

# The GLSEN **Jump-Start** Guide

PART  
**3**



## **Strategies for Training Teachers**

**GLSEN**<sup>®</sup>

GAY, LESBIAN & STRAIGHT  
EDUCATION NETWORK

# The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide

## WELCOME!

Welcome to *The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide*! GLSEN’s student organizing team has created this resource to support new and established Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and similar groups that are working to make schools safer and more inclusive for all students. We’ve been hearing from many organizers that they need concrete ideas for building, shaping and activating their groups, and that’s what this guide is all about. It takes you through the process of establishing your student club, identifying your mission and goals, assessing your school’s climate, and engaging in projects and activities throughout the year. It also offers resources for further exploration.

This guide consists of eight self-contained sections; all are designed to help you *jump-start*—or bring fresh and creative energy to—your student club. Topics include:

- Building and Activating Your GSA
- Tips and Tools for Organizing an Action Campaign
- Strategies for Training Teachers
- Understanding Direct-Action Organizing
- Examining Power, Privilege and Oppression
- Creating Youth-Adult Partnerships
- Making Your Student Club Trans-Inclusive
- Evaluation, Continuation, Celebration!

Please note that we have chosen to use gender-neutral language in this resource. We recognize that replacing “he” and “she” with the gender-neutral “they” is grammatically questionable, but we hope you will overlook this in support of students who do not use “he” or “she” to identify themselves.

If you would like to receive more information about GLSEN, or to get involved in the safer schools movement, please register online at [www.studentorganizing.org](http://www.studentorganizing.org)! We welcome your feedback on the activities in this guide—and we salute you for the important work you are doing to create safer schools for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

## Strategies for Training Teachers

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# Planning a Teacher Training

**Your GSA**  
can make  
your school a  
**safer place**  
for **all**  
**students**

**Ready...** Training teachers to respond to anti-LGBT name-calling and harassment is an essential strategy in making your school a safer and more supportive place for *all* students. Your GSA can greatly improve the climate of your school by giving teachers the tools they need to combat name-calling, bullying and harassment.

Planning a teacher training involves working with your school's administration. Every school and district is different. It may be easiest to start small; for example, you could invite teachers to an event sponsored by your GSA. Your group may be able to work with your GSA advisor(s) and the principal, or with other decision-making staff, to make a presentation at a faculty meeting or in-service training. If you choose to bring outside individuals or groups into your school for a training, you'll need to get permission from your school administration, and there may be contracts or other documents to sign. Your advisor(s) can be of great assistance with this piece of the process.

Once your student club has gotten approval, planning your training becomes the priority. It's important to remember that training teachers is like any other event. You'll need to plan **objectives**, or what you hope to accomplish; the **agenda**, or schedule for the training; and **roles and responsibilities**, or the assignment of specific tasks to group members.

**Set...** **People:** Entire group (working as a whole), prepared facilitator(s) and designated note-takers/recorders

**Tools:** 6–8 sheets of flip-chart or large construction paper, markers, tape

**Time:** 60–90 minutes

Hang five sheets of paper in a row where everyone can see them. Designate one or two recorders to take notes during the planning discussion. At the top of Sheet 1 write "Objectives Wish List," at the top of Sheet 2 write "Final Objectives," at the top of Sheet 3 write "Allies," at the top of Sheet 4 write "Agenda," and at the top of Sheet 5 write "Roles and Responsibilities."



# Planning a **Teacher Training** (continued)

**GO!** **Part 1: Establishing Your Objectives** (20–30 minutes)

**A.** What are your goals for this training? On your “Objectives Wish List” sheet, **have the group make a list of all the outcomes you’d like to see emerge from the training.** Some questions to consider: What do you want teachers to know and/or do? How do you want teachers to respond to anti-LGBT name-calling and harassment? How would your school be different after the training? What would those who present or facilitate the training gain by doing it? Why is this training important?

**B.** Once the group has finished creating the wish list, take some time to **prioritize your objectives and narrow the list.** Let’s get a little acronym-happy and say that your objectives should be SMART: Specific,

Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. There may be some ideas on the wish list that would be better suited to a follow-up training because they grow out of the groundwork laid by the initial sessions. The group should reach consensus as to the objectives for the training. Once the objectives have been decided, write them on the “Final Objectives” sheet.

## Consider This. . .

As you develop your objectives, you may want to think about **measuring the outcomes** of your training. This can be done by having a pre- and post-training evaluation of teachers’ knowledge and attitudes, checking in with teachers several weeks after the training to see if they are using their new information and skills, and/or conducting GLSEN’s Local School Climate Survey (discussed in detail in Part 1 of *The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide* and available in the Library section at [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)). This survey can help you assess your school’s climate and how the training affects it.

**Part 2: Identifying Your Allies** (5 minutes)

**A.** Working with individuals and groups inside and outside your school may be helpful. Including straight allies on the training team can be particularly effective. To deepen the impact of their trainings, some GSAs have

invited **family members** of LGBT students in the school community; **LGBT alumni** who can talk about the experiences they had as students at your school; **members of the local GLSEN chapter**; and **representatives from the local chapter of PFLAG** (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; for more information, visit [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)). Use the “Allies” sheet to list the names of people who could be involved in your training.

**B.** You may also want to get in touch with allies such as a local diversity trainer or LGBT resource group to share your ideas, get feedback on your plan and propose how they might participate in the training. Feel free to contact your local GLSEN chapter or to check out the GSATalk discussion listserv for help with this step in the process.

## Planning a **Teacher Training** (continued)

### Part 3: Planning Your Agenda (20–30 minutes)

**A.** Once you’ve identified allies and agreed upon objectives, **the next step is to create an agenda**. It’s important to know how much time will be allotted for the training. It helps to have at least an hour for the workshop. The recorder should write the expected duration of the training at the top of the “Agenda” sheet as a reminder to everyone as you are planning the agenda. As you discuss each proposed part of the agenda, try to come up with a general estimate of how long that piece will take. Remember to include a scheduled break, depending on how long the training will be. The recorder should write decisions about the agenda on the “Agenda” sheet.



**B.** It’s always a good idea to **begin the training with introductions and a discussion of community norms**, or ground rules. Especially if students will be sharing their own personal stories, you’ll want to remind the group about respecting confidentiality, maintaining a non-judgmental attitude and speaking only for oneself rather than making generalizations (often called “Speaking from the ‘I’”). You may also want to think about how to respond to dissent, factually inaccurate statements and offensive comments that may not have been intended as such. It’s good to have a strategy for handling those kinds of remarks so that they can be addressed respectfully without sidetracking the training.

**C.** Using an activity at the beginning to survey teachers’ attitudes will help you gauge the group and prepare them for the workshop. Activity 3.2, “What Can Teachers Do?” includes a suggested resource and energizer for the early part of the training.

Concluding the training with a Q&A period and a written evaluation will enable you to address any issues that haven’t been covered and learn what information was most and least useful for participants. This will help you develop future trainings while underscoring teachers’ remaining concerns.

## Planning a **Teacher Training** (continued)

### **Part 4: Assigning Roles and Responsibilities** (10–20 minutes)

**A.** Begin by looking at the agenda developed by the group and identifying the major tasks you'll need to accomplish in order to organize your training. On the "Roles and Responsibilities" sheet, the recorder should **list the name of each person, the tasks and responsibilities they agree to take on and the first task they plan to do**. It will be up to each individual (or group, in the case of shared tasks) to write down their responsibilities, take some time on their own to prioritize their tasks and create a timeline for accomplishing them.

**B.** Your group may wish to have one or two people serve as **overall coordinators** of the training. The coordinators should look at the presentation as a whole and identify any broad changes that need to be implemented.

**C.** Designate one or two members to **oversee the logistical planning tasks**, such as reserving a space for the training, reserving audio-visual equipment or other supplies, creating invitations for teachers, producing publicity materials, photocopying handouts and buying refreshments.

**D.** Your group should also designate people to **reach out to LGBT community groups and other local allies** who could assist you in plan-

ning and presenting your training. It's usually a good idea to have one person serve as a contact person with each outside group, so that people from those groups don't get confused about which person from your school to call. Remember to inform school administrators if you plan to bring in any outside participants.

**E.** Once the agenda has been divided into sections, **decide who will present each section during the actual training**. The presenters should be responsible for the research and preparation of the section they have been assigned. The process of putting the information together will increase the presenters' familiarity with it and build their confidence about sharing it with an audience.

**F.** An important part of training teachers is giving them evidence of harassment in the school. **Including student, alumni or family speakers** is a useful strategy for reaching teachers' heads and hearts.

### **Tips for Facilitating a Training**

- **Paperwork**—Provide handouts and other resources for teachers to review after the training
- **Visuals**—Use flip-charts, overheads, videos or other graphic features
- **Many voices and faces**—One person doesn't have to do it all; divide the training into parts and delegate them to different people
- **Practice, practice, practice**—Meet at least once to review the training; you may also want to videotape the training for facilitators to review, so that they can improve their presentations for future trainings

## Planning a **Teacher Training** (continued)

As one GSA advisor put it, having students discuss their personal experiences with bias and harassment “puts a face on the issue.” One effective technique is a “read-around,” in which you collect short letters from students, remove the writers’ names and ask teachers to read these personal accounts aloud. You may also want to include evidence from GLSEN’s National School Climate Survey, available online at [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org). Keep in mind that it’s just as important to script and rehearse personal stories as it is to rehearse presentations on statistics or intervention strategies. In addition to having speakers from

outside your school, it’s also important to represent the diversity within your school’s community—gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and race/ethnicity are some of the areas you should try to represent.

### Consider This...

- **Break out:** In addition to having discussions with the entire audience, identify sections where participants could divide into smaller groups for discussion, brainstorming and/or problem-solving.
- **Vary formats:** Skits and role-plays can be extremely effective training tools, but too much reliance on dramatic formats may reinforce opinions about the harassment being exaggerated.
- **Videotape the training:** The tape can be used as a resource for absent teachers and new hires, as well as a self-evaluation and review tool for trainers.
- **Serve refreshments and take breaks:** Consider the length of your training and identify places where you could fit in a break.
- **Make it personal:** Send out personal invitations to teachers, reminder notes and an advance sign-up sheet; devise a special outreach strategy for unsupportive teachers. (Highlighting quotes from students and statistical evidence may help persuade skeptical teachers to attend your training.)
- **Know your audience:** Organize trainings in Spanish or other languages spoken by the teaching staff, to include as many teachers as possible.
- **Follow up:** In order to sustain commitment, momentum and growth, consider planning trainings on an annual or biannual basis; repeat the same introductory training, or even develop a second, advanced training.

### Part 5: Reviewing the Plan

(5 minutes)

Take a few minutes for the group to review the “Final Objectives,” “Allies,” “Agenda” and “Roles and Responsibilities” sheets. Make sure that everyone understands their next steps and which person(s) they should contact with any questions or concerns about fulfilling their responsibilities. Begin the next training team meeting with a check-in to see how everyone is progressing with their planning tasks.

# What Can Teachers Do?

Teachers can take **concrete steps** to help **end bias** and **improve** the school climate

**Ready...** Your GSA's teacher training can do more than provide a forum for discussion of anti-LGBT bias and harassment at your school. The training can also give students the opportunity to present practical solutions—and a chance for teachers to brainstorm ways to achieve these solutions. Teachers should leave the training with a concrete understanding of the problems and of the immediate and long-term actions they can take to address these issues. Students and teachers alike should feel empowered to support each other's efforts.

This activity focuses on **four concrete actions teachers can take** to help end bias and harassment and improve the overall school climate. These include: 1) acquiring knowledge about anti-LGBT bias; 2) intervening when direct harassment occurs; 3) adopting gender-neutral language; and 4) creating Safe Space/Zone Programs. For each action, information is provided in the following format:

- 1. Name and general description** of the action
- 2. Suggested points** for trainers to brainstorm and discuss how they can tailor each action to your school
- 3. Supporting resources** (available at [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)) that trainers can use in planning the training and distribute as a handout during the training itself

**Set...** **People:** Entire group, divided into four groups of at least two people (if you have fewer than eight people, you should still divide into as many pairs as you can make, and each pair will work on more than one of the four actions)

**Tools:** 10 sheets of flip-chart or large construction paper, markers, tape

**Time:** 45–65 minutes





# What Can Teachers Do? (continued)

## **GO!** Small-Group Brainstorm: Understanding What Teachers

### **Can Do** (20–30 minutes)

Assign at least one of the four actions to each small group, and give each group two sheets of paper per action and a marker. Each group should designate a recorder for taking notes and should spend 20 to 30 minutes discussing the action, brainstorming ideas for how teachers could implement the action in your school and reviewing the supporting resource indicated for that action.

### **Action 1: Acquiring Knowledge About Anti-LGBT Bias**

In order to act as allies for LGBT students, teachers need to be educated about the problem of anti-LGBT bias and harassment. There are multiple strategies for doing this, and usually they work best when

combined. As one GSA leader noted, “I think the combination of statistics, personal stories and role-playing worked together to drive home the message that name-calling and harassment were happening and that teachers had the power to end it.”

### **Suggested Points for Brainstorming and Discussion**

⇒ *How can personal stories be presented to prompt an active response from teachers?*

As noted earlier, student, alumni, family and community speakers can all make a powerful and poignant contribution to a training. The key is having only a couple speakers, having them speak authentically about personal experiences and making sure

they’re comfortable speaking to the group. It’s also important that they script their presentations and rehearse them multiple times.

### **Two techniques for making personal stories as effective as possible are:**

**1. The “zap”** is a method of telling a story with the elements of introducing yourself, surveying the audience, telling your personal story, providing historical and other group information, and ending with a summary that includes a request—a task you want the audience (individual or group) to do.

### **Consider This...**

- **Emphasize needs:** Teachers should leave the training understanding, as one GSA leader put it, “that students need teachers’ help and that they have an opportunity to support their students and improve the school climate as a whole.”
- **Provide options:** Give teachers multiple solutions and intervention options, while encouraging consistency across the faculty/staff.
- **Show evidence:** One GSA used “confiscated hateful flyers and notes” to prove to teachers that anti-LGBT harassment was a legitimate problem in their school.

## What Can Teachers Do? (continued)

**2. Stories and solutions** is a method of telling your story in which you identify a problem and then propose a solution. In cases where you choose not to include live speakers with personal stories, videos can be a useful tool. Videos often include student, family and teacher anecdotes, as well as research data. Check the GLSEN BookLink for video recommendations.

⇒ *How can teachers use statistics to connect the experiences of their students to the larger problem of anti-LGBT bias?*

Statistics are a great way to reach teachers because facts and figures are concrete and provide big-picture evidence of the problem. Teachers can use them to teach about bias in their classrooms, to sway skeptical colleagues and families and to mobilize community support for school change. Statistics on anti-LGBT harassment in the classroom, on anti-LGBT bias in school athletics and on risk factors facing LGBT young people can help broaden teachers' understanding of the experiences of their LGBT students.



**Supporting Resource:** *The 2005 National School Climate Survey* (including the Executive Summary and Full Report) is available in the Library section of [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org). The only national survey to document the experiences of LGBT students in America's schools, GLSEN's National School Climate Survey examines the prevalence of school-based harassment

and victimization, the frequency with which students hear anti-LGBT language and the factors that contribute to an overall feeling of safety.

### **Action 2: Intervening When Harassment Occurs**

One of the most common concerns GLSEN hears from teachers is frustration over anti-LGBT name-calling in their schools, mixed with confusion about how best to intervene. Many teachers are allies in spirit but not in action; they remain silent because they don't know how to respond to name-calling, especially when it is indirect (for example, the random use of the expression "That's so gay" as opposed to harassment targeting a specific student). There are multiple strategies teachers can use to respond to name-calling, and one of the best ways for them to learn those strategies is by practicing them in a role-play. (See the "Model Training Outline" later in this section for details.)

## What Can Teachers Do? (continued)

### Suggested Points for Brainstorming and Discussion

⇒ *What are the specific names and slurs that you hear in your school? How, where and in what context are they used?*

Give students the opportunity to share their experiences with name-calling, and likewise give teachers the opportunity to share their stories about name-calling incidents in their classrooms. Keep a list on the board or flip-chart so that you can incorporate the specific types of name-calling discussed into your role-play, if you decide to include a role-play in your training (it's highly recommended!). Similarly, keep a list of the places in your school where name-calling incidents happen most, and discuss how teachers could help create an ally presence there.

⇒ *Does your school have anti-harassment and nondiscrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression? If so, how can you encourage teachers to be more proactive in implementing these policies? If not, how can you encourage teachers to mobilize in support of creating such policies?*

As one GSA student organizer advises, "Emphasize educators' legal, ethical and professional responsibilities to promote a safe learning environment for all students." Ask teachers directly if they know about your school's anti-harassment and nondiscrimination policies, and if they've participated in any trainings or discussions about how to implement them. Give them an opportunity to brainstorm how they can collaborate to better educate themselves and the school community about school policy. In cases where there is no school policy or the existing policy is not inclusive of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, give teachers an opportunity to brainstorm how they could advocate at the school and district levels to get such policies passed.

⇒ *Does the problem of name-calling and harassment in your school extend beyond anti-LGBT slurs? What other kinds of harassment occur? Is there an opportunity to apply the intervention strategies you discuss in your training in a broader way?*

While the focus of your training is anti-LGBT harassment, it's important to remember that students have complex identities. They may experience multiple oppressions and be targeted by sexual harassment, racial/ethnic harassment or other forms of bias. Teachers need to be aware of the ways in which different forms of oppression interact.

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Many teachers remain **silent** because they don't know how to **respond** to **name-calling**

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# What Can Teachers Do? (continued)

## Model Training Outline

*This outline comes from the student organizers at the Franklin High School GSA in Portland, Oregon.*

### 1. Welcome

### 2. An activity in which teachers call out people on whom they depended for support when they were students

“We then went through the list of people and systematically crossed off almost every one, explaining why an LGBT young person couldn’t necessarily depend on those people.”

### 3. Personal narratives from students

### 4. Gallery walk

“The teachers went around the room and discussed scenarios we’d written on paper. In their groups, they had to come up with responses to each scenario: what would they say, whether or not they’d report it and to whom, and what they could do to prevent it from happening in the future. At the end of this activity, they all shared their answers and discussed the best ideas and how they could use them.”

### 5. Statistics

“We showed statistics about drop-out rates, suicide, and alcohol and drug use, including students’ reports of being unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation (or perceived orientation).”

### 6. Role plays

“This was one of the most effective tools we used. The three students played students in different scenarios (saying ‘fag’ in the hallways, threatening each other, saying ‘that’s sooo gay’ during a class, and others). The teachers would then have to react on the spot and figure out what to do. A lot of the teachers got up and didn’t know what to do, so other teachers would jump in with suggestions or get up and respond themselves. This gave them all a chance to empower themselves by tackling the situation with students they may not have known. It was by far the best part of the training.”

### 7. Closing

Total time for this training: 2.5 hours

In addition, there are tremendous coalition-building opportunities among different groups in schools, and addressing a common issue such as student harassment can help empower all students and improve the school climate for everyone.

*, What kind of proactive measures can teachers take to set a tone that discourages antagonistic behavior among students?*

Harassment intervention is often reactive, happening after the name-calling and harassment have occurred. Discuss ways that teachers can establish classroom procedures and relationships with their students that set a positive tone.

## Action 3: Adopting Gender-Neutral Language

Using gender-neutral language is one of the simplest, most proactive ways that teachers can “come out” as allies to LGBT students. Being conscious of language and choosing words carefully is already a crucial part of teaching, and it’s perfectly reasonable to ask teachers to consider how the gendered language they use, both in casual conversation and in their lessons, sends specific messages about equity and power to all of their students. If you choose to address this subject in your teacher training, it’s another area where role-playing can be very effective.

## What Can Teachers Do? (continued)

### Suggested Points for Brainstorming and Discussion

⇒ *What are some concrete ways that teachers can make their language more gender-neutral?*

One example that often produces an “Aha!” reaction in teacher trainings goes like this: Let’s say it’s Monday morning and a teacher asks students what they did over the weekend. One female student responds by saying that she went on a date. The teacher, wanting to show interest in the student’s life, asks, “What’s his name?” or “Where did you and your boyfriend go?” or “Do I know him?” By asking instead, “What was your date’s name?” or “Do I know the person you’re dating?” the teacher could refrain from making an assumption about the student’s sexual orientation.



⇒ *How can teachers change their language to respect gender-variant students, gender-questioning students or students whom they suspect of being transgender?*

Using gender-neutral language is important in affirming gender-variant students or students who may be going through a process of gender questioning or transition. Transgender students may not feel comfortable correcting teachers who use incorrect pronouns to describe them, and it’s important

for teachers to be sensitive to students’ self-expressions. It’s generally better to approach students privately to discuss gender identities and sexual orientations and learn from them how they’d like to be addressed.

**Supporting Resource:** “The Language of Gender” (available at [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)) provides educators with a set of definitions to help expand their understanding of gender, enabling them to speak effectively and respectfully about gender with peers, parents and students. Teachers usually respond favorably to learning about vocabulary because it gives them something tangible to use. Including a section on gender-identity and sexual-orientation vocabulary also provides a useful opportunity for clarifying the distinctions among different types of gender variance (i.e., transgender, transsexual, FTM, MTF and other terms). Review the resource and discuss ways you could include it in your training.

## What Can Teachers Do? (continued)

### Action 4: Creating Safe Space/Zone Programs

The purpose of a Safe Space or Safe Zone Program is to create safe, supportive spaces within schools that are beneficial and easily identifiable to LGBT students and staff. Safe Space/Zone Programs provide LGBT people and their allies with useful information and effective strategies to increase their understanding of LGBT issues and end anti-LGBT bias in their school.

#### Some of the more common features of Safe Space/Zone Programs include:

⇒ Distribution of materials (such as stickers and brochures) for students and staff to display in locations around the school as a way of declaring them to be safe spaces for LGBT people

⇒ Designation of trained Safe Space/Zone allies who understand LGBT issues and are willing to personally provide support and advocacy to LGBT students and staff in cases of bias and harassment; allies should also be equipped to provide referral services to community resources for students with coming-out, health, family, relationship, violence or other issues that would be handled best by a professional counselor

⇒ Development of additional strategies for making Safe Space/Zone Programs highly visible in schools



### Suggested Points for Brainstorming and Discussion

⇒ *What makes a space safe?*

Students doing teacher trainings often have included an activity that involves teachers reflecting on their own experiences in school. Teachers are asked to think about how they felt at school, which people they considered allies, what “ally” behavior looked like for them, whether there were any safe spaces for them to go to, what made those spaces feel safe, what made other spaces feel unsafe and related questions. It’s a very useful exercise to put teachers into the mindset of students

## What Can Teachers Do? (continued)

It's a  
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students

and helps to create empathy for students' experiences. It also helps drive home the idea that all students need to feel safe and supported in school, and that LGBT students are not asking for "special" rights or treatment.

⇒ *What are some strategies teachers can use for helping to create a Safe Space/Zone Program that is organized and visible?*

Most Safe Space/Zone Programs include the display of a sticker, sign and/or poster (often designed and produced by students) that communicates through a symbol or slogan that a space is officially "safe." Teachers can put stickers and signs on their classroom doors to let all students in the school know they are participating in the program, and on their walls, desks and other visible places inside their classrooms. In addition, participating teachers can create a space in their classroom where they keep materials such as school and district anti-harassment and nondiscrimination policies, pamphlets on coming-out, referral information for local social-service providers and youth support groups, and LGBT-inclusive books and videos.

**Supporting Resource:** "Tools for Developing and Implementing a Safe Schools Campaign," available at [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org), is a how-to guide that offers strategies for preparing students, faculty and staff to be effective allies to LGBT students.

**Reporting Back: Sharing Your Ideas** (20–30 minutes)

The four groups should hang their brainstorm sheets on the wall and choose a reporter for their group. Each reporter should take a few minutes to share the ideas generated during their group's brainstorming session, pose any questions their group has come up with, and answer questions from the rest of the group. The whole group should then make a final decision about which actions will be presented in the training, as well as who will be responsible for doing further research, developing each part of the script and presenting each action. At your next training team meeting, discuss the work you've done in developing the content of the training, and brainstorm ideas for transitioning from one section to the next.