths and weaknesses that you should address.

Finally, as you've most likely been hired by a business, you need to act to meet their requirements. To do this, you can perform a strategic needs analysis for the business. Identify any business patterns and use these to focus on their business needs. For example, if the company has hired employees who are new to customer service, and would like you to train them in this area, then you're likely to include training in both listening and giving instructions.

### Understanding Your Trainees

It's important to connect with your trainees. Doing this makes training an enjoyable, complete process, and maximizes trainee engagement, comfort, and attention levels. A social bond also helps you learn about improving your workshops and presenting style. You should be open to possibilities to move away from your PowerPoint slides and into short, open, conversations. Don't forget to manage workshop timings!

It's helpful to use learning theories to analyze how trainees learn and process information. Adults have a variety of learning patterns; familiarizing yourself with the nuts and bolts of how learning happens can allow you to unlock the trainee learning experience:

- **Basic Adult Learning Theory:** Learning should be relevant and usable for the trainee. Remember that adult learners approach their learning experiences from a position of self-worth—they want to share their experiences, and in return, want the learning to benefit their lives.
- **Multiple Intelligences:** This theory relates to the ease with which people learn in relation to being alone or with other people. Some people may have an affinity for logical or mathematical learning, visual learning, or musical or linguistic learning. Others learn through movement by making an emotional connection, or by applying concepts to nature or understanding from the perspective of purpose. Each person has an affinity for three to four of these intelligences.
- **Whole Brain Learning:** This relates the preference of thinking style to analytical thinking. People think sequentially. Some may use interpersonal thinking, and others imaginative thinking. The brain changes with time as new information processes.

You can use these learning theories in your workshops by building a variety of activities into your workshop structure. Plan to include all the skills, including quiet reflective time, working together socially (such as in role-plays), providing handouts, and allowing research time. You could play music while the trainees work, provide interesting visuals like videos, and provide space and time for trainees to tell their stories and engage with others. Ensure that learning is relevant and that trainees receive feedback for their efforts.

## Structuring Your Training

A well-structured workshop provides learners with new skills that address their needs. Atwood provides workshops designed to build communication, create inspiration, and engage with audiences. According to the author, workshops should include the following:

- **An introduction and icebreaker:** Invite your trainees to introduce themselves and get to know one another.
- **A skills self-assessment:** This information identifies what skills your trainees lack. The author includes self-assessment worksheets for the trainees that reflect on their planning and writing skills, amongst others.
- **Information about materials:** This should include presentation design, how to create presentation materials, and how to overcome challenges.
- **An opportunity to use the skills learned:** Allow trainees to practice the concepts you've taught. For instance, include a formal presentation activity within the trainee group, such as giving an elevator speech.
- **An evaluation:** The author includes workshop evaluations that provide you with feedback from your trainees. For instance, how relevant they found the subject matter.

All the workshops should implement the SET formula in the design and creation stages. SET stands for "Short Answer," "Evaluate," and "Transition." When you're presented with a question or topic, give a short answer, then evaluate your answer by including evidence to emphasize your reply. Lastly, transition the discussion back to

the audience by interacting with them. So, ask them a question. The SET formula forms the backbone of all public speaking, from informal speeches to presentations. The author provides a worksheet that you can use to enhance your SET skills.

## Utilizing Appropriate Tools

The author examines some tools you can use to develop an effective workshop. These include handouts, slides, workbooks or journals, videos, toys, and other props. Atwood points out that these tools enhance the learning process by engaging the learner. For instance, far from being “unprofessional,” toys serve to get your class engaged and interested. After all, props are a welcome break from the tedium of book learning.

## Specifying the Duration

The length of your workshop is decided by the company that hires you. You should ensure that your content and activities fit the time constraints. The book provides three workshop structures:

- **Two-day workshop:** This workshop aims to support trainees and is most suitable for beginners. It discusses your presentation topic, supports planning presentations and creating content, practices delivery skills and audience interaction, and addresses challenging audiences. Learning activities use “mini-presentations,” building into a final presentation that uses support documentation such as observation forms, further action planning, and an evaluation.
- **One-day workshop:** This workshop focuses on the design and delivery of presentations. Activities for this workshop include learning activities for designing presentations. It also includes understanding the SET formula and creating and delivering presentations. There are activities for working through anxiety, and working with audio-visual materials.
- **Half-day workshop:** This workshop addresses “shorter-format presentations,” such as those found in meetings. The workshop introduces models of presentation design and creation before participants practice a short presentation speech. Atwood proposes the inclusion of follow-up activities for longer presentation skills, if required. She also emphasizes that due to the time constraints in this workshop, it’s imperative that you demonstrate flawless presentation skills.

Atwood proposes that you split the material to fit a more drawn-out time frame. For example, if a company wanted a one-day workshop but couldn’t schedule a whole day for their trainees, you could recommend three sessions lasting two and a half hours each.

## Utilizing Relevant Material

Once you understand how to structure your workshop, and what content needs to be delivered, it’s time to move forward. *Presentation Skills Training* outlines the use of materials, such as handouts and assessment guides, that serve to supplement the learning process. Decide what’s right for you, and what you need to make your workshop work. Be judicious in your use though—too many tools can detract from your main purpose!

## Making Alterations to Materials

Having materials to complement your workshop is a good idea because it boosts learner interaction and understanding. Atwood provides some basic templates that you can use to monitor your workshop progress, as well as some materials for your trainees. However, sometimes you may need to alter the material. For example, suppose you need to change the timing format of the workshop by expanding a one-day session into a multi-day workshop. In this instance, you could spread the sessions out over several days and refocus the in-class time on skills practice and interaction. With more time, you can experiment with delivering online content between sessions. Or, if you have less time, you can combine exercises.

Activities and session formats can be adjusted to suit your group, like introducing role-playing. Atwood provides handouts, such as a presentation questionnaire, designed to engage the trainee with the material. For instance, the trainee answers questions such as, “Why is this topic important to the audience? How will it help them?” The author provides access to other material that is available online or through purchasing a license to use the additional materials available in the book.

Whether making changes or using more of Atwood’s material, your workshop content should always include increasing engagement, planning time, and giving the trainees the opportunity to practice the skills they’ve learned. You can increase engagement by including points of interest, small challenges, and by making the material relevant to the trainee’s jobs. Or build a relationship with your trainees by telling a joke. You should plan time for trainees to use the workshop information to build their understanding, for instance, through small challenges or assignments. Lastly, ensure that trainees have the opportunity to practice the skills they’ve learnt; for example, an end-of-workshop presentation assignment. Also stay in touch with your trainees, and their organization, to monitor their progress. You can use their feedback to improve your future training sessions.

## Delivering Materials

When running a workshop, you pursue the roles of trainer, facilitator, and learner. As a trainer, you’re concerned with structure and goals; as a facilitator your goal is teaching and connection; and as a learner you need to accept information for your own improvement. The author provides guidelines to help you combine these roles.

- Use colors to make learning more interactive and interesting; for instance, use colored markers on a flipchart.
- Consider the best room set-up to both deliver your materials and allow trainee interaction, such as placing the desks so that people work in groups.
- Provide material so that trainees can present ideas; for instance, whiteboards and flip charts.
- Establish the workshop environment and set the tone for learning. Consider banning cell phones!
- Engage with individuals and encourage participation. Smile, and be friendly and helpful.

These guidelines will help you deliver content for maximum impact, as well as create an engaging and interesting learning environment.

## Using Technology

Workshops are designed to be run in person. However, you can include technology, if the need arises—you can use a projector to present a slideshow, or if you need to teach trainees how to make online presentations. Keep in mind that technological improvements will influence your planning. So, find out where the electrical outlets are, and carry spare electrical cables. Also prepare yourself for glitches—have alternative methods of delivery in case your chosen technologies fail. You should be capable of delivering your material on a flip-chart if necessary!

## Finishing Off

Learning any skill is not a “closed” experience; neither is teaching. You should allow healthy feedback throughout your workshops, and encourage trainees to help one another. It’s useful to end your session with a structured evaluation. You should expect your trainees to be respectful and respond with consideration to each other. And have the same standards for yourself—don’t expect your trainees to be polite if you can’t manage it. Importantly, this step allows you the chance to reflect on how the workshop was run, and what you could have done differently.

## Giving Feedback

As your workshop progresses, you should give feedback to the trainees in terms of areas to improve on and areas that are satisfactory. Trainees should also give guidance to one another. Don’t criticize for the sake of having an opinion: be honest but gentle about how someone can improve. This helps trainees consolidate knowledge and build their skills. By the end of the workshop, the trainees should show they’ve improved according to the feedback they receive.

Spare some thought for the end of your workshop. It should go out with a bang—not a fizzle—so keep it strong and make it memorable. Remember the training you provide should be transmutable into value-building skills that instill confidence in employees. This is the organization’s Return on Investment (ROI). Measuring the ROI through feedback benefits both you and your trainees. You can see what knowledge has been beneficial to your trainees, and they can review their training experiences by completing feedback forms.

## Using Evaluations

Your final training step should be an evaluation. If you don’t reflect and gain insights, you can’t improve. Your evaluation should take into account the following:

- **If trainees reacted well to the workshop:** You can use Atwood’s evaluation form, or create your own, to help measure trainee’s reactions.
- **If trainees understood the content:** This should be assessed on an ongoing basis during the course of the workshop.

- **The effect of the workshop on job performance:** The trainee and their organization will judge this, but you can involve yourself by following up at a later stage.
- **The impact of the training on the identified needs:** Has the trainee left the workshop feeling empowered to put new skills into practice?

The evaluation phase is important because it helps you determine whether your methods of training are effective, and how to improve on your shortcomings. Try not to be defensive; that won't lead to improvement. To this end, the author provides a Facilitator Competencies document that guides you through using trainee self-assessment, end-of-course feedback, observer feedback, and repeat ratings for personal development purposes. The long-term point of the training is to ensure that trainees incorporate their new skills into their behavior in their jobs. One way to do this is by following up with your trainees. For instance, touch base with the trainee after a month to evaluate their new skill level.



## Insights—Become a Skilled Trainer

### Consider the Organizational Objectives

An organization will be paying for your services. You should, first and foremost, consider what the organization wants and needs. Develop a relationship with the organization, and conduct a needs analysis to understand what is necessary. Follow up with organization to ensure that these needs have been met.

### Plan More Than Just the Workshop

Your trainees are there for your workshop—and a good workshop is more than just information. Be organized on the day. Have slides, handouts, and assessments ready. Set up the venue, and deal with refreshments and technological requirements. Plan for hiccups too—you don't want a technological glitch to ruin all your hard work.

### Customize Your Material

Every participant and training group enters a workshop with different needs. Consider how your material fits in with your trainee group. Be familiar with your content and be ready to change it to suit your trainees' needs. You should involve the trainees in your process of understanding what you need to include. Strive to address their different learning styles.

### Make a Good Impression

A good workshop environment and a successful attitude can make the difference between success or failure. Model good behavior, be competent about your content, present yourself professionally, and be open and friendly. Also, don't forget to smile!

### Build Reflection into Your Workshops

Reflection is an essential part of learning. Build assessments and self-reflection into your workshops for your trainees, and use this technique to improve your personal development, too! Make use of self-assessment and evaluation forms, and keep in contact with your trainees to develop an understanding of how they're progressing.



## Conclusion

*Presentation Skills Training* connects to the human side of training, and encourages you to do the same. Aimed at all presentation skills workshop facilitators, this book helps you transform uninspiring material into a vibrant, lively workshop, filled with interaction and learning. Atwood's passion for training shines through as she masterfully builds on the basics of workshop structure and content, and expresses how you can do more to address the needs of your trainees and their organization.

“Don't expect yourself to be perfect. Stumbling over words, forgetting something, having equipment malfunctions, and experiencing other miscues are actually opportunities to demonstrate that it's okay to be human. Your participants will see that you recover from these situations with calm and grace and realize that they can too.”

If you've enjoyed our insights on Christee Atwood's *Presentation Skills Training: The ATD Workshop Series*, we encourage you to access the other *Presentation Skills Training* assets in the Skillsoft library, or purchase the hardcopy.

## About the Author



**CHRISTEE ATWOOD** is a certified Franklin Covey trainer who has worked with Fortune 500 companies, major associations, and governmental entities. She provides the knowledge and tools you need to deliver top-notch workshops in your own organization. Atwood has managed professional and trade associations and enjoyed an ongoing career as a newspaper and magazine columnist. She also serves as a Human Relations Commissioner for the city of Alexandria, Louisiana.

### Also by Christee Atwood

- 1 *Knowledge Management Basics* (ASTD Training Basics Series), ATD Press, © 2009, ISBN 978-1562865481.
- 2 *Ultimate Basic Business Skills: Training an Effective Workforce* (ASTD Ultimate Series), Association for Talent Development, © 2009, ISBN 978-1562865894.
- 3 *Manager Skills Training: Trainer's Workshop* (ASTD Trainer's Workshop Series), Association for Talent Development, © 2008, ASIN B01K14JIUC.
- 4 *Succession Planning Basics* (ASTD Training Basics), Association for Talent Development, © 2007, ISBN 978-1562864774.