



Adult Learning - Improving your Effectiveness as a Teacher

Tips & Facts Sheet

Adults learn differently from children, and teaching techniques therefore need to differ from those used in many schools and universities. Because adults already have considerable experience, they want to add information that is relevant and which will help them. Thus, key points to help adults learn are:

Meaningful: Start by helping the group understand why the topic is important and how it could help them.

Experience: Recognize the group already has considerable knowledge. Draw on this experience during the learning session.

Respect: Adults respond better when they feel they are respected and part of the learning process. Talk with them, not at them.

Self-exploration: Provide time for adult learners to explore ideas (on their own or in small groups). Let them consider how they might use the information. The table shows examples of how to better engage learners.



Relevance – improve adult learning by showing how the information is relevant.

How implemented	Why helpful
Discussion: Trainers using a discussion approach pose a problem, define roles, develop specific TORs, monitor and assist the discussion, and facilitate and document reports upon completion of the discussions and group presentations.	Discussion (in small and larger - plenary - groups) is the optimum teaching method for active learning as it enables participants to discover solutions and develop critical thinking abilities.
Case studies provide a brief narrative and/or situations that present unresolved and/or provocative issues or questions. Ask participants to analyze or connect to real-world problems	Case studies challenge adults to analyze, critique, take responsibility, make decisions, develop critical thinking skills, and express opinions.
Role playing provides scenarios that people act out presenting specific situations that contain two or more different viewpoints or perspectives.	Role Play raises questions which require discussion, assessment, negotiation and understanding of the various scenarios and potential decisions and their implications.

(For further reading see: Bender, 1972; Knowles, 2011; Srinivasan, 1993)

Use combinations of the above techniques to create learning experiences that will help participants be more likely to retain and apply what they have learned.