

jobs. Many training programs include having trainees identify a work problem or situation and discuss the potential application of training content. Application assignments increase the likelihood that trainees will recall the training content and apply it to the work setting when they encounter the appropriate cues (problems, situations) in the environment. **Application assignments** are work problems or situations in which trainees are asked to apply training content to solve them. The use of application assignments in training helps the trainee understand the link between the learned capability and real-world application, which makes it easier to recall the capability when needed.

Encourage Trainee Responsibility and Self-Management

Trainees need to take responsibility for learning and transfer.¹⁰ This includes preparing for training, being involved and engaged during training, and using training content back on the job. Before training, trainees need to consider why they are attending training and set specific learning goals (either alone or, preferably, in a discussion with their manager) as part of completing an action plan (action plans are discussed in more detail later in the chapter). Also, trainees need to complete any assigned pre-training assignments. During training, trainees need to be involved. That is, they need to participate and share experiences in discussions, to practice, and to ask questions if they are confused. After training, trainees need to review and work toward reaching the goals established in their action plan. They need to be willing to change (e.g., try new behaviors, apply new knowledge) and ask peers and managers for help if they need it.

Self-management refers to a person's attempt to control certain aspects of decision making and behavior. Training programs should prepare employees to self-manage their use of new skills and behaviors on the job. Self-management involves:

1. Determining the degree of support and negative consequences in the work setting for using newly acquired capabilities.
2. Setting goals for using learned capabilities.
3. Applying learned capabilities to the job.
4. Monitoring use of learned capabilities on the job.
5. Engaging in self-reinforcement.¹¹

Research suggests that trainees exposed to self-management strategies exhibit higher levels of transfer of behavior and skills than do trainees who are not provided with self-management strategies.¹² Self-management is important because the trainee is likely to encounter several obstacles in the work environment that inhibit transfer of training. Table 5.2 shows these obstacles. They include (1) lack of support from peers and managers and (2) factors related to the work itself (e.g., time pressure). Given the restructuring, downsizing, and cost cutting occurring in many companies, these obstacles are often a reality for trainees.

For example, new technologies allow employees to gain access to resources and product demonstrations using the World Wide Web or personal computers equipped with CD-ROM drives. But while employees are being trained to use these resources with state-of-the-art technology, they often become frustrated because comparable technology is not available to them at their work site. Employees' computers may lack sufficient memory or links to the World Wide Web for them to use what they have learned.