

Practical Teaching Tips for 3Rs Volunteers

1. Begin your small group by asking a question that you will expect your group to answer (based on the material you are about to cover) at the end of the class. Tell them that the information they will need to correctly answer the question will be in the materials you will be going over, so they will need to pay attention. If you want a forum to showcase your creative side, begin the lesson with a short skit.
2. Encourage answers by using phrases like “Good point” or “That’s an interesting idea/way to look at it.” Follow up by asking if anyone else has an answer or idea. Be positive.
3. Never tell a student that his/her answer is wrong. Even wrong answers generally have some good point or points that you can emphasize. Use the answer as a springboard to encourage discussion.
4. Ask open-ended questions.
5. Don’t call on students to read unless you are certain they are strong readers. Read the material to the students rather than inadvertently embarrass a poor reader by asking him/her to read, or ask for volunteers.
6. Act as a facilitator of discussion. Keep the discussion going. Try to have the students relate the information they are learning to their own experiences.
7. Redirect students who aren’t paying attention by emphasizing the importance of the materials for their OGT preparation.
8. Minimize your use of lecture in presenting the factual material. Highlight the significant aspects of the materials.
9. In your discussions, try to get beyond knowledge and comprehension to application and analysis. Use the hypotheticals and then vary the facts so that the students will have to analyze the new facts and apply what they are learning to a new scenario. For example, “What if the policeman had been invited into the house? Would that have made a difference?”
10. Students learn in different ways. Supplement your methods of presenting material in different ways to try to better reach each student. For example, use visuals, have the students dramatize a fact pattern, pass out political cartoons and discuss, or anything else you can think of.
11. Be prepared. Most students will know right away if you are not. The good news is that 3Rs presentations are like weekly “open book/notes quizzes,” and we have already prepared the outline and materials. If you have read over and are familiar with the materials, you will be fine! A half-hour internet search and periodic email supplements from the CMBA can give you even more background as needed.
12. Remember your audience. If you are a law student, think of how you would explain a case to a non-lawyer friend instead of your professor. If you are an attorney, think of how you would explain an issue to your non-lawyer spouse instead of your colleague. Just as you would present a legal seminar differently to recent graduates than to seasoned professionals, try to factor in differences in your audience to your approach (i.e. what is on the mind of a typical Cleveland 10th grader).

Above and Beyond: Creative Extras

Although volunteers need to make sure the main lesson points come across, creativity is encouraged! Here some successful and creative ideas volunteers have used (always with school permission!):

1. PowerPoint presentation for Jeopardy review
2. Candy, bagels, or other treats for winning Jeopardy groups or for general participation
3. Field trip to court to observe proceedings
4. Bring in police and search dogs
5. Staged examples of the day's lesson (e.g. dividing kids into groups by birthday for equal protection lesson)