

## Enhance Training with Analogies

One method I use to take the mystery out of software training is using as many analogies in my classes as possible. It is much easier to relate new concepts to familiar processes or activities, and adults have a wealth of experiences and skills into which we trainers can tap. By using these mental images, a new dimension is added to the learning of concepts that usually cannot be seen. Retaining what is being conveyed is therefore, much easier.

Johnny Hart gave one perfect example in his B.C. cartoon. The little ant is late coming home from school. When his grandmother asks why he is late, he responds, "Sorry, Grandma, I had to stay after school to clean the hard drives and update the databases." She obviously does not understand what he was doing after school. The young ant explained it in terms that she could understand by giving the analogy, "Think of it as clapping the erasers and washing the blackboards." No doubt the grandmother could relate and had a little better idea of what her grandson was doing on the computer.

Here are some of the examples that I have picked up along the way.

1. The hard drive is like a file cabinet. Each drawer is a folder on the hard drive and each hanging folder is a subfolder. These subfolders hold the pieces of paper (files).
2. Not doing a proper shutdown on your computer is like the child who drops their shoes, book bag, and notes from the teacher anywhere he pauses in the house. The next morning he has a hard time finding all the things he needs to go to school. A proper shutdown puts away all the files for easy retrieval.
3. The Windows Taskbar is like a switchboard operator who takes new calls, and can see who's on line. Each new program opened is a new call (button) on the taskbar. The operator can switch back and forth from one call (program) to another by clicking on the call (button).
4. The recycle bin is like the trash can in your office. You can throw away the paper on which you were working but you can always dig it back out until the custodian comes to take the trash away.
5. A wildcard symbol in queries is like a joker in cards. It can stand for anything.
6. A macro is like a piano roll. The piano will play the same tune every time the roll is used.
7. Formatting is like getting dressed up in fancy clothes and jewelry. You're still the same person but you look better and people will probably notice you more.
8. An Excel workbook is like a library book. Each sheet added to the workbook is like a chapter in the library book. Each chapter can have several pages when printed.
9. Cell references are like Bingo cards. You need the Column letter and the Row number to know exactly where to place the marker.
10. A query is like ordering from a catalog. You specify certain criteria for the product that you are ordering. The result will meet your specifications when delivered.

Computer training is not the only area of training that can benefit from the participants' visualization through analogies. Since a great number of people are visual learners, this is one way to reach them. Just be sure to give the same attention to the participants who need other forms of instruction to process their information. For more information on different styles see

[http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/Learning\\_Styles.html](http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/Learning_Styles.html)

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*Doris Loretta is co-owner of Paris Mountain Associates, Inc. in Greenville, SC. She is a certified Microsoft Office Master Instructor and has been in the training/education profession for over 20 years. She is the author and administrator of [www.tipsfromdoris.com](http://www.tipsfromdoris.com).*

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