

What You Should Know about Adult Learners

Adults Don't Learn in the Same Way as Children Learn

When we think about instruction, we usually envision the classrooms where we received our formal education. Most of the teaching models we have go back to our school days. However, if we try to model our instruction of adults after the teaching techniques we observed or experienced when we were children, we are not likely to get the results we want. We are also not likely to have happy participants since many adults carry bad memories and negative attitudes toward traditional schooling.

Adult Learners:

- may lack confidence
- are more sensitive to failure than youths
- have stronger long-term and weaker short-term memory
- rely on prior knowledge and experience
- have increasing self-reliance and autonomy
- have a harder time staying focused on learning tasks
- prefer straight-forward, how-to instruction over theoretical training
- are the most motivated to learn in the first 3 weeks of starting a new job
- have more pronounced individual differences than younger learners