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Course Development Methodology

Guidelines for Training Adult Learners

Adult Learning Principle	Guidelines
Adults learn more quickly and easily when they can integrate new ideas with what they already know. Attempt to tie what you are presenting to what they already know.	• Provide an overview of the content (big picture) so that students will get a feeling for what to expect (no surprises). • Provide a context or conceptual framework for *new* knowledge. That is, does this fit into the "big picture" and, if so, how? • Instruction should include job aids that help the learner organize new information and relate it to previously known information. Link new information with old information using logical connectors. • Provide a rationale for new information to generate interest. Why is this important to the learner? How is it useful to the learner? • Sometimes an analogy is helpful in relating a new concept to an old, familiar one. Present the analogy at the beginning and then use it throughout the instruction. • Call upon the combined knowledge and experience base of learners. ("You are probably familiar with this because you have used it before in _____.) • Whenever necessary, and at the end, reiterate the context. Learners may be feeling overwhelmed by details and may have lost sight of the big picture. • Frequent summarization makes retention and recall of material much easier for learners. • Instruction should be presented one idea at a time.

Guidelines for Training Adult Learners

Adult Learning Principle	Guidelines
Adults are self-directed. They know what they want or need to learn, and they go after it. But each goes after it in his or her *own* way.	• Give adults responsibility for their own learning through self-designed and self-directed inquiry and let them learn through their own experiences and that of their colleagues. They prefer these approaches over group learning experiences led by a professional. • Treat adults as individuals and not as subjects. • Self-evaluation is the most important result to the adult. • Provide more time, resources, and instructional input for learners who find the material unfamiliar; difficult or complex; or at odds with previous beliefs or values. • Provide alternative instructional activities that produce the same outcome. • Group learners in either of two ways: - so that every group has the same level of understanding; or - so that every group has similar but varying degrees of expertise. • Give the learners choices about: - pacing of the course; - topic or module sequencing; - activities; and - supplementary materials or activities.

Adult Learning Principle	Guidelines
Adults learn more efficiently when they have information about whether or not, and to what degree, their performance or knowledge is accurate and how they can make it more accurate. Feedback is the most effective form of reinforcement.	• Provide feedback regardless of the instructional strategy you are using. • You cannot give feedback unless the student is *doing* something. This links feedback directly to *practice*.
Adults learn by *doing*. The amount of learning increases with repeated performance (practice).	• Practice has to be *active*. Learners should actually perform, not simply be *told how* they should perform. • Practice should be guided and closely monitored. - This does *not* mean interference. It means that the instructor must be aware of what is going on so he or she can give assistance when necessary. - Don't send learners off on their own. - Monitoring practice sessions is *not* a break time for instructors. Properly done, monitoring takes as much energy as lectures and demonstrations, if not more. Monitoring also includes activities such as providing feedback. - The level of instructor assistance may be high initially and then gradually fade out as performance improves, speed increases, and errors decrease. • Provide numerous opportunities for practice. - If on-the-job practice is not feasible, then provide practice opportunities in situations as much like on-the-job conditions as possible. - If learners will have to generalize what they

Adult Learning Principle	Guidelines
	have learned to other settings, try to provide practice opportunities in those situations also. • Try to individualize practice according to learners' needs in terms of time, amount, and setting.
Adults learn most efficiently if they can relate new information to their own experiences or if they can bring their own experiences to bear upon the content of the instruction.	• Use techniques that tap the experience of the learner. These might be inquiries designed to facilitate inductive learning or examples designed to "anchor" a new concept with previous experiences. • Illustrate broad generalizations with actual experiences drawn from the learners.
Relevance and application	• Focus heavily on the application of content to issues relevant to the learners. • Design learning experiences that allow the learner to plan, or even re-learn, how they're going to apply the new skill or knowledge in day-to-day life. • Adults prefer content orientation when it leans toward a straightforward "how-to" emphasis.
Adults need active participation and ego involvement in the learning process.	• Actively include learners in the learning process. Requiring them to be passive recipients of knowledge is a relatively ineffective strategy. • Provide opportunities for learners to ask questions, get points clarified, and "get into the act." • Adults want the opportunity to participate at the right time—that is, when they have enough information to participate *effectively*.

Adult Learning Principle	Guidelines
General instructional issues	• Early on, give learners a good idea of where the lesson is headed—that is, what are the objectives of this course/module? • Avoid long periods of sitting, and the absence of practice. • Avoid disappointed expectations: clarify learner expectations, state instructional objectives, and "take a pulse" occasionally to see how well you are achieving your objectives. • Use more than one instructional medium. • Maintain good instructor control, which is perceived by the adult learner as a balance between instructional flexibility and a sense that progress is being made. • Employ a course windup that makes retention of material easier and transfer of learning to the job more effective. As mentioned earlier, this relates to reinforcing an overall context for the learning material.

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