Train the Trainer: Adult Learning Principles
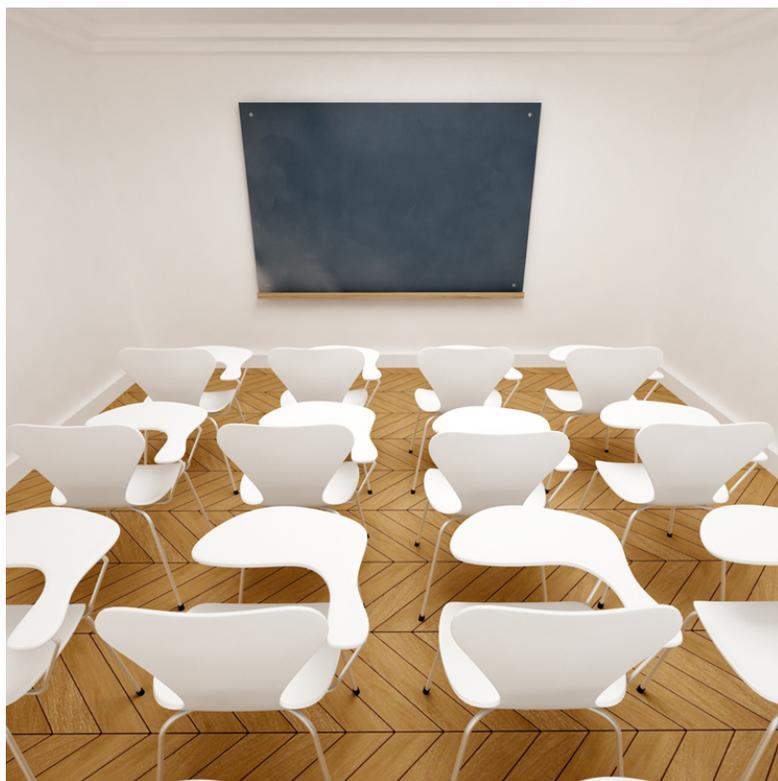
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Office of the Secretary of State

Objectives

Using this guide, trainers will:

- Develop an understanding of learning styles and the trainer's own style so that when creating a lesson plan, the trainer can design instructional activities to encompass all learning styles;
- Understand the difference between adult learners and child learners so that when developing a lesson plan, the trainer will select presentation methods which best fit the needs of the adult learner;
- Be able to develop a lesson plan to help structure the training;
- Understand assessment strategies so that during the training session, the trainer will be able to measure learner understanding, engage students in the learning process and encourage independent thinking.

Before proceeding, take a moment to answer the following questions about a learning experience you've had recently. (Note: This could be either a positive or negative experience.) Keep your answers in mind as you progress through this guide.

1. **Describe the learning environment. Was it hands-on or lecture? Off-site or on-site?**

2. **Was the trainer effective? Why or why not?**

3. **What could have been done to improve the training?**

4. **What helped you learn?**

5. **What could you have done to make the training session more beneficial for yourself?**

1.0 Election Judge Training Context

Minnesota Statutes 204B.25 gives the county auditor primary responsibility for providing training and certification for election judges, although election judge training duties may be assigned to the city and township clerks. *Minnesota Rules* 8240.1600 specifies the requirements of the election judge training course.

Minnesota Rules 8240.1600 Election Judge Training Course.

Subpart 1. Length. The election judge basic training course must be at least two hours long.

Subpart 2. Materials. The training authority shall provide examples of all forms which election judges must complete in the course of their duties; with examples of forms of identification acceptable for purposes of election day registration, including any forms of student identification issued by educational institutions in the area; and with the materials contemplated in the training plan. Additional materials may be provided by the training authority as the authority considers useful.

Subpart 3. Use of equipment. An electronic voting system or specimen paper ballot and ballot box must be used at each training session to familiarize each election judge with the voting procedures for the method of voting employed in the precinct where the judge will serve.

Subpart 4. Course content. A basic training course must include necessary information and skill development in the following areas:

    A. how to use the training materials to find answers to questions arising in the polling place on election day;
    B. preparations on election day before polls open;
    C. judges' duties during voting hours:
        (1) election day voter registration;
        (2) persons allowed in polling place;
        (3) challenge process;
        (4) voting process;
        (5) spoiled ballots;
        (6) assistance to disable voters; and
        (7) absentee ballots;
    D. basic election judges' duties after polls close;
    E. new laws, rules, forms, and procedures;
    F. major problems at prior elections; and
    G. how to follow instructions from head election judge.

Statutory Authority: *Minnesota Statutes* 204B.25

2.0 Four Stages of Learning

Learning is a constant and life-long process. We are continuously taking in and assimilating information. There are many theories and models describing the learning process. One widely used model, developed by David Kolb, divides learning into four distinct yet mutually supportive stages. ([University of British Columbia Learning Commons](#))
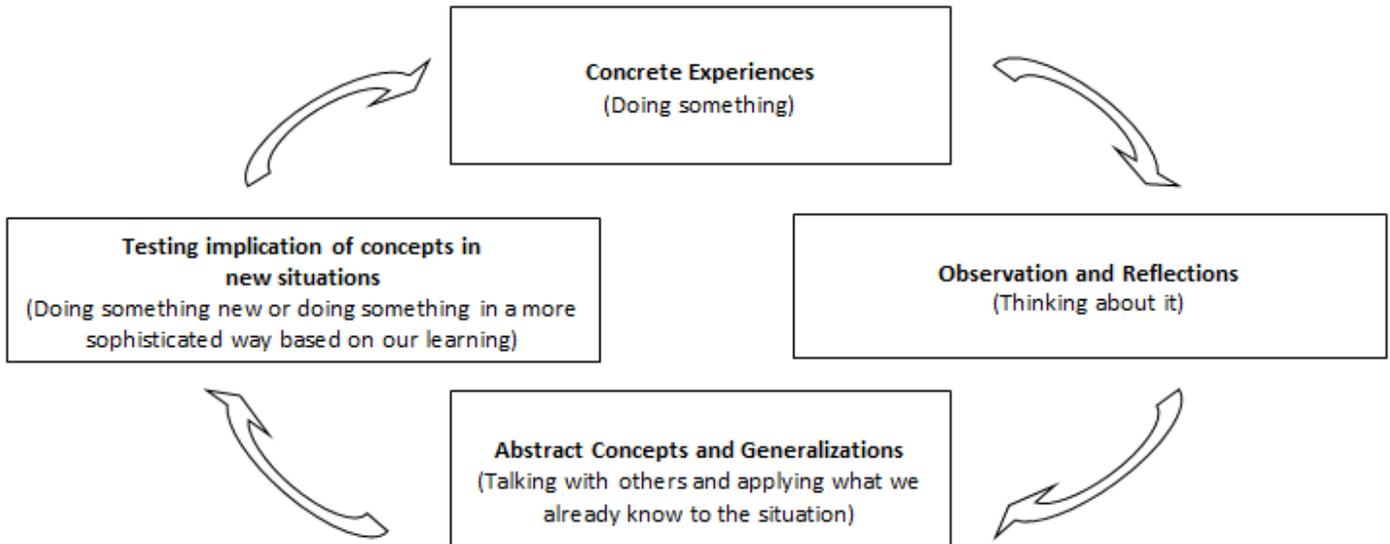

Figure 1: Four Stages of Learning

- **Experiencing:** By having an experience (through a discussion with peers, reading an article, or taking on a responsibility), we begin to think about things differently.

- **Reflecting:** Experiences can prompt us to consider making changes. Reflecting might involve assessing our own behavior, evaluating our contribution to a particular situation, or speculating how our approach to a situation might be improved.

- **Theorizing:** Once we have gathered the necessary information about the experience, we are in a position to form generalizations or conclusions. Once we have reached a conclusion, we can create a strategy about our next steps.

- **Testing:** Finally, we can test our theories and see if they work. If they do, they become part of our knowledge or skills. If they do not, we either modify or completely discard them.

We all approach new information in different ways. Our preferred method is referred to as a 'learning style.'

3.0 Learning Preferences

There are many different ways to understand how people prefer to learn, three are listed below.

Learning Styles
Kolb's stages were applied to people's learning styles by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford. These learning styles or preferences refer to ways a person naturally prefers to learn.

- **Activists** prefer to learn by doing, getting in and getting their hands dirty.
- **Reflectors** prefer to learn by observing and thinking.
- **Theorists** prefer to learn by understanding the theory behind the action.
- **Pragmatists** prefer to learn by seeing how the information will be put into practice in the real world.

It is important to remember they are not the only way they can learn, and people can improve their skills in each style. ([Mobbs](#))

Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK)
Another model that translates well for trainers in planning their activities is the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) model. This model is based on our senses and places learners in three broad categories:

- **Visual** learners prefer looking, seeing and watching.
- **Auditory** learners prefer listening, hearing, and speaking.
- **Kinesthetic** learners prefer experiencing, moving, and doing.

As learners, we often will not fit exclusively into one style, but will use elements of all three. ([Conner](#))

Multiple Intelligences
An expansion on the VAK model is the theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner. It expands the notion of "intelligence" beyond traditional academic notions, and includes eight abilities:

- **Musical**: sensitivity to sounds, rhythms, tones, and music
- **Visual-spatial**: spatial judgment and the ability to visualize with one's mind
- **Verbal-linguistic**: facility with words and language
- **Logical-mathematical**: logic, reasoning, and numbers
- **Bodily-kinesthetic**: control of one's bodily motions
- **Interpersonal**: sensitivity to others' moods and motivations, and ability to work with others
- **Intrapersonal**: self-reflection and understanding of one's own capabilities and limitations
- **Naturalistic**: relating information to natural surroundings ([Wikipedia](#))

As a trainer, it is necessary to be aware of your own learning preferences because it will influence the way you design and conduct your training session. For example, if you plan a verbal lecture heavy on theory, learners who rely on reflective observation, or have a preference for visuals, may have a harder time learning the material. A questionnaire located in the Appendix will help you determine your preferred learning style.

4.0 Adult Learners and Child Learners Compared

Adults and children differ as learners. Differences include their conception of self; the experiences they have had; their orientation to learning; their readiness to learn, and their perspective of time. Important differences in each of these areas are listed below:

Table 1 Learner Characteristics of Adults and Children

Learner Characteristic	Adults	Children
Conception of Self	Need to validate the information based on their beliefs and values.	Accept the information being presented at face value.
Experience	Significant ability to serve as knowledgeable resource to the trainer and fellow learners.	Little ability to serve as knowledgeable resource to teacher or fellow students.
Orientation to Learning	Have substantial experience upon which to draw. May have fixed viewpoints	Have little or no experience upon which to draw, are relatively "blank slates"
Readiness to Learn	Decide for themselves what is important to be learned	Rely on others to decide what is important to be learned
Time Perspective	Expect what they are learning to be immediately useful	Expect what they are learning to be useful in their long-term future

(Edmunds, Lowe, Murray, & Seymour)

5.0. Keys to Adult Learning

The five areas examined in the preceding section provide helpful categories for the following key points about adult learners.

Concept of Self
- *Roles*: Have many roles and do not see themselves as learners.
- *Education*: Have wealth of experience that may influence self-perception.
- *Peer Group*: Influenced by peers and do not want to look foolish.
- *Participant/Trainer Relationship*: Should be one of mutual respect and trust. A partnership.

Experience
- *Previous Experience*: Will color any new concept introduced. Will influence reception of new information.
- *Education*: Have wealth of experience that may influence learning.

Orientation to Learning
- *Fear of Change*: Are more conservative and cautious by nature. Have a tendency to justify the "rightness" of their opinions.
- *Prejudices*: Influenced by pre-conceptions.
- *Loss of Sense of Discovery*: Diminishing sense of curiosity. Need right environment and motivation to regain it.

Readiness to Learn
- *Ability to Learn*: Willingness to learn is not related to their ability to learn.
- I*ncentives*: Need motivation or enticement to learn.
- *Humor*: learn more when relaxed.
- *Pain and Pleasure*: Do things to avoid pain and receive pleasure.
- *Risk Averse*: Less willing to give up a behavior if it has worked for them in the past.

Time Perspective
- *Time*: Many responsibilities and more choices of how to spend free time means time spent learning must be a worthwhile and cost-effective investment.
- *Attention Span*: Have short attention span of about 20 minutes.
- *User-Urgent and User-Relevant*: More prepared to learn when they see immediate use for what they are learning, and it affects their success.

Keep these keys in mind as you prepare your training session. A helpful tool as you organize your session is a lesson plan.

6.0 Lesson Plans

Just as a traveler needs a map, a trainer needs a lesson plan. Lesson plans enable you to see not only your final destination (knowledgeable, competent election judges), but also the locations you need to journey through in order to get there (new laws, judges duties, voting processes, etc.).

A lesson plan answers three basic questions:

- *What* (do you want your students to learn)?
- *Why* (should they learn this materials)?
- *How* (should they learn it)?

The following is a basic lesson plan template:

Lesson Title

Content:

Objectives:

Materials:

Introduction:

Presentation:

Practice:

Evaluation:

Lesson Plan Elements Explained:

Content: The topic the lesson will be about.

Objectives: Specify the new skill that learners will gain as a result of the lesson. They focus on learner behavior. They are specific, observable and measurable.

Materials: Supplies and equipment needed to conduct the lesson; an items checklist.

Introduction: Preamble of the lesson. It provokes interest and motivates the learners.

Presentation: Introduce new information. Methods include:

Lecture	Discussion	Group problems
Demonstration	Question and answer sessions	Games
Video	Case studies	

Practice: Opportunity to use new information and/or skills.

Evaluation: Informal or formal assessment of learner understanding of knew knowledge or skill in order to determine whether the objectives have been met. ([Beery](#))

An Element In-Depth: Objectives

Creating quality objectives is like equipping yourself with a good compass. With your map (lesson plan) in hand, your compass (objectives) will keep you focused and headed in the right direction.

Do you want to create quality objectives? Just remember your ABC&Ds!

- **A**udience: Who are your learners?
- **B**ehavior: What do you expect them to be able to do?
- **C**ondition: Within what type of environment will the learning occur?

- **D**egree: Is there a specific set of criteria that should be met? Is complete mastery required?

Objectives are tied to the evaluation portion of the lesson plan. The evaluation should assess whether the learners met the objectives. ([Bixler](#))

An example of an election judge training lesson plan, including objectives, is provided below:

Example Lesson Plan for an Election Judge Training Session

Lesson Title: Election Judge Training

Content: See M.R. 8240.1600, Subp. 4. Course content

Objectives: Participants will understand new laws, rules, forms and procedures, and where to find the information so that when questions arise in the polling place, they will be able to answer accurately.

Participants will demonstrate that they can effectively perform judges' duties on Election Day before, during and after hours.

Materials:

Election Judge Guide	Laptop	Evaluation Forms
Training Power Point presentation	Pencils/Pens	Certificates of Completion
Election Judge Training DVD/video	AutoMARK and Ballot Tabulator	
	Sample Ballots	
	Precinct Supply Box	

Introduction: Introduce self and fellow trainers. Address housekeeping concerns. Give synopsis of training session. Engage in icebreaker activity.

Presentation: Present content in blocks, utilizing DVD and Power Point when applicable.

   Block One: Brief summary of new laws. How to use training materials on election day to find answers to voter questions.

   Block Two: Election day preparation before polls open, incorporating new laws and rules, forms and procedures.

   Block Three: Duties during voting hours, incorporating new laws and rules, forms and procedures.

   Block Four: Major problems and other issues at prior elections.

   Block Five: Chain of command; How to address questions unable to answer at polling place.

Practice: Engage in activity or questions/answer session after each block. After all blocks are complete, engage in election day simulation.

Evaluation: Review performance during Election Day simulation. Engage in final question and answer session. Distribute evaluation form; complete evaluation. Wrap up- last questions, future communication, etc. Distribute certificates.

7.0 Incorporating Learning Styles & Keys into a Lesson Plan

As you begin to draft your lesson plan, ways to address the preferences of different learning styles and be mindful of the keys to adult learners will become apparent.

Elements of a lesson plan are listed below, along with some helpful hits for incorporating the different styles and keys:

Content: Remember to focus on information that is urgent and relevant.

Objectives: Be specific in the goals of the session and cognizant of the short time allotted for the training sessions.

Materials: Use a variety of supplies – power point presentations, whiteboards, DVDs/videos – to appeal to all learning styles.

Introduction: This is your opportunity to build a positive relationship with your learners and establish a safe, mutually supportive learning environment. You can set the tone for the session, pique their interest, and explain how the information to follow will be immediately useful.

Presentation: Be aware of short attention-spans. Keep things moving! Use different delivery options (different format, different presenter) to appeal to multiple learning styles. Remember, laughter goes a long way. Ask questions. Questions keep learners actively engaged and allow them to demonstrate newly gained knowledge and prior experience. Questions can also help you measure success of the lesson's objectives.

Practice: Allow learners to put new information and skills to use through simulation activities. Activities demonstrate the usefulness and relevancy of new information. Practice especially benefits tactile/kinesthetic learners.

Evaluation: An assessment of some type requires learners to be responsible for their own learning. Whether formal (written survey or test) or informal (observation), learners are able to demonstrate what they have learned during the session and also provide feedback to the trainer.

8.0 Gauging Learner Understanding

As you present the content of the training session, how can you be sure the learners are doing just that – *learning*? In the preceding section, the use of questions during the presentation portion of the lesson was briefly discussed. Asking questions is one method available for determining learner understanding.

Questions play an important part in a training session for both trainers and learners. On one hand, they help you, the trainer, determine the needs and expectations of your audience, and allow you to reinforce critical learning points. On the other hand, questions help learners stay engaged and actively participate in the session.

When employed properly, questions can help you gauge learner comprehension.

Questioning Strategies

The key to getting the most out of your questions is to use them effectively. It is not *what* you ask; it is *how* you ask it. Remember to give adequate time for a response, even if it feels uncomfortable. This increases the likelihood that your question will generate an answer. (Consider offering an incentive – chocolate anyone? – for those who answer a question.)

Use 'probing' rather than simple 'yes or no' questions. Seek information from your learners. Ask follow up questions to encourage participants to expand, clarify, or justify their answers. If you are limited in training time, ask polling questions which require participants to raise their hand rather than verbalize a response.

As you formulate questions, consider the objectives of your lesson plan, and use your questions to reinforce them. The questions you ask helps your audience see what topics you consider important.

Questions also help prepare your learners for another means of measuring learning understanding: the final assessment or evaluation.

Assessments/Evaluations

An assessment is how you definitively know your learners have met your learning objectives. It also helps you improve the learning experience by illustrating subject areas that are not quite clear to your learners.

Assessments general fall within two categories:

- Formative assessment: This is used during the presentation to determine how well your learners understand the materials as they are presented. You check for comprehension and use feedback to immediately adjust the training session.
- Summative assessment: This is a final cumulative test which evaluates what the learner has learned during the course. It assists the educator in determining whether the lesson objectives have been met.

There are multiple methods of assessment that can be used during a training session and at its conclusion. Four different types and brief descriptions are listed below:

- Formal assessment: Structured and recorded testing.
- Informal assessment: Observing learner performance in normal training session conditions.
- Peer-assessment: Fellow participants provide feedback to each other about their learning.
- Self-assessment: learner evaluates their own learning experience.

The best way to decide how to evaluate learner achievement is to make sure you identify what you want the participants to know, and what evidence you need to demonstrate this knowledge. (These elements are in your lesson plan objectives.)

The most common evaluation tool used in work-related presentations is the post-session evaluation. An evaluation generally consists of a combination of multiple choice questions and open-ended questions that require a written response. A sample evaluation is included in the Appendix.

9.0 Conclusion

This guide briefly explores concepts to consider as you prepare to train your election judges. What you see is only the first step of the journey; this introduction is meant to simply get you on the road.

After reviewing these materials, you should have a greater awareness of learning styles; keys to adult learning; the elements of a lesson plan; and methods to measure learner understanding.

As you prepare for the training session, remember:

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I will learn."
-Benjamin Franklin-

Appendix

Minnesota Statutes section 204B.25 Training for Election Judges.

Subd. 1 Duties of county auditor. Each county auditor shall provide training for all election judges who are appointed to serve at any election to be held in the county. The county auditor shall also provide a procedure for emergency training of election judges elected to fill vacancies. The county auditor may delegate to a municipal election official the duty to provide training of election judges in that municipality or school district.

Subd. 2 Rules of secretary of state. The secretary of state shall adopt rules establishing programs for the training of county auditors, local election officials, and election judges by county auditors as required by this section.

Subd. 3 Trained election judges; number required. Each election precinct in which less than 100 individuals voted at the last state general election shall have at least two election judges who are members of different major political parties who have received training as required in this section. In every one election precinct, no individual may serve as an election judge who has not received training as required by subdivision 1.

Subd. 4 Training for local election officials. At least once every two years, the county auditor shall conduct training sessions for the municipal and school district clerks in the county. The training sessions must be conducted in the manner provided by the secretary of state. No local election official may administer an election without receiving training from the county auditor.

What's Your Learning Style?

Learning styles refer to the ways you prefer to approach new information. Each of us learns and processes in our own special ways, though we share some learning patterns, preferences, and approaches. Knowing your own style also can help you to realize that other people may approach the same situation in a different way from your own.

Take a few minutes and complete the following questionnaire to assess your preferred learning style. Begin by reading the words in the left-hand column. Of the three responses to the right, circle the one that best characterizes you, answering as honestly as possible with the description that applies to you right now. Count the number of circled items and write your total at the bottom of each column. The questions you prefer provide insight into how you learn.

Questions	Possible Response A	Possible Response B	Possible Response C
1. When I try to **concentrate**…	I grow distracted by clutter or movement, and I notice things around me other people don't notice.	I get distracted by sounds and I attempt to control the amount and type of noise around me.	I become distracted by commotion and tend to retreat inside myself.
2. When I **visualize**…	I see vivid, detailed pictures in my thoughts.	I think in voices and sounds.	I see images in my thoughts that involve movement.
3. When I **talk to with others**…	I find it difficult to listen for very long.	I enjoy listening, or I get impatient to talk myself.	I prefer to interact while walking or participating in some activity.
4. When I **contact** people…	I prefer face-to-face meetings.	I prefer speaking by telephone for serious conversations.	I prefer to interact while walking or participating in some activity.
5. When I **see an acquaintance**…	I forget names but remember faces.	I know people's names and I can usually quote what we discussed.	I remember what we did together and I may almost "feel" our time together.
6. When I r**elax**…	I watch TV, see a play, visit an exhibit, or go to a movie.	I listen to the radio, play music, read, or talk with a friend.	I play sports, make crafts, or building something with my hands.
7. When I **read**…	I like descriptive examples and I may pause to imagine the scene.	I enjoy the narrative most and I can almost "hear" the character talk.	I prefer action-oriented stories, but I do not often read for pleasure.
8. When I **spell**…	I envision the word in my mind or imagine what the word looks like when written.	I sound out the word, sometimes aloud and tend to recall rules about letter order.	I get a feel for the word by writing it out or pretending to type it out.
9. When I **do something new**…	I seek out demonstrations, pictures, and diagrams.	I want verbal and written instructions, and to talk it over with someone else.	I jump right in to try it, keep trying, and try different approaches.
10. When I **assemble an object**…	I look at the picture first and then, maybe, read the directions.	I read the directions, or I talk aloud as I work.	I usually ignore the directions and figure it out as I go along.
11. When I **interpret someone's mood**…	I examine facial expressions.	I rely on listening to tone of voice.	I focus on body language.
12. When I **teach other people**…	I show them.	I tell them, write it out, or I ask them a series of questions.	I demonstrate how it is done and then ask them to try.
Total	Visual:_____	Auditory:_____	Tactile/Kinesthetic:_____

Table 2 What's Your Learning Style? © Marcia Conner, 1993-2013. All rights reserved. http://marciaconner.com/assess/learningstyle/

The column with the highest total represents your primary processing style. The column with the second-most choices is your secondary style.

Your primary learning style:_____

Your secondary learning style:_____

Now that you know which learning style you rely on, you can boost your learning potential when working to learn more. For instance, the following suggestions can help you get more from reading a book.

- If your primary learning style is **visual**, draw pictures in the margins, look at the graphics, and read the text that explains the graphics. Envision the topic or play a movie in your thoughts of how you'll act out the subject matter.
- If your primary learning style is **auditory**, listen to the words you read. Try to develop an internal conversation between you and the text. Don't be embarrassed to read aloud or talk through the information.
- If your primary learning style is **tactile/kinesthetic**, use a pencil or highlighter pen to mark passages that are meaningful to you. Take notes, transferring the information you read to the margins of the book, into your journal, or onto a computer. Doodle whatever comes to mind as you read. Hold the book in your hands instead of placing it on a table. Walk around as you read. Feel the words and ideas. Get busy – both mentally and physically.

Evaluation

To help make this course more effective, please complete this evaluation.

Course Title (Required)_____ Date (Required)_____

On a scale from 1 (disagree) to 4 (agree), please rate the statements below:

_____ 1.   The materials were presented at a pace that was effective and easy to comprehend.

_____ 2.   The trainer was knowledgeable about the topic.

_____ 3.   The training materials were logically organized and easy to follow.

_____ 4.   The trainer used effective examples and/or stories to illustrate points.

_____ 5.   The manuals and handouts were complete and accurate.

_____ 6.   The content of the course was relevant to my job.

_____ 7.   The manuals and handouts communicated information that will help me perform my job duties.

_____ 8.   The course objectives were clear to me and were met.

_____ 9.   The length of the course was appropriate.

_____ 10.   I plan to apply what I've learned in this course to my job.

_____ 11.   Overall, I was satisfied with this course.

On a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), please indicate your knowledge of and skill with election judge duties and applicable election law:

Before the Course_____

After the Course_____

What was most useful or meaningful about the training session?

What was least useful or meaningful about the training?

What are you going to do differently as a result of training?

Additional Comments:

Your Name (Optional)_____

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