# 6Ts Teaching Tips for evidence-based practitioners

At a McMaster Evidence-Based Practice Workshop, our group, led by librarian Jan Figurski and tutor trainee Rakesh Patel, developed a very useful teaching tool for our tutorials. We called it the 4Ts Teaching Tips. After this initial success, the rest of us expanded the tool into the 6Ts Teaching Tips at the next workshop. The overall objective of the tool is to provide a touchstone to plan, conduct, and evaluate a teaching session.

1. The first T stands for Time management. A critical appraisal exercise or any teaching session requires careful planning about topics to be covered within a specified period. The first T also reminds teachers about leaving time for evaluation at the end.

2. The second T is for Teamwork, to ensure engagement of all parties. Planning sessions with interaction in mind encourages at least 1 strategy to elicit meaningful participation (e.g., asking someone to review a case history, explain how an article was found, and describe the difference between concealment and blinding).

3. The third T is for Tools. This is a simple reminder to plan ahead and use them. Some people learn by listening. However, the auditory learners in a group may be outnumbered by visual learners who can follow best with handouts that organize the key information (e.g., structured abstracts from *ACP Journal Club*) or who appreciate diagrams to illustrate difficult concepts (e.g., adherence to the intention-to-treat principle). Be creative! Tools can be index cards, coins to illustrate the randomization process, colored markers for the board, or even effective use of space in your conference room.

4. The fourth T is for Triage—a skill that is crucial to teachers on the fly. Often after starting a teaching session, no matter what the venue, despite careful planning and scrupulous time management, one can run out of time (e.g., someone's pager may beep incessantly). Adaptive teachers need to think fast about what is expendable so that closure can be achieved and a sense of satisfaction engendered. In other words, it is imperative to be able to judge what can't be covered to close the session with a sense that something useful was done.

5. The fifth T is for Tone, which should be respectful and non-threatening. When the environment is safe, learners are bound to have more fun, take more risks, and experience more self-discovery.

6. The final T is for the Take-home messages. Teaching sessions are invariably more satisfying when the group reviews the bottom line(s). Too often this closure is forgone. Repetition of the key points will help learners recall pearls down the road from previous teaching sessions. You can challenge learners to verbalize the take-home messages using a strategy called the Verbal Study Synopsis, which concisely communicates key material to be retained beyond the index teaching setting.

In summary, the 6Ts Teaching Tips provide a framework to help with teaching sessions. They also provide a schematic for evaluation (particularly if evaluations tend to be lengthy and repetitive—or conversely, superficial and unhelpful). Writing the 6Ts on the board during tutorials is a great reminder to use these tips. Jan Figurski also developed a group logo to remind everyone to consider these 6Ts and underscore their teaching pearls (Figure).
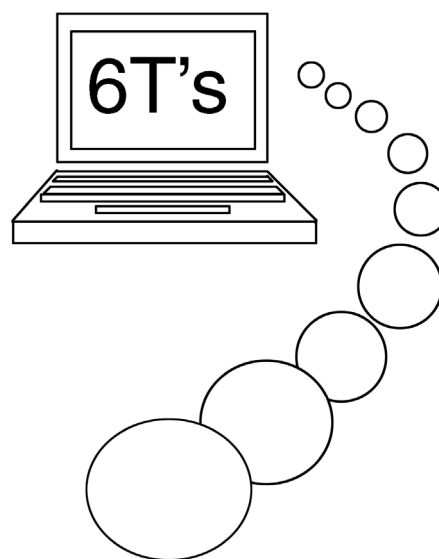
Figure. Such strategies as the 6Ts Teaching Tips may help to shape and symbolize organizational culture, cementing norms that streamline learning in a group.

Try the 6Ts—we hope that you'll like them! Show us how they could be better, and adapt them to other settings.

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