

Resistance management prompt sheet



Managing experienced tradespeople

Part of the AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework

Purpose: Use this prompt sheet to respond to resistance respectfully while keeping training focused on current standards, safe practice, quality requirements, and workplace compliance.

Use this approach each time:

1. Acknowledge experience
2. Restate the current standard
3. Explain why it matters
4. Bring the learner back to the required practice.

Trainer reminders

- Start with respect. Do not dismiss existing experience or treat questions as defiance by default.
- Focus on the task, the risk, the standard, and the evidence.
- Avoid arguing about status or personality.
- Use current workplace language related to site procedures, manufacturer requirements, safe work methods, quality standards, customer expectations, or compliance requirements.
- Where possible, show the current process in practice.
- Demonstration is often more effective than debate.

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Common resistance phrases and practical responses

Resistance phrase	Suggested trainer response	Strategy behind the response	Follow-up action
<i>I have always done it this way.</i>	"I can see you have done this task many times. Today, we are focusing on the current standard, so let's compare your method with the required process."	Acknowledge skill, then shift to the present requirement.	Show the current procedure, critical control, or manufacturer's instruction, and ask the learner to demonstrate that version.
<i>This is how we do it in the workshop.</i>	"I appreciate that you want to reflect on your workplace practices. However, we need to ensure that these local habits comply with the requirements."	Separate habit from required practice.	Clarify the difference between workshop customs and the approved process.
<i>It has never caused a problem before.</i>	"Experience matters, but we still need to do our due diligence and assess the risks. A task can feel normal and still fall short of current requirements."	Do not let "no incident yet" become proof of good practice.	Link the discussion to risk controls, quality failures, near misses or changed requirements.
<i>This is quicker.</i>	"It may feel quicker in the short term, but shortcuts can result in mistakes and rework. The method we are highlighting today aims to protect safety, quality and consistency. We need to get the result right, not just fast."	Reframe speed as secondary to safe and correct performance.	Check whether the shortcut removes a control, step or record that is still required.
<i>That paperwork is just box-ticking.</i>	"The record is part of the job and helps to inform our practice. It shows what was checked, what was found and what action was taken."	Treat documentation as part of performance, not an add-on.	Explain how paperwork supports traceability, handover, compliance and accountability.
<i>We do not have time for all that.</i>	"I understand the pressure. However, see this as an investment of time in protecting the integrity of the outcomes."	Acknowledge production pressure without lowering the bar.	Bring the learner back to the minimum non-negotiable steps and the reason they stay in place.

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<i>I already know this.</i>	"That is useful. Let's confirm it in practice so we can see the current standard being applied."	Move from claim to demonstration.	Ask for a short demonstration, explanation or problem-solving response.
<i>I have been doing this for 20 years.</i>	"Your experience is valuable. This session is about ensuring experience aligns with the current process and expectations. You can use this training as a form of affirmation of your knowledge and skills."	Respect tenure while still verifying current competence.	Use current documents, equipment requirements or site rules to anchor the conversation.
<i>That is not how my old supervisor taught me.</i>	"Different workplaces teach tasks differently. Here we need the method that matches the current standard and evidence requirements."	Avoid criticising the previous trainer. Keep focusing on the present context.	Name the current procedure and explain any updates since the learner was first trained.
<i>That might work in theory, but not on site.</i>	"Let's test that against a real task. Show me where the current process does not fit, and we will look at it against site requirements."	Use evidence, not opinion, to test the claim.	Invite a practical comparison and bring the discussion back to actual workplace conditions.
<i>No one checks this in the real world.</i>	"Even if it is not checked every time, it is still part of the required practice. Training needs to reflect the right standard, not the lowest one."	Do not let poor workplace habits become the benchmark.	Reinforce the expected standard and explain why verification still matters.
<i>I know what I am doing. Just sign it off.</i>	"I still need to see the evidence. Sign-off needs to be based on demonstrated performance."	Protect assessment integrity.	Require observation, questioning or another valid evidence source before making a judgement.
<i>This new system is over-the-top.</i>	"It may feel different from the old way, but it is the system we are working with now. Let's focus on what has changed and what you need to do."	Normalise change without debating the whole system.	Break the update into a few practical differences and practice those.

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<i>That would never happen.</i>	"It may be uncommon, but the task still needs a safe response when conditions change, or something goes wrong."	Use scenarios to test judgement, not just routine steps.	Bring the learner back to risk, escalation, and non-routine events.
<i>I only need to get through the assessment.</i>	"The goal is not just to finish the assessment. The goal is to show you can do the job the standard in practice."	Shift the focus from completion to competence.	Explain that assessment is evidence of workplace capability, not a paperwork exercise.
<i>That is common sense.</i>	"Some parts may seem obvious, but we still need a clear and consistent process, so everyone works to the same standard."	Challenge vague confidence with clear expectations.	Ask the learner to state the exact step, check or decision point rather than relying on general statements.
<i>I do not need feedback on this.</i>	"You have strong experience. Feedback here is about keeping the work aligned to the current standard."	Frame feedback as calibration, not criticism.	Keep comments specific and tied to observable actions, records, or decisions.
<i>That is how we did it on the old machine.</i>	"That makes sense for older equipment. This task is for the current plant, vehicle, or system, so the process needs to match that."	Differentiate legacy practices from current equipment requirements.	Use the actual equipment, manual, or procedure to show what has changed.

Final reminder

Strong trainers do not try to "win" resistance. They keep credibility by respecting experience, holding the current standard, and bringing the learner back to what must be demonstrated in practice.

Learn more about the Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework

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