

Principles for Adult Learning

The following are some of the principles that apply when working with the adult learner:

- Practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge are two interrelated aspects
- The learning program should capitalize on the experiences of the participants.
- Adult learners need to know why they need to learn something and to be involved in the planning and evaluation of instruction.
- Experience (including mistakes provides the basis for the learning activities.
- Adults approach learning as problem-solving and need to be involved experientially.
- Adults are most interested in learning something that has immediate relevance to their job or their life.
- Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented and the instructor should act as a facilitator or resource rather than a lecturer or evaluator.
- Adults need to be able to integrate new ideas with what they already know so they can retain and utilize the new information more readily.
- Adult learners tend to take errors personally with a negative impact on their self-esteem; sometimes, as a result, they stay with tried-and-true solutions rather than taking risks.
- Adult learning opportunities must be designed to accept viewpoints from people in different life stages, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and with different sets of values.