

Evidence-Informed Guidance for Summer Camp Staff Training

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For the American Camp Association

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Purpose: The purpose of this resource is to provide camp professionals with promising practices for summer staff training. While there is much information that focuses on training topics, there is less information available that can provide camp professionals with comprehensive, research-informed evidence of promising practices in staff training approaches. This guide can help camp administrators make decisions about training their staff.

Camp staff are essential elements of the camp experience, and part of every camp staff member’s knowledge and skills is dependent on their training. Camp staff training typically aims to improve the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of staff members. Given the enormous responsibility camp staff have in their work, the topic of training can be daunting! After all, camp staff are responsible for other people’s children’s safety, learning, and fun. This is no small task.

While summer camp staff training can involve a wide range of topics, approaches, and participants, for the purposes of this guide, we assume the following conditions:

- Training participants are typically 18–25 years old
- Training is required for work with children and youth in camps, but staff may be paid or volunteer
- Staff training occurs over several days, rather than a couple of hours
- The purpose of the training is to prepare staff to work with children in a camp setting
- The training is not a counselor-in-training program.

This resource focuses on the following questions:

1. What do we know about summer camp staff training?
2. What competencies should summer staff learn during training?
3. How is training effectiveness influenced by characteristics of camp staff?
4. How should staff training be structured?
5. How can training transfer to camp work?

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What do we know about summer camp staff training?

While most camps deliver at least some professional development to seasonal staff, most of the training is conducted by internal staff and not much is delivered online. Further, camp employment is an increasingly researched area in workforce skills and development but more information is needed.

Let's put into context the importance of camp staff training. First, the experience of working at a camp can have lifelong impacts on career and other life choices. Warner, Godwin, and Hodge (2021) reviewed research on seasonal summer staff and found research has looked at workplace well-being, performance and workplace practices (including workplace motivation and retention and training), and staff outcomes (including life skills, professional development, and identity development). All of these areas are threaded through staff training.

Some specific studies illuminate the camp staff experience. For example, Warner, Povilaitis, Sibthorp, and Richmond (2021) found that camp staff perceived their work to be more meaningful than non-camp work because they felt they made a difference, had meaningful connections with others, and personally developed at camp. Training is an area that can set the stage for staff developing deeper meaning in their lives.

In a national study of young adults who worked at camp, the major outcomes of their work were that they learned relationship skills, leadership, and appreciation for being present (Povilaitis, Sibthorp, & Richmond, 2021). This study also showed that camp employment was a rich developmental setting for emerging adults to learn skills they may not learn elsewhere. In another study on career paths for women, Garst, Baughman, Whittington, and Gagnon (2015) examined the influence of camp experiences. Career impacts included human service career interest, outdoor career interest, leadership and interpersonal skill development, and social-emotional skill development. Camp administrators running staff training can capitalize on these positive outcomes by being intentional about them in their training approaches.

Duerden et al. (2014) found that when structured correctly, camp appears to be a prime context for the development of essential workplace skills such as interpersonal interactions, communication, problem solving, and leadership. This study also suggested that special attention be paid to the factors and processes at camp that both hinder and facilitate staff development. Facilitators of positive growth included developing intrinsic motivations for working at camp, being forced out of one's comfort zone, participating in the supportive camp community, and receiving positive feedback. Constraining elements included long work hours, working under poor management, and personal relationships among staff that reduced focus and engagement. These elements can be addressed in the structuring and planning of staff training.

Second, some form of training likely happens for the more than 1.5 million people employed in camps each summer (ACA, 2016). What does training look like in summer camps? According to the American Camp Association’s *2019 Staffing, Compensation & Benefits Survey*:

	Overnight Camp Respondents	Day Camp Respondents
Delivered some hours of professional development	89%	78%
Had a professional development requirement for seasonal specialty staff	73%	51%
Had a professional development requirement for other seasonal staff	57%	54%
Offered online training	12%	12%
Conducted on-site training provided by internal staff	61%	69%
Conducted on-site training provided by external trainers/consultants	17%	12%
Conducted off-site but not online training	9%	6%
Mandated specific number of hours	9%	57%
Average length of training	Over 50% of camps mandate 30 or more hours	Over 50% of camps mandate 30 or more hours

Note: For camps using volunteer staff, all numbers are lower.

ACA accreditation standards (2021) require staff training of 2–3 days for short-term day camps and 5–6 days for resident camps. Training must include the following topics:

1. Camp purpose, focus, mission, intended outcomes, and how these are implemented in camp structure and program activities
2. Developmental needs of campers to be served and the resulting differences necessary for program and structure
3. Objectives, safety considerations, skills progression, operating procedures, and competencies required for program activities
4. Age-appropriate behavior management and camper supervision techniques to help create a physically and emotionally safe environment
5. Clear expectations for staff performance and conduct, including sexual harassment policies
6. Recognition, prevention, and reporting of child abuse
7. Emergency procedures and staff members’ roles in implementation

Additional training is required for different roles including supervisory roles.

Although we know a little about potential lifelong outcomes of camp staff training, and the extent of camp staff training in the United States, more information is needed to answer the many questions camp professionals have about how and why to conduct training and different approaches.

The remainder of this document breaks down the different aspects of camp staff training:

- Staff competencies to learn
- Characteristics of camp staff
- Training structure
- Transferring training



What competencies should summer staff learn during training?

The point of training should be to build staff members' competencies to do their jobs. How do camps verify mastery of concepts taught during training, such as with a checklist of completion, competency assessment, skill demonstration, or other assessment? Is the training that was provided relevant to the roles and responsibilities of staff members? Is the training standards-based (i.e., is training provided to meet specific organizational/institutional standards)? If so, why and according to what standard? If not, why not? Consider doing a training needs assessment to determine which staff need to learn which concepts. Consider differentiating your training for new and experienced staff members.

- Make sure training intentionally aims to increase competence in the areas important to your camp and in areas where staff tend to want more information, such as child and youth development and behavior management.
- Conduct needs assessments of your staff to find out what they already know and where there are gaps.
- Provide differentiated learning opportunities for new and experienced staff so they increase their differing competencies.
- While a goal of many camps is to build community through staff training, also use that opportunity to increase staff members' competencies at their jobs.
- Consider that competencies can fade over time (over a summer, after several summers) so continually assess staff members' competencies and train accordingly.

Much of the research on training has focused on individual and specific camp staff competencies, or on staff members' feelings or perceptions of competence. Very few studies have linked camp staff competencies to a larger framework of what camp staff need to do in their jobs. Further, few camps—if any—have systematic ways to assess camp staff members' competencies, nor do they assess camp staff before training. Implications of many studies about staff competencies include the need for camps to conduct training needs assessments and to decide what competencies are needed for employees' roles and jobs. Fortunately, there are a few frameworks of competencies designed for youth development professionals such as camp staff. These frameworks can be used to design and evaluate training content.

Here are some competency frameworks from the out-of-school-time field. Does your staff training intentionally include these topics, as appropriate for your camp's setting and context? What common areas do you see?

American Camp Association: Certificates of Added Qualification

The ACA offers certificates of training for both entry-level and experienced staff.

1. [Entry-level staff certificate](#)
2. [Experienced staff certificate](#)

Topics covered:

- Youth/Adult Growth & Development
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Program Planning
- Evaluation
- Professionalism & Leadership
- Health & Wellness
- Risk Management
- Cultural Competence
- Family and Community Connections
- Nature and Environment
- Business Management and Practices
- Human Resource Management
- Site and Facility

National Afterschool Association: Core Knowledge and Competencies

The NAA developed core knowledge and competencies “to enable afterschool and youth development practitioners to demonstrate expertise and gain a higher level of recognition within their communities—particularly from school officials—that has long been sought after.”

- Child and Youth Growth and Development
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Child/Youth Observation and Assessment
- Interactions with Children and Youth
- Youth Engagement
- Cultural Competency and Responsiveness
- Family, School, and Community Relationships
- Safety and Wellness
- Program Planning and Development
- Professional Development and Leadership

Youth Work Core Competencies

School's Out Washington and Next Generation Youth Work Coalition reviewed existing frameworks of youth work core competencies and identified the following:

- Curriculum (program activities)
- Safe and Inclusive Environment
- Child and Adolescent Development
- Cross-Cultural Competence
- Connecting with Families
- Connecting with Communities
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Professionalism
- Professional Development
- Program Management

Other resources were compiled by the American Institutes for Research.

What does the research say about staff competencies?

A study on perceived competence for experienced staff (Wahl-Alexander, Howell, & Richards, 2017)

1. Competencies in this study included typical day routine, conflict management, counselor expectations, safe camp environment, relationships, develop camper skills, and behavior management. A survey was given to 101 counselors after an 8-day training.
2. Results showed that increases across all competencies were significant, and the three competencies with **the largest increase after the orientation training were typical day routine, counselor expectations, and developing camper skills**. The two competencies with **the smallest increase were behavior management and creating a safe camp environment**.
3. The researchers suggested that devoting additional time teaching tangible methods on **how to handle conflict and cultivate camp skills** can lead to stronger competency in staff. They also suggest **integrating video module training** for staff prior to training can help.

A study on positive youth development competencies (Halsall, Kendellen, Bean, & Forneris, 2016)

1. This study explored perceived camp counsellor characteristics and strategies for youth engagement believed to facilitate positive youth development at resident camp.
2. Two main themes emerged: perceived characteristics of an effective camp counsellor and youth engagement strategies.
3. For “**perceived characteristics of an effective camp counsellor**,” four subthemes emerged, including
 - a. being understanding and compassionate
 - b. ability to maintain equanimity
 - c. having a sense of humor
 - d. being a positive role model.
4. For “**youth engagement strategies**,” four subthemes themes emerged, including
 - a. individualizing the activities
 - b. facilitating initial engagement by making it fun
 - c. creating an autonomy-supportive environment
 - d. providing leadership opportunities.
5. Recommendations include
 - a. Using recruitment and training approaches to **identify necessary staff characteristics** in new recruits and promote these characteristics with new staff

- b. Provide programs and services to **support stress management** for staff
- c. Develop capacity building opportunities for staff such as learning **how to engage youth** and highlight best practices for initially engaging youth and maintaining engagement over time.

A study on perceptions of competence (Wahl-Alexander, Richards-Rosse, & Howell, 2018)

1. This study evaluated the effectiveness of module-based training videos that supplemented an eight-day orientation at a residential summer camp. The study included a control group of staff who did not view the videos.
2. The results of this study indicated significant increases, with the **largest increases in typical daily routine, counselor expectations, and developing camp skills.**
3. Counselors **lacked confidence in their ability to develop camper skills and in behavior management**, so additional time should be devoted to these topics.
4. The findings suggest that participation in an online training program leads to initial gains in counselor perceived competence. This competence appears to prepare the counselors for the onsite orientation, leading to greater overall perceived competency on post-survey scores. **Online training programs** can be a valuable supplement to on-site camp training. Counselors' competencies can be improved by implementing specific pre-training training videos.

A study on camp healthcare practices competency (Garst, Gagnon, & Brawley, 2019)

1. This study looked at how an online training affected staff members' camp healthcare practices. The study included a group of people who worked at camp and another group who did not work at camp.
2. Somewhat surprisingly, the test scores for the people who worked at camp were significantly lower than the scores of people who did not work at camp, at both the first and second post-test measures. **The training didn't make a difference to (and even decreased) camp healthcare competency.** These findings contradict other studies suggesting online education is an effective strategy for camp staff training.
3. It's possible that the competency of camp healthcare practices is affected by counselor fatigue or that online learning is less durable.

A study on the camp counselor competency of creativity (Lynch, Hartman, Trauntvein, & Moorhead, 2020)

1. This study explored organizational support for creativity among first-year and returning staff at the beginning and end of one season of employment.
2. Over the summer, both first-year and returning counselors indicated significant **decreases in perceptions of the camp organization valuing creativity**. Counselors' **self-identification as a creative employee significantly decreased** among returning employees over the summer.
3. Three **barriers to creativity** included
 - a. **personal** (intimidation, inexperience),
 - b. **structural** (time/money), and
 - c. **camp traditions** (status quo) barriers.



How is training effectiveness influenced by characteristics of camp staff?

Training can be tough on anyone. Use a wide variety of teaching and training approaches to meet staff-specific needs. Provide choices and options wherever you can. Learn about staff members' characteristics and issues that concern them.

- Provide opportunities for rest and ways to combat fatigue.
- Promote self-efficacy in training.
- Foster learning-oriented behavior.
- Clarify links between training and job tasks.

Lots of different types of people work at camp and their characteristics vary in how they experience training. Previous camp experience, geographical locations of the camp and staff members' homes, life stage (retiree or teenager), length of time, and other characteristics all influence how training is experienced. Research suggests that the individual characteristics of learners can impact how they learn. This also means that how we train staff matters. Paying attention to who your staff are can make a difference. Knowing who your staff are can tell you a lot about what you need to do to meet their learning needs.

How could you possibly attend to all of these differences? One approach is to provide options. When given a choice, most people will pick an approach to training that best aligns with the way they learn. This means that when possible, providing options for training may help your staff learn what they need to know more easily and retain more.

Another approach to meeting the needs of different staff can be to find the commonalities and aim for meeting *most* learners' needs. This approach is the most efficient and knowingly misses some trainees. On the positive side, however, attempting to meet the most needs possible through one approach means that time and resources can be reallocated. This approach might make the most sense when your staff is relatively homogenous along one (or many) characteristics, or when the content of the training is less in-depth or important.

What does the research say?

A study on performance-influencing factors (Dubin, Garst, Gaslin, & Schultz, 2019)

1. This study looked at how fatigue impacted employee performance and strategies to reduce the negative impacts of fatigue within camp settings.
2. Camp-related fatigue involves a mix of time, types, and causes.
 - a. Fatigue is a **distinct experience** leading to setting-specific outcomes.
 - b. Fatigue is **managed** using administrative and peer supports.
 - c. Fatigue is sometimes perceived in **positive** ways.
3. Fatigue is important to understand and plan for, given the challenges of the camp setting.

A study on what matters during training (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012)

1. Self-efficacy leads to better learning. Training should be designed to **promote self-efficacy and then to reinforce it afterward**. Self-efficacy can be improved by reminding trainees of past successes in training or on the job and by ensuring early successful learning experiences during training.
2. Framing training objectives and goals should intentionally foster learning-oriented behavior. **Learning-oriented** trainees should be given **freedom** to take greater responsibility for their own learning processes, but **performance-oriented** trainees should also be given greater **structure**.
3. Motivation to learn matters, before, during and after training. Motivation should be promoted throughout the learning process. To **enhance motivation to learn**, clarify the link between training content and learning needs and by providing organizational and supervisory support for training.

A study on learner motivation (Gillet et al., 2018)

1. Self-determined motivation at a police vocational training program had three trajectories: high, moderate, and low.
2. **Mental load** increased the likelihood of high self-determined motivation to learn. **Peer support** increased the likelihood of high motivation relative to those with moderate motivation to learn. In contrast, **emotional load** increased the likelihood of moderate and high motivations to learn compared to those with low motivation. Finally, learners with **high motivation** had the highest levels of positive affect and performance, and the lowest levels of negative affect.

A study on fatigue and performance (Dorrian, Lamond, & Dawson, 2000)

1. In a study of people aged 19–24, **as fatigue levels increase, people noticed their performance declined. Alertness** can partially affect an individual's global assessment of performance.
2. Performance was defined as grammatical reasoning (accuracy and response latency); vigilance (accuracy and response latency); simple sensory comparison, and; tracking.
3. Performance scores decreased significantly with more fatigue.



How should staff training be structured?

Consider your goals for training. Do you use training to build community or teach skills, or both? Most camp administrators will say both, so use a hybrid approach for training that balances in-person community building with remote or online training for skill building. Differentiate your training methods for new staff and experienced staff.

- Think about the content you want to teach staff. Does some content lend itself to being taught online, such as the history of your camp, or some policies or procedures? Is there sufficient structure and guidance as to what and how trainees should learn online?
 - If you use online training, choose the right media and incorporate effective instructional design principles.
 - If you use online methods, use well-designed simulation to enhance learning, improve performance, and help minimize errors; it is also particularly valuable when training dangerous tasks.
-

Hybrids of in-person and online training seem to be a good approach for training. Consider how online training can extend your training time: what concepts could be taught via video, or synchronous online meeting, or asynchronous discussion board? What concepts are better off being taught in person? Think about modeling experiential education to teach concepts if this is an approach you want your counselors to use with campers.

There is no one superior method. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses. Consider how you want your staff to use this information. Mix up your methods to avoid boredom. Staff with low levels of knowledge might benefit more from facilitated approaches, and staff with higher levels of knowledge might prefer more directive learning approaches.

- Facilitative approaches can lead to deeper learning, but directive approaches might lead to higher satisfaction in learners.
- Inquiry-based approaches can increase conceptual understanding over passive approaches like lecture.
- Interactive approaches can lead to greater motivation than passive approaches.
- Small group learning can promote achievement and motivation.

Concepts in Professional Development

Cooper (2016, p. 4) suggests the following model which can be used to structure different components of staff training.



Adapting Cooper's summary of steps in the model for effective professional development, here are some definitions and examples of what to do at each step.

Step	Definition	Example
1. Theory	Present underlying definitions, research, and rationale.	The techniques for getting the attention of a large group of children are presented. The policies or reasoning behind the techniques are presented (e.g., why we do/do not use whistles)
2. Demonstration	Show the staff how "it" is done.	Techniques for teaching group attention-getting are learned. The trainer models each technique by using the staff as campers.
3. Practice and Feedback	Give staff time to try the procedure and provide a critique of their efforts.	The technique of attention-getting has been taught as a way to expand group management skills. Staff practice the technique with other staff by creating several attention-getting techniques. Under the direction of the trainer, they discuss how they did and receive input from other staff and the trainer.
4. Coaching and follow-up	Provide observation, feedback, and additional support.	After attending a session on attention-getting strategies, staff return to their cabins. Each staff member selects one strategy to model for their campers. A mentor colleague observes the attention-getting technique and makes suggestions for improvements. At the weekly staff meeting, staff share the results of their lessons and discuss the feedback.

Before, During, and After Training

Below are tables from a research synthesis of training studies (reading the full article is highly recommended and available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1529100612436661>) (Salas et al., 2012). The authors emphasize in their article that training is a systematic process, and they explain what matters before, during, and after training. The authors also share that

- a. Properly designed training works, and
- b. The way training is designed, delivered, and implemented can greatly influence its effectiveness.

Steps to take at each of these three time periods are listed, described, and summarized in a checklist for ease of use. These guidelines are well-suited and adaptable for the camp setting.

BEFORE Training.

Table 3. Checklist of Steps to Take Before Training

Step	Actions	Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct training needs analysis	Determine what needs to be trained, who needs to be trained, and what type of organizational system you are dealing with.	Clarifies expected learning outcomes and provides guidance for training design and evaluation. Enhances training effectiveness.
<input type="checkbox"/> Job–task analysis	Specify work and competency requirements. Examine teamwork demands, if needed. Identify what trainees need to know vs. what trainees need to access. Consider conducting a cognitive task analysis for knowledge-based jobs.	Ensures that the training provided will address real job requirements and demands.
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational analysis	Examine strategic priorities and the culture, norms, resources, limitations, and support for training. Determine whether policies and procedures in place support training.	Enables strategic resource-allocation decisions. Identifies how the work environment can support or hinder the training objectives.
<input type="checkbox"/> Person analysis	Uncover who needs training and determine what kind of training they need. Determine whether training must be adapted for some learners.	Clarifies training demand and trainees' needs. Maximizes benefits of the training by ensuring fit with trainees' needs.
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare learning climate		
<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule training	Schedule training close to when trainees will be able to use on the job what they have learned. Plan to offer refresher training when skill decay cannot be avoided.	Reduces skill decay and atrophy.
<input type="checkbox"/> Notify employees	Communicate clear expectations about the training. Describe training as an “opportunity” without overselling. Inform employees about any posttraining follow-up. Communicate the importance of training.	Encourages the right attendees. Ensures trainees enter with appropriate expectations, which enhances readiness and learning.
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish attendance policies	Determine whether attendance should be mandatory. Use the mandatory label selectively.	Helps ensure learner motivation and attendance.
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare supervisors and leaders	Prepare supervisors to support their employees and send the right signals about training.	Enhances employees' motivation to learn.

Also consider:

1. How should trainers be trained?
 - a. Will you be using an internal (i.e., camp-led) trainer or an external (i.e., outside) trainer? What does the trainer need in terms of coaching/support? What trainer competencies are needed?
2. What resources are needed for training?
 - a. What is the resource level for the training - to what extent is the training resourced by the camp? Resources can involve financial, human, time, etc. Is your camp investing to provide staff with high-quality training?
3. How is training prepared?
 - a. What do people need to know before the training begins? What should they prepare for? What goals and expectations for training are set?

DURING Training (Salas et al., 2012).

Table 4. Checklist of Steps to Take During Training

Step	Actions	Outcome
<input type="checkbox"/> Enable right trainee mindset <input type="checkbox"/> Build self-efficacy	Deliver training in a way that builds trainees' belief in their ability to learn and perform trained skills. Reinforce performance during training.	Enhances motivation and increases perseverance when on the job.
<input type="checkbox"/> Promote a learning orientation	Encourage trainees to participate in training to learn rather than to appear capable. If most trainees will not have that orientation, design more structured training experiences.	Leads to greater learning.
<input type="checkbox"/> Boost motivation to learn	Engage trainees and built their interest. Ensure that training is perceived as relevant and useful. Show why it benefits them.	Leads to learning and positive reactions to learning; may encourage transfer back on the job.
<input type="checkbox"/> Follow appropriate instructional principles		
<input type="checkbox"/> Use a valid training strategy and design	Include these elements in training: provide information, give demonstrations of good/bad behaviors, allow trainees to practice, and give meaningful and diagnostic feedback.	Helps trainees understand and practice the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they need to develop; allows for remediation.
<input type="checkbox"/> Build in opportunities for trainees to engage in transfer-appropriate processing	Incorporate features that require trainees to engage in the same cognitive processes during training that they will have to in the transfer environment (e.g., sufficient variability and difficulty). Recognize that performance during training does not necessarily reflect trainees' ability to apply what they have learned in the transfer environment.	Equips trainees to be better able to apply what they learned when performing their job.
<input type="checkbox"/> Promote self-regulation	Maintain trainees' attention and keep them on task by encouraging self-monitoring.	Allows trainees to monitor their progress toward goals; enhances learning.
<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate errors into the training	Encourage trainees to make errors during training, but be sure to give guidance on managing and correcting the errors.	Improves transfer of training and equips trainees to deal with challenges on the job.
<input type="checkbox"/> Use technology-based training wisely	Technology can be beneficial in training, but proceed with caution. Recognize that entertaining trainees is insufficient for return on investment.	Optimizes individual learning.
<input type="checkbox"/> Use computer-based training (CBT) correctly	Ensure that any CBT is based on sound instructional design, for example, providing trainees with guidance and feedback. Recognize that not all training can be delivered via computer.	Allows for self-paced learning.
<input type="checkbox"/> Allow user control wisely	Provide sufficient structure and guidance to trainees when allowing them to make decisions about their learning experience.	Allows for individualized training experiences while ensuring trainees have appropriate learning experience.
<input type="checkbox"/> Use simulation appropriately	Best to train complex and dynamic skills, particularly those that may be dangerous. Ensure the simulation is job relevant, even if it is not identical to the job. The priority should be on psychological fidelity rather than physical fidelity. Build in opportunity for performance diagnosis and feedback. Guide the practice.	Enhances learning and performance; allows trainees to practice dangerous tasks safely.

AFTER Training. (Salas et al., 2012)

Table 5. Checklist of Steps to Take After Training

Step	Actions	Outcome
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure transfer of training <input type="checkbox"/> Remove obstacles to transfer	Ensure trainees have ample time and opportunities to use what they have learned.	Increases transfer of training and reduces skill decay. Maintains employee motivation and self-efficacy.
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide tools and advice to supervisors	Ensure supervisors are equipped to reinforce trained skills and can promote ongoing learning using on-the-job experiences.	Enables employees to retain and extend what they learned in training.
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage use of real-world debriefs	Reflect on and discuss trainees' on-the-job experiences that are related to the training. Reinforce lessons learned, uncover challenges, and plan how to handle situations in the future.	Promotes retention, self-efficacy, and motivation. Improves job performance; promotes adequate mental models.
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide other reinforcement and support mechanisms	Consider providing trainees with job aids or access to knowledge repositories or communities of practice to reinforce and support what they learned in training.	Improves performance.
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate training <input type="checkbox"/> Clearly specify the purpose of evaluation	Determine what you hope to accomplish by evaluating the training and link all subsequent decisions back to the purpose.	Ensures that time spent evaluating training produces desired results.
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider evaluating training at multiple levels	Consider measuring reactions, learning, behavior, and results. Use precise affective, cognitive, and/or behavioral indicators to measure the intended learning outcomes as uncovered during the needs assessment.	Allows well-grounded decisions about training, including any necessary modifications. Enables effective training to continue to be supported.

What does the research say?

A study on online and face-to-face instruction (Means et al., 2009)

1. In a review of recent experimental and quasi-experimental studies contrasting blends of online and face-to face instruction with conventional face-to-face classes, **blended instruction was more effective**. When used by itself, **online learning appears to be as effective as conventional classroom instruction, but not more so**. Online learning is not necessarily better as a medium. For studies that showed an advantage for blended learning, the online and classroom conditions differed in terms of time spent, curriculum and pedagogy. Elements in the treatment conditions were combined (such as additional learning time, materials, and opportunities for collaboration) which seemed to produce the observed learning advantages. Online learning is much more conducive to the **expansion of learning time** than is face-to-face instruction.
2. Elements such as **video or online quizzes** did not appear to influence the amount that students learned in online classes.

3. Online learning can be enhanced by giving learners **control** of their interactions with media and prompting learner **reflection**. Elements that trigger learner activity or learner reflection and self-monitoring of understanding are effective when students pursue online learning as **individuals**.
4. Providing guidance for learning for **groups** of students appears less successful than does supporting individual learners. When groups of students are learning together online, techniques such as **guiding questions** generally influence the way students interact, but not the amount they learn.

A study on small-group discussion (Arias, Scott, Peters, McClain, & Gluskin, 2016)

1. Students in the **small-group discussion groups** scored significantly higher than those in the lecture groups when skill performance was tested.
2. However, the written test results showed no difference between small-group students and **lecture** students.
3. **Active student participation** did relate to improved manual skill acquisition, but the format of the session did not seem to have a direct influence on acquired knowledge.

A study on student-centered/facilitative training (Berghmans, Druine, Dochy, & Struyven, 2012)

1. This study contrasted the effects of a student-centered (i.e., facilitative) training approach on medical students' clinical skills learning with students' perceptions. Students experienced either a directive or facilitative training approach.
2. While clinical knowledge and understanding and actual clinical performance did not differ, there was a relationship between students' **course-specific prior knowledge** and the training approach.
3. Students with **low levels of knowledge** benefited more from the **facilitative training approach** in terms of clinical knowledge, while highly knowledgeable students experienced a negative effect of this training approach.
4. Students' perceptions revealed that **facilitative-trained students reported more deep-level learning**, while the **directive training approach turned out to score higher in terms of quality and perceived effects**.

A study on inquiry-based instruction (Minner, Levy, & Century, 2010)

1. This study looked at the impact of instruction on K-12 student science conceptual learning by reviewing findings from many other studies.
2. There was a clear, positive trend **favoring inquiry-based instructional practices**, particularly instruction that emphasized **active thinking** and **drawing conclusions** from data.
3. The study suggested that using teaching strategies to actively engage students in the learning process through scientific **investigations** are more likely to increase

conceptual understanding than are strategies relying on more passive techniques (like those used to prepare students to take standardized tests).

A study on learner-oriented vs. lecture approaches (Reusch, Ströbl, Ellgring, & Faller, 2010)

1. This study compared an interactive program with a lecture-only program to learn about health behaviors (diet, sports, and relaxation behaviors) for adults in rehabilitation.
2. Participants of the **interactive group**, as compared to the **lectures**, showed more **advanced motivation** regarding diet and sports. **Interactive group** patients reported better outcomes over time.
3. However, the superior effectiveness of the interactive group was only partly confirmed. The short, 5-session interactive program **may not be superior** to lectures to induce **major sustainable changes in motivation**.

A study on small-group learning (Springer, Stanne, & Donovan, 1999)

1. This study reported the results of a meta-analysis that integrated research on undergraduate science, math, engineering, and technology education since 1980.
2. The meta-analysis demonstrated that various forms of **small-group learning** are effective in promoting **greater academic achievement**, more favorable **attitudes** toward learning, and increased **persistence** through courses and programs.

How can training transfer to camp work?

Well-designed training leads to transfer. Training transfer is applying what is learned during a training to one's work. The first step to creating transfer is identifying the learning outcomes and creating actionable steps that will lead staff through the training and toward the outcomes. Secondly, give staff opportunities to practice skills during training for better retention and implementation of the skills. This can lead to less need to retrain later. Opportunities for practice, role modeling, and positive feedback can help staff become more confident in their abilities. Third, creating transferable training requires maintenance. This means that the beginning of the summer training needs to be revisited throughout the summer. Creating resources that can be referenced outside of training can help meet this need. Frequent check-ins or mini skills sessions can also help with skills maintenance, as they can be great opportunities for staff to talk about what went well and what could be improved for the future. Check-ins should ideally strike a balance between reinforcing positive behaviors and providing suggestions for improvement. Mini skills sessions can take many forms. However, they should be more than an abbreviated version of the initial training.

- Effective training requires upfront intention *and* maintenance through the summer.
- Identify the intended learning outcomes and create actionable steps that lead staff through the training and toward the outcomes.
- Give staff ample opportunities to practice skills during training for less need to retrain skills later.
- Opportunities for practice and role modeling can help staff become more confident in their abilities.
- Providing positive feedback on staff's performance can enhance their beliefs about their abilities.
- Creating training resources, frequent check-ins or mini skills sessions can also help with skills maintenance, as they can be great opportunities for staff to talk about what went well and what could be improved for the future.

Training is often deemed successful if it leads to enhanced performance by staff. After all, training is conducted for the purpose of improvement. Post-training evaluation can be an easy way to know if staff are retaining what is learned during training. What is more difficult, though, is knowing how to design training that changes staff's behaviors and leads to their use of what they learn in their work. The purpose of this section is to describe strategies for designing training that transfers to staff's work.

The first step in fostering transfer is to identify what the process looks like. In other words, what do the staff need to actually know?

Another key element of training transfer is making the learning stick. Training that leads to high levels of transfer often involves opportunities to practice skills. Although it may be tempting to spend minimal time on training a skill, time invested during the training can lead to greater retention and implementation of the skills which may create less need to retrain.

We also know that people are more likely to perform a behavior when they believe they can successfully perform the behavior. One way to increase people's beliefs about their abilities is have them watch the behavior being successfully performed. By seeing someone else—another staff person—perform the behavior, other staff are not only able to see the process in action, they also can see that others have been successful. Another great way to increase these beliefs is to provide feedback on staff's performance. Although constructive feedback has its place, positive feedback is more likely to enhance a person's beliefs about being successful. Opportunities to practice during training can be an ideal time to use these strategies for creating positive beliefs about ability. Practice can also provide staff with opportunities to successfully perform the behavior themselves, which we know is one the best ways to become more confident in our abilities.

Another critical element of creating transferable training is maintenance. Training at camp often occurs during the first couple of weeks of the summer season. However, how often do these same topics have planned follow-up training? Creating supports and tools that can be referenced outside of training can help meet the need of follow-up training. Check-ins or mini skills sessions are another approach to maintenance. Check-ins should strive for a balance between reinforcing positive behaviors and providing suggestions for improvement. Similar to the post-session check-ins, mini skills sessions can occur just as frequently. It is important to note, however, that these sessions can take many forms and should be more than an abbreviated version of the initial training.

What does the research say?

A study on what's needed to transfer training (Machin & Fogarty, 2004)

1. This study examined the underlying structure of transfer climate and those aspects of transfer climate that were related to pre-training self-efficacy, pre-training motivation, and post-training transfer implementation intentions. Positive and negative affectivity (or mood) were also measured to better understand the relationship of affect to trainees' perceptions of the transfer climate and the other training-related variables.

2. The study suggests **increasing trainees' self-efficacy** as much as possible before training and **decreasing the number of bad feelings** during training.

An integrative review about the essential elements of transfer (Grossman & Salas, 2011)

1. This review aimed to provide an accessible synthesis of what is known about the conditions that foster training transfer. The researchers drew upon existing reviews and empirical studies to identify their suggestions.
2. At a basic level, transfer can be broken down into three areas: **inputs, outputs, and conditions of transfer**. The inputs are often the most important, and include:
 - a. trainee **characteristics**,
 - b. training **design**, and
 - c. work **environment**.

Although each of these elements can be important, **trainee characteristics are routinely found to be most related to actual outcomes post-training**.

3. Individual characteristics like cognitive ability, while important to transfer, are not under the control of trainers. However, **self-efficacy, motivation, and perceptions of the importance of the training** can all be influenced by trainers/organizations.
4. The most critical aspects of the training design include
 - a. providing **adequate behavioral modeling and time to practice** the skills
 - b. opportunities for trainees to **identify and troubleshoot potential struggles** or error-prone tasks
 - c. **realistic training** environment.
5. Important aspects of the work environment that foster training include:
 - a. cues and consequences that provide **feedback** about performance;
 - b. **support** from trainers/supervisors/peers;
 - c. **actual opportunities** to use skills learned;
 - d. **continued training** opportunities.

These characteristics of a work environment provide staff with the necessary conditions to put what they learned during training into action.

A study on work environment supports (Hughes, Zajac, Woods, & Salas, 2020)

1. This study looked at other studies about how 3 types of work environment supports—peer, supervisor, and organizational support—were involved in training transfer and sustainment or long-term use of learned knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
2. The results showed that peer, supervisor, and organizational support uniquely contribute to transfer and sustainment of training.

3. The study suggests people in charge of training should work hard to increase motivation to engage in training by
 - a. building a **culture of learning** throughout the organization such as through recognition, career advancement opportunities
 - b. communicating a **clear link between training and job performance** such as providing trainees with strategies to guard against relapsing, and encouraging self-management techniques
 - c. participating in an established **peer support network** such as involving trainees in training content and providing encouragement, feedback, and aid in finding solutions to complex problems. Trainees may be more receptive in interacting with peers instead of supervisors, and could see the feedback as nonpunitive, constructive, and applicable to their jobs.

A review of how to maximize training transfer (Hughes, Zajac, Spencer, & Salas, 2018)

The researchers reviewed scientific evidence about how trained skills can be used on the job. Beyond the outline below, the full checklist can be found in the article's appendix and downloaded [here](#).

Before training:

- Align training with the facility's **objectives**
- Ready the **facility** for training
- Ready **trainees** to attend training
- **Facilitate a climate** which encourages learning

During training:

- Assess training design for **appropriateness** of content and delivery
- Use training to create a **trainee mindset** conducive to motivation and learning

After training:

- Enact plans to **support use** of the trained skills
- Set goals and **provide feedback** on progress
- Assess training effectiveness criteria including training **transfer**
- **Update** the training program as needed

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