

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Adult Learners
Problem-centered ; seek educational solutions to where they are
Results-oriented; have specific results in mind for education - will drop out if education does not lead to those results because their participation is usually voluntary
Self-directed ; typically not dependent on others for direction
Often skeptical about new information ; prefer to try it out before accepting it
Seek education that relates or applies directly to their perceived needs , that is timely and appropriate for their current lives
Accept responsibility for their own learning if learning is perceived as timely and appropriate

In summary, adult learners usually approach learning differently than younger learners:

- they are more self-guided in their learning
- they bring more to a learning situation because of their wider experience - and can take more away
- they require learning "to make sense" - they will not perform a learning activity just because the instructor said to

Teaching Strategies for Adult Learners

Adult Learner Characteristics	Teaching Strategies
Adults have years of experience and a wealth of knowledge	Use your adult students as resources; use open-ended questions to draw out students' knowledge and experiences; provide many opportunities for dialogue among students
Adults have established values, beliefs, and opinions	Take time to clarify student expectations; permit debate and challenge of ideas; be careful to protect minority opinions within the class
Adults expect to be treated as adults	Treat questions and comments with respect; acknowledge contributions students make to the class;
Adults need to feel self-directed	Engage students in designing the learning process; want more than one medium for learning and to want control over the learning pace and start/stop times
Adults often have a problem centered approach to learning	Show immediately how new knowledge or skills can be applied to current problems or situations; use participatory techniques such as case studies and problem-solving groups
Adults tend to be less interested in survey types of courses and more interested in straightforward how-to	Focus on theories and concepts within the context of their applications to relevant problems; orient the course content toward direct applications rather than toward theory
Adults have increased variation in learning styles	Use a variety of teaching materials and methods to take into account differences in style, time, types, and pace of learning

From: RIT On-line Learning

For more information go to: http://online.rit.edu/faculty/teaching_strategies/adult_learners.cfm