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# Didactical Guidelines

## Is there a well-designed practice situation?



*TARGET GROUP: police training coordinators & trainers*

*WHAT TO EXPECT: Good practices for a well-designed practice situation*

*SOURCES: based on empirical and experiential findings of the research studies and field trials of the SHOTPROS project*

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## Is there a well-designed practice situation?

In police training, a well-designed practice situation is defined by the level of realism it offers to the trainee. The practice situation should therefore invite realistic stress, present a realistic problem, and provide room for realistic solutions. The practice situation should be aligned with the training objective and “invites” trainees into the right learning activities. A well-designed practice situation has been shown to enhance transfer of knowledge and performance under pressure (Nieuwenhuys & Oudejans, 2011; Oudejans, 2008; Oudejans & Pijpers, 2009).

For relevant information on how to apply the didactical concept of a well-designed practice situation in VR, watch this information video by scanning the QR code or clicking the link.



[tinyurl.com/ycxty7ad](https://tinyurl.com/ycxty7ad)

## Good practices for a well-designed practice situation

- The trainer checks before using VR if there are any arguments against using VR for the learning objective or that other training methods have clear benefit over VR. For instance, if the intention is to include physical contact, handcuffing, training of communication with micro expression, a different training tool would support this practice better. Is the goal to bring together and apply different skills in one scenario and to learn tactical behaviour, or if the trainees would benefit from quick variations in training, then VR might be the ideal solution to go for.
- The trainer selects training environments in VR that trainees may encounter on duty (realistic environment).
- The trainer selects scenarios in VR that present tasks and challenges that trainees may encounter on duty (realistic problem).
- The trainer ensures that in VR trainees can execute their tasks and find solutions to the challenge that are similar to tasks and solutions required on duty (realistic solutions).
- The trainer ensures that trainees have access to the same tools as in real-life, for instance, if a trainee carries a taser in real-life, the trainee should be able to carry taser in the VR belt as well.
- The trainer ensures that the number of trainees in a team is representative for the task and realistic for real-life performance (e.g., by how many trainees are the tasks and procedures expected in the VR scenarios normally performed in real-life)?
- The trainer ensures that the solutions provoked are as realistic as possible and achievable in VR. For instance, having a role-player acting as a suspect and giving the instruction to

use physical force or resistance would not be useful as this requires a solution that cannot be performed by the officer in VR such as self-defence and physical arresting skills.

- The trainer selects scenarios according to the experience and level of expertise of trainees, properly scaffolding learning experiences to fit the level of the trainees. Clearly, special forces will work with more complex scenarios than police academy recruits, and the aim should be to practice near/around the zones of proximal development of the trainees.
- The trainer checks whether certain pitfalls of VR can be avoided in the training; for example, are stairs a necessary part of the training? And is it necessary that doors are closed in a VR scenario or can they already be open? (Since executions of the stair movement and opening doors are not yet experienced as realistic and natural by the trainees).
- By controlling or directing the responses of role-players and NPCs on the fly and in correspondence with the behaviour of the trainee, the trainer can foster trainees' beliefs in their capabilities to perform an action successfully. For instance, when the trainee performs well, make sure the role-player or NPC rewards the behaviour of the trainee thus providing the experience of success to the trainee. If trainees consistently fail, and the trainer fears that motivation and confidence will be lost in trainees, they may choose to simplify the scenario or adapt behaviour of the role player/NPC to pick trainees motivation back up again.
- The trainer avoids familiarising the trainees with the training environment, since in reality officers constantly encounter new and unfamiliar situations and it is important for the transfer of skills that the skills are constantly applied in new contexts. Therefore, the trainer adapts the scenario and the environment from repetition to repetition (e.g. from an outdoor scenario in the car park in daylight to an outdoor scenario on a busy road at night; placing cars and people can be done quickly by the VR operator).
- The trainer ensures that no repetition of a scenario is exactly the same as the previous since in reality no situation is the same as another. Therefore, the trainer adjusts role-player instructions from repetition to repetition (e.g., instructing the role-player to act with weapon in one scenario and without a weapon in the next repetition).
- By using for example the in-action monitoring tools, the trainer makes a quick analysis of what is needed in the next repetition or practice situation depending on the trainees' performance. The trainer then adapts the scenario (the environment, the behaviour of the role-players or NPCs, the assignment for the trainees, etc) to meet the needs. For example, if the performance of the team shows the trainer that the trainees do not maintain a 360 overview of the situation while processing, the next environment, the behaviour of the role-players or the assignment should force the trainees to better maintain their 360 overviews. For example, by placing trainees in an area where threats

can come from all directions, by placing NPCs in places that they would typically miss if they were sloppy with the 360 view, etc.

- The trainer ensures that the practice situation forces or invites the trainees to act in a certain way, without the need for explicit instruction. For example, a scenario where a perpetrator harms an individual until the perpetrator is stopped forces the trainees to speed up. Or if the environment is very cluttered (lots of people, stuff or spaces) it forces the trainees to scan the environment in a very focused and structured way.