

## Characteristics of Adult Learners

Adult Learners
<b>Problem-centered</b> ; seek educational solutions to where they are
Results-oriented; <b>have specific results in mind for education</b> - will drop out if education does not lead to those results because their participation is usually voluntary
<b>Self-directed</b> ; typically not dependent on others for direction
<b>Often skeptical about new information</b> ; prefer to try it out before accepting it
<b>Seek education that relates or applies directly to their perceived needs</b> , that is timely and appropriate for their current lives
<b>Accept responsibility for their own learning</b> if learning is perceived as <b>timely and appropriate</b>

In summary, adult learners usually approach learning differently than younger learners:

- they are more self-guided in their learning
- they bring more to a learning situation because of their wider experience - and can take more away
- they require learning "to make sense" - they will not perform a learning activity just because the instructor said to

### Teaching Strategies for Adult Learners

Adult Learner Characteristics	Teaching Strategies
Adults have years of experience and a wealth of knowledge	Use your adult students as resources; use open-ended questions to <b>draw out students' knowledge and experiences; provide many opportunities for dialogue among students</b>
Adults have established values, beliefs, and opinions	Take time to clarify student expectations; permit debate and challenge of ideas; be careful to protect minority opinions within the class
Adults expect to be treated as adults	<b>Treat questions and comments with respect; acknowledge contributions students make to the class;</b>
Adults need to feel self-directed	Engage students in designing the learning process; want <b>more than one medium for learning and to want control over the learning pace and start/stop times</b>
Adults often have a problem centered approach to learning	<b>Show immediately how new knowledge or skills can be applied to current problems or situations;</b> use <b>participatory techniques</b> such as case studies and problem-solving groups
Adults tend to be less interested in survey types of courses and more interested in straightforward how-to	Focus on theories and concepts within the context of their applications to relevant problems; <b>orient the course content toward direct applications rather than toward theory</b>
Adults have increased variation in learning styles	<b>Use a variety of teaching materials and methods to take into account differences in style, time, types, and pace of learning</b>

From: RIT On-line Learning

For more information go to: [http://online.rit.edu/faculty/teaching\\_strategies/adult\\_learners.cfm](http://online.rit.edu/faculty/teaching_strategies/adult_learners.cfm)