

YOUR TIME TO TEACH

A Starter Guide for Aspiring
Real Estate Instructors



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Why the World Needs You on That Stage

Let me start off with a story (since I can't seem to share anything without sharing a story). A few years ago, I walked into a training room feeling burned out. Two decades of teaching, and I was asking myself the question every instructor eventually faces: why do I keep doing this?

Then I spotted them. An agent I had taught in pre-licensing, sitting quietly in a corner, mentoring a brand new agent. She was walking this new person through mission statements, personal finances, and why consumers matter more than trophies. She was mirroring the things I had said to her years earlier, the same principles, repackaged in her own voice, working to impact someone else's career.

That's the moment. It's not about the large audiences, the applause, or the awards. It's about the one person who heard what you said and built a career, fed her kids, and served her clients because of something you invested in their lives.

If you're reading this, you've probably felt that pull. You know things that other agents need to hear. You've watched instructors phone it in and thought, I could do better. Good. The industry desperately needs you. This guide is a simple starting point to help you get started.

1. Know Your Why Before You Know Your Slides

Before you ever open PowerPoint or Canva, you need to answer two questions: Why are you doing this? And why now?

Here's mine: *"My mission is to gain knowledge, share it, and use it to the benefit of those I serve"*. Simple. That one sentence has driven every class I've designed, every keynote I've accepted, and every time I've said no to something that didn't fit.

Your "why" shapes everything. It determines what topics you pursue, how you market yourself, and how you respond when you get that one brutal evaluation in a sea of fives. (You will get that evaluation. We'll talk about that.)

Simon Sinek's Golden Circle applies here perfectly. When someone asks what you do, "I'm a real estate instructor" gets you a polite nod. "I help agents build businesses that actually serve their clients" starts a conversation. That's the difference between a job description and a mission.

Your First Assignment

Write your instructor mission statement. One to two sentences. Why do you want to teach, and what change do you want to create? Keep this somewhere visible. It will anchor every decision that follows.

2. Understand Who's Actually in the Room

One of the biggest mistakes new instructors make is teaching to the student they used to be instead of the student who actually shows up. Let me hit you with some reality from NAR's own data:

- 65% of REALTORS are female
- Only 49% have completed a college program
- The average income for agents under two years is \$8,100 in GCI
- 74% reportedly did one or fewer transactions last year
- 52% are part-time

Source: NAR Profile of Members (<https://www.matthewrathbun.com/nar-tools-and-resources/>)

That changes how you teach. If you're standing in front of a room telling agents to "invest in your business" and "send out postcards," you've already lost half of them. They don't have the money. They need low-cost, high-impact strategies they can execute this week.

Here's the other thing: 81% of agents say they prefer live, in-person education. But the actual attendance data tells a different story. Self-initiated attendance to virtual training is 22 times more active than attendance for the same topic in person. Agents are telling us one thing and doing another. Smart instructors pay attention to behavior, not surveys.

Pro Tip: Build a Learner Persona

Use Donald Miller's free MyStoryBrand tool (mystorybrand.com) to map out who your ideal student is. What are they struggling with? What do they fear? What does success look like for them? When you know this, your marketing and your teaching both get sharper.

3. Start Small, Prove Yourself, Then Scale

Nobody hands you a two-day designation class as your first gig. The path looks more like this:

1. **Volunteer for the unglamorous stuff.** Fair housing reviews, ethics CE, and orientation sessions. These are the proving grounds. If you can make a Fair Housing class engaging, you can teach anything.
2. **Offer free webinars.** A 45-minute session on a timely topic costs you nothing but time and builds your reputation fast. I've done this as a lead-in to larger programs: teach a free session in June, and by July the paid class fills itself.
3. **Get in the micro-learning game.** Short YouTube videos, Instagram tips, LinkedIn posts. Agents are consuming education in bite-sized pieces between transactions. One of my videos on basic AI for agents got 60,000 views. That's more students than most instructors see in a lifetime.
4. **Partner with your association.** Professional Development Directors need good instructors. Make their lives easier. Offer to co-promote classes. Send them a brand kit with your bio, headshots, and testimonials so they don't have to chase you for materials.
5. **Be trustworthy in the small things.** Show up early. Respect the time. Deliver more than expected. That's how you earn the bigger stages.

4. Build Your Brand Like a Rockstar

I use the rockstar metaphor a lot in my Rockstar Presenting course because it fits. Think about it: every great band started playing in small clubs. They built a following one fan at a time. They developed a signature sound. And people started recommending them to their friends.

That's exactly what we're doing as instructors. Here's how:

Find Your Signature

What's your thing? Safety? Technology? Leadership? Negotiation? You don't have to pick just one forever, but you need a lane people associate with you. Own something.

Your Social Presence Is Your Stage

When I posted a photo holding my granddaughter, it got 678 likes and 327 comments. A couple weeks later, I posted a Newsmaker award, and it got 90 likes. Same audience. Totally different response. People want to connect with you as a person, not just applaud your accolades.

Mix your content. Share your expertise, but also let people see who you are outside the classroom. That's what builds the kind of following where agents will travel to take your class instead of the one down the street.

Be a Storyteller, Not a Slide Reader

Every class you teach follows a narrative arc, whether you realize it or not. Exposition: why should they care? Rising action: here's what's at stake. Climax: here's how to fix it. Falling action: what do you do next? Resolution: happily ever after. Use that structure in your marketing too, not just your teaching.

Guard Your Trust

Your credibility is everything. If you repost something on Facebook that's obviously false, you just told your potential students you're gullible. If you're teaching agents to use video but you don't have a single video of your own, you've broken the story. Live what you teach.

5. Name Your Course Like You Mean It

Course titles matter more than most instructors realize. Here are five rules:

1. **Lead with the outcome, not the process.** What will they walk away with?
2. **Use power words that trigger emotion or curiosity.** "Edge," "mastering," "winning," "non-negotiable."
3. **Name your target like you know them.** "For the Modern Agent" hits differently than a generic title.
4. **Create a signature format or theme.** Something distinctly yours.
5. **Add a hook.** A number, a timeframe, or a bold promise.

Example: An ethics class called "Code of Ethics Review 2025" puts people to sleep. But "Trust Me, I'm a REALTOR: Ethics That Actually Work in Real Life"? That fills seats.

6. Marry Technology Into Everything You Do

I'm going to be direct: being "not a techie person" is a choice in 2025. The totality of the world's knowledge is at your fingertips. Canva has a free university. OpenAI has a free academy. There are 16-year-olds in Australia who will teach you anything on YouTube.

More importantly, your students can't afford for you to be tech-averse. 74% of the workforce is using AI. 91% are on social media. 82% watch videos daily. If you're not integrating technology into your instruction, you're leaving your students behind.

That doesn't mean teaching "60 Apps in 60 Minutes." That's a parlor trick. It means showing agents how AI can help them write a better listing description after you've taught them the fundamentals. It means demonstrating how a CMA tool works inside the workflow they actually use. Marry the tech to the skill. That's what makes it stick.

Here are is a list of web tools and resources I put together:

<https://www.matthewrathbun.com/webtools/>

And here is an AI prompt book with RE instructor-specific prompts:

<https://www.matthewrathbun.com/ai>

Tools Worth Exploring

Canva (design and marketing materials), Menti or Poll Everywhere (audience engagement), Ecamm (streaming and recording), Zoom polls and breakout rooms (virtual interaction), AI tools like ChatGPT (course design, poll creation, marketing copy).

I maintain a full list of instructor tools and gear at matthewrathbun.notion.site/onlineinstructortools

7. Your Green Room Checklist

Before every gig, you need a green room list, the things you require to deliver a great experience. Here's a starter:

- HDMI cable and power outlet at the podium (you'd be shocked how often they forget the power)
- Room temperature water (cold water constricts your throat and makes it harder to speak)
- Lapel mic for groups over 35 (you need to move, not hide behind a podium)
- Internet access and the Wi-Fi password
- Room setup preference: U-shape for small groups, chevron for larger ones
- ED director's cell phone number for day-of logistics
- A pre-class notes document with all your links, assets, and checklist items ready to copy-paste

Put this in your speaker agreement. It protects you, and it shows the host you're a professional who takes the experience seriously.

Here's a sample of what I send to clients: <https://www.matthewrathbun.com/promotematthew/>

8. Education Doesn't End When the Class Does

Here's a fact from the learning pyramid that should change how you think about instruction: of everything you say in a lecture, your students will retain about 30% at best. 30%. That's not a failure, it's just how adult learning works.

The real retention happens after class. Discussion among peers gets you to 75%. Practice gets you even higher. Teaching it to others? That's 90%.

So your job isn't done when the CE certificate prints. Give them post-course resources. Toolkits. Video recaps. A follow-up email with key takeaways. This is how they remember your name, because they go back to your resources when they need them, and they think, that instructor actually cared about whether I succeeded.

This is also how you build your following. They come back. They tell others. They become your evangelists.

Go Change the World

John F. Kennedy once said something that has stuck with me throughout my career: ...the only reason to give a speech is to change the world. That's why I teach. And I genuinely believe it.

Right now, agents are desperate for leadership. Their brokers aren't always equipped to help them. The Facebook masterminds are full of bad advice from agents in other states who have never read a contract. The industry is in flux, and the people standing at the front of the classroom, or the Zoom room, have more influence than they realize.

You don't need to be perfect. You don't need to be the most polished speaker on the circuit (God knows that I'm highly unpolished as an instructor). You need to care about the person in the room more than you care about the applause, and then do the work to make your delivery worthy of their time.

Start small. Build your toolkit. Find your voice. And if you want to go deeper.

Now get out there. The stage is yours.

— **Matthew**