



# In-Service 101: How To Create an In-Service That Will Make You a Hero

Imagine this. It is 15 minutes before you are scheduled to leave work. You are tired, cranky, and in dire need of a glass of wine. On your way to wrap up for the day, your rehab director comes up to you and says "Oh, hey. I forgot to tell you a couple of days ago, but the administrators and I decided that we need you to give a 15 minute in-service at 8am tomorrow morning at the nursing meeting about [insert topic]. That shouldn't be a problem, right?" You start to feel a bit light headed and in slow motion from a distance you watch your mouth say the words "Sure, no problem!"

Oh. Crap.

What just happened? Did you just agree to give an in-service?!?! You HATE talking in front of a crowd! Where do you start? What information should you cover? Will they be bored to tears and hate you? You don't even know where to begin! <cue panic attack>

Hey!!! Stop freaking out! We've got you covered! First of all, let's talk a bit about why in-services are necessary and why we should feel comfortable holding them. After that, we will walk you step-by-step through the planning process, so you can give in-services that are memorable and FUN!

In-services give us SLPs the chance to speak to a captive audience to educate them on a certain topic relevant to our profession. Most of the time, we are given topics that educate other professions as to how to help us do our job more effectively or that help the facility to improve patient care. Sometimes these in-services can be formal with powerpoint presentations and handouts, sometimes they are super informal like one-to-one conversations with key staff members. The main idea is to make them easily digestible, engaging, and to add an element of fun where you can!

We all know how often our profession is misunderstood. We've all had those moments where nurses refer dysphagia patients to PT because they just didn't know better. Or those moments where a patient has been choking on pills for 2 weeks but nobody thought it was important enough to report to you. In-services give us the opportunity to educate other professionals about our scope of practice. Who better to do this?! We are literally a field of communication specialists!!!

So let's get started!!!

Before you start preparing for your in-service, there are a few questions you need to answer. This may require requesting clarification from the person asking you to do the in-service.

What is my topic?

- Frequently requested topics include oral infection control/oral care, screening for cognition/dysphagia/ aphasia, and improving modified diet compliance within the facility.
- Sometimes you are told to choose a topic. Congratulations! You know that thing that happens in your facility that annoys the crap out of you? Talk about THAT! But be sure to get administrative approval before you move further in the planning process.



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Who is my target audience?

- You need to remember that you are likely not going to be speaking to other speech-language pathologists. Try to avoid SLP-specific lingo or super fancy words. Yes, we know you have a Master's degree or higher, but does your audience?
- The level of education of your audience really does change how you'll go about presenting the information. You can go into a lot more technical detail with a group of physicians or nurse practitioners than you would with a room full of CNAs.
- If you talk over or under their level, they'll dismiss every single word you say.

How long do I have to speak/present?

- This is truly situation dependent. Sometimes you'll be asked to make a powerpoint and speak for 15 minutes. Sometimes you'll have 2-3 minutes in the nurse's station to get your point across.
- If you are writing a powerpoint, a good guide is that each slide usually correlates to about 1 minute of speaking. So if you're going to give a 15 minute presentation, you may want to create 12-14 slides and leave the last one open for questions.
- It is better to run a bit short than to run a bit long. Your staff is busy. Respect their time.

What is the setting? Formal vs. Informal

- Are you going to be presenting in a class-like room with a projector and giving a powerpoint lecture or will you be talking to small groups of people or individuals in the nurses station? Obviously you'd make completely different plans for each setting.
- In my experience, informal in-services are often overlooked but serve as an EXCELLENT way to connect on a personal level with the staff in your facility.

Are educational materials or handouts necessary?

- Handouts or other materials can really help with carryover of information into day-to-day practice.
- Remember to keep these materials simple and easy to read. Pictures are worth a thousand words!
- If you are creating a powerpoint, remember that less is more. Do not clutter the slides with text, as it will distract the listener. Summarize what you want to cover on each slide, add pictures, and then use YOUR words to expand on the information on the slide.

Those are the basics to consider. If you follow these rules, you'll be able to knock out a decent in-service on any topic in no time. But why shoot for "meh" when you can be "amazing"!