

How Adults Learn Best

- **MAKE THE TRAINING RELEVANT.**

Adults need to see that the subject matter and the teaching methods are relevant to their lives and what they want to learn.

Find out beforehand about the participants, and what they're most interested in learning. Use examples and discussions in the training that reflect participants' own experiences, and are relevant to their needs.



- **RESPECT PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES, KNOWLEDGE, AND SKILLS.**

Adults come to the class with a wealth of prior experience and knowledge. They are more open to learning if treated with respect.

Explain to the class that participants will learn from each other, and plan activities that build on and incorporate participants' own experience.

- **BUILD ON PREVIOUS LEARNING.**

Adults learn best when they can relate new material to what they already know. Learners need road maps, with clear objectives. Each new piece of information needs to build logically on the last.

Avoid presenting large amounts of new information all at once. Use visual aids. Be sure to allow time for breaks and questions. Make sure everyone is ready for the next step before proceeding.

- **USE DIVERSE TRAINING METHODS.**

Adults have different learning styles. Some people learn better if the material is reinforced with visual aids, and some learn better through hands-on activities. Learning works better when information is presented in different ways.

Use a variety of teaching activities, including brainstorming, discussion, visual aids, role plays, games, and case studies. Change the pace and the method frequently, especially when covering difficult and abstract topics.

- **ENCOURAGE CLASS PARTICIPATION.**

When adults are involved in and help direct their own learning, they are more engaged and learn more. People need to practice as they learn, and hear things more than once to remember them.

Encourage questions and discussion during the class. Use hands-on practice, role playing, non-competitive quizzes, and other exercises often. Incorporate information presented earlier into new activities. Remember that an instructor's skill in asking questions and analyzing people's answers is of greater value than flooding the class with a mass of information they can get elsewhere or don't need.

An old proverb says:

Tell me, I forget.

Show me, I remember.

Involve me, I understand.

