

# PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES OF GOOD INSTRUCTION

There are three principles and two techniques of good instruction which can be applied to individual periods of training:

1. The Principles.
  - a. **Preparation and Planning.**
  - b. **Promotion and Maintenance of the Desire to Learn.**
  - c. **Confirmation That Instruction is Being Assimilated.**
2. The Techniques.
  - a. **Question Technique.**
  - b. **Selection and Use of Audio-Visual Aids.**

## ***Preparation and Planning***

No period of instruction can be successful unless time and care are spent on preparation and planning beforehand. Certain factors must be considered whilst preparing a lesson and the following is a logical process to adopt:

1. ***The Objective.*** The instructor must first decide on his objective for a particular period, that is to say what he expects the cadets to know and/or be able to do when he has taught them. It must be simple, clear and limited. It must be capable of being achieved in the time available.
2. ***Instructor's Knowledge.*** No one can teach others unless he possesses the necessary knowledge himself. After defining the objective the instructor must then make certain that he knows his subject.
3. ***Subject Matter.*** When preparing a lesson the subject matter must be examined carefully. The instructor should decide exactly what the class must know and do if the objective is to be achieved, and points that are irrelevant should be discarded.
4. ***Splitting up of Lessons.*** All lessons or periods must be arranged in a logical sequence. The lesson should be split up into a beginning, middle and end, as follows:
  - a. ***Beginning.*** After ensuring that time is allowed for the preliminaries such as safety precautions and roll call, start with an introduction and make certain that everyone knows what the objective of the period is. Where the lesson follows on from a previous one start by a few revision questions to refresh the memories of those in the class.
  - b. ***Middle.*** This contains the main part of the teaching. It must be a logical sequence and arranged so that instruction can be confirmed by stages.
  - c. ***End.*** Check that the class has learnt what they have been taught by question or tests and finally summarize the lesson.

5. **Conditions of Work.** When planning, always make certain that the place where the instruction is to be carried out is suitable and properly organized. Huts and lecture rooms are sometimes locked, dirty or cold, and outside lessons lose their value if located near other distractions such as main roads or places where other activities are taking place.

### **Promotion and Maintenance of the Desire to Learn**

Discipline ensures that individuals attend periods of instruction but there is no guarantee that they really have the desire to learn. It is the instructor's responsibility to make his class really want to learn. Even with a keen class a poor instructor can soon kill the desire to assimilate the instruction. Attention to the factors detailed below can do much to promote and maintain this desire to learn.

1. **Enthusiasm.** The first essential is for every instructor to be enthusiastic and really believe in what he is trying to teach. Nothing can kill instruction quicker than a monotonous or bored approach on the part of the instructor. Remember to be enthusiastic and to carry the class with you.
2. **Simplicity.** The use of long complicated words and phrases can kill interest. Irrespective of the level of the class or the subject, the simpler the explanation the better. Always be clear and simple.
3. **Interest.** It is essential to maintain interest during periods of instruction. There are many ways of doing this and it is up to the instructor to use his initiative with this object in view. Encourage the interest of the class before the lesson by telling them what they are going to do. During a period interest can be achieved by including as many of the following as possible:
  - a. Realism and being practical.
  - b. Competition; there is a natural instinct to do better than others.
  - c. Variety; changes in the form of instruction and approach relieve monotony.
  - d. Incentive; anything which provides a reward for good work must promote interest.
  - e. Activity, whether mental or physical.
  - f. Good conditions of work.
4. **Maximum Activity.** A cadet is taught certain facts and also skills. When teaching facts, activity must be mental, but when teaching a skill the activity must be physical, because a skill can only be perfected by practice. As many as possible of a cadet's five senses should be used - hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste. The more he employs the longer his interest is maintained and the more effective his learning. The instructor promotes mental activity by questioning the class during a period and organizing short tests at the end of periods. The instructor promotes physical activity by making an individual or group from the class practise until the required standard is reached.
5. **The Human Factor.** The desire to learn depends largely on the relationship of the class with the instructor. Sarcasm, bullying or a display of boredom by the instructor destroys interest and the wish to learn. He must be fair, firm and approachable. He must also be quick to sense the feeling of the class and note when he has lost its attention.

## ***Confirmation That Instruction is Being Assimilated***

No matter how good the instruction and how great the desire to learn, the former will lose much of its value if the instructor does not confirm that the class really is learning. He may do this by means of:

- a. Revision or
- b. Questions or
- c. Tests

and, ideally, he should do these at the beginning, middle and end of a lesson in the following form:

Beginning of a lesson - Revision of past work.

Middle of a Lesson - Questions as instruction proceeds.

End of lesson - Tests (oral or written).

## **Testing**

Testing may be simple during an instructional period or more comprehensive during a course or period of training. It should normally be carried out

- a. At the beginning to help in grading and to find a standard on which to base instruction.
- b. After each stage of instruction to ensure that the stage has been learnt before going on to the next one.
- c. At the end of the lesson to check that the aim of the instruction has been achieved.
- d. At subsequent stages to check that the standard is being maintained.

There are many types of tests and it is the responsibility of the instructor to devise suitable ones for his class. The main categories are:

- a. Practical, to test skills, techniques and the application of knowledge.
- b. Oral, to test knowledge.
- c. Written, to test knowledge.

Practical tests are easy to produce; the main problem is to prevent cadets queuing up to wait their turn to be tested. A possible solution is to have a series of stands at which each squad or individual is tested in a specific thing and then moves on to do something else at another stand.

Oral tests either consist of questions put by an examiner or they can be run on the lines of a quiz. In the latter case consider the possibility of running the test on a team basis in order to introduce competition.

Long written tests are of value in academic instruction but they must to a large extent depend on powers of expression. They take a great deal of correcting and are probably not of much practical value in the Cadet Forces.

Short written tests are easy to run, quick to correct and do not test powers of expression. They may take many forms but the principle is that the cadet has to answer a series of short questions. Examples are:

- a. Filling in a blank space left after a question.
- b. Completing a statement in which the missing word or phrase has to be filled in.
- c. A series of statements some of which are true and others false. The cadet has to select the true ones.

Ingenuity must be used to design these tests, but they should be very simple and must be framed to check on how much the class has learnt.

Revision periods are used to maintain standards and confirm instruction. They must be interesting and the time spent on them limited.

## Questioning Technique

Oral questioning is the simplest method of checking that instruction is being assimilated. The instructor must ask a clear question, pause to allow the whole class to think, and then nominate a cadet to reply. This ensures that everyone thinks out the problem in his own mind. When questions are asked by the class the instructor should either answer it himself or obtain the answer from another member of the class. If he does not know the answer he must say so and answer the question later when he has had time to find out. He must not bluff; neither should he waste time answering irrelevant questions.

## Selecting and Use of Audio-Visual Aids

When selecting an aid the instructor must ensure that it is:

- a. **Necessary.** The instructor must ensure that an aid is really necessary in helping to gain student understanding. If the aid is not necessary, then it tends to become a gimmick, even a distraction.
- b. **Suitable.** The most easily available aid is not necessarily the most appropriate. The instructor must obtain or construct the most suitable aid to assist learning. Often a simple and imaginatively produced aid is more effective than an expensive or sophisticated one. Very often such aids are initiated by the instructor himself.
- c. **Simple.** An aid aims to simplify instruction; the message it conveys in the context of the lesson should, therefore, be as simple as possible. Unnecessary detail must be avoided and official posters and drops must be adapted by covering up all irrelevant material.
- d. **Large Enough/Audible.** An aid must be large enough for all the class to see all the detailed information the instructor requires. This must be checked by viewing the aid from all student positions. Similarly aids like tape recorders and cine projectors should be checked for audibility.
- e. **Interesting.** Colour, layout, humour and realism all make an aid more interesting for the student. The instructor must use his imagination, but must also exercise discretion; if the class remembers the interest and forgets the teaching point, the aid has not served its purpose.

In planning the use of aids the instructor must:

- a. **Rehearse.** A rehearsal of the presentation of the simplest aid is always necessary to make sure that the instructor is well versed in its operation and use. The instructor should also make certain that the aid is ready and will work when he requires it. He must consider whether assistance is required and plan accordingly.
- b. **Display.** The aid should be kept hidden until required. Plan the correct moment to produce it and hold this is going to be done. Ensure it is in the best position for the class to see it.
- c. **Describe.** Description of an aid is often necessary before it is used so that the class may know what it is representing. For example, the scale of a cloth model is an essential fact for the class to know before they can fully understand it.
- d. **Teach.** An aid used without explanation by the instructor is of limited value only. The instructor must do the teaching whilst using the aid to help him explain.
- e. **Dispose.** Having used an aid dispose of it, otherwise it will remain a distraction for the remainder of the lesson. Disposal must be planned.

The different categories of aids usually available to the instructor, and advice on their use, are given in other lessons.