

Adult learning and course design

Learning Principles	Implications for Course Design
The adult is a partner with the instructor in the learning process.	Participants should actively influence the learning approach.
Adults are capable of taking responsibility for their own learning.	Incorporate self-directed learning activities in the course design.
Adult learners gain through two-way communication.	Avoid over-use of lectures and 'taking-to', emphasise discussion.
Adults learn through reflection on their and others' experience.	Use interactive methods such as case studies, role-playing, etc.
Adults learn what they perceive to be useful in their life situations.	Make the content and materials closely fit assessed needs
Adults' attention spans are a function of their interest in the experience.	Allow plenty of time to process the learning activities.
Adults are most receptive to instruction that is clearly related to problems they face daily.	Include application planning in each learning activity.
Adults learn best when they are being treated with respect.	Promote giving inquiry into problems and affirm the experience of participants
Adults do not typically see themselves as learners.	Give participants a rationale for becoming involved and provide opportunities for success.
Adults learn better in a climate that is informal and personal.	Promote getting acquainted and interpersonal linkages.
Adult learners apply learning that they have been influential in planning.	Diagnose and prioritise learning needs and preferences during the course as well as before.
Adults learn when they feel supported experimenting with new ideas and skills.	Use learning groups as 'home bases' for participants.
Adults are likely to have somewhat fixed points of view that make them closed to new ways of thinking and behaving.	Include interpersonal feedback exercises and opportunities to experiment.
Adults learn to react to the differential status of members of the group	Use sub-groups to provide safety and readiness to engage in open interchange

Adults are internally motivated to develop increased effectiveness.	Make all learner evaluation self-directed.
Adults filter their learning through their values systems.	Provide activities that focus on cognitive, affective and behavioural change.