



Guidance on Training Room & Seating Layouts

Membership Support Factsheet 43



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This factsheet provides guidance on training room and seating layouts for face-to-face training courses and what style is the right one for you.

When delivering a face-to-face course, providing the right room layout is as important as the training course content.

Ensuring delegates are seated in a way that enables them to easily communicate, make notes and ask questions all contributes to a positive learning experience that is memorable and enjoyable.

Of course, as a provider, you might be limited with room space or have too many delegates to provide the preferred room layout. However, bear in mind that organising a room and seating layout that aligns with the type of learning you are delivering provides an optimal learning experience.

TEACHING STYLE & OBJECTIVES

First of all, the room seating arrangements must support the course learning objectives and your general teaching style. You also need to consider who you want to be the focus of the group:

- **Learner-Centred Group:** Here, group work and delegate conversations are critical, so choose a seating arrangement that maximises interaction.
- **Trainer-Focused Group:** If the course is heavily focused on a presentation, or your lecture, make sure you configure the room so all delegates can see you and the presentation slides/projector.



LEVEL OF DELEGATE INTERACTION

- Large Groups: Delegates engage in discussions which involve the whole room.
- Small Groups: Regular interactions in pairs or small group exercises.
- Minimal: Interaction mainly flows from the trainer to the delegate, and delegate-to-delegate conversations are infrequent. Minimal interactions are useful if there is a focus on individual work or a text/exam at the end of the course.

DELEGATE GROUP SIZE

The number of delegates within your group often dictates the available seating options. Yet your preferred seating arrangement doesn't need to be abandoned if you have a particularly large or small group. There are various seating options which can accommodate most class sizes, it might just be a case of being creative.

CLASSROOM SIZE AND SHAPE

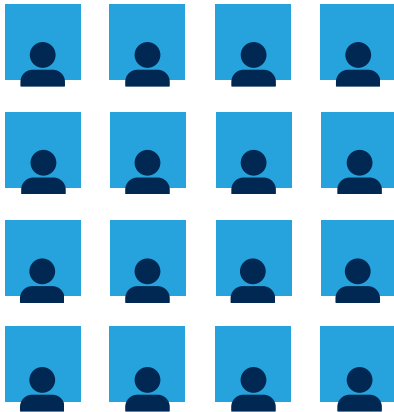
Before you start moving your desks around, make sure your preferred seating arrangement can work within the space you have. Be mindful of obstructions like support beams, poles, walls and other fixtures that can't be moved, and some configurations may not be feasible with certain classrooms. For many trainers, the presentation slides or flipcharts are a major focus in their delivery. Therefore it is important that delegates can clearly see without too much difficulty or strain.

For cluttered rooms or those with many support columns, consider having multiple presentation screens on different walls of the room.

DISTRACTIONS

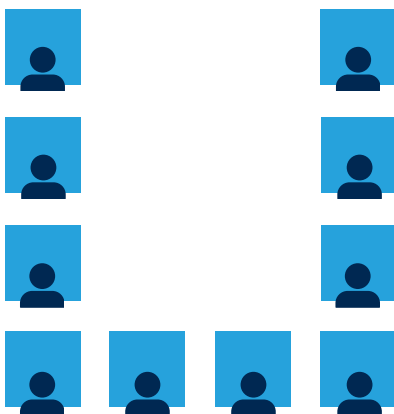
Before beginning the course, it is worth undertaking a quick assessment of distractions that might hinder learning. These might include windows overlooking a busy street, noise from lobbies or other rooms, water fountains or features. Where possible, try to accommodate these distractions and keep them out of the delegates' line of sight.

RECOMMENDED LAYOUTS



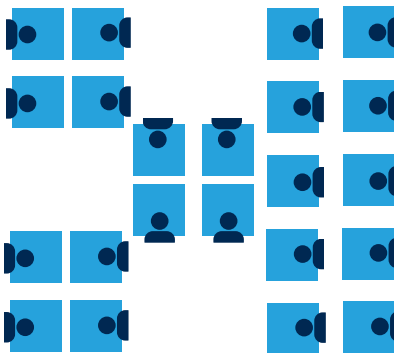
Rows/Columns

This is a classic classroom and the most common training room layout. It complements courses that are content-rich and revolve around 'chalk and talk' facilitator-led sessions or presentations. This layout also enables delegates to be more focused on coursework and independent assignments. This layout can also be used with any group size, but be aware that a larger group will experience uneven levels of interaction as delegates in the front row will participate more than those in the back may lose focus.



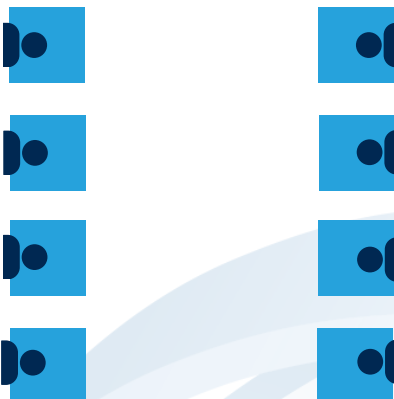
Horseshoe

This popular layout supports both delegate-to-delegate interaction and teacher-to-delegate interaction. The group can easily interact with each other, and facilitators have ample opportunity to work with delegates one-on-one. Courses that emphasise discussions and presentations typically function well with this configuration.



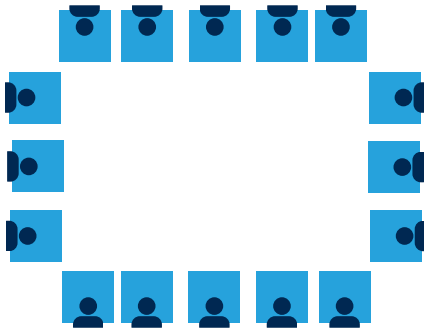
Combination

This configuration is great for classes with delegates of varying learning levels and methods of learning. Mix and match any configuration to best fit your needs and your delegates' abilities. For example, set up part of the room as rows for delegates who need to focus on individual work and another part as a mini horseshoe for delegates who require more discussion-based activities.



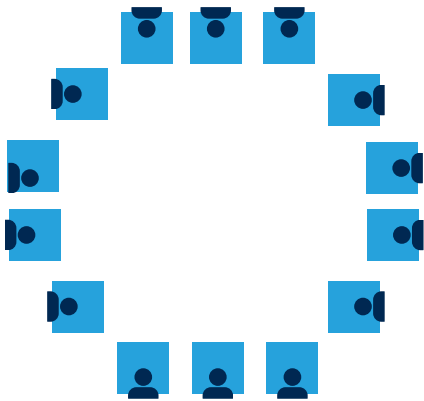
Fashion Runway

This layout is recommended for discussions and lecture-based clients. Suited to smaller groups, this layout puts a real emphasis on the facilitator, who can use the runway between the two rows of facing desks to move around and engage with every individual in the group.



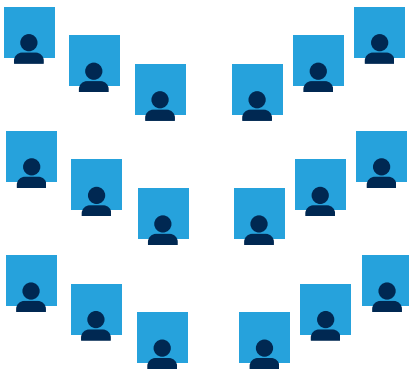
Boardroom Style

Using a boardroom layout has both pros and cons: Whilst it facilitates conversation and discussion, it is difficult to break delegates up into smaller groups for paired discussions. Often used with senior or executive groups, with the facilitator sat at the table, this layout ensures that everyone can easily contribute to the session and is neither learner or teacher-centric, giving a feeling of equality in the room.



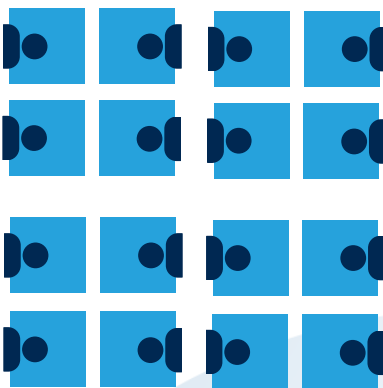
Workshop Circle

Sitting your group in a circle is perfect for discussion-based seminars, which do not have any presentation slides or lecterns. The benefit of this configuration is that it facilitates informal and formal conversations and enables each individual delegate to give their contributions. However, without desks, workshop circles do not lend themselves to note-taking or using laptops.



Stadium

A variation of the class row configuration and runway, desks are grouped in clusters but all facing the same direction. Like runway, this layout is best suited to teacher-centric classes.



Pods

Clustering the desks into small pod groups promotes delegate-to-delegate interaction. Using this arrangement, delegates are more likely to 'bond' in smaller groups and develop their communication, problem-solving and collaboration skills. These clusters offer comfortable environments for individuals to share their ideas. However, it can be offset by the fact that the groups may 'creep' into off-task conversations with large increases in noise and distractions.

We hope you found this factsheet helpful.