

Best Practices for Using Breakout Rooms

Breakout rooms add another dimension to the distance learning experience by increasing interaction between trainees during a session. Just like polling, Kahoot!, and Quizlet, breakout rooms keep the learners engaged throughout the training by simulating in-person small-group exercises. Breakout rooms also offer another way for the trainer to measure the level of understanding among trainees. The following are some helpful practices to consider when going into breakout rooms. Read more at www.cpwr.com/distance-learning-report.



Set expectations at the beginning of the breakout exercise

Provide an overview of the exercise and expected outcomes of the breakout session. This can include what the trainees will see on their screens during the breakout session.



Include a mix of participants for each breakout session

If possible, select trainees with different levels of expertise and experience for each breakout room to ensure differing perspectives in the discussions. Ideally, create groups of at least 3 and no more than 8 people.



Provide clear instructions for the breakout activity

Define the specific tasks and goal for the activity so that trainees are able to stay focused on that goal during the breakout session.



Assign a facilitator for each breakout room

Depending on the activity, each group should designate roles for the activity such as a facilitator to lead activities, notetaker to capture discussion points, and reporter to share key findings from the breakout session.



Announce the expected duration of the breakout session

By giving a time frame for each breakout session, trainees can better manage their time and prioritize the activities or discussion points.



Indicate how trainees can get help, if needed, during the breakout session

Instructors and co-instructors should provide a mechanism to help trainees with questions or technical difficulties once they have joined the breakout session.



Monitor the breakout sessions

Instructors should circulate throughout the breakout groups as trainees complete the breakout activity to ensure that trainees are on-task and provide guidance and additional instruction as needed.