

Selected programs on effective communication



Jean-luc Doumont provides help with and runs training sessions on effective oral presentations, written documents, graphical displays, and related topics of scientific, technical, or business communication. He also trains instructors and facilitates any process in need of structuring. In hundreds of sessions, he has addressed audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and nationalities, in English, French, Dutch, and Spanish. He is an engineer from the University of Louvain and a doctor in applied physics from Stanford University.

SIMPLE YET SOLID PRINCIPLES of strategy and structure, supported by real-life examples and tailored exercises with individual feedback—these are the foundations of our own training approach. Thus, no unnecessary theory, no irrelevant illustrations, and no canned exercises; instead,

- a high-level, language-independent approach, focusing on macroscopic issues such as strategy and structure (not on microscopic issues such as usage or grammar);
- a customized approach, with most examples selected from sample documents provided by the participants (not the same generic examples for all our audiences);
- a contextualized approach, with individual feedback on real-life written documents and oral presentations (not academic, textbook-like homework assignments).

We always tailor the training's contents, duration, and method to objectives, audience, and constraints: we propose programs on many topics, in various languages, from an hour to a week, from individual coaching to formal, large-auditorium lectures. Without surprise, some of our most popular training options are 90-minute talks to large groups, and half-day workshops or longer programs of a day or two for moderate-size groups (at least 8 people for momentum, and more typically 15 to 25). The next few pages describe selected programs in more detail.

The learning approach of most programs is definitely active. Participants learn by writing, speaking, and graphing, but also by analyzing one another's texts, presentations, and displays, and by sharing their experience with the group. As trainers, we strive to structure their knowledge and develop their skills, not to dazzle them with overabundant or undigested material.

We attach much importance to securing an appropriate room, too, in an effort to favor group interaction and elicit learning.



Fundamentals of communication

Our programs on written documents, oral presentations, and graphical displays build on the same fundamental principles. To avoid ineffective redundancy among the various programs, it is best to preface them with a discussion of these principles, as one morning session, for a group of up to 25 participants.

Concepts

Basic principles
Planning (strategy)

One half-day



Effective oral presentations

Our compact training program on oral presentations consists of two mornings of group discussion (up to 25 participants) and two practice sessions for each subgroup of 5 participants. It includes written feedback on Practice 2, as a way to identify the skills already mastered and those to be further developed.

	Concepts 1 Designing and delivering the presentation	One half-day
A week later (so participants can first prepare the presentation)	Practice 1 First exercise presentation (without slides or questions)	One half-day per subgroup
A few days later	Concepts 2 Creating the slides Answering questions	One half-day
One to two weeks later (so participants can, again, prepare their presentation)	Practice 2 Second exercise presentation (with slides and questions)	One half-day per subgroup



Effective written documents

Our compact training program on written documents consists of three mornings of group discussion (up to 25 participants), two “homework assignments” allowing participants to apply the principles discussed to real situations, and one 15-minute individual tutorial. Most of the examples discussed in class are selected from sample documents sent by the participants.

	Concepts 1 Designing the document (structuring the contents)	One half-day
A few days later	Concepts 2 Drafting the document (paragraphs, sentences, ...)	One half-day
One to two weeks later (so participants can first complete an assignment)	Concepts 3 Drafting (cont.), formatting, and revising the document	One half-day
Usually on the same day as Concepts 3 (afternoon)	Tutorials Individual discussion of the assigned exercises	One half-day (15 minutes per participant)



Effective graphical displays

Our compact training program on graphical displays consists of two mornings of group discussion (up to 25 participants): first a conceptual session, illustrated by sample graphs sent ahead of time by the participants, then a follow-up session, during which we discuss graphs created by the participants after the first session. The program does not cover software tools; instead, it focuses on choosing an appropriate graphical representation for a given question or message, and then on optimizing the resulting display for effective communication.

A few weeks/months later
(so participants can first
put concepts into practice)

Concepts

Choosing the right graph
Optimizing the display

One half-day

Follow-up

Discussing graphical displays
created after the first session

One half-day



Effective training programs

Our compact *train-the-trainer* program is based on the simple but fundamental observation that “teaching is not learning.” Going away from comfortable but often ineffective lecturing, it focuses more on planning, designing, and running activities that engage learners and make them interact with the material. It consists of a day of group discussion (up to 25 participants) and one practice session for each subgroup of 5 participants.

One to two weeks later
(so participants can first
prepare a training session)

Concepts

Planning, designing,
and running activities

One full day

Practice

Running (part of)
a training session

One half-day per subgroup

