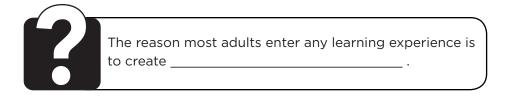# Adult Learning Principles & Instructional Style

> *I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.*
>
> —Albert Einstein

Part of being an effective instructor involves understanding how adults learn. Although adult learning is a relatively new field of study, it is just as important to understand as traditional education and carries potential for greater success. Compared to children and teens, adults learn in different ways, so teachers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process.

Adult learners prefer:

1. To be self-directed during learning scenarios

2. Clear learning goals that align with their own agendas

3. Relevant learning experiences that are transferable to their work

4. Examples and scenarios that are practical and job-related

5. To be shown respect and are turned off by condescending language

6. To actively participate in learning rather than passively observe

7. To feel in control and have a say in the learning process

8. Learning to be logical and build upon what they already know

9. To come to their own conclusions, as opposed to simply being told something

10. To have their time respected and utilized productively

? The reason most adults enter any learning experience is to create _____ .

For adult learners, a class or training often leads to a change in their skills, behavior, knowledge level, or even in their overall attitudes about things. Compared to children, the major differences between adult learners and children involve the degree of motivation, the amount of previous experience, the level of engagement, and how the learning is applied.

Malcolm Knowles, an American educator, pioneered the field of adult learning and identified four critical elements of learning that must be addressed to ensure that participants gain the most from their learning experience:

1. **Motivation.** If the participant does not recognize the need for the information, the instructor's effort to assist the participant will be unsuccessful.

2. **Reinforcement.** Reinforcement is a very necessary part of the teaching/learning process; through it, instructors encourage correct modes of behavior and performance.

3. **Retention.** Students must retain information from a class or training in order to benefit from the learning. The instructors' jobs are not finished until they have assisted the learners in retaining the information. The instructor is to assist learners in retaining the information in the course. An instructor who provides examples and scenarios that are practical and job-related will enable learners to retain the information.

4. **Transference.** Transfer of learning is the result of training—the ability to use the information taught in the course but in a new setting.

Each adult brings to the learning experience preconceived thoughts and feelings that will be influenced by each of these factors, as well as personal experiences and biases that will affect her learning. Assessing the level of these traits and the readiness to learn should be done each time a teaching experience is being planned.

> *All the world is a laboratory to the inquiring mind.*
> —Martin H. Fischer

Andragogy vs. Pedagogy

Andragogy—the study of adult learning—differs from pedagogy, which is the more traditional teaching model typically used to instruct students in school. Because most of us have more familiarity with the pedagogical model, we tend to lapse into this teaching style. However, andragogy is more appropriate for the professional learning environment.

Here are some distinctions for each:

Andragogy	Pedagogy
Learners are called "participants" or "learners."	Learners are called "students."
Independent learning style.	Dependent learning style. Objectives are predetermined and inflexible.
Objectives are flexible.	
It is assumed that the learners have experience to contribute.	It is assumed that the learners are inexperienced and/or uninformed.
Active training methods are used.	Passive training methods, such as lecture, are used.
Learners influence timing and pace.	Trainer controls timing and pace.
Participant involvement is vital.	Participants contribute little to the experience.
Learning is real-life problem centered.	Learning is content-centered.
Participants are seen as primary resources for ideas and examples.	Trainer is seen as the primary resource who provides ideas and examples.

We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.

—Peter Drucker

Instructional Strategies for Job Aid

There are a variety of instructional strategies available. The first table below provides you with a list of industry standard instructional strategies. This is for reference only. On the next table you will see only the most used instructional strategies in KBS-Audit.

Instructional Strategy	Definition
Active Experimentation	Participants carry out surveys, perform tests or experiments, or conduct site visits.
Case Study	A written or oral account of a situation is given to the trainees. Either individually or groups, the trainees are asked to analyze the case and present recommendations.
Collaborative Learning	Participants work together in groups to teach each other new material and produce group documents or projects, which may include group and individual assessment.
Computer Based Training	The participant receives instruction, responds and receives feedback via interaction with a computer.
Course Handouts	Reading materials for distribution to the participants to support the selected presentation and distribution methods.
Debates	Participants are asked to take sides of an issue and argue them based upon factual data and personal experience. The debate may require participants to argue against their own point of view.
Demonstration	Participants view a real or life-like example of the skill or procedure to be learned. The demonstration may be live with an instructor or through videos or videoconferencing.

Instructional Strategy	Definition
Dialogue	A group explores complex issues from many points of view without selecting one "correct" position. The participants are not asked to debate the topic, to win an argument or to make decisions. They are expected to listen to everyone's opinions, to suspend their own assumptions and to reflect on the meanings that are held. Dialogues are meant to develop a broader perspective and deeper understanding of complex phenomena.
Discussion	This method involves the free exchange of ideas and feelings among learners, the instructor or both. It is useful in assessing knowledge, skills and attitude of a group of participants, stimulating rapport with participants and obtaining feedback from participants about a topic or idea.
Drill and Practice	This method is used for skill building with feedback built in to correct errors. The participant does practical exercises to increase fluency in a new skill or to refresh an existing one.
Facilitated Discussion	During and after the presentation, participants or instructors ask questions to help learners internalize and understand the content more completely. This type of interaction also helps to confirm that the participants understood the instructor.
Fishbowl	A modification of the discussion in which a large group is divided into two smaller groups. The "inner" circle discusses an issue or does an exercise while the "outer" circle observes and then offers observations or feedback.

Instructional Strategy	Definition
Game	An exercise in which competition or cooperation (or both) are used to practice principles learned previously. It is usually intended to be fun.
Independent Learning	Participants select topics and formats that they want to study and can use a wide variety of technologies or methods to learn.
Instruments	Participants fill out questionnaires, checklists, etc. to gain insight about themselves or explore a topic.
Interviews	Participants seek information about the topic from resources or people outside of the course.
Job Aid	Many forms of aids can be given to the participants to assist them in doing their jobs. These include worksheets, checklists, samples, flow-charts, procedural guides, glossaries, diagrams, decision tables, manuals, etc.
Journal	Participants keep a systematic record of reflections, course processes or activities to put memories and thoughts on paper or computer to refer to later and witness the process of learning.
Lecture	The instructor delivers a prepared script on a certain topic, resulting in one-way communication without immediate response or interaction from participants.

Instructional Strategy	Definition
Lecturette	A very brief oral presentation usually requiring only a few minutes—an attempt to overcome some of the weaknesses of formal lectures. These are usually interspersed throughout a course.
Mentoring	Participants are paired with people who are more experienced. The mentor teaches and supports the participant in understanding the organizational culture, the environment and the skills needed to perform a job, complete a project or achieve a positive outcome in a specific situation.
Mini Case	A modification of the case study in which a brief situation is described to the trainees who discuss how the case should be handled. Characterized by only key facts being presented and by brevity in discussion. Often used to give examples of situations and procedures.
Modeling	This method relies on representations of depth and solidity in objects and models. It is a way to bring the representation of a product into a course. Models are usually three-dimensional representations of real objects and can be assembled and modified.
Peer Presentation	A participant presents information to the other learners in the course or training session.

Instructional Strategy	Definition
Practice Excercise - Written or Computer Based	Participants are given an assignment to practice performing the task. Can be used for any type of task.
Presentation	The instructor presents information to the learners through various means, resulting in one-way communication without immediate response or interaction from learners.
Problem Solving	A real or fictitious situation is presented as a problem or issue, and the learners must work to solve it, either individually or as a team, using the knowledge and skills previously obtained in the course. Problem solving can occur through interaction with content via cases scenarios where learners have to troubleshoot a customer service issue or situation.
Programmed Instruction	A self-instruction method in which participants work through materials at their own pace, making responses and receiving feedback on their work. Can be done in many formats and media.
Quizzes	Instructors pose questions, which require written or spoken responses from the individual or group for evaluation purposes.
Reports	Participants write reports to link together the major concepts of the course, module or knowledge object in a cohesive, clear document, which can be used to assess understanding and learning.

Instructional Strategy	Definition
Software Applications	Computer applications can serve as assistant instructors. Some applications are designed to present material, provide instructional activities or situations, conduct quizzes, interact with learners, evaluate learner responses, provide feedback and determine follow-up activities.
Seminar	A participatory method in which participants are expected to have good background in the topic and work together as equals. Often starts with a leader giving a brief presentation and then acting as a resources person while the trainees are responsible for directing their own efforts.
Simulations	Participants work through "what if?" scenarios to practice formulating hypotheses and examining outcomes. Dynamic, interactive, task-driven exercises enable learners to experience a concept through learning-by-doing.
Small Group Discussions	Participants work together in groups of three to five for a variety of purposes: developing social skills, conversing about the topics and developing ideas together.
Study Guide	Materials that provide a map for the participants to follow in learning a subject. It can include many types of activities and materials, and can be used individually or in groups.

Instructional Strategy	Definition
Tutorials	A tutor or a computer presents content, poses a question or problem, requests a student's response, analyzes the response, supports appropriate feedback and provides practice until learners demonstrate a predetermined level of competency.
Teamwork, Cooperative Learning Groups	Small groups of participants work together in an online environment or through audio or videoconferencing to achieve a common goal or complete a common project while learning social skills and how to work in a group. Participants apply problem solving skills and critical thinking to the project and learn from each other as they work.
Website Development	A text-based environment can be used for learning about something, organizing thoughts, learning a process, presenting facts, concepts or definitions, identifying procedures and processes and addressing principles or guidelines on the World Wide Web.
Workshop	A highly participative session that puts greater emphasis on participant application than on presentation by the leader. Trainees work to produce a product or solve a problem with guidance from a leader.

KBS-Audit Most Used Strategies

The table below contains the preferred standard instructional strategies used at KBS-Audit. Please refer to the table below to select the best strategy and associated time frame when designing a course.

Instructional Strategy	Use	Length
Case Study	When new ideas/concepts are best learned through meaningful scenarios.	20 mins to several hours
Demonstration	When learners need to see how their new skill or knowledge is best used.	20 to 30 minutes per task
Facilitated Discussion	During and after the presentation, participants or instructors ask questions to help learners internalize and understand the content more completely. This type of interaction also helps to confirm that the participants understood the instructor.	10 to 20 minutes
Game	When the subject is best learned and retained by having fun. May also be used to energize a dry, tedious subject.	5 to 45 minutes
Group Discussion	When sharing a real-life scenario is relevant to the learning experience. Also used when emphasizing application of a new skill.	5 to 15 minutes
Independent Learning	When the subject is pertinent only to the individual. May also be good for a group of people who don't know each other well enough to share their thoughts.	5 to 20 minutes
Lecture/Presentation	The instructor presents information to the learners through various means, resulting in one-way communication without immediate response or interaction from learners.	5 to 20 minutes

Instructional Strategy	Use	Length
Practice Exercise - Written or Computer Based	Participants are given an assignment to practice performing the task. Can be used for any type of task.	5 to 15 mins
Problem Solving	When learners need to apply new knowledge, skills and abilities to a problem situation.	15 mins to several hours
Role Play	When the learning needs to be demonstrated in a face to face setting. When the participants need to show how to use new skills in a safe setting prior to returning to work.	5 to 15 mins per scenario
Simulations	Participants work through "what if?" scenarios to practice formulating hypotheses and examining outcomes. Dynamic, interactive, task-driven exercises enable learners to experience a concept through learning-by-doing.	10 to 45 mins
Surveys/Tests/Quizzes	To evaluate knowledge, skills and abilities to show how well the learner understood the content. Quizzes also help energize a group and get them re-engaged after lunch or a long lecture period.	5 to 15 min