

Adult Learning Principles

Andragogy or Paedagogy?

We're all learning most of the time, even when we're sleeping. Children learn a bit differently to adults that's why it's important to understand the difference between pedagogy (the science of teaching children) and andragogy (helping adults achieve their personal learning goals). The biggest difference is that adults choose what, when and sometimes how they learn.

While many trainers talk about adult learning principles, few if any can actually name them. Here is a recognised set of adult learning principles proposed by Malcolm Knowles. We've added a question (in italics) that we use to check our lessons have been designed to incorporate the principles.

Need to know

Adult learners need to know the reason for learning something. *Will the program help learners understand why the material will be important to them?*

Foundation

Experience, including errors, provides the foundation or basis for learning activities. *Will the program adequately probe the learner's individual experience, both positive and negative?*

Self-Concept

Adults need to be responsible for their decisions on education. They need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction. *Will the program offer the learner choices on what is to be learnt, how it is to be learnt, and the way it is to be assessed?*

Readiness

Adults are most interested in learning subjects having immediate relevance to their work and or personal lives. *Will the program connect meaningfully with learner's needs in a timely fashion?*

Orientation

Adult learning is problem-centred, rather than content-orientated. *Will the program help learners define the problem, and arrive at specific solutions?*

Motivation

Adult learners respond better to internal versus external motivators. *Will the program excite stable intrinsic motivations, rather than unstable extrinsic motivations?*

Fast
Street

