

Tips for Room Set up and Use

by Jeanette Romkema

Whether you will use a space familiar to you or one that is new, you need to consider all its potential and challenges. How you use a space can help deepen learning or get in the way of it. Here are some tips to consider when checking the place and space for a learning event:

1. **Take time to be in the space and own it.**
2. **Arrange for a circle of chairs as well as work tables.** Starting and ending each day in the circle can be powerful, and it can become a very “sacred” special space. When there are times of deep personal sharing it is highly recommend that you use the circle. The work tables will be helpful to engage in challenging activities with the new content. Of course other spaces inside and outside the room should also be considered.
3. **Minimize clutter - the less distraction the better.** This will also help participants find resources, materials, and their belongings more easily. Moving extra furniture out of the room can help with this too.
4. **Intentionally decide where the best place is for the “front” of the room.** Look at the most effective configuration for the work tables in relation to the circle – that will determine the front. What seems like the “front” at first glance, may not actually be the best for the group and what you have planned for their engagement with the content.
5. **Make food and drinks easily accessible.** These are essential for the learning and the learner. It can help energize and stay focused. Adding candy or chocolate in the table baskets can also be very helpful and appreciated.
6. **Ensure everyone can see and talk to each other easily.** Arranging the room for most effective visibility will help dialogue and engagement with the new content.
7. **Ensure all materials needed are easily accessible.** Markers, Post-it Notes, pens, pencils, scissors, and tape should be put in a basket for each table.
8. **Consider all the different places and spaces for potential use, in and around the building.** There is no need to all stay in the same room every day of a longer learning event. Changing location may be a welcome thing when energy is low!
9. **Utilize flowers or plants.** People who appreciate nature and feel energized by it will appreciate a vase of flowers or a few plants in the room. Finding a location with large windows is another – this will bless people afflicted with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) as well as those who are “nature smart” and feel energized by the outdoors.