

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



**How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks**  
60-Minute Module Series

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# TRAINING

## Training Guide

**National Park Service**  
**Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



# HOW TO SUCCEED WITH VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS

## 60-Minute Module Series

Program Preparation  
Program Planning  
Motivation  
Needs Assessment  
Designing Jobs  
Recruitment  
Interviewing  
Orientation  
Training  
Safety Management  
Supervision  
Delegation  
Performance Reviews  
Recognition

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# INTRODUCTION

Volunteers need specific skills in order to do their jobs. They must either bring the skills with them or they must be provided with the necessary training to gain the skills. Training is a serious commitment of staff time that must always be balanced against the commitment of time that the volunteer brings to the job. However, properly organized and presented training shows that you are professional, that you expect volunteers to be professional and that you want to make sure volunteers are given all the necessary tools to do the best job possible. Thus, the up-front investment often pays for itself many times over through the excellent work done by well-trained volunteers.

The training given to volunteers must be of the highest quality available. Whenever possible, and appropriate, volunteers should be included in formal training given to paid staff. In some cases, such training may in part determine when the volunteers begin their jobs. In other cases, training may be given as needed by paid staff or by other volunteers, by local colleges, or even by professional consultants. Training may be conducted on-line, or by self-study, correspondence, or by any other means you might discover.

In addition to formal training, informal training, in the form of coaching or counseling, offers many valuable opportunities for volunteers to improve their job performance. Coaching gives volunteers the chance to gain and practice new skills, while counseling gives them an opportunity to assess and to refine their skills.

# PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The **Purpose** of this module is to explore ways to ensure VIPs get the training they need to do their jobs effectively.

## Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the difference between formal and informal training.
2. Summarize the three basic questions that job training should answer.
3. Compare the investment in training resources with the services donated by the volunteer.

# GENERAL NOTES TO TRAINER

1. This workshop is in a suggested format. Feel free, however, to personalize it to meet your needs. This module can be presented in conjunction with the Orientation module to make up a complete one hour block of time.
2. This module is also about providing necessary training for volunteers commensurate with their needs (including safety), and with their commitment to the job. Whenever possible, volunteers should be included in training given to paid staff.
3. Appropriate safety training should be given to volunteers. Safety training and equipment provided should be at the same level as that provided to paid staff.
4. The amount and type of training provided should always be in line with the commitment from the volunteer.
5. Many additional resources are available on how to provide training. The Resources section, at the end of the Trainer's Guide, is an excellent place to start.

# WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Transparency Handout	Section	Method of Presentation	Time
T-1 T-2	H-1 Introduction Introductory Comments Learning Objectives Key Concepts	Lecture	3 minutes
T-2	H-1 H-2 Concept 1 Formal vs. informal training	Discussion	6 minutes
T-2	H-1 H-2 Concept 2 Highest quality training	Discussion Presentation	6 minutes
T-2	H-1 H-2 Concept 3 Three elements of job training	Presentation Discussion	6 minutes
T-2	H-1 H-2 Concept 4 Commitment of NPS resources to training must be balanced with VIP services donated	Discussion	6 minutes
T-2	H-1 H-2 Summary/Wrap - Up/ Evaluation	Summary Remarks	3 minutes

**TOTAL TIME: 30 minutes**

# TRAINER'S NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

Time: 3 minutes

### T-1: Learning Objectives

Share brief introductory comments including the purpose of job training for volunteers and learning objectives.

### T-2: Key Concepts

This section is built on **four Key Concepts**.

### H-1: Key Concepts



## CONCEPT 1

Time: 6 minutes

Training for volunteers can be either formal or informal.

T-2: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

H-2: Tips for  
Training VIPs

**Define formal training:**

Training which is scheduled and usually involves a group of students, a variety of training resources and a variety of training techniques.

**Define informal training:**

Typically one-on-one techniques such as **coaching**, where a particular skill is described and practiced and improved; **counseling**, where discussions and questions are used to help volunteers discover for themselves how to improve their performance; and **self-study**, where the volunteer uses books, video tapes, computer programs, on-line opportunities, etc.

## CONCEPT 2

Time: 6 minutes

**Training for volunteers should be of the highest quality available.**

### T-2: Key Concepts

### H-1: Key Concepts

### H-2: Tips for Training VIPs

Ask participants to describe what kind of job training they give their volunteers, including how long training is, who gives it, what job it is for, etc. Try to get a variety of responses.

Note which uses resources effectively:

- Make good use of limited training resources
- Include volunteers in training for paid staff
- Tap into local training opportunities
- Partner training with other districts, divisions, parks
- Get instructor costs donated
- Use volunteer expertise to help train
- Use skilled trainers, variety of training techniques

## CONCEPT 3

Time: 6 minutes

**Job training for volunteers should explain the purpose of the job, how to perform the job, and how the volunteer relates to other staff in performing the job.**

### T-2: Key Concepts

### H-1: Key Concepts

### H-2: Tips for Training VIPs

Tell participants that all job training should answer three questions:

#### **First, what is the purpose of the job?**

Ask participants how they make sure new volunteers understand the need for the job they are being trained to do.

#### **Second, how should the job be performed?**

Ask participants for examples of specific instructions that help volunteers do their job better. Note that such instructions will generally fall under three categories:

- What you should do
- What you should not do
- What you should do if ...(emergencies, special situations, etc.)

#### **Third, how does the volunteer relate to other park staff?**

Ask participants if their volunteers have had problems resulting from not knowing who their supervisor is, who is in charge, what other key staff people do, how their position relates to others, etc.

Training is an investment in future performance. We want to see the time and effort put into training volunteers “pay off” in the end through the time and skills donated by the volunteer.

**CONCEPT 4:**

**Time: 6 minutes**

**The NPS resources committed to volunteer training must be balanced against the services donated by the volunteer.**

**T-2: Key Concepts**

**H-1: Key Concepts**

**H-2: Tips for Training  
VIPs**

Ask for examples of when the investment paid off.

## SUMMARY/WRAP-UP/EVALUATION

Time: 3 minutes

**T-2: Key Concepts**

**H-1: Key Concepts**

Review the key concepts and the importance of training to the volunteer and the agency.

**END 30-MINUTE TRAINING**

# SUGGESTION FOR EXPANDED ACTIVITIES

1. Ask participants to prepare an outline of a proposed training to be given for a specific volunteer job. include speakers, topics, locations, time schedule, activities, exercises and resources.
2. Have participants create a video providing specific job-related training for volunteers: i.e., training on loading and firing of historic weapons, training on how to be helpful to visitors at the visitor center desk, training on how to paint doors, etc.
3. Demonstrate an informal training activity in front of the class using two class members. One can take on the role of the volunteer and the other can be the coach. Choose something relatively simple like how to greet visitors coming into the visitor center.

# RESOURCES

1. McCurley, Steve and Rick Lynch. *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*, Chapter 7 Orientation and Training, Heritage Arts Publications, 1996. Available at [www.pointsoflight.org/catalog](http://www.pointsoflight.org/catalog) or [www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)
2. Stallings, Betty. *Training Busy Staff to Succeed with Volunteers: Building Commitment and Competence in Staff/Volunteer Teams, Building Better Skills*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998. Available from [www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)
3. Vineyard, Sue. *The Great Trainer's Guide*, Heritage Arts Publications, 1995. Available through [www.pointsoflight.org/catalog](http://www.pointsoflight.org/catalog)

Other resources that may be available

4. McCurley, Steve and Sue Vineyard. *101 Ideas for Volunteer Programs*, 1986, Heritage Arts Publications, 1807 Prairie, Downers Grove, IL 60515. (312) 964-1194.
5. McCurley, Steve and Sue Vineyard. *101 More Ideas for Volunteer Programs*, 1995, Heritage Arts Publications, 1807 Prairie, Downers Grove, IL 60515. (312) 964-1194.





# **T** RANSPARENCIES

# Guide to Transparencies

**T-1:** Learning Objectives

**T-2:** Key Concepts

# Learning Objectives

1. Explain the difference between formal and informal training
2. Summarize three basic questions that job training should answer
3. Compare agency investment in training with volunteer service provided

# Key Concepts

## Concept 1

Training for volunteers can be either formal or informal.

## Concept 2

Training for volunteers should be of the highest quality available.

## Concept 3

Job training for volunteers should explain the purpose of the job, how to perform the job, and how the volunteer relates to other staff in performing the job.

## Concept 4

The NPS resources committed to volunteer training must be balanced against the services donated by the volunteer.

# HANDOUTS

# Guide to Handouts

**H-1:** Key Concepts of Training

**H-2:** Tips for Training VIPs

# Key Concepts of Training

**The purpose of training volunteers is to improve their skills or behavior in such a way that they do their job more effectively.**

## Concept 1

**Training for volunteers can be either formal or informal.**

Formal training is usually scheduled, sometimes in a classroom, and usually involves a group of students. Often, more than one instructor is used, as well as a variety of training resources and training techniques. Informal training can involve coaching, where specific skills are demonstrated, then practiced and improved; counseling, where discussion and questions are used to help volunteers discover how to improve their performance; or self-study, where volunteers use books, video tapes, computer programs, etc.

## Concept 2

**Training for volunteers should be of the highest quality available.**

Give your volunteers the best training you can. Be resourceful. Include volunteers in training for paid staff. Tap into local training opportunities. Partner training with other districts, divisions, and parks. Get outside instructor costs donated or at reduced rates. Use volunteer expertise to help develop and deliver the training. Use skilled trainers and a wide variety of training techniques. Volunteers should get the clear message that you value their time, skills, and willingness to learn.

## Concept 3

**Job training for volunteers should explain the purpose of the job, how to perform the job, and how the volunteer relates to other staff in performing the job.**

Volunteers need to know how their job relates to overall park operations and to the park mission. They need to know how to do their job, including what they should, and should not do, and what to do in specific situations, like emergencies. They also need to know how their position relates to the rest of the staff and should know who is in charge of their project, who else is working on it, and where to go if they need help.

## Concept 4

**The NPS resources committed to volunteer training must be balanced against the services donated by the volunteer.**

It is only reasonable to consider the total commitment of time and skills that the volunteer has agreed to when deciding what an appropriate investment in training resources would be. If the commitment is there and the attitude is there, make the investment!

# Tips for Training VIPs

Always include instruction on the purpose of the job, how to perform the job, and how the volunteer relates to other staff when doing the job.

Bridge the gap between the skill level of the volunteer and the skills needed to do the job.

Use both formal and informal training techniques, as appropriate.

Offer the highest quality training available.

Tap into all available resources, including paid staff training and non-NPS training.

Use skilled paid staff and volunteer expertise to help develop and deliver training.

Include training on appropriate safety skills and messages.

Balance the training resources committed against the services donated by the volunteer.

Schedule training so that skills taught can be applied to the job in a timely manner.

Use existing standards to maintain the quality of training.

Define and meet mandatory training needs for each volunteer job.