

## Using Effective Teaching Techniques

It is always best to actively involve clients in an educational process. Various teaching techniques facilitate client involvement.

People learn in different ways. Some people like to see main points written down to remember them. Others learn better by listening. They like to hear information repeated a few times in different ways. Others rely on their senses. They need to touch and feel something before they can fully learn it.

### Teaching Techniques

1. Ask questions.
2. Use a variety of teaching methods.
3. Encourage clients to participate and practice skills.
4. Use different teaching materials.
5. Speak in ways that clients understand.

#### 1. Ask questions.

Questions can help you:

- ✓ Obtain important information from clients.
- ✓ Find out what services clients want and identify client problems.
- ✓ Explore client feelings and concerns.
- ✓ Check for client understanding and skills.

### Two types of questions

#### *Open-ended questions*

Questions that encourage clients to provide information.  
Open-ended questions encourage communication.

Examples: What brings you to the clinic today?  
How do you feel about having a pelvic exam?  
What are some ways you could protect yourself from getting an STD?

## ***Closed questions***

Closed questions can be answered with a few words. They are often used to clarify information or get specific answers. The answer to a closed question is usually “yes” or “no.”

Examples:                    “Is this the first time you’ve had a pelvic exam?”  
                                  “Are you using a birth control method?”  
                                  “When did you start your last menstrual period?”

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Both open-ended and closed-ended questions have their place.

Don’t ask questions in a way that leads the client to think you want a particular answer. Sometimes clinic staff phrases questions in a way that clients answer with what they “think” the educator wants to hear, instead of the truth.

Example:     If you ask, “You only have sex with your husband, don’t you?” the client will probably answer, “Yes.” If you change your question to “How many partners have you had sex with in the last month?” you will be more likely to get a truthful response.

## **2. Use a variety of teaching methods.**

**Examples of teaching methods:**                    **Demonstration**  
                                                                         **Question and answer**  
                                                                         **Role play**  
                                                                         **Short lecture**

**Examples of teaching materials:**                    **Audiovisual**  
                                                                         **Interactive computer/Internet**  
                                                                         **Story/games**

### ***Demonstration***

The educator shows a client how to do something. For example, fill an applicator with spermicidal foam while the client watches.

### ***Question and answer***

The educator asks the client questions to find out what the client knows about a certain topic. The client asks the educator questions.

### ***Role play***

Clients practice what they might do or say in a given situation. For example, the educator asks the client to practice what she will say to her boyfriend about condom use. The educator then plays the role of her boyfriend.

### ***Short Lecture***

The educator gives information for a short period of time. For example, the educator describes the menstrual cycle to the client. If the lecture becomes too long, clients can lose interest.

## **3. Encourage clients to participate and practice skills.**

One teaching method is not better than another. The method should actively involve clients in the learning process. Clients need more than just information about how to use a birth control method. They also need to learn new skills. It's best to create a situation that is close to what the client might experience at home.

After you teach a new skill, ask the client to try it. They may want to practice more than once. As they practice, give them feedback and support.

*What I hear, I forget;  
What I see, I remember;  
What I do, I understand.*  
Confucius

## **4. Use different teaching materials.**

Another way to involve clients is to use different teaching materials. Pictures, brochures, samples of birth control methods, models of the human body or videotapes help clients learn new things. Use education materials to explain new ideas or reinforce learning.

### ***Print materials***

Print materials include pamphlets, information sheets, wallet cards, etc.

#### When you use print materials:

- ✓ Reinforce key messages.
- ✓ Circle important points.
- ✓ Cross out anything unnecessary.
- ✓ Write the client's name on the pamphlet.
- ✓ Give the materials to the client to take home.

## **Visuals**

Visuals include flip charts, posters, diagrams, drawings, etc.

### When you use visuals:

- ✓ Reinforce key messages.
- ✓ Show clients what things look like.

## **Samples**

Samples are actual objects that clients can see and touch.

### When you use samples:

- ✓ Explain what they are.
- ✓ Encourage clients to touch and hold them.

## **Models**

Models are copies of objects that clients can see and use to practice skills.

### When you use models:

- ✓ Explain what the model represents.
- ✓ Show clients how to do something.
- ✓ Give clients a chance to practice on the model.

## **Other audiovisuals (AVs)**

Audiovisuals include webinars, videos, PowerPoint presentations, etc.

### When you use audiovisuals:

- ✓ Always preview the AV before using it.
- ✓ Introduce the AV by telling clients what to watch for.
- ✓ Hold a discussion after it is shown.

## **5. Speak in ways that clients understand.**

Listen to the words the client uses and then use those words if you can. Use examples your client can relate to. Examples link new ideas with words and concepts the client already knows.

### Use common language the client knows.

Educators need to speak the language used by the client and/or a trained interpreter who speaks the language. Don't use technical terms. If you need to use unfamiliar terms, explain their meaning clearly.

Relate new information to what the client already knows.

Present new information in a way that builds on what the client has just learned. For example, you should talk about the reproductive organs and their function before explaining how the menstrual cycle works.

Use examples.

Examples help to clarify concepts. When explaining how to insert the diaphragm to clients who know about Mexican cooking, you might say, “Put spermicidal jelly on the rim of the diaphragm and inside the dome. Then fold the diaphragm in half, like you would fold a tortilla to make a taco.”

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- 4. Use different teaching materials.**
- 5. Speak in ways that clients understand.**

These techniques involve clients in the learning process and help them to remember and use the information they learned.

Remember, the way you educate clients is just as important as the content you teach.