Trainers' notes

Trainers' notes: **how to use these materials**

These materials consist of a series of eight basic chapters and one supplementary chapter, available as downloadable PDF files. The chapters are:

- **Chapter 1**: What is investigative journalism?
- **Chapter 2**: Generating story ideas
- **Chapter 3**: Planning the investigation
- **Chapter 4**: Sources and spin-doctors
- **Chapter 5**: Investigative interviewing
- **Chapter 6**: Basic research – skills and tools
- **Chapter 7**: Writing the story
- **Chapter 8**: The law and ethics of investigation

There are also an introduction contextualising investigative journalism within the tradition of African professional journalism, a section on how to use the manuals designed to give students or those using the materials for self-study some basic tips and hints, and a list of general books, resources and links. Future chapters with a narrower focus on specific aspects or areas of investigative journalism will be added over the next couple of years. (One such chapter, on investigating health, is already available).

The chapters contain all the information needed for an individual to use the series as a basic IJ textbook: exercises, tips and hints, and lists/links for further reading. Each is a combined textbook and workbook/diary. Users complete exercises and assignments, and are also encouraged to log their responses to ideas and arguments in the text.

These trainers' notes add information to assist you in using the chapters as part of a short course or mentored newsroom programme for IJs.

They contain:

- Guidance on creating additional materials
- Guidance on facilitating, coaching and mentoring
- Suggestions for lesson and programme planning

Trainers' notes: **target group**

The chapters are aimed at working journalists with some basic newsroom experience or relevant qualifications. But they will also be suitable for older, more experienced reporters wishing to transfer from general newsroom duties to an investigative team; certain chapters – interviewing, writing, and law and ethics – will also assist non-journalists wishing to submit investigative projects to the media. However, the materials do not cover the full range of journalism basics, and it is recommended that users with no exposure to these also consult an introductory journalism text. Likewise, these notes focus on training issues relevant to investigative journalism at this level, and are not an exhaustive guide to journalism training.

FAQ: Aren't IJs born rather than made? Can you really train someone to be an investigative journalist?

This sounds a lot like similar questions about whether you can teach someone to paint, sing or dance. It implies that 'talent,' 'inspiration' or 'genius' is the key factor. It's also a convenient cop-out for people not really motivated to coach or mentor, who find it easier to say "He (or she) just doesn't have what it takes!"

So, let's break down the question into its different components:

Can you train just anyone? No – but only in the sense that every skill rests on a foundation of other skills. People who don't have the basics in place will find it much harder to grasp IJ techniques, and you may be setting them up to fail. The basics include literacy and numeracy, an understanding of how news and newsrooms work and good interpersonal communication skills. Technical skills related to computer-assisted research are increasingly also becoming vital, although some volunteer community newsrooms in rural areas manage good investigations with very limited technical resources and know-how.

But even if they do have these basics, can IJ be taught? Yes – but only if you have some ability as a trainer, coach or mentor. There is a huge difference between simply telling someone <u>what</u> to do – which is the most ineffective training method – and helping them to learn <u>how</u> to do it, which we call "being a facilitator". The skills of IJ, just like any other skills, can be taught and mastered. But you have to be honest with yourself. If you have no enthusiasm for training others and are not prepared to learn the skills of facilitation (which may change profoundly how you relate to colleagues) then you will probably not be very effective as a trainer. It's better to find someone in your newsroom who does have this interest and flexibility. It's certainly not the fault of the trainees if poorly designed and implemented training fails.

Will the people you train be any good as investigative journalists? Some of them will. A range of factors play a role. In any kind of training, we have to accept that competence (as proved, for example, by an end-of-course project or assessment) does not always equal performance. There are three factors at play here.

- The first is the perennial educational problem of transference. It is very hard for people who have learned a skill in a classroom or on a short course to transfer that skill back into the real working environment of the newsroom. Circumstances in the newsroom are volatile and varied and journalists have to work out how best to select and modify what they've learned to make it useful. Some will fail at this task; others will give up. That is why workplace-based training is often more effective than courses off-site.
- The second key factor is the circumstances of the newsroom. If the environment in the newsroom doesn't support doing good investigations, no amount of training will overcome this. If resources are lacking, if new ideas are suppressed or laughed at, if newsroom bureaucracy doesn't allow for non-routine ways of working or, worse, if corruption and deference to authority rule, the skills of investigation will be stifled. The people who need training here are not the reporters, but those who run the newsroom!
- Thirdly, this is where indefinables like 'talent' and 'attitude' do become relevant. They make the difference between someone routinely going through the motions of doing an investigation, and someone who works with flair, passion and principles to go beyond what they have been taught.

But even if only some of the people you train end up being stars of the investigative team, all journalists can benefit from acquiring a set of skills that will broaden and deepen the way they approach their everyday reporting.

Trainers' notes: **methods: facilitating, coaching and mentoring**

When you take on responsibility for a learning programme, it can appear very daunting, particularly if you assume that you will have to prepare and deliver lectures or lessons on every topic contained in the programme. If you have no previous teaching experience, you may feel that the only way to do this is to lecture or fill the time with stories from your own experience as an investigative reporter ("war stories"). However, everything we know about adult learners tells us this is not the way to go.

1   Adults learn very little from simply listening or reading
However exciting your own experiences are, passively listening to you or reading a chapter do not help adults to learn. Learning, in the context of journalism education, means internalising certain ways of approaching tasks or challenges, and being able to transfer those approaches from classroom or workshop to the daily working situation.

2   So what works? Learning is most effective when
- it respects the participants
- it starts from people's needs and existing knowledge
- it is active, and composed of varied activities
- it has clear goals understood by both participants and trainers
- more time is spent on participant activity than on trainer talk.

As a facilitator:
- You need to know the people you are training, their abilities, goals and needs.
- You need to take responsibility for your own strengths and weaknesses as a trainer, and for the competencies of other trainers involved in your courses.
- You need to plan learning so that it has pace, involves a range of activities and is clearly directed towards relevant goals.
- You need to develop strategies which involve participants at every stage as partners in learning, not "pupils".

Adults, including even young adults, learn best when they are active and encouraged to reflect and build on their own practice (including being allowed to make and think about mistakes). Your role is to facilitate: to make sure that both the practice and the opportunities to learn from it, occur.
There are points in this programme where learners do need information inputs, but there are many ways of ensuring they receive information actively, not passively: from discussion of set reading to setting them a research task involving interviewing,

compiling and presenting results. The exercises in the various chapters incorporate these approaches, and the extra notes we provide for you here suggest ways you can develop more exercises and activities.

That's why we call your role in a workshop or short course that of 'facilitator': you set up the tasks and experiences that will stimulate learning, and provide appropriate structure, direction and feedback. That's also why we use the term 'learners' for people in training. It implies they are actively involved in learning, not sitting and listening passively – which, unfortunately, has become the connotation of terms such as 'students'.

As a newsroom trainer, you will conduct coaching or mentoring, more or less formally, to develop investigative skills.

Coaching

Coaching can happen

- casually during conversations with learners
- in meetings or short workshop sessions called for the purpose (**conference-based coaching**)
- or during regular daily production activities like diary meetings and de-briefing sessions (**process-based coaching**).

Anyone can be a coach, if they are capable of holding a dialogue with a colleague that results in improved work. Even relatively junior reporters can coach one another, because they can bring a fresh eye to one another's projects, and you will therefore find it useful to draw your colleagues into the process, and to encourage learners to work collectively as well as individually.

Because of their experience, gate-keeping role, and insight into the demands of the publication and the needs of readers, editors, newsdesk managers and senior sub-editors can make some of the best coaches – so long as they don't let their status get in the way.

Coaches need to learn to make helpful inputs at the right stage, in the right way, and using relatively short periods of time.

Mentoring

- Mentoring is a relationship formally set up between two individuals: one more experienced, skilled, or specialised; the other needing to learn.
- Mentoring involves a working agreement about communication and action between the two people concerned.
- So while designated mentors need all the skills of trainer and coach, they also need great sensitivity, and the skills to build a learning relationship that will work and last.

Neither coaches nor mentors can be fully effective if the newsroom climate is uncaring about what they do. So you need to ensure that your colleagues are fully informed about whatever learning programme is going on, and understand how they can also contribute to developing learners' skills.

Trainers' notes: being a coach

Coaching is the most rewarding thing you can do in a newsroom. In a few minutes, in the course of your normal work routine, you can improve a story and help others to realise their potential.

Coaching is best accomplished by asking questions and discussing the answers – giving orders may produce similar short-term results (story is delivered on time and to brief), but it doesn't develop the journalist. We say, 'help the writer, not the story', because 'story-fixing' has to be repeated on subsequent stories. No transfer of learning has taken place.

You need to encourage the person you're coaching to think through the issues and develop his/her own answers, based on the relevant standards of your newsroom. By helping the person, rather than the story, you are endowing learners with transferable skills they can then apply to subsequent similar tasks.

Go for small victories: use short inputs of time to deal with one aspect of a work problem or topic, rather than spending a long time you may not have on de- and re-constructing every facet of the learner's personality, attitude and practice. Diagnose the problems of the IJ learner you are working with, make a list, and then deal with those problems one at a time. These materials are divided into sections to assist you with this.

A good framework for story coaching is that recommended by Roy Peter Clark of the Poynter Institute:

- **Before** a reporter tackles a story: coach for ideas
- **After** the story is produced: coach for accuracy, consistency, clarity, structure and expression.

Coaching is not simply therapy by another name!

It is about setting goals and achieving results within specific timeframes, not about resolving the deep-rooted psychological problems that can hamper work performance. If someone you are coaching seems to need a therapist or counselor, by all means recommend ways of finding one – but don't take that task on yourself.

Using a workbook ensures that learning (and gaps) are documented. If you prioritise carefully, you will be able to deal with the problems that arise in shorter interventions paced throughout the learning programme.

being a mentor

Mentoring is part skill, part intuition, part common sense. Good mentors, and good mentoring relationships, come in all shapes and sizes. But there are some basic requirements. You need to:

- want to do it
- acknowledge that mentoring is a skill you'll need to polish
- be prepared to mentor the specific person allocated to you
- (who also has to want to be in the relationship); and
- know the priorities, challenges and needs of your newsroom

Mentoring is not about replicating yourself!

The person you work with may be much younger and from a different background, have a different education and working style and hold different views about investigative journalism. Your task is to help them become the best <u>they</u> can be, and if you try to simply turn them into copies of yourself, you will fail. Your ways of approaching journalism will have both elements that can be adopted by anybody, and unique elements that have developed because of your personality, history and chosen working style. So you need four key qualities:

- The ability to examine (critically) your own performance and practice
- Empathy for the differences you'll find in others
- Great communication skills (including listening)
- The ability to develop and implement sensible ground rules for the mentoring process.

Ground rules: the mentoring contract

Ground rules can be established formally or informally. But without them, you'll be amazed how much each of you (inaccurately) takes for granted about the mentoring process. Further, when the mentoring relationship is part of formal structures like assessment or conditions of employment, a formal written contract, discussed, modified and agreed to by both of you helps avoid potentially career-threatening misapprehensions.

However, even in informal mentoring relationships, it's worth having a conversation that spells out the ground rules, including:

- When and how you'll meet and what the meetings will cover
- What other interventions you'll make in your mentee's work
- What will happen to information about the work and the mentoring sessions (access, confidentiality). If it has to be shared with the HR office or a senior line manager, say so.
- Both your mutual expectations of the process

  It's reasonable of you to expect your mentee:
  - to turn up on time, with whatever has been agreed for the session
  - to let you know in time if arrangements need to be changed
  - to be honest and open in discussing work, problems and progress
  - to attempt to follow advice that has been given
  - to be prepared to discuss why advice wasn't, or couldn't be, followed
  - to ask questions, give feedback and contribute to discussions
  - to respect your professional and personal timetables

  Equally, it's quite reasonable for your mentee to expect you:
  - to be available as you have promised
  - to look at their work and comment in time to be useful
  - to be friendly, open, empathetic and supportive
  - to give constructive criticism, not negative put-downs
  - to create a climate in which exchange of ideas can happen
  - to create self-reliance, not dependence

Constructive criticism

- is based on questioning, and listening to, the other person
- focuses on agreed priority problems, not on everything
- is specific, explicit, detailed and realistic. Think about objectives that are SMART:

  Simple (as opposed to multiple)

  Measureable

  Achievable

  Relevant

  Timed

- is honest, not patronising or secretive
- is always set in the frame of what will happen next

Self-reliance

No learning relationship lasts forever. So you need to look in any teaching activity at how you will move the learner towards self-reliance. This is done via a long-term plan. If you don't plan for it, right from the start, it won't happen. You'll end up with either a sullen resentful mentee who feels you're just another boss, or a lazy and clinging mentee who's got out of the habit of being independent. Your plan must progress through:

- *early direction* (manageable short-term goals and tight timeframes)
- *intermediate support and guidance* (more discussion, more joint decisions, more shared evaluation of efforts)
- *end-point separation strategy* (mentee sets majority of the goals and is encouraged to initiate self-criticism and forward planning)
- *attention to the mentee's morale and working climate*

This should form part of the way you plan a workshop too: the early days and tasks will involve more input from you; by the end of whatever timeframe is set, learners should be playing a role in setting goals and evaluating products, as well as simply completing tasks.

Trainers' notes: **session and programme planning**

Teacher-training courses devote months to this topic; these notes provide only the most basic guidelines. But certain basic principles are simple to grasp even for people moving into a training role from another profession, such as journalism.

1 **Have objectives for your time with learners**

An objective is something you can observe or measure, not something vague and subjective such as 'be a sharper interviewer'. As we've seen, effective learning focuses on the learner, not the trainer. Describing educational processes in terms of their objectives helps us to internalise this process of focusing on outcomes, not inputs (our own talk). Further, no-one can teach or learn unless they know what their activities are supposed to achieve.

> **What are the activities supposed to achieve?**
>
> **Instead of 'be a sharper interviewer', think about the actions you'd like to see a 'sharper interviewer' carrying out. For example:**
> - Doing research before the interview
> - Preparing questions based on the research
> - Using an appropriate mix of different types of questions (open/closed etc)
> - Sequencing questions to reach the desired end-point
> - Being flexible in responding to answers during the interview, etc. etc.
>
> This gives you a checklist you can agree with coaching colleagues and learners, observe and even tick off, rather than relying on a subjective term such as 'sharper' which could mean different things to different people.

On the basis of these common-sense notions, whole theories, vocabularies and national curricula have been erected, often unnecessarily mystifying the process. But the basic principle is:

> **Before you begin any training, you must decide what participants' should know at the end of the process – realistically, given your time and resource constraints – and what they must be able to do to demonstrate this knowledge.**

This will help you

- to design activities which can help participants reach those goals
- to weed out "noise" irrelevant to those goals
- to evaluate how far the training has been useful.

That's why we broke interviewing down into observable features such as planning questions; using the best mix of open and closed questions; responding to cues in what the interviewee says, etc.

② **Have a plan that relates objectives to learning needs and resources**
The order of materials in a handbook such as these chapters does not necessarily provide you with a plan. It simply organises by topic all the material on a range of subject areas. You might run a one or two-week course covering all of these. You might borrow ideas from the book to weave into an existing course. You might decide to cover a selection of topics across two or three days. Or you might take more time to go into much greater detail on a single topic. Your starting point is the needs of the participants and your objectives. One very useful, quick opening exercise is to ask participants to write down a question that has always troubled them about the topic, and stick these questions up on the wall of the training venue as a contribution to the agenda. Close to the end of the programme, ask participants to remove all questions that have been answered.

- List the objectives you want to achieve and the needs that have been diagnosed or that learners have expressed.
- Look at which are foundational (the skills or knowledge on which other content rests). Start your programme by dealing with these.
- Consider time & other constraints. Don't try to deal with too much: if 'covering' a topic simply means mentioning it at a lecture, participants will take very little of that away with them.
- Have a recap session at the start of each day/ weekly session/ meeting. Ask participants what the standout points were in previous activities **for them** – these may not necessarily be the key points you had planned! The recap allows participants to mentally 'stretch' before the current activity and build links – and allows you to notice and make a Plan B if key earlier points have been forgotten, misunderstood or missed. If that has happened, you'll have to find a fresh way of re-presenting those points.
- Create a plan that moves towards self-reliance.
- Look at sessions in terms of variety. The average human attention span for concentrated focus on one task is less than 15 minutes, irrespective of how well-educated or intelligent those humans are. To keep participants focused, switch activities or types of activities regularly: from talking to listening or reading; from moving about on a project to sitting and writing; from individual work to pair work to group work.
- Use the exercises in this investigative journalism handbook as part of your lesson plan. You can change names and circumstances to make them more locally-relevant to your newsroom, or create your own exercises based on them.
- A single session may cover a whole handbook chapter, or one small aspect of a topic. This will depend on the level of the learners, and the amount of time you have available.

Sample programme plan: Forensic interviewing

You have 4 x 40-minute lunchtime sessions to sharpen up the interviewing skills of your investigative team.
You could run it as follows:
1. Lecture to revise interviewing basics
2. Lecture to look at differences of forensic interviewing
3. Watch video of courtroom movie
4. Recap and questions

But it's fairly obvious what's wrong with a programme like this:
- There's no way of assessing or incorporating what learners already know
- It's wholly passive & gives no opportunities for practice
- There's almost no variety in activities.
- It's focused on what you do, say, present & answer. This gives you a huge amount of work & preparation and makes learners feel their active participation is irrelevant.

On the other hand, these are lunchtime sessions during a busy working day, so it's unlikely participants will want to prepare presentations or similar in advance. And the topics – getting the basics in place, looking at the unique features of investigative interviewing, seeing this kind of interviewing in action – are clearly the relevant ones. So how could you do it differently?
- Either role-play or short video-clip of interview. Group to critique. Brainstorm on basics of interviewing. (Facilitator fills in gaps)
- Short presentation from senior colleague on investigative team or invited guest on 'How I do it?' + Q&A. Sum up session by compiling flipchart list of differences/ similarities between this & last week's findings
- Short (5 minutes) role-play between pairs on investigative tasks designed by facilitator. Group to prepare/enact/discuss/ critique (Will fill the full session)
- Self/group evaluation of previous 3 sessions.
  - What has been learnt
  - What still presents difficulties?
  - Make a plan for future self-directed activities, or future group meetings.
  - Sum up with discussion of overview handout (for example, selected sections from Chapter 5, or similar).

3 **Employ a consistent process for sessions**
Every training session has a similar shape, which relates to the way people best grasp new knowledge.

1. You need an **introductory phase** to help participants bring to the surface what they already know or think about the topic. Brainstorming, critiquing a case study or listing pros & cons of a course of action can all help with this. The results help you to understand participants' starting points, and allows them to internalise subsequent content better, because they have brought their existing knowledge into play.
2. A short **information phase** (from you, from reading and discussion, from an assigned report from certain group members, from a guest speaker or film) consolidates that previous knowledge and augments it with what must be added. This phase provides the What, How and Why of the content.
3. A **practice phase** (an assignment) gets participants engaging with the new knowledge, trying it out, evaluating it, exploring new concepts.
4. A **consolidation phase** lets participants return to their earlier knowledge or experience, work out how the new stuff fits (and, if it does not, why not) and plan future actions based on a new level of understanding.

Sample lesson plan:
Where do investigative story ideas come from?

NOTE: You can set reading of the relevant handbook chapter – or sections of it – either in advance as a preparatory activity, or after the session as a consolidation activity. Which you choose depends on the level of the learners: a more advanced group will take more from the chapter, and the practice/consolidation sections of the session will occupy the major part of face-to-face time. But a beginners' group may find the chapter too daunting before they have been introduced to the topic; for them, introductory and information phases may need to occupy more of the face-to-face time.

Introductory
Recap anything relevant that happened in previous sessions/reading/activities/ during work… Brainstorm group's ideas & record them on flipchart. Ask for actual examples/ experiences of where people got story ideas from.
Look at a case study (or more, depending on time) and track it back to its inspiration. Use the case studies in the handbook.

Information
Facilitator modifies any misconceptions, fills in gaps, expands on process of moving from idea to story project plan. Provides examples (use case studies from handbook if no local examples are available). Q&A from group; questions from facilitator to detect misunderstandings.

Practice
Go back to day's papers. Participants each (or in groups, depending on time, group size, need to develop teamworking skills as part of process) to find one story idea from a hard news story that could turn into an investigative project, and construct pitch that sketches out how the investigation could be approached. Present what they've developed.

Consolidation
Group evaluates each proposal. Facilitator records points, and generalises specific points into broader learning points. Group adds to flipchart list of general points any other observations – relates these to 'Key Points' from chapter, used as handout. Plan for next session/activity, including setting reading/ further work-related assignments as appropriate.

This isn't a quick, straight-line process. It is intensely reflective and involves the learner modifying the content as well as being modified by it. The trainer or facilitator has to do a lot of learning too. There will be recursions back to earlier phases. Most importantly:

Participants may well perform worse than previously while they're internalising new knowledge. They are experimenting with the unfamiliar rather than relying on the familiar. They will make mistakes, and any training context has to be a safe space for experimentation and error.

As we've already said, competence does not automatically equal performance. Taking that new knowledge back to the newsroom and employing it effectively depends on a whole range of context factors in the newsroom itself, including resources and the climate of working relationships.

Among the activities most useful for participants at the level of investigative reporters are:

Editing
This allows reporters to understand the editing function and think like readers. Done in groups or pairs it can provoke intense debate; done individually, it faces a writer with hard choices about how to present a story. You can also set editing exercises that

focus on a single aspect, such as language or sequence, or ask writers to edit from the standpoint of a particular type of audience or publication genre.

Newspaper-based activities
These link theory to practice in a very immediate way.
- Going through the day's papers can provide examples of well- (and badly) conducted investigations for learners to discuss and critique: " What are the strong points? Where are the weaknesses? If you had been covering this story, how would you have tackled it differently?"
- Looking at hard-news stories can provide investigative story ideas; learners can be asked to find un-reported aspects of, or context for, hard news, and present ideas on how these could be turned into pitches and plans for investigative projects.

Case studies
These ask in an open-ended, multidimensional framework: 'what would you have done?' Real or invented case studies – even short ones – ask participants to exercise both empathy and analysis. They can be very effective in distancing people from a real problem. It is much less threatening to ask why reporter X took a bribe, than to ask why someone in our own newsroom might have done so. But it's always important to discuss the similarities and differences between the case study and what might happen in the learners' own context.

> **Using newspaper stories as described above to create an investigative pitch and plan provides an example of a case study.**

Simulations
Stripped-down versions of real situations, less complex than case studies but dealt with in an open-ended rather than a rule-bound way. Particularly for work around communication (interviewing, for example) they allow you to set up an activity that focuses on a key or weak aspect.

A mock interview

A mock (role-played) interview where you have given a brief to both interviewer and interviewee is an example of a simulation. Of course, each participant may be given information the other does not have. For example:

Interviewee: You are the headmaster of a school where a teacher has just been convicted of sexual abuse. You received complaints from parents a year ago, but did not react to them because the children involved were described by the teacher as 'troublemakers', and the school has serious financial problems that took priority. You don't intend to mention the complaints to the press.
Interviewer: You're the reporter investigating the case. You have spoken to a parent, who showed you a letter of complaint about the teacher sent to the headmaster a year ago. You want to find out why the school took no action until the police arrested the man.

Games
Stripped-down versions of real situations played within strict rules and timeframes so that outcomes are limited. Where the focus of training is to understand a process or system and make appropriate choices within it – for example, making the best use of limited time online to do research – a game can be an effective tool. Games are not childish; don't apologise for using them. Finance houses, diplomatic services and high-level military decision-makers all use them. But the game you set up must be appropriate for the group you're working with.

Games

Games work really well, but require a great deal of preparation from the facilitator, who has to prepare a story context document and all the various option briefs. However, because participants are always different human beings, a good game can be used again and again and will always produce a different mix of outcomes, so the time invested is worthwhile.

An example would be an investigative project management game. The facilitator develops a simple – four or five stages is the most that's practical – plan for how an investigative project might unfold. A simple decision-tree is the best way to plan this.

At each stage, participants are asked to make decisions on dilemmas related to the investigative project. The facilitator has designed the options, priorities and limitations. Participants have to make decisions: each choice leads them to a different sealed envelope detailing the – depending on their choice – next stage of the game. (Note: the number of envelopes doubles at each stage!)

So, for example:
"Your editor says the project is costing too much money. You have a choice:

a Cut the reporter's travel and expenses budget, thus preventing her from taking further trips to the capital to consult experts,

OR

b Cut the project timeframe, thus saving on a whole range of costs.

Discuss which you would do.
If you choose a) open envelope 2a. If you choose b) open envelope 2b to see what happens next…"

When the various small groups come together at the end of the game, they look at the different outcomes of the various choices, and how these affected the final story. The consolidation process generalises these specific conclusions into broader points about practice.

Questioning
It's surprising how often we forget our own sophisticated interviewing and listening skills when we use questions in a training situation. The questions that help are those that:
- Define their terms of reference
- Indicate the types of answers they seek
- Signal their context
- Follow a logical structure
- Are varied in type
- Are genuinely open to all contributions
- Challenge without threatening and encourage without nagging

The questions that can derail a workshop session:
- Bundle too many issues into one
- Are immediately answered by the facilitator (people need time to think: don't be scared of silence)
- Are directed only to a 'chosen few'
- Are directed towards a single, narrow answer with all other contributions rejected
- Are irrelevant or at the wrong level for these learners now
- Are monotonous (i.e. all closed questions)
- Are threatening or patronising
- Do not build on previous answers or lead on to the next points

When you plan activities for participants, ensure:
- That you are explicit about what type of outcome is required. ("Brainstorm three interviewing contexts where closed questioning is better than open questions.")
- That you have spelt out any constraints or time limits.
- That you are not setting them up to fail. Make sure they have, or have a way to acquire, the resources and skills they need to do the task at this stage in their workshop or course. Challenges and demands for initiative are good; but setting people tasks they have no way of completing will simply demoralise them and block rather than help learning.
- That there is always an opportunity for feedback and self-reflection. You don't always have to do this; the rest of the group can, or individuals can present a self-assessment as part of their final report.

Trainers' notes: creating materials

Every chapter contains exercises. They are SAMPLE exercises only: you can use them, or you can create similar materials derived directly from your own work environment. It is always more effective to increase the relevance of materials by giving them the flavour of participants' own environment: local names, local scandals, local issues.

The best source for materials is reality:

- stories in newspapers
- stories produced by previous course participants.

When you come across something that seems suitable, file it – manually, or in a folder on your hard disk – instantly. You can do the work of adaptating or editing it later, but it's very demanding to wade back through stories at the end of a week or month to find the ones you want.

Unless you have a particular reason for focusing on the origin of the story, you should remove identifiers like the byline. If you're drawing from publications other than your own, remove the masthead too. Identify them by type of publication ("popular daily paper" etc.) and date. There are important reasons for doing this:

- it's unethical to hang a journalist out to dry before his or her professional colleagues
- when you re-type, you can adapt the story slightly, to remove distractions and sharpen the focus towards the strength, weakness or issue you want to highlight. This will save time during practice.

You can, of course, also write your own case study stories or problems – but make sure they're realistic. Don't get carried away with detail: provide enough detail to establish character or context only – what you want learners to focus on is the problem or issue.

You can also create activities and materials based on real work-in-progress brought by participants to the course. Be realistic, however: actual work is amorphous, multi-dimensional and may refuse to fit into training course sequences, timeframes or logistics!

Layout and language

Anything you produce – handouts, exercises, examples – needs to be clear, readable and attractive. Smudgy, hard-to-read photocopies simply waste participants' time. This doesn't mean extensive design work. Simple typefaces and clear headings plus direct language are all you need. See the reading suggested in Chapter Seven on 'Thinking Visually' for more hints.

Bear in mind the following points:

- pictures and graphics may not reproduce well: choose them carefully
- much computer clip-art is culturally-specific and can be confusing. Unless an image is absolutely right, leave it out
- Instructions for exercises need to be crystal-clear. If in doubt, use short, single-step sentences starting with an action word (e.g. "Read the following passage. Note the places where it appeals to the senses...") Sometimes the schedule for doing the work may be open-ended; where it is not, indicate how much time an activity should take. Always spell out what form of outcome is expected (e.g. "List five pointers for effective caption-writing to share with the rest of the group.")

 (**NOTE – Copyright**: If you are reproducing material from a book, you should try to get copyright clearance. If this isn't practicable – or if the excerpt is very short and the training material for internal use only – you must nevertheless acknowledge the source clearly.)

As well as the resources and facilities listed at the end of each section, you will find it useful to have on hand back copies of your own publication, similar and contrasting publications. (Ask colleagues to donate their old papers and magazines!) This will give you a gold-mine of examples for practical work.