

Teaching in a Small Group

**Angela Jackson, MD
Associate Professor**

**Assistant Dean, Office of Academic Affairs
Boston University School of Medicine**

Goals of the session:

- Overview of the adult learning process
- Understand when and why Small Group Teaching is effective
- Strategies to use during teaching sessions
- Identify potential teaching challenges

The Adult Learning Process

Adult learners want:

- To help set the learning objectives
- To use what they learn right away
- To problem solve, not just learn facts
- Feedback, so they can evaluate their own progress

Adult Learning Process

Help set the

learning objectives



Collaborative

Use what

they learn right away



Clinically relevant

Problem solve



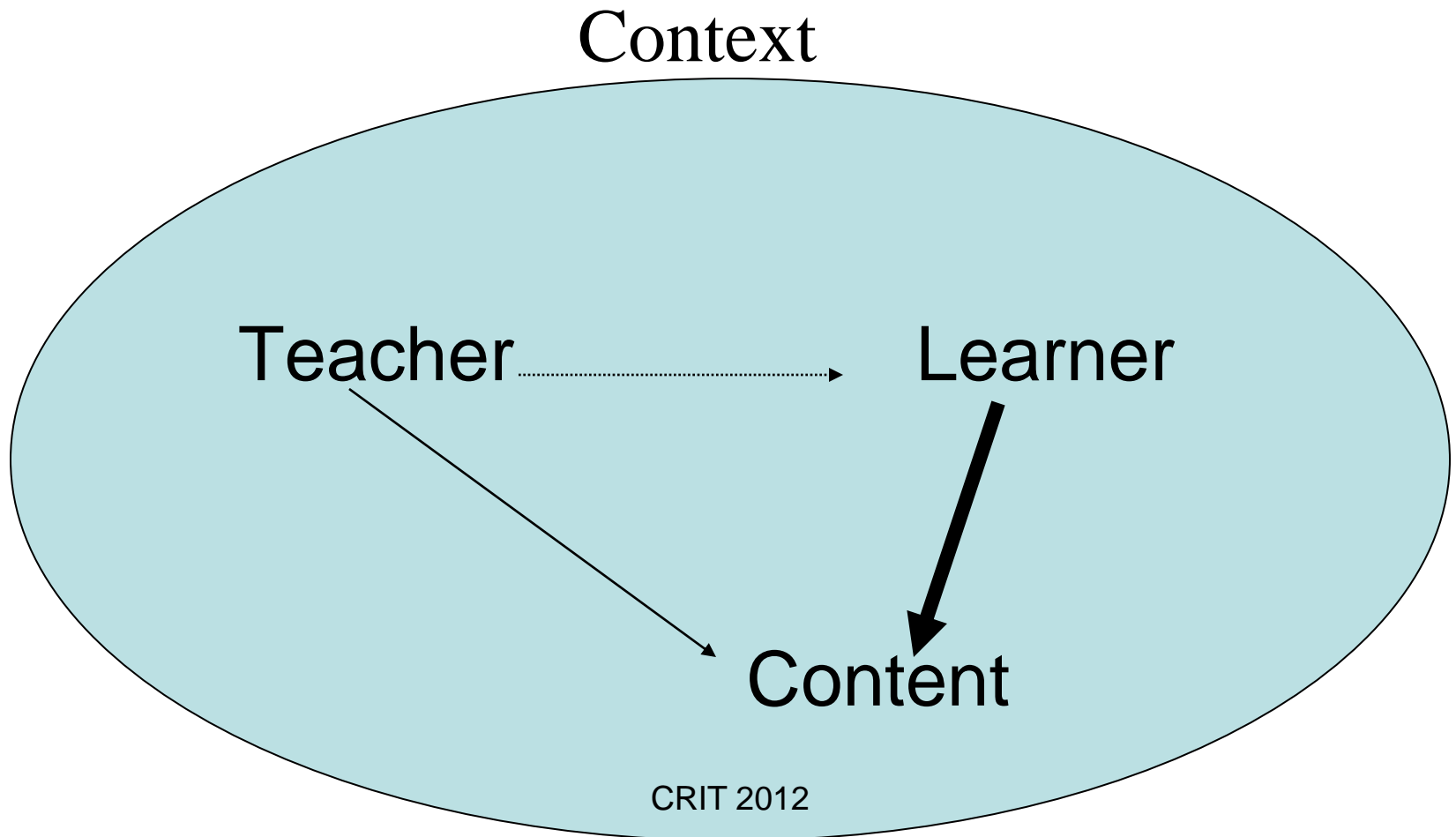
Practical

Includes feedback



**Encourages self-
assessment**

Small Group Teaching:



Small Group Teaching

**Shared responsibility for
the learning process**

Small Group Teaching:

Opportunities for the teacher-

- To assess the learner's needs and learning agenda
- To highlight misconceptions and individual knowledge gaps
- To observe learner's reasoning skills
- To encourage self-assessment (metacognition)

Small Group Teaching:

- Examples of small group teaching
- When is this format useful?

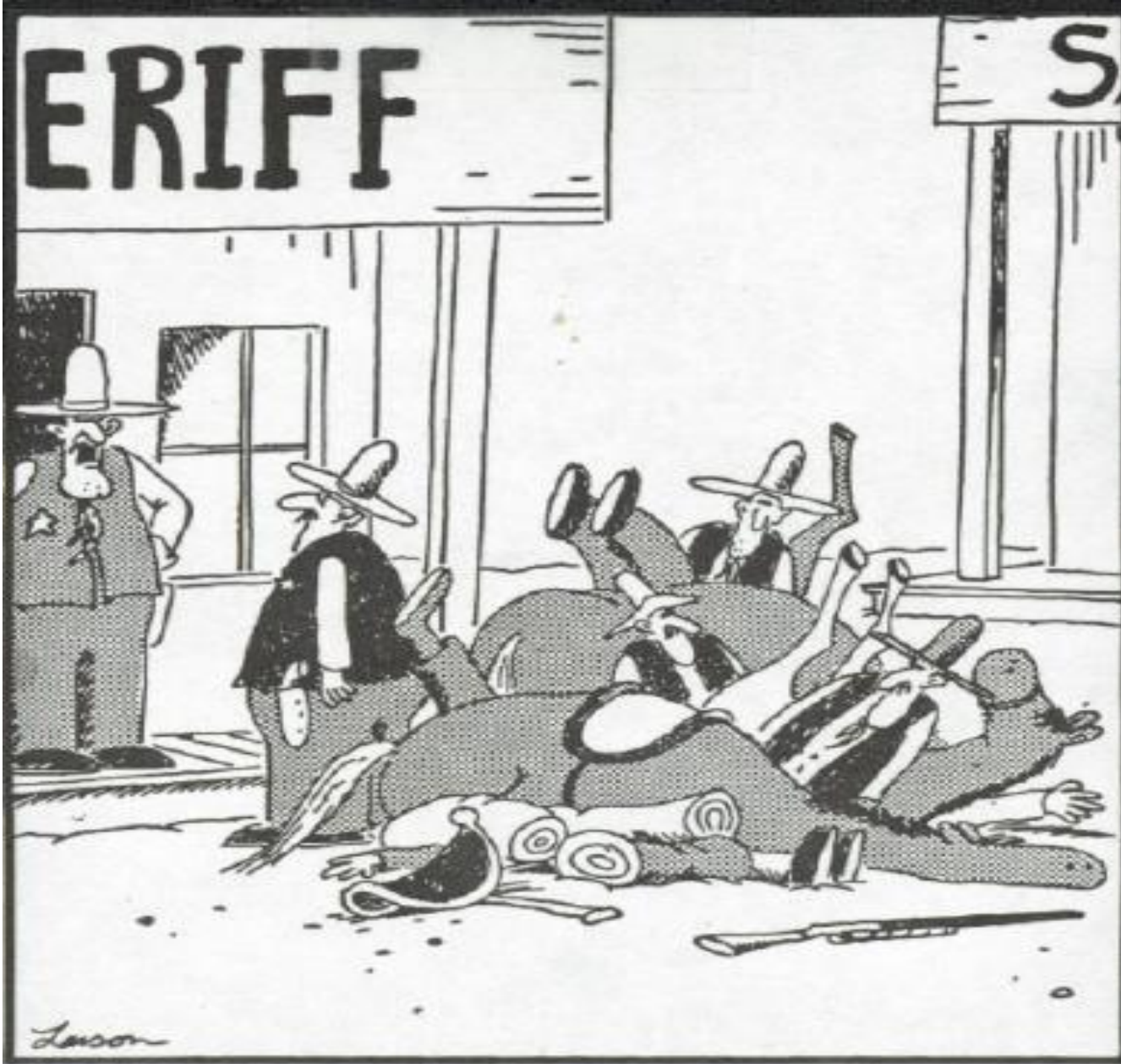
Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

Before you start...

Who?

What?

How?



"And so you just threw everything together? ... Mathews, a posse is something you have to organize."

Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

- **Who** are your learners?
 - Motivation level?
 - Background knowledge?
 - What do they want to learn?

Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

- What do you want to accomplish in the session?
 - “Need to know” vs “Nice to know”
 - What three points should they walk away with?

Small Group Teaching: Planning the Session

- **How** will you meet your teaching goals?
 - Techniques to use
 - Keep them involved
- **How** will you know that they are learning?

Small Group Session Work Sheet:

- Who are your learners?
- What do you want to accomplish in the session?
- What is challenges do you anticipate?
- How will you meet your teaching goals?
- How will you know that they are learning?

Small Group Session Work Sheet:

- Who?

- Chief Residents, experienced teachers; tired from sitting and listening to talks

- What?

- Provide some specific, useful techniques, likely to be used, encourage experimentation

- How ?

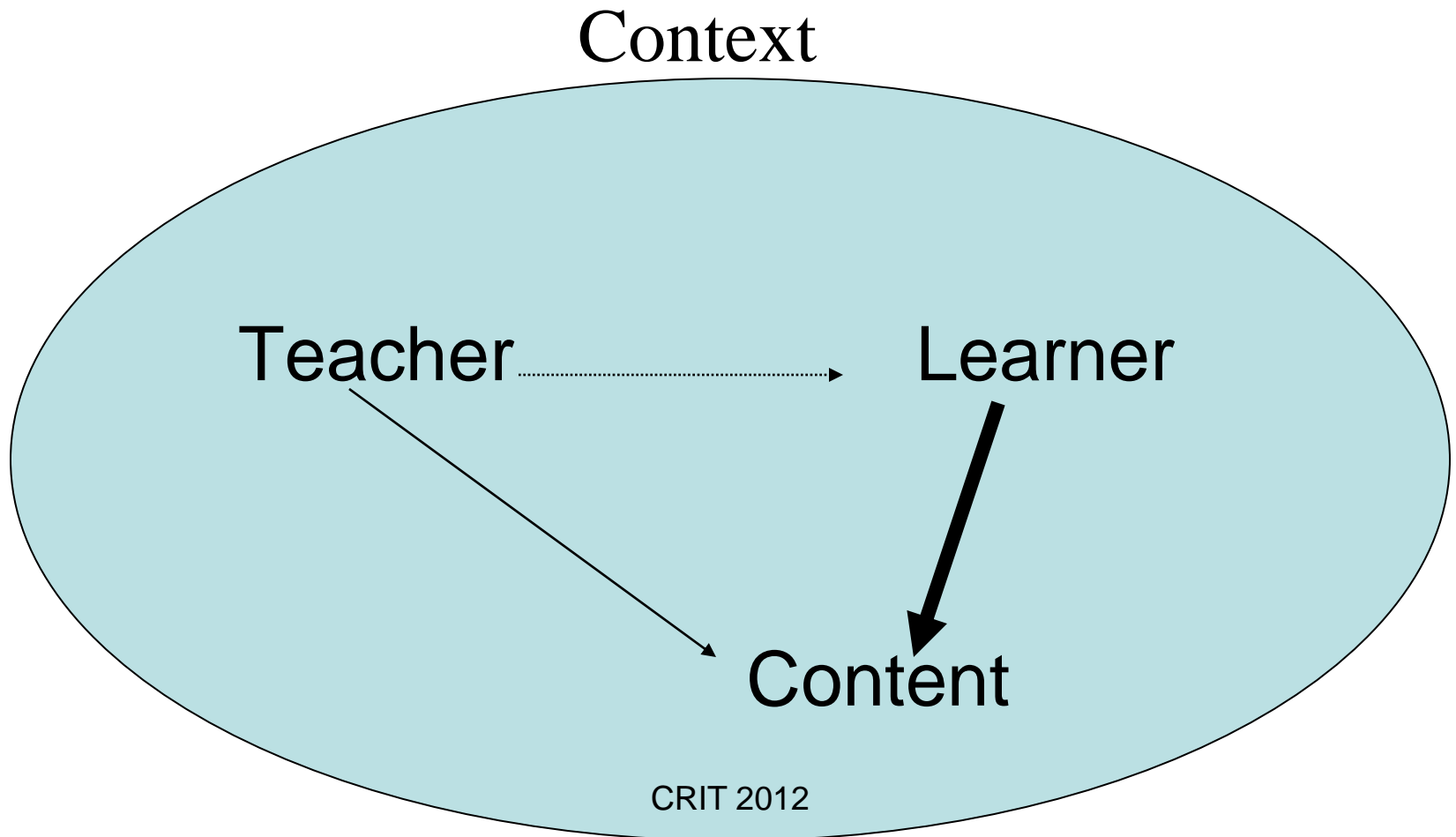
- Interactive didactic, modeling some of the tips during the session
- Take home points on the 3x5 card

Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Your role:

“facilitator” vs “the UPS guy”

Small Group Teaching:



Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Your role:

- prepare the general plan for the session
- set the tone for the session
- pay attention to the environment
- encourage participation
- keep the discussion on track
- time management

Adult Learning Process

- **Collaborative**
- **Clinically relevant**
- **Practical**
- **Encourages self-assessment**

Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques

Small Group Teaching: Running the Session

Tips and Techniques:

- Know their names- and use them
- Learners should talk to each other
- Count to 10
- The “Coffee Cup Technique”
- 3 x 5 cards
- Use summary statements for key points

Small Group Learning: Running the Session

Using Questions as Teaching Tools:

Small Group Learning: Using Questions as Teaching Tools

**Ask about something that is
worth knowing**

Small Group Learning:

By asking questions you can...

- Assess learners knowledge level
*(What do they **NEED** to know?)*
- Elicit their learning agenda
*(What do they **WANT** to know?)*
- Promote active thinking
- Assess their understanding of what is being discussed
(Links new concepts with “real life” scenarios)

Small Group Learning: Using Questions as Teaching Tools

Types of Questions:

- **Recall:** first level of interaction with the material
(list, name, report, define, etc)
- **Analysis/ Synthesis:** demonstrate understanding
(compare, categorize, distinguish, design, etc.)
- **Application:** apply new concepts to a specific clinical setting
(interpret, apply, demonstrate, choose, etc)

What challenges have you
faced in small group teaching?

Small Group Learning: Challenges

- Group with learners with different knowledge levels
- The “Learner with Frontal Release”
- The “Know it All”
- The “Bored Learner”--“Sleeping Learner”
- The “Shy Learner”

Small Group Teaching: Challenges

- Unpredictability of the session- requires creativity and a tolerance for the unknown
- Learner's needs and interests may not be what you predicted
- “Thinking on your feet” to refine or revise the learning objectives
- Group dynamics

Small Group Learning: Keys to success

- 1) Plan ahead
 - 2) Pay attention to the **process**, not just the content
 - 3) Self-assessment: Learners AND teachers
- *) Experiment

Now, the 3x5 card...