

Child and Adult Learning Characteristics

Children

Rely on others to decide what is important to be learned.

Accept the information being presented at face value.

Expect what they are learning to be useful in their long-term future.

Have little or no experience upon which to draw, are relatively "blank slates."

Little ability to serve as a knowledgeable resource to teacher or fellow classmates.

Adults

Decide for themselves what is important to be learned.

Need to validate the information based on their beliefs and values.

Expect what they are learning to be immediately useful.

Have substantial experience upon which to draw. May have fixed viewpoints.

Significant ability to serve as a knowledgeable resource to the trainer and fellow learners.

Motivation can be improved and channeled by the instructor who provides clear instructional goals and learning activities that encourage and support strong learner interest. To best capitalize on this high level of learner interest, the instructor should explore ways by which the needs of each learner can be incorporated into the training sessions. The use of challenging and exciting learning experiences and learning activities that are self-paced and tailored to individual rates of learning can improve motivation.

INSTRUCTION BASED ON FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

Leadership - *The ultimate educator remains alert to the first principle of adult learning: Adults enter the learning environment with a deep need to be self-directing and take a leadership role in his or her learning.*

- The instructor guides the learners in determining the relevance of the learning for their own lives and work; whereas,
- The learners are encouraged to use their own leadership, judgment, and decision-making capabilities.

Experience - *The ultimate educator knows that experience is a rich resource for adult learning and therefore actively involves adults in the learning process.*

- Everyone comes to the learning situation with a lifetime of experience.
- The lifetime experiences of each learner are different from those of others.
- Lifetime experiences also includes: misconceptions, biases, prejudices, and preferences. In other words, some of what people think they know is actually wrong.

Appeal - *Therefore, a key principle in adult learning is that the ultimate educator needs to develop an appeal, a "need to know" in the learners-to make a case for the value in their life performance of learning what is offered.*

- What's in it for me?
- Why do I need this information?
- How will I benefit from it?
- How can I make use of it in a practical, real way?
- How will it help me be a better person or professional?

- Rule #1: Training is appropriate only when two conditions are present:
 - There is something that one or more people do not know how to do.
 - They need to be able to do it.
- Rule #2: If they already know how, more training won't help.

Respect - *The ultimate educator honors adult learners' individuality and experience and creates a safe, respectful, and participant-centered environment for learning to take place.*

- Show respect for the learner's individuality and experience.
- Be sensitive to the language you use so that learners are not inadvertently offended.
- Be open to different perspectives.
- Adopt a caring attitude and show it.
- Treat the learners as individuals rather than as a group of people who are all alike.
- Support all learner comments by acknowledging the "rightness" that is in each comment and each person.
- Take the learning process seriously because it is serious and important.

Novel Styles

When developing an instructional program, the instructor must take into consideration the novel styles of learning that each adult brings to the session.

- Adult learners respond better when new material is presented through a variety of instructional methods, appealing to their different learning preferences.

Studies show that over a period of three days, learning retention is as follows:

- 10% of what you read.
- 20% of what you hear.
- 30% of what you see.
- 50% of what you see and hear.
- 70% of what you say.
- 90% of what you say as you do (e.g., orally work out a problem) (Pike 1989).