



Tips for Successful Engagement of Adult Learners

A large component of being an effective instructor is knowing your audience. Just like other students, adult learners have special needs and requirements. Understanding and applying these tips will make workshops for adults more effective and enjoyable.

1. Value your parents' existing knowledge and seek to increase their understanding by providing meaningful information. Offer opportunities for parents to do "hands-on" activities, ask questions in a relaxed environment, allow independent research, and have them share their findings with one another.
2. Connect the content with life experiences which may include work-related activities, family responsibilities and previous education. Using real-life examples are essential for them to recognize the pertinence and value of the information provided. Example: Fractions are found in every day activities, like sewing, cooking, and construction work
3. Be creative and have fun! The majority of learners grasp information more quickly when they are directly involved and are actively participating. Utilize games, technology, and group activities to keep participants continuously involved and to provide an enjoyable learning environment.
4. Value everyone's time. Make every effort to start and end the event on time. Waiting to see if anyone else may show up is inconsiderate to those who showed up on time. Additionally, ensure you have allowed adequate time to pass out materials, set up the room, PowerPoint, etc., so the class is not waiting on you.
5. Adults are goal-oriented and will therefore appreciate a course or training that is well-organized and has clearly defined elements. Highlight purpose and relevance of the training at the onset. You may also want to have an agenda or objectives to hand out.
6. Adults tend to take fewer risks in the learning environment. Establish and promote an environment that is safe for participants to voice opinions, ask questions and make mistakes. This can be accomplished by creating at the onset an agreed upon list of ground rules with the group (i.e., all ideas are welcome, only one person talks at a time, anything shared in this room, stays in this room, etc.).
7. Respect is first and foremost. Everyone is important and has something to share that others can learn from. Treat all participants as equals and as partners, and allow them to voice their opinions freely.
8. Create an environment that is physically and psychologically comfortable and safe. No one likes to sit for long periods of time while listening to a lecture go on and on. Opportunities for shared discussion, frequent breaks and autonomous learning will help the adult learner thrive.
9. Allow adults to proceed at their own pace by offering support as needed and/or providing enrichment activities for participants that grasp concepts quickly.



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10. You have invested time and effort in presenting the workshop, and the participants have found it important enough to attend. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you present information in manageable sections. Doing so facilitates improved listening and retention of the material. Avoid “information-dumping” and rushing through the materials in order to finish. If there is much to cover, consider adding additional sessions. Keep the focus on learning, comprehension, and partnership.