

Adult Learning Principles

In order to engage your adult learners, it's important to understand some of the basic principles in adult learning.

1. Adults should be able to integrate new ideas with what they already know and they should retain and use the new information.
2. Adults can integrate information that conflicts with what they regard as normal and thus force a reassessment of old procedures, but at a slower pace.
3. Adults can acquire the information that has little "conceptual overlap" with what they already know, but also to a slower pace.
4. Adults learn what they perceive as helpful in their situations. The content and course materials must be tailored to their needs.
5. Adults are more receptive to instructions that are related to the problems they face daily. Provide opportunities for participants to apply their learning to real world situations.
6. Adults demand a transition time and concentration to integrate new knowledge and skills. Focus on real world problems and relate them to their work to help the knowledge transfer.
7. Adults have expectations and it is important to take time to clarify and articulate all expectations at the beginning. The participants and the instructor must explain their expectations. If there is a disagreement, the problem should be recognized and negotiated. In any case, the instructor can assume responsibility only for his expectations, not those of the participants.
8. Adults are irritated by long courses with long periods of theory without practice or hands-on opportunities.
9. Adults bring a lot of life experience in the classroom, an invaluable asset to be recognized, found and used. Use open questions to share their knowledge and experiences.
10. Adults need repetition to learn. This does not mean repeating the same point several times, but use different ways to explain it. Talk to a point in the course, use it in the demonstration and finish with a scenario or exercise. Another technique of repetition is to summarize within the information.
11. The time of adult attention is based on their interests in the content - give a lot of time for learning activities.
12. Adults learn best in a climate that is informal and personal. Encourage the exchange of knowledge and interpersonal relationships among participants.
13. Adults will often have limited perspectives that make them closed to new concepts and behaviors. Include exercises, interpersonal activities and opportunities to experiment.

