

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory



On-the-job Training Guidance for OJT Instructors

Welcome

On the Job Training (OJT) is a mixture of instruction, observation, and supervised activities. It is used to ensure staff have the needed work-specific skills to work safely and effectively so is based upon the accepted principle that people learn best by doing. OJT is especially critical in situations where performing a task incorrectly can lead to injury, damage expensive equipment, spoil experiments, or worse. At Berkeley Lab, OJT is an important part of the worker qualification process. Since it is line management's responsibility to ensure that workers have the competencies needed to perform their work safely and effectively, before they begin independent work, OJT is an effective method to achieve this.

Who is qualified to provide OJT?

What are the practical criteria or qualities that make someone qualified to provide OJT?

Broadly speaking qualified OJT instructors have strengths in five areas:

- 1. Strong knowledge of the science
- 2. High-level expertise performing the tasks and operations
- 3. Strong knowledge of the hazards and the controls needed to work safely
- 4. Strong knowledge of emergency response procedures
- 5. Strong teaching, coaching or mentoring skills

Selecting an OJT instructor requires careful consideration. Though it is commonly the Work Planning and Control Activity Lead and/or Activity Lead designee, who serves as OJT trainer, this may not always be the case; there may be others on the team who are better suited to providing OJT specific to one or more tasks or operations. Whomever line management assigns, the expectation is that the person assigned is qualified to provide the specific OJT they are assigned. It's a deliberate decision.

It is also the responsibility of the person who has been assigned to provide OJT to speak up when they don't feel they are qualified or capable of performing that role, or they simply don't feel they are up to the task. This is similar to when a person is assigned to sit in an emergency exit on an airplane and in this capacity are expected to open the door and help others out. That person can decline and be reseated if they don't feel qualified, capable or comfortable performing that role.

Determining the need for OJT

The degree of formality and the comprehensiveness of OJT should be graded to the overall risk. Quite simply:

- The higher the risk the more effort and care should be expended in providing OJT.
- The less experience a person has, the more OJT, mentoring and oversight they will need.

Your role as line manager or activity lead who provides OJT is to:

- 1. Evaluate worker's current understanding and ability to perform the work safely and effectively.
- 2. Provide OJT to develop the necessary knowledge and skills or competencies.
- 3. When worker demonstrates competence, and both the trainer and trainee agree then the trainee is qualified to work independently assuming all other needed training requirements are satisfied. Until then, the worker should work under adequate supervision by a trained and qualified person until they have demonstrated they can work independently.

OJT Method

As stated earlier, on-the-job training is a mixture of instruction, observation, and supervised activities. A common OJT instructional method is demonstration-performance, or the "show and do" method which can be broken down as follows:

- 1. **Show:** Here the trainer explains and demonstrates how to perform the task safely and effectively. The trainer:
 - a. performs the task exactly the way they want the worker to perform it
 - b. repeats the task until the trainee has a clear understanding for how and why the activity or task is performed as demonstrated.
 - c. controls the pace of instruction to meet the learners needs.
 - d. encourages trainee to ask clarifying questions.
- 2. Do: The worker then practices the activities and tasks under the trainee's guidance.
 - a. While the trainee is working through the task, the trainer guides the performance by correcting mistakes, providing feedback and encouragement.
 - b. Depending on how well the trainee performs, the trainer may need to repeat demonstrations a few times and then allow for additional supervised practice until the trainee achieves an acceptable level of performance.
 - c. As the trainee's performance improves the trainer reduces the amount of coaching and correcting, until the trainee is able to perform the task completely on his or her own with no additional input.
 - d. OJT is completed when the trainee demonstrates, to trainer's and their own satisfaction that they are qualified to safely perform the activities and tasks.

Practical OJT Tips

OJT is focused and specific to the work. It shows and explains how to perform the task successfully and safely. With that in mind:

- 1. **Be explicit.** Be explicit about hazards involved with the work. Be explicit about the controls necessary for protection. Include statements like, "When you are doing this step, watch out for this hazard. This is how you can get hurt..."
- 2. **Be thorough.** Thoroughly explain the controls needed for a worker's protection. If personal protective equipment (PPE) is needed for example, talk about selecting the appropriate type of PPE. Talk about how to inspect the PPE. Talk about the limitations of the PPE. Talk about how to use the PPE.
- 3. **Highlight the critical tasks.** Risk varies from activity to activity. Be aware of the critical tasks or steps of work where a person can suffer serious injury. Highlight these in OJT. Emphasize the hazard and the controls. Emphasize what can go wrong and how the worker can suffer injury.
- 4. **Don't assume knowledge or skill.** Assume the worker is not familiar with the work, not familiar with the hazards and not familiar with the necessary controls. Adjust your approach as OJT progresses.
- 5. **Dwell on students and affiliates.** Students usually have limited work experience. Berkeley Lab experience has also shown that students are often reluctant to ask questions that might reveal the limits of their knowledge or skill. Affiliates, on the other hand, may come with more experience, but may bring different safety cultures or different ways of doing things that aren't aligned to Berkeley Lab practices. Both groups should receive extra attention during OJT.
- 6. **Be vigilant.** If a person is not grasping important concepts or is not demonstrating proficiency, do not let the worker perform the work. Provide additional OJT, have workers work under appropriate supervision, or assign a different worker to perform the task.

Designing OJT

Broadly speaking, there are three things that most good OJT includes:

- 1. A clear performance objective
 - a. What should the person be able to do after completing OJT
- 2. Outline of actions or steps the worker needs to perform safely and effectively
 - a. Specifically, what *must go right* for the task to be performed without incident?
- 3. Actions to take if something unexpected occurs
 - *a.* What the worker needs to be able to do in the event something unexpected occurs (off-normal event).

An OJT outline can be helpful as a planning tool to think through the steps that lead to successful performance. In addition to serving as an effective planning tool, it can help maintain consistency

and continuity if, for example, there are different people providing the same OJT and in situations where a new OJT instructor takes over for someone else.

Example OJT form and checklist:

- OJT Form Example (PDF)
- OJT Checklist Example (PDF)

Being a good OJT trainer

Every one of us has our own teaching style, and we should use this to good advantage. The following provides an overview of some qualities that help create an effective teaching and learning partnership.

Enthusiasm for Producing Learning

Enthusiasm is having a real enjoyment in what you do. This is a natural part of showing interest in the learning process and how well you relate to your trainees.

Subject Matter Expertise

The trainees should be able to look to the trainer as the expert. This calls for a level of skill and knowledge that meets or exceeds the standards set for the performance on the job. In this way, choosing an OJT instructor is a careful consideration tailored to the activity.

Effective Communication Skills

Communication skills are often referred to as interpersonal or people skills. These skills determine how others perceive you. To be effective as a trainer, you must be responsible for making certain that the messages get through clearly in both directions; information from you to the trainee, and information from the trainee to you. The words you choose, the sequence you put them in, and the way you say them has a lot to do with how effective your communication will be. It's not only the literal meaning of the words you use that communicate to your trainee, but also the tone of your voice, your body language and other non-verbal cues also send messages to the trainee. Language and cultural understandings can influence communication. If language limitations impact understanding, trainer or trainee should get help.

Positive Attitude

Your attitude is a reflection of the way you feel about yourself, your job, and your world. Much of what we do is a result of how we feel, rather than of what we know. A good, positive, attitude reflects the philosophy and goals of the organization. Acquiring such an attitude will have a positive effect on the trainees, enhance their performance, give them a desire to learn, and assist in their own development of a positive attitude.

Patience and Empathy

The key is to allow learners to learn at their own pace. No two trainees will be alike, yet usually they will all try to be successful in their efforts. Do not condemn poor performance but strive to understand what is causing it and work with the employee to fix it. Allow the trainee the time and opportunity for practice in order to improve. Try to understand any changes that the trainee is going through and be supportive whenever possible.

Counselor and Advisor

The trainees expect your instruction and support. They need your feedback on their performance. They want to know what progress they have made and areas where they can improve. You can help them by giving them direction and suggestions on performing their job correctly. You need to have high standards, yet be realistic in your expectations of the trainees. Be fair and objective when assessing their performance. Commend them on their strengths and help them to improve their weaknesses. In other words, strive to be a support to the trainees, not a hindrance or critic.

Prepared

People generally accept the ideas of an organized person much faster than they accept the ideas of a disorganized one. It is to your advantage to act, speak, and think in a logical, well-planned manner. It is especially important for the trainer to be organized and familiar with the training process. Trainees recognize and appreciate when the trainer is prepared.

Documenting OJT in Work Planning and Control

A simple way to document OJT is through the "Manage OJT" functionality within Activity Manager. A tutorial is available here: <u>https://vimeo.com/297388122/259bb2ab76</u>

Can also access the tutorial in the Activity Manager tutorial library here within the Activity Lead section https://wpc.lbl.gov/training/

CONCLUSION

When on-the-job training is integrated into the culture of "doing great science" and "doing great business" it becomes an efficient and effective way to develop competent and qualified workers. This document provided an overview of the value of OJT, determining the need for OJT, and a framework for providing effective OJT.

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