

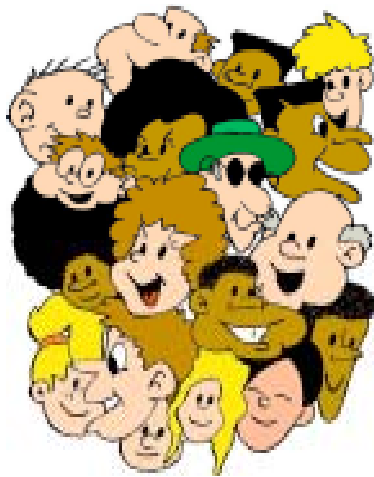
**Terrific Tips for Crowd Control.**  
**From Chapter 14 of *Shake, Rattle and Roll!***

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You know the importance of involving learners in their own learning. And during your class or training, you are committed to including activities that engage learners and that help them remember and use what they learn. Yet every time you teach or train, you're faced with the same problem: ***How in the world do you get learners' attention again (and in a timely fashion) once you've turned them loose with an activity?***



Ah, the trainer's worst nightmare - a room full of adults totally out of control! No wonder so many of us opt for the safer shallows when treading the training waters of learner-centered instruction. Keep 'em seated, keep 'em relatively quiet, keep 'em focused on us and not on each other. All effective ways of crowd control.

And all pretty ineffective ways of learning if we truly want our training participants to leave with information and skills *they can use.*

What to do?

***\* Teach a group management technique before you begin the training.***

***\* Have a group management tool ready to use that is a strong enough wake-up call to which every trainee will pay immediate attention.***

Let's take a look at a number of group management tools that fit these two suggestions:

**1. Noisemakers:** Explain to your participants before an activity that, when they hear a certain noise, they need to stop what they're doing and turn their attention back to you for the next activity. Noisemakers can be simple toys like whistles, horns, slide flutes, kazoos. They can be household objects like a wind chime, a spoon and water glass, or a bunch of jingling keys. Or they can be training tool noises like tapping the microphone. Be sure to practice using your noisemaker before a training to make sure the sound is loud enough without being annoying.

**2. Music:** Have a "signature" piece of music that always represents: "Stop what you're doing and turn your attention this way." Explain the music signal before the first activity. You can also use percussion instruments like a tambourine, a set of bongos, or a bell. Or play an easily portable musical instrument such as a recorder or flute.

**3. Visual Signals:** Explain to your trainees that, when you raise your hand, they need to stop talking and raise their own hand also. Or hold up a brightly-colored large paper with the fol-

lowing sentence printed big and bold: "If you can see this, stop and turn this way." Or walk around with a pre-made sign in your hand. The sign says: "One minute to finish," or "When you're finished, sit down," or "If you can read this, stop and look at me," or "Times up - have a seat."



**4. Clap or Snap:** When an activity is over, Bob Pike says quietly to the group, "If you can hear my voice, clap once. If you can hear my voice, clap twice. If you can hear my voice, clap three times." By that time, the whole group is clapping and he has the attention of all.

***Variation One:** Instead of clapping, say, "If you can hear my voice, snap once, snap twice, snap three times." Or, "If you can hear my voice, raise one hand, raise another, nudge your neighbors if their hands aren't up, wiggle your fingers." Or "If you can hear my voice, stomp*

*once, twice, three times." The variations are endless.*

**Variation Two:** *Teach your training participants to clap "Shave and a Hair Cut - Two Bits" (five claps, pause, then two more). Let them know that, whenever you do the first five claps, they need to stop what they're doing and do the last two claps. Practice it a couple of times to make sure they understand. Then use the five claps as your signal to pay attention, and they'll respond with the two claps to show you they're ready.*

**5. Lights Out:** If you have easy access to a light switch, flick them off to get the attention of the group.

**6. Secret Word:** Let the group choose a secret word for the day. The word needs to be one that wouldn't normally come up in conversation (nonsense words or unusual words work well; so does a word that is topic related). Whenever they hear or see this word, they whisper it to their neighbors, then stop and listen.

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The more comfortable you are with a variety of creative ways to regain the focus of the group, the more your trainees will pay attention to your group manage-

ment tools, and crowd control will no longer be an issue for you. And remember to be a little flexible with the time it takes to settle down. ***Anytime you engage learners in activities, they will need some start up and wind down time.*** It's all part and parcel of interactive learning - and it makes the learning experience a rich and memorable one for your training participants.



Author and traveling teacher Sharon Bowman helps educators and business people "teach it quick and make it stick," - fine-tuning their information-delivery skills and turning their passive listeners into active learners.

Over 50,000 copies of Sharon's 7 popular teaching, training, and motivation books are now in print. Look for her newest book ***The Ten-Minute Trainer! 150 Ways to Teach It Quick and Make It Stick*** online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

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