It is the responsibility of supervisors and managers to utilize available resources to train, qualify, and develop their employees.

On-the-job training (OJT) is one of the best training methods because it is planned, organized, and conducted at the employee's worksite. OJT will generally be the primary method used for broadening employee skills and increasing productivity. It is particularly appropriate for developing proficiency skills unique to an employee's job - especially jobs that are relatively easy to learn and require locally owned equipment and facilities.

Morale, productivity, and professionalism will normally be high in those organizations that employ a sound OJT program.

An analysis of the major job requirements (identified in the position description and performance plan) and related knowledges, skills, and abilities form the basis for setting up an OJT plan. To be most effective, OJT requires:

- Thorough planning
- Instructor-coaches who have been trained to teach OJT
- Identified competencies or tasks that the employee-learner must learn
- A system for recording the successful accomplishment of those competencies or tasks.

To have a successful OJT program, supervisors need to assign a qualified coach to each employee involved in OJT. A qualified coach is one who has demonstrated thorough proficiency in the job and has been trained to administer OJT instruction. It is the responsibility of the coach to plan training carefully and conduct it effectively.

On-the-Job Training

The most frequently used training method, especially in smaller businesses, is on-the-job training (OJT). OJT uses more experienced and skilled employees, whether coworkers or supervisors, to train less-skilled and experienced employees. OJT takes many forms and can be supplemented with classroom training. Instruction by coworkers or supervisors at the job site often occurs on an informal basis and is characterized by the following:

- It has not been carefully thought out or prepared.
- It is done on an ad hoc basis with no predetermined content or process.
- No objectives or goals have been developed or referred to during training.
- The trainers are chosen on the basis of technical expertise, not training ability.
- Trainers have no formal training in how to train.

Formal OJT programs are quite different. They are typically conducted by employees identified as having superior (not necessarily the best) technical knowledge/skills and who can effectively use one-on-one instructional techniques. Because conducting one-on-one training is not a skill most people develop on their own, organizations with formal OJT programs provide "train the trainer" training for these employees.
Formal OJT programs should follow a carefully developed sequence of learning events. Learning is usually achieved through the following steps:

- The trainee observes a more experienced and skilled employee (the trainer) performing job-related tasks.
- The procedures and techniques used are discussed before, during, and after the trainer has demonstrated how the job tasks are performed.
- When the trainer determines that the trainee is ready, the trainee begins performing the job tasks.
- The trainer provides continuing guidance and feedback.
- The trainee is gradually given more and more of the job to perform until he can adequately perform the entire job on his own.

The generalized instructional process just described is formalized in more detail as the job instruction technique.

**JOB INSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE (JIT)**

Job Instruction technique (JIT) uses a behavioral strategy with a focus on skill development, but some factual and procedural knowledge objectives are usually involved as well. JIT was developed during World War II and continues to be a standard in evaluating OJT programs. JIT consists of four steps—prepare, present, try out, and follow-up—as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. JIT Instruction/Learning Sequence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basis of Instruction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prepare</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Break down the job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prepare an instruction plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Put the learner at ease.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Present</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tell.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Show.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Try Out</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have the learner &quot;talk through&quot; the job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have the learner instruct the supervisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>on how the job is done.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Let the learner do the job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide feedback, both positive and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Let the learner practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow-Up</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Check progress frequently at first.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tell the learner whom to go to for help.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gradually taper off progress checks.</td>
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</table>

Prepare
Preparation and follow-up are the two areas that are most often ignored in OJT programs. Preparation should include a written breakdown of the job. The person responsible for the OJT
may believe that, because of a familiarity with the job, written documentation is unnecessary. To ignore this step, however, is to miss seeing the job through the eyes of the trainee. A trainer who knows the job well is likely to be able to do a number of things without thinking, and these may be overlooked in training. A systematic analysis and documentation of the job tasks will ensure that all the points are covered in the training.

The next step is to prepare an instructional plan. First, the trainer must determine what the trainee already knows. The person analysis portion of a needs assessment provides this information. The trainer will need to review any data available from a completed TNA. If no TNA is available, checking personnel records and interviewing the trainee are ways of determining what the trainee knows and what training should focus on.

Finally, putting the trainee at ease is just as important in OJT as it is in the classroom. You must take care to create a comfortable learning atmosphere. One way to create such an environment is to provide the trainee with an orientation to the OJT/JIT learning process. This orientation may or may not be provided by the JIT trainer. In this orientation you should help trainees understand their role and the role of the trainer in the process. The importance of trainee listening and questioning should be emphasized. Familiarizing trainees with the steps in the JIT process will reduce their anxiety because they will know what to expect.

**Present**
The four activities of this stage are tell, show, demonstrate, and explain. First, tell and show. As the trainer you would provide an overview of the job while showing the trainee the different aspects of the job. You are not actually doing the job, but pointing out where buttons are pushed, where materials are located, where to stand, and so on. When finished, you demonstrate how to do the job and explain why it is done in that manner. If the job involves many components or is complex, you should cover only one segment at a time, in the same order in which segments occur when the job is performed. During the demonstration you would indicate why the procedure is performed in that particular way, emphasizing key learning points and important safety instructions.

**Try Out**
Before actually trying the behaviors, the trainee describes, to the trainer, how to do the job. This step provides a safe transition from watching and listening to doing (symbolic rehearsal). The trainee then attempts to perform the job and the trainer is able to provide instant feedback. The trainer should consider that any errors that take place are probably a function of the training, not the trainee. With this notion in mind, the focus will be on improving the method of instruction rather than on the inability of the trainee to comprehend. In any case it is useful to allow the trainee to learn from mistakes, provided they are not too costly. Allowing the trainee to see the consequences of using an incorrect procedure, such as having to scrap the product, reinforces the use of the correct procedures. Such an occurrence becomes a form of negative reinforcement, because using the correct procedures avoids the scrap. The trainer can help by questioning the trainee about her actions while the trainee is performing the job and by guiding the trainee in identifying the correct procedures.

**Follow-Up**
There is an inappropriate tendency for informal OJT programs to consider training completed after the previous step. The trainer must check the trainees’ work often enough to prevent incorrect or bad work habits from developing. It is important that trainees feel comfortable asking for help during these initial solo efforts. The trainer should take every opportunity to reinforce trainees in areas where they are performing well. As trainees demonstrate proficiency in the job, progress checks can taper off until eventually they are eliminated.
COACHING

Coaching is the process of providing one-on-one guidance and instruction to improve knowledge, skills, and work performance. Usually, coaching is directed at employees with performance deficiencies, but it can also be used as a motivational tool for those performing adequately. Although coworkers can be coaches, especially in team-based organizations, more typically it is the supervisor who acts as coach. One analysis suggests that in the past supervisors spent, on the average, only about 10 percent of their time coaching subordinates. In today’s organizations they typically spend more than 50 percent of their time in such activities. Although many different models describe how the coaching process works, the format generally follows an outline. The following outline looks at the process from the coach’s perspective:

1. Understand the trainee’s job, the KSAs and resources required to meet performance expectations, and the trainee’s current level of performance.
2. Meet with the trainee and mutually agree on the performance objectives to be achieved.
3. Mutually arrive at a plan and schedule for achieving the performance objectives.
4. At the work site, show the trainee how to achieve the objectives, observe the trainee perform, and then provide feedback. This process is similar to JIT.
5. Repeat step 4 until performance improves.

As can be seen, coaching is similar to JIT, involving one-on-one instruction in how to perform a task. A key factor in the learning process is the interpersonal relationship between the coach and the trainee.

Even though coaching is clearly a skill-focused method, it can also be used for knowledge development (e.g., facts and procedures), although other methods are better for transmitting knowledge. Like the OJT trainer, the coach must be skilled both in how to do the task(s) and in how to train others to do them. HRD professionals typically do not perform the role of coach (unless they are coaching other HRD professionals). Rather, they train supervisors in the coaching process and develop the supervisors’ interpersonal skills to make them more effective.

Mentoring is considered to be a form of coaching in which an ongoing relationship is developed between a senior and junior employee. The purpose of mentoring is to provide the more junior employee with guidance and a clear understanding of how the organization goes about its business. Whereas coaching focuses on the technical aspects of the job, mentoring focuses more on improving the employee’s fit within the organization. Thus coaching emphasizes skill development, and mentoring emphasizes attitude development. Generally, mentoring is conducted only for management-level employees, though in some cases it is applied at lower levels. In the past mentoring was primarily an informal activity, but it is becoming formalized in many organizations. The concerns about untrained OJT trainers discussed earlier apply to mentoring as well.

TRAINING THE TRAINER FOR OJT

For OJT programs to be effective, the trainers must be motivated to serve in the training role, be skilled as trainers, and possess the interpersonal skills necessary to interact effectively with those they train. The components for training the trainer should include the following:

- The company’s formal OJT process (e.g., JIT), the policies and support provided by the organization
- Interpersonal skills and feedback techniques
- Principles of adult learning
Trainers' normal job responsibilities should be reduced while they are training others. Some reduction in productivity must be anticipated and built into job expectations. As with any other job assignment, performance as a trainer should be evaluated periodically with feedback and appropriate reinforcement.

**STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF OJT**

OJT is clearly a useful method for skill enhancement. Trainees learn their KSAs in the actual job situation, thus transfer of training occurs naturally. An additional benefit is that the OJT process will provide new employees with a rapid orientation to how the company operates. It also has the potential of developing more positive relationships among older and new employees and between supervisors and their subordinates.

A major concern in OJT is the competency of the trainer. The trainer must possess the technical competence, the training competence, and the motivation to train. Without all these characteristics, training is not likely to be successful. In addition, the organization must provide the trainer with enough time away from her regular job to do the training. This accommodation not only leads to better training, but demonstrates the organization's commitment to its OJT program.

**Cost**

OJT offers some clear cost advantages if it is done effectively. Trainees and trainers are both at the job site performing job activities. Though neither the trainee nor the trainer will be producing at full capacity, they are at least producing something. With other techniques, neither the trainer nor the trainee is engaged in producing the organization's products or services while training is going on. Also OJT does not require the purchase of expensive training materials such as simulators, games, or computer-based training modules. All the materials are part of the normal work equipment.

OJT also speeds up the learning process. No delay separates training from its application to the work situation. In addition, some evidence indicates that one-on-one training produces faster learning that is more resistant to forgetting. 58 The more efficient the training, the less costly it is. One cost concern in implementing OJT is the cost of training the trainers. Unlike other methods, for a start-up OJT system most if not all of the trainers will need training. In addition, while other methods have one trainer for many trainees, this method uses one-on-one training. The drop in productivity due to having the more skilled employees conducting training must be added into the cost. In addition, companies should expect some increased waste, breakage, and downtime due to inexperienced trainees operating the equipment.

**Control of Content and Process**

The content and process of learning in OJT is controlled primarily by the trainer during the "prepare" and "present" stages of training. As training progresses to the "tryout" and "follow-up" stages, the trainee and trainer jointly control the content and process, because it is the trainee's actions that determine what the next learning module will be. The training moves as quickly or as slowly as necessary for the trainee to master the learning. Thus, if the trainee is in the "talk through" portion of trying it out and misses some steps, the trainer might again demonstrate how the job is done. If the trainee is able to "talk through" the steps correctly, the trainer might be ready to move to the "instruct the trainee" portion. However, if the trainee said, "You know, I was just guessing on some of those steps," the trainer might repeat the "talk through" portion until the trainee felt confident of knowing all the steps.
Learning Objectives (KSAs)
The primary focus of OJT is skill development, but because we discussed this aspect previously, we will not deal with it here except to say that OJT is a good method of developing skills. OJT can also enhance the knowledge base of trainees and influence their attitudes. Through discussions with the trainer and through questioning and restating of techniques, the trainee can learn factual and elementary procedural information. However, classroom techniques and individual reading assignments are more efficient and do a better job of developing this type of knowledge. Advanced procedural knowledge and strategic knowledge are better developed through experiential learning such as OJT. This occurs through a combination of observation and discussion as well as through physical interaction with the equipment, materials, and other accoutrements of the job.

The attitudes new employees hold about their job and their company come from observing and interacting with others. OJT provides a great opportunity to get employees off on the right foot by clarifying the norms, expectations, and culture of the work unit. Of course, accomplishing this task will depend on the ability of the OJT trainer to convey these appropriately to the trainee. On a final note, if knowledge acquisition is required to perform the job, OJT techniques should be supplemented with other techniques that are more suited to knowledge acquisition.

Apprenticeship training is a good example. For skilled trades, it is important to develop the skills of the trade; however, certain knowledge is a prerequisite for that skill development. For that reason, a significant amount of classroom training is also required as a part of the training. Computer-based training, role-playing, reading texts, manuals, and other techniques can all be combined successfully with OJT.

Learning Process
Trainees are likely to be relatively more attentive and more motivated during OJT, because it is easier to see a direct relationship between the training and job performance. Verbal and visual stimuli direct attention to key learning points. Periods of active practice require the trainee to attend to what they are doing and what is being said, thus increasing the learning potential. The visual, auditory, and tactile cues in OJT assist in the symbolic coding process, providing many relationships among objects and actions in the work environment. Through observation, practice, and discussion, the trainee cognitively organizes these relationships into easily recalled patterns of behavior.

By asking the trainee to describe the steps in the operation (before letting the trainee perform the operation), the trainer is facilitating the symbolic rehearsal process. The trainee must imagine himself going through the operations as he describes the procedures. Behavioral reproduction, of course, is a strong point of this method. The trainee practices small portions of the operation until they are mastered and then moves on to larger portions until command over the tasks that make up the job reach the level needed to perform the job alone.