

Introduction to **Orientations & Trainings** in **Experiential Learning**

When facilitating an experiential learning opportunity, it can sometimes be tempting to dive in to the project or activity and immediately get started. However, it is a **good practice to first provide students with an orientation** to the activity, community, or partner with whom they will be working.

UT's [Experience Learning Resource Guide](#) says it best: “For the full value of the experience to be accessible to both the learner and the learning facilitator, and to any involved organizational partners, **it is essential that they be prepared with important background information about each other and about the context and environment in which the experience will operate.** Once that baseline of knowledge is addressed, ongoing structured development opportunities should be included to expand the learner’s appreciation of the context and skill requirements of their work” (University of Tennessee, 2016, p. 25).

As the Ryerson University Learning & Teaching Office (2012) notes, an orientation explaining why the chosen experiential learning component is important and what it will entail can often **focus student learning and prepare learners** to better process their experiences. Please see the [full report](#) for more information.

Additionally, the University of Washington- Bothell Community-Based Learning and Research website explains that it can be helpful to discuss the following items during an orientation:

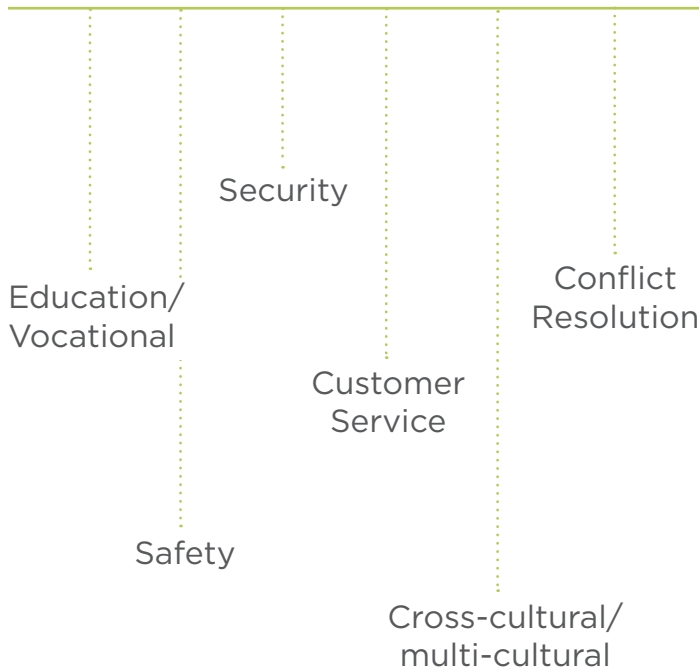
- Introductions
 - Students, Faculty, Community Partners, Volunteers, etc.
- Overview of the organization
 - History
 - Mission and values
 - Overview of course/partner expectations
- Review organizational policies and procedures
- Elaborate on the tasks, responsibilities, and expectations of the position
- Provide a tour, or virtual tour, of the learning environment
- Complete required paperwork and host a Q&A

Engaging in these simple practices **can facilitate an effective exchange of expectations and will begin to create a foundation of trust amongst all participants.**

Furthermore, orientations can serve to prime students to begin thinking about reflection throughout the course or experience.

In a similar vein, trainings serve to equip students with the skills that they will need to be successful in the experiential learning context, particularly in applied or service-driven situations. These trainings are often used to satisfy legal best practices or ensure that students are aware of and adhere to organizational standards.

These trainings may consist of one or more of the following areas:



In conclusion, we hope that this short document will allow all stakeholders in the experiential learning process to maximize the potential value of the orientations and trainings provided to our students. For more information, or if you have any questions, please email us at tli@utk.edu or request a consultation [here](#).

References and Additional Resources:

Ryerson University. (2012). Best practices in experiential learning. Retrieved from <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/lt/resources/handouts/ExperientialLearningReport.pdf>

University of Tennessee. (2016). Experience Learning: Resource guide. Retrieved from <https://experiencelearning.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/04/442930-ELResourceBookUpdate-v2.0accessible-smaller.pdf>

University of Washington-Bothell. (N.D.) Best practices for orienting students to your organization and their community-based learning and research position. Retrieved from <https://www.uwb.edu/cblr/partner-resources/orienting-students-on-site>

Need More Information?

Find more resources on course design, course implementation, class assessment and more for experiential learning coursework on experiencelearning.utk.edu.