

CHAPTER 6

Evaluation



This chapter explores evaluation, both of the learning delivered and of you as a Trainer. It covers receiving feedback from others and reflecting yourself about how the session went. Sometimes the feedback will not be all positive, and you will have to deal with that experience, but it is important to remember that the evaluation process gives you a springboard for improving.

WHAT DOES EVALUATION MEAN TO YOU?

- For some, it is the part of the training process they most look forward to as they find out if the learning they provided achieved its purpose.
- Others dread it because they feel their session is being judged.
- Some are unclear about how to do it, and why it is needed.
 - When used thoughtfully and appropriately, evaluation

is always positive and meaningful and given in a constructive way.

- At its best, it brings together everyone involved in the learning activity to help Girlguiding UK achieve its aim of enabling girls and young women to develop their potential and make a difference to the world.
- It is the most effective way to grow and develop as a Trainer.

THE LANGUAGE OF EVALUATION

The following terms will be used in this chapter. Click on the word for a definition.

-  Feedback
-  Validation
-  Reflection
-  Review
-  Verification
-  Assessment
-  Evaluation

A short questionnaire handed out to participants at the end of a learning activity to ask for their views or on how the session went is often referred to as an 'evaluation'. However, such questionnaires are in fact only a single element of a much bigger process.

THE BENEFITS OF EVALUATING

We evaluate to check for evidence of the outcome of the training activity and that it benefits the following people in these ways.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| The learner | To ensure she gains what she wants or needs from the training |
| The Trainer | To ensure you deliver the aims and objectives of the training session and learn from the experience so you can apply this in future training |
| The Training Organiser | To ensure that the sessions fulfil the requirement and expectations of the training requesters |
| Girlguiding UK | To ensure trainings uphold the values and standards of guiding |

WHO EVALUATES

Everyone involved can contribute to the evaluation process - both formally and informally. There are layers to evaluation with different people involved at different times and for different purposes.

Your self-evaluation of your role as the Trainer

After you have delivered the session you evaluate the choices you made about content, training methods, training style, equipment and materials. With experience, you become more confident and have a greater understanding of what works for you and the learner, and what doesn't. This process is often referred to as 'validating' the choices, and carefully evaluating your practice will help to achieve this.

There will be times as part of your personal development when you want to gather specific feedback from a learning group on aspects of your training, in addition to the

feedback questions the Training Organiser is asking.

See websites in 'Useful references' for thoughts on how to design a feedback questionnaire.

Your evaluation of the learners' learning experience

This is where, by checking regularly with learners, you find out at the time of the learning event how the session is going and whether learning is taking place.

You do this using observation and questions throughout the whole duration of the learning activity.

You are checking for the learners' participation, their interest and their understanding so that, if need be, you can alter your methods or provide information in a different way to help them learn more easily.

Questioning in the delivery session

The learners may give feedback to you informally during the course of the session or at the end, for example, by saying how useful/enjoyable the activities were, or whether there was something else they would like to have had included.

Learners may also give feedback at the end of a session, often by filling in a questionnaire.

The Training Organiser

The most common method for the Training Organiser to find out how the learning event went is the end-of-session feedback questionnaire. If the Training Organiser isn't present at the event, the Trainer may do this on her behalf. This can be given out on paper on the day, or accessed online soon after the event. This contains questions about what the learners liked, want more of, or didn't find useful, plus more general questions about the training venue and arrangements for the event itself. Soon after the event, the Training Organiser finds a way to give the Trainer a summary of the responses gathered so the Trainer can use this as part of her own evaluative reflection.

The training requester

This could be a County Adult Support/Leadership Team, a Country, Region, Division or District, another youth organisation or other external body. Included within this

layer are the Commissioners who appoint these teams and the local area's specialist Advisers. These bodies will usually rely on the feedback from the Training Organiser to evaluate the event against the purpose and outcomes they required.

Volunteer structure and organisation chart

Girlguiding UK's Leadership Development Team

The Leadership Development Team of the Guiding Development Department at Girlguiding UK manages the overall structure within which local learning events lie. It sets the standards for training, oversees the recruitment and training of prospective Trainers in partnership with Countries and Regions and monitors that Trainers are keeping their skills current and their training practice and knowledge up to date. Because of all this it also needs to evaluate how successful training is in imparting knowledge and information about the guiding programme.

To do this, the team gathers the views of commissioning bodies, Training Organisers and Trainers about how new programme initiatives are being received to ensure that volunteer Leaders are getting the best available training and support.

WHEN AND WHY WE EVALUATE

Evaluation is an essential element in each stage of the learning cycle to ensure that learners have the best possible experience.

Training cycle

When identifying training needs

From the point at which you accept an invitation to train - whether as a Mentor to an individual, for a District team or with a group of Leaders at a County Day - you will be asking important questions of the Training Organiser to help you understand the training needs so you can evaluate whether by the end of the event or session you have met them.

Your questions will also have helped you understand the aim for the learning activity, frame the objective and be clear about the desired outcomes for the learners.

When planning and developing learning

When you start the detailed planning, you will have learners' requirements in mind.

What do they need from this training? And what will they want? These can be two different things.

If the learners are Unit Leaders, what would the girls they lead want them to gain from this training?

If the learners work with other adults, what do they need to know and be able to do or know after this training session?

When designing the session, what methods will you use to engage the learners and help them learn, and what resources will you need?

When delivering the training

When you think back to the day or evening of the training, how did you check that the learners understood the content, and could apply their learning in the unit, or as part of their role working with other adults?

How did you handle situations that could affect the participants' capacity to learn?

For example, how did you:

- deal with unexpected situations?
- respond to unanticipated questions from learners?
- cope with last-minute changes of plan from the Training Organiser?
- welcome latecomers?
- spot learners who might be struggling with the topic?
- keep to time?

Training Organiser

Inclusivity

When reviewing the experience as a whole

- What did the learners say about the session, during the event and at the end?
- What feedback have you received from the Training Organiser?

- If you were training as part of a team, or were being observed by another Trainer, what feedback have you received from them?

- What are your own feelings about how it went?

Having considered all of this, what do you learn from it and what will you take from it to apply to your training practice in future?

WHAT WE EVALUATE

When we evaluate, we are looking for evidence that learning took place, relevant for the learner, and appropriate to the context of guiding. Ask yourself these questions to find out how to tell if learning took place.

Did you create or manage the conditions where learning could take place?

- Was the environment suitable - quiet, comfortable, spacious enough, safe, containing appropriate furniture and materials?



- Were the learners at ease with you - attentive, engaged, open to new possibilities, asking questions, taking time to reflect?



Were you suitably prepared for the session?

- Were you familiar enough with the content to train with confidence and respond to all eventualities?
- Did you have enough resources for the size of the group?

- Were the resources you brought used by the learners? Were they useful and fit for their purpose?
- Was what you had current and attractive to look at/use?
- Were your resources tough enough to be handled by 30 learners and look as good at the end as they did at the start?
- Did you have too much 'stuff' - and did it get in the way of the learning?
- Did you follow the copyright legislation?



What did you observe and hear from the learners?

- Could you see that your chosen training methods were working for the learners and a good fit for the topic?
- Were learners asking appropriate questions of you and each other?
- Was there a happy 'buzz' in the room?
- Was everyone involved in the activities, exercises, games and discussions?
- Did you see the learners trying out a new skill successfully during the session?

Was the content of the training relevant for the learners?

- Did the learners come with the training needs you expected them to have?
- Could the learners tell you about ways they could use their learning in the future?
- Could the learners take your activities as starting points and develop them further for their own use?

Was the learning appropriate in the context of guiding?

Did the learning, for example:

- help a Leader progress with a guiding qualification?
- help learners deepen their understanding of the educational context for the age range of girls in their units?
- take place in an environment where the essential elements of guiding were evident?



SELF-REFLECTION



After the evaluation is completed it is important to set aside some time for deeper reflection about what you learn from it.

Self-reflection is important as it helps you develop your skills and make future training sessions even better. It will help you decide what you need to know more about, elements of training that you need to practise, and things that you need to adjust for next time.

Perhaps talk with the Training Organiser, your Tutor or other Trainers. You should not leave it too long after the session to reflect on it. However, a short time lapse will help you gain a perspective on it and make it easier to be objective about it.

What do I reflect on, and what do I do with the answers?

This may include reflecting on the collated feedback forms and reviewing the session independently.

Here are some things you might think about.

Reviewing the aims and objectives

- If the aims and objectives given to you by the Training Organiser were a good fit for the group of learners, what was it that made them a good fit? If they weren't, can you identify the reasons for this? What else could you have done at the initial planning stages to help clarify what was needed?
- If you had to shape the aim and objectives yourself because the invitation to train held insufficient information, what have you learned from this? What could you do if it happens again?

Reviewing the use of training methods

How successfully did you include methods to suit all learning styles and levels of experience? If you did, what was it in the planning process that enabled you to do this? If you didn't, what will you do next time to see if it makes a positive difference?

Reviewing the use of resources and materials

- Note what worked particularly and try to think about why it did. What changes will you make for next time?
- If you worked with other Trainers, what would you try out next time you train together that also develops your individual skills?

Reviewing your training practice

- Did you look the part with smart, appropriate guiding wear, worn correctly?
- Did you start on time and make your presence felt in the room?
- Did you cover all the objectives?
- Did you make everyone present feel included?
- If circumstances changed during the session did you alter the objectives to accommodate the change and still provide learning?
- Did you end on time, calmly - or rush at the end or even overrun?

Reviewing the training setting

- Was the environment you were working in helping to support learning?
- Was it noisy, hot, cold, too cramped?

- What did you do to improve it? What else could you have done?

Reviewing the performance of the training team

- How did you do? Did you complement each other or get in each other's way?
- Did you make best use of your skills and knowledge?
- Did you support each other, and share out the preparation appropriately?

What to do with the feedback afterwards

Use the feedback to find ways to build for continuous improvement of your skills and knowledge.

- Identify any gaps to bridge - are there any new skills you need to work on?
- Work this into your personal development plan, with achievable targets if required - and review regularly.

It might be to try a new training method, or practise a skill such as facilitating group discussions, or to find out more about a subject you are less familiar with so you can offer to train on it in future.

From these general thoughts and ideas you will be able to draw up a personal development plan to follow over the course of the year ahead, supported in particular by your Tutor if you are a prospective Trainer, and your Trainer peers once you are a qualified Trainer.



DEALING WITH NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Human nature is such that even if 29 out of 30 learners comment that your training session was excellent, it's the view of the one who was less happy that you will pay most attention to!

There are many reasons why a learning event didn't go as well as hoped, and you are just one of many factors, so don't take it personally. Think back to the situation and try to identify any elements that were beyond your control.

That should leave two possibilities.

- There was something that you could have addressed but you weren't aware of at the time - in this case, you will be aware next time it happens.
- You were aware that something wasn't going right but you did not deal with it at the time. Think about what you could do differently if this occurs in the future. Is it related to a general area of training that you need to work on?

Evaluating during a learning event sometimes means that we can spot the cause of a problem early on, act on it as it emerges and thereby avoid negative feedback.

Renewal of the training qualification

Girlguiding UK's way of ensuring its training programme is current and effective is to require all qualified Trainers to focus on the continuous improvement of their skills and knowledge every year, using a personal development plan, and to renew their qualification every three years by means of observation by an experienced Trainer and a self-reflection process with their peers. However, a Trainer should try to develop her knowledge and skills continuously.

Models for evaluating training events

A well-known model is the Kirkpatrick model.



Another is the Return on Investment (ROI), which is designed to establish if the investment in the training event is made worthwhile by the benefits that result from it.

This might not seem to lend itself to a guiding context but is a concept worth considering.

For example, take a County Day for up to 200 Leaders, which involves time and expenses for a planning team, hire of a venue, refreshments, and the time of Advisers, Trefoil Guild members, shop teams, caterers and the Trainers. It all adds up to a substantial cost. Was the investment worth it in terms of the benefits to girls that result from the day?

Other examples of evaluation methods

- **Interviews** - Talk to a sample group of learners long enough after the session for them to have had the opportunity to put their learning into practice, to interview them about what they remember of your session and what they have done with what they learned.
- **Questionnaires** - Usually offered at the end of a learning session, but can also be used with learners later on as a follow-up activity.
- **Observations** - Go where your learners meet and watch them in action applying their newly learned skills.
- **Walk and talks** - Informally, as you walk between locations at a larger event, talk to some of the learners about how they are finding the day/session and what they are learning.
- **Focus groups** - Invite six to eight volunteers from the learning group or others who have a view such as Commissioners or the girls to meet with you or perhaps the Training Organiser for an hour to talk, with a facilitator, about their learning.
- **Personal logs** - Diaries, log books, reports - keep your own reflective diary or log book.
- **Workshops** - Get together with other Trainers to look at your training materials and your processes for planning and designing training to see if you can learn new and better ways for how to go about training.
- **Creative methods** - Drawing, writing, photography. Ask a group of learners you are training to draw what they have learned from your session. Or ask them to take a few minutes to write about it, which also helps them to deepen their learning. Or invite them to take photos with their phones that reflect how they feel now about what they have learned and ask them to share them online, such as on Flickr (www.flickr.com).

■ Quick evaluation methods, which can be used when it is inappropriate to carry out detailed evaluation, but you want to get a feel for how things went. For example, when time is very short, or facilities limited. These might include:

- happy sheets
- verbal evaluations
- physical evaluations.

All of these test reactions and are described on the website about the Kirkpatrick model (see link right).

ACTION PLANNING FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a Trainer you will want to use the feedback from the evaluation process to develop yourself and your training skills. All Trainers have personal development plans, which are regularly updated and form part of the renewal process.



 [Renewal of the training qualification](#)

Most Trainers have a preferred format for their development plan, but as you work on it, ask yourself the following questions.




1. What is the learning activity you want to do?
2. How will you measure progress with it?
3. What might get in the way of you making progress?
4. How will you avoid or remove what might get in the way?
5. When will you start?
6. When do you plan to have completed the learning?
7. Who will you need to help you complete the learning?
8. What benefits do you hope will come from your actions?
9. When will you and your Tutor/training support network meet a) to discuss the implementation of your plan and b) to review the progress of this action?

USEFUL REFERENCES

Evaluation methods

-  www.evaluationtrust.org/tools/introduction
-  www.businessballs.com/trainingprogramevaluation.htm

Feedback questionnaires

-  www.ltc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/support/documents/feedbackform.pdf
-  www.businessballs.com/trainingevaluationtools.pdf
-  www.servicegrowth.net/documents/10%20Tips%20on%20Creating%20Training%20Evaluation%20Forms.net.pdf

Kirkpatrick model

-  www.businessballs.com/kirkpatricklearningevaluationmodel.htm