



How to Handle 'Resistant Learners'

Resistant learners are not anything we can run from. There is nearly always one in the group that makes it difficult. The reason behind the resistance isn't always known, but can generally be narrowed down to one or more of these reasons.

- ❖ **Relevance** – it's common for learners to feel the topic being trained is not relevant to their job and isn't really necessary for them to know.
- ❖ **Boring** – the topic or form of training does not hold the learner's interest.
- ❖ **Priorities** – the learner could be frustrated as they may believe there are more important things they could be doing with their time.
- ❖ **Fear** – training can sometimes build up fears in the learner, fear of change, exposure, job loss, or many other things.

When a resistant learner is encountered it's important to take a step back and recognize if they fit into any of the above points. Once you have narrowed down a reason, you can adjust your approach, if possible.

Here are some tips, keeping your resistant learner in mind.

- **Chunk Your Material** – Whether your training is conducted in person or virtually, keep the lecturing portion to a maximum. Keep the content engaging and then allow time for learners to get involved, ask questions, and interact. This could be a quick relatable review activity or small group discussion. This will decrease the boredom scale.
- **Set Expectations and Goals** – In the beginning, let the learners know what will be covered in the course and why. Ask them to write down their goals for the day, and then share it with the group. Explain how the course will benefit them and their position. Knowing this information will help with relevance, help them view it as a priority, and possibly reduce fears.



- **Provide a Sneak Peek** – If it's a course you have facilitated before, offer a small sample beforehand. A "Sneak Peek Session" over lunch one day. It will allow the learners to get a taste that might peak their interest and get them excited.
- **Know Your Audience** – Make sure to do your research about the types of learners you will have. Find out what is their working experience, what kind of knowledge, if any, they have of the topic being covered. If needed, and helpful, split the learners up. Some get embarrassed if they are not at the level someone else is and might be intimidated.
- **Use visuals** – Adult learners react more to aesthetically pleasing visuals and visuals that are more stimulating. Whether it's an in-person presentation or a virtual learning module, use graphs to display data, and colours that draw people's attention.

It's impossible to avoid a resistant learner! They will always be a bit of a challenge. Keep all types in mind when developing your training. Imagine you are in their shoes, unhappy to have to take the training. What would you want to see or do to make it better? Most likely, if something engages you, someone else will respond to as well.

