



Ten Tips To Becoming A Better NSP Instructor



Many of us are already NSP Instructors teaching courses in one or more of the five National Ski Patrol education disciplines:

- Avalanche
- Instructor Development
- Mountain Travel & Rescue
- Outdoor Emergency Care
- Outdoor Emergency Transportation

Could we become better instructors?

Certainly, none of us are perfect, although we have many extremely effective and successful instructors in NSP. We've compiled a few tips taken from the NSP Instructor Development textbook, the Instructor Development Instructor Manual, and a few outside sources as well that may help us become more effective and successful in teaching our courses. Chances are, if you are a successful NSP Instructor, you may already be using some or all of the following tips in your classes.

Also, we have provided you with a page so that you can share with us some of the successful teaching tips that you use or have observed in your educational experiences.

Tip No. 1: Be the Man/Woman: Walk the Walk

Since you're the instructor, you usually walk into the classroom or onto the slopes with some built-in degree of assumed credibility. You must insure that you keep and develop that credibility with your students throughout your course. How do you do that?

- be on time
- be prepared
- be professional
- be knowledgeable
- be a model of what you teach
- be a leader
- take control when necessary
- stay current with your knowledge

Tip No. 2: Listen

Listening is one of the basic communication skills needed to be an effective educator. But do we really know how to listen effectively?

- focus on what they are saying
- focus on what they are doing (non-verbal messages)
- listen as much as you speak
- learn from your students, they will teach you also
- ask didactic questions to solicit knowledge
- ask rhetorical questions to motivate them to think
- by listening effectively, you will be able to adjust your teaching as necessary

Tip No. 3: Mix it up

We all like to teach the way we learn best, using our primary learning style. But, as you know, we must adjust our teaching and lessons to accommodate all learning styles; visual, auditory and tactile/kinesthetic. By using various teaching styles and tools, we can keep the students motivated and the class flowing.

- keep it fluid/keep it moving
- address attention spans by changing activities every 15-20 minutes
- make them move
- be flexible and ready to adjust

Tip No. 4: Go Team

Adults, unlike children, are active learners and want to be involved in directing and designing their learning. Our students usually come to us motivated to learn our material, and they come with a great deal of life experiences. Tap into those experiences and their existing education to enhance your teaching and their learning.

- clarify your expectations for them right away
- they will usually rise to those expectations if they know what you want
- give them something to discuss, create, build, write, draw, experiment with
- these type of activities tend to keep them energized
- adults absorb and learn faster when they know the “why”
- as always, try to integrate new learning with what they already know
- learning new skills and material can provide the student with self esteem
- learn and use their life experiences to get them involved

Example I use: What was your best and worst learning/teaching experience?
What I don't like about the CD course – we don't get the gems of your input!

Tip No. 5: Do Unto Others

We should treat our students the way we would like to be treated were we in their shoes taking our class. This is especially true during feedback and evaluations. Singling out or embarrassing a student for their mistakes is not only unkind, it is counterproductive to your teaching and their learning.

- adults may tend to take their mistakes personally
- their self-esteem and ego are at risk, so be sensitive
- focus on their strengths
- redirect negatives to positives or new topics
- feedback should be praiseworthy or objectively constructive
- treat them with respect
- don't know it all, you are human too

Tip No. 6: Be There

We're teaching our students to be there for the skiing/snowboarding public, so we need to be there for them.

- focus on your class and what you are doing
- focus on what they are doing so you can adjust if necessary
- be supporting and approachable, but not condescending
- create a learning environment where students are not afraid to make mistakes
- they can learn from those mistakes, and we can help them learn
- respond, and listen to responses
- make yourself available at times other than class hours if possible
- provide e-mail or phone contacts if possible

Tip No. 7: Students Are People Too

Unlike child students, our students come to us with an array of life experiences, different backgrounds, varying beliefs and accumulated knowledge. They are experienced consumers of education and knowledge, and each one is different. Many come with college and advanced degrees.

- we must respect that we are dealing with experienced adults
- we must respect their backgrounds, life experiences, and pride
- they have made the decision to come to us to learn
- make it real
- we should make their education with us relevant to their experiences
- they like to be physically & psychologically comfortable
- no long lectures, not long sitting
- respect their feelings, their dignity and their self esteem
- provide food, snacks, breaks and comfort
- keep them safe while in our care

Tip No. 8: Rah, Rah, Rah, Sis, Boom, Bah

We have a unique opportunity as instructors to affect people's lives, enhance their self esteem, provide additional self-worth, and train them to serve the community with skills few attain.

- teach with a passion for your craft
- show enthusiasm for what your teaching and how you are teaching it
- continuously evaluate to show you care, they can make you better
- be supportive and approachable
- give invisible time to your students
- watch, communicate, and learn with other good instructors
- evaluate ourselves at every opportunity

Tip No. 9: Work it, baby!

As instructors, we are constantly on stage and putting on a show of education. Try to make that show entertaining as well as informative.

- develop a teaching style of your own
- work the room/slopes
- work the students and other instructors
- we deal with serious topics, but don't take yourself too seriously
- have fun, use humor, but don't compromise the subject content or integrity
- find their learning style and teach them how to learn
- keep it moving

Tip No. 10: Follow Through/Follow Up

After the class, we have additional responsibilities before we can call our class complete. This is a very important part of our instructor responsibilities that sometimes even the best instructors put off or take lightly.

- answer any questions or issues not resolved in class with your students
- send thank you notes or e-mails to instructors, helpers, host facilities...etc.
- file course completion records in a timely manner
- send out student completion certificates if not given out at class
- send follow up e-mail or letter to students thanking them
- reinforce with students the next step for them to take
- evaluate your course evaluations and adjust your teaching as necessary

This is your challenge as a teacher of adults. Beyond teaching your subject, you have the opportunity to inspire confidence and passion in another human being. That kind of teaching changes lives, and that kind of teaching rewards your life. Take the challenge!

Thank you for attending our Instructor Development break-out session!

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