



THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL COLLEGE

ADULT LEARNING THEORY AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES: DISTINGUISHING HOW ADULTS LEARN AND FOCUSING TEACHING

Friday, June 4, 2021

12:00 – 1:30 p.m. CDT (via Zoom Meeting)

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WEBINAR DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Adult learners bring a lifetime of experiences, formal education, and wisdom to the classroom or to a webinar which they want to share with their peers. Good teachers know the learners' specific needs before educating them. Some like to say that children's brains are like sponges. They soak up new information. Conversely, adult brains are like sieves. They filter all new information through their experiences and tie any new information to past experiences. Dr. Malcolm Knowles's research indicates that children and adults learn differently. As such, faculty members must design educational courses that honor those differences. Adult learners are also self-directed and will only truly engage with subject matters that interest them. Next, the faculty will assist the participants in focusing their presentations through learning objectives.

After this 90-minute webinar, you will be able to:

- (1) Identify the characteristics of adult learners;
- (2) Apply adult learning principles to planning a presentation; and
- (3) Draft meaningful learning objectives for your teaching.

Adult Learning Theory

What is adult learning?¹

Adult learning is any “post-compulsory” learning. Other terms used for Adult Learning are “Life-long Learning” and “Continuing Education.”

Adult learning is a broad term that can comprise formal college education; job related education, community education, or self improvement. Adult learning is vital in today’s changing world where the facts and approaches we learned in our formal education are obsolete within a few years. Life-long learning has visible economic implications, contributes to the growth of society, helps bring about change, and improves the quality of life for the individual.

It has been said that adult learning is all about change - change in attitude, change in knowledge, change in behavior, change in a skill, change in how we think, and change in productivity.

Why is adult learning different? Or is it?

Since the first adult learning theory was developed it has been argued that adults learn differently because, among other things, they bring with them experiences that children don't.

Andragogy (how adults learn) differs from Pedagogy (how children learn) in that pedagogy does not address prior experiences. To this extent we can say that they are different, however, even with young learners, andragogical or a mix of andragogical-pedagogical approaches, work better than purely pedagogical ones. The reason for this is simple: we retain and understand better those things that relate to our experiences or real world situations.

Knowles coined the term andragogy but he evolved in his views as can be seen in the table below. His conclusion was that the use of andragogical and pedagogical principles is to be determined by the situation and not the age of the learner.

¹ Harriman, Gray, http://www.grayharriman.com/adult_learning.htm, 2004

Malcolm S. Knowles evolution: Andragogy vs. Pedagogy

Andragogy 1970	The art and science of helping adults learn.	Pedagogy is not always appropriate for teaching adults on the basis of crucial assumptions about adult learners that are different from those of child learners
Andragogy 1980	A model of assumptions about all learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model.	The choice of which model to use depends upon the situation rather than solely upon whether the learner is an adult or a child.

Knowles, Malcolm Shepherd. The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy. New York: Association Press, 1970.
Knowles, Malcolm Shepherd. The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy. 2nd ed. Wilton, Conn.: Association Press, 1980.

Still, in spite of what was said above there are observable differences between adult and childhood learning. To understand the differences we can turn to the summary compiled by Marie Wallace.²

Adults are not a homogenous group but in learning they generally:

- Are much more self-directed than children.
- Take responsibility for their learning experiences.
- Seek learning experiences that are learner-oriented.
- Have a large reservoir of life experiences to bring to and support new learning.
- Flourish when their abilities and life achievements are acknowledged and respected.
- Prefer a practical and immediately relevant approach.
- Learn readily from their peers.
- Have formed a dominant learning style and know what it is.
- Want immediate and regular feedback.
- Are ready to learn when an event in their personal/professional lives sparks “the need to know.”
- May be “education wounded” from earlier pedagogical experiences and require “unlearning” to become effective adult learners.

² Wallace, Marie, <http://www.llrx.com/columns/guide38.htm>, 2000

Contrast adult learning with what children experience in primary and secondary education:

- An authoritative atmosphere with subject-oriented instruction.
- A teaching hierarchy which decides what subjects they learn, what the approach will be, when the instruction will take place and how they are to learn.
- Little practical, how-to-use-this-in-their-lives today instruction, unless they are in music, sports, or the arts.
- A teaching model resembling a funnel with the teacher at the big end pouring in knowledge and the students at the little end filling their empty brains.

In spite of the differences stated above, Wallace agrees with Knowles. She states that “adult learning started out meaning the art and science of helping adults to learn but has come to mean learner-focused education at any age.”

Adults learn best when:

- Their prior learning is appreciated and/or rewarded
- The subject matter is relevant to their needs (professional or other)
- Full of partial opportunity for self direction is provided
- They can employ critical reflection
- Mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn
- The instruction provides opportunity for interaction
- Dialog is part of the learning
- Practical/hand-on experience is part of the learning

Educators must remember that learning occurs within each individual as a continual process throughout life. People learn at different speeds, so it is natural for them to be anxious or nervous when faced with a learning situation. Positive reinforcement by the instructor can enhance learning, as can proper timing of the instruction.

Learning results from stimulation of the senses. In some people, one sense is used more than others to learn or recall information. Instructors should present materials that stimulate as many senses as possible in order to increase their chances of teaching success.

Motivation and the Adult Learner³

Another aspect of adult learning is motivation. At least six factors serve as sources of motivation for adult learning:

1. **Social relationships:** to make new friends, to meet a need for associations and friendships.
2. **External expectations:** to comply with instructions from someone else; to fulfill the expectations or recommendations of someone with formal authority.
3. **Social welfare:** to improve ability to serve mankind, prepare for service to the community, and improve ability to participate in community work.
4. **Personal advancement:** to achieve higher status in a job, secure professional advancement, and stay abreast of competitors.
5. **Escape/Stimulation:** to relieve boredom, provide a break in the routine of home or work, and provide a contrast to other exacting details of life.
6. **Cognitive interest:** to learn for the sake of learning, seek knowledge for its own sake, and to satisfy an inquiring mind.

Barriers to Motivation

Unlike children and teenagers, adults have many responsibilities that they must balance against the demands of learning. Because of these responsibilities, adults have *barriers against participating in learning*. Some of these barriers include lack of time, money, confidence, or interest, lack of information about opportunities to learn, scheduling problems, “red tape,” and problems with child care and transportation.

The best way to motivate adult learners is simply to *enhance* their reasons for enrolling and *decrease* the barriers. Instructors must learn why their students are enrolled (the motivators); they have to discover what is keeping them from learning. Then the instructors must plan their motivating strategies. A successful strategy includes showing adult learners the relationship between education and an expected gain.⁴

³ Lieb, Stephen, <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/adults-2.htm>, 1991

⁴ Knowles, Malcolm Shepherd. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy*. New York: Association Press, 1970.

Knowles, Malcolm Shepherd. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*. 2nd ed. Wilton, Conn.: Association Press, 1980.

Adult Learning Principles and Learning Objectives: Distinguishing How Adults Learn and Focusing Teaching

William J. Brunson, Esq.
Director, Special Projects



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“Education is the most
powerful weapon which
you can use to change
the world.”

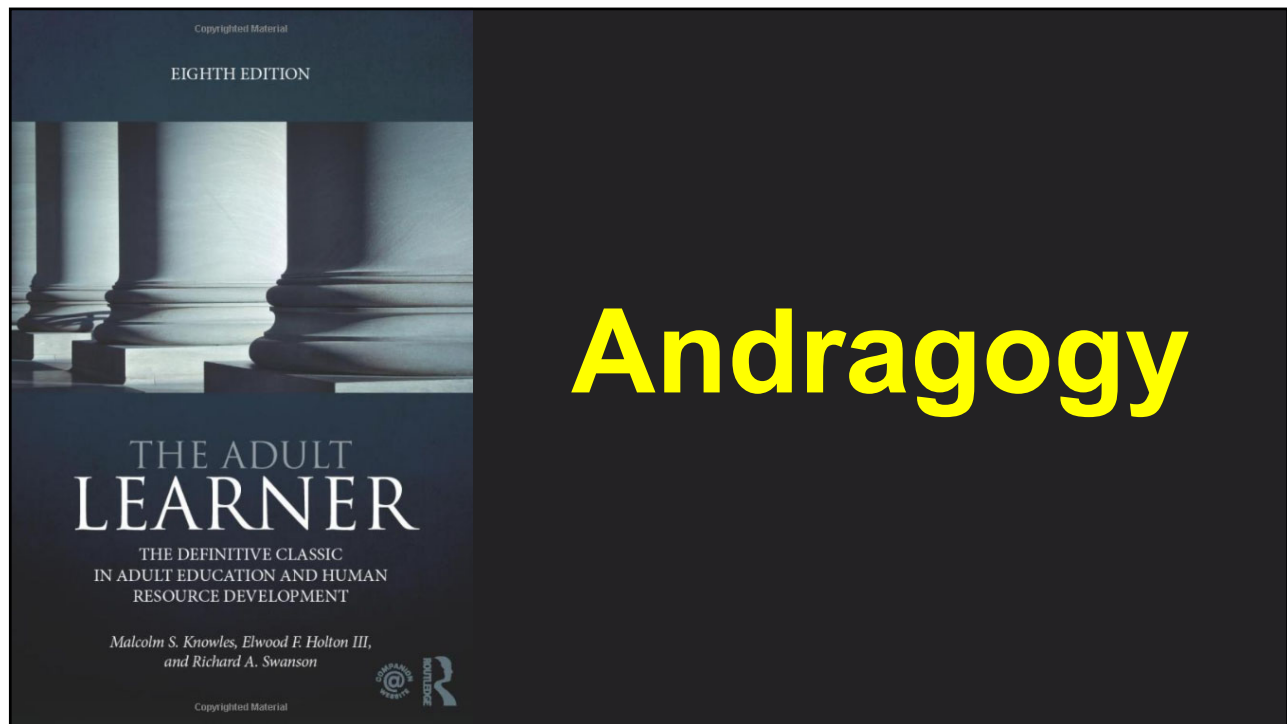
~ Nelson Mandela



Andragogy



Pedagogy



What You Learn Today

After completing this webinar, you will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of adult learners
- Apply adult learning principles to planning a presentation
- Draft meaningful learning objectives for your teaching



How Adults Learn

- Are self-directed
- Take responsibility for learning
- Seek learner-oriented experiences
- Have a large reservoir of experiences



How Adults Learn

- Need faculty members to acknowledge and respect their abilities and life achievements
- Prefer practical and immediately relevant information

Adult Learning Principles & Implications

Adults want to know **why** they should learn. What implications are there for your teaching?



Adult Learning Principles & Implications

Adults bring experience to learning. What implications are there for your teaching?



How Adults Learn



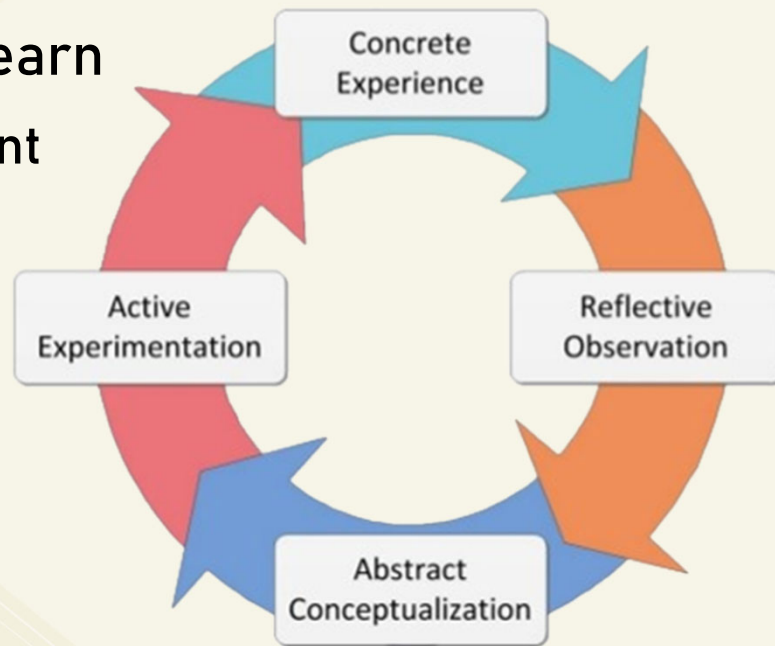
How Adults Learn

Learn readily
from their peers



How Adults Learn

Have a dominant learning style



**How Adults
Learn**

Want regular
feedback

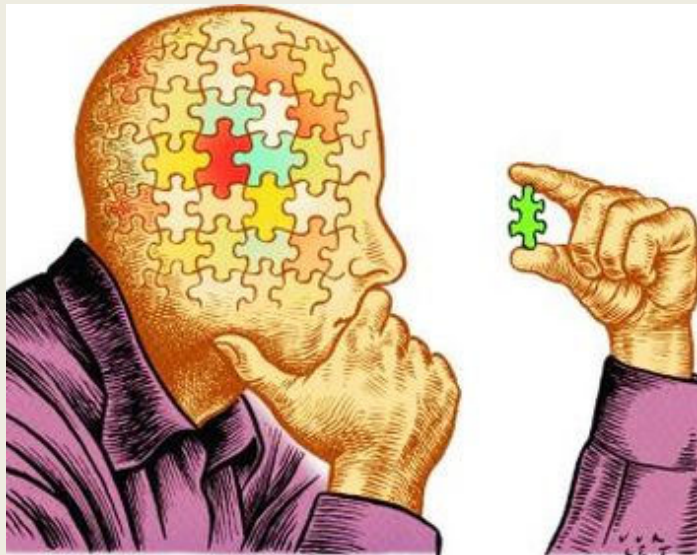
How Adults Learn

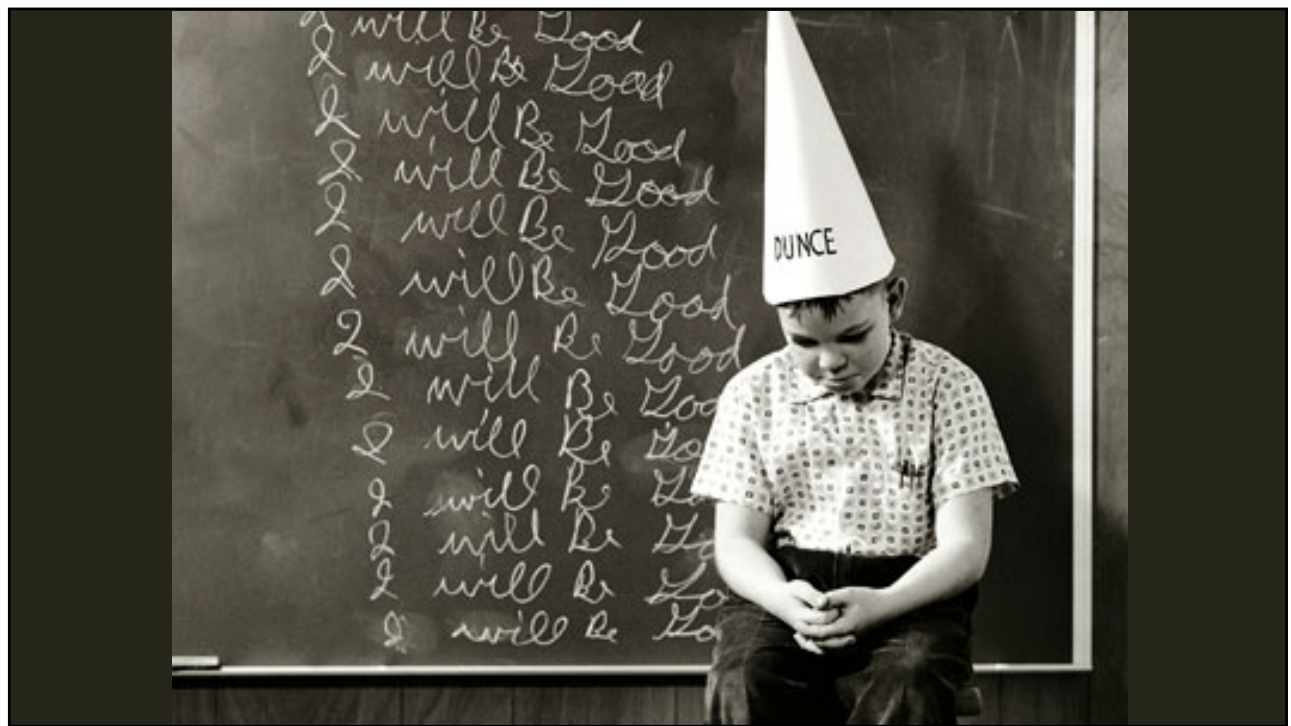
Are ready to
learn when
“inspired”



How Adults Learn

Employ critical
reflection





Gerry's Three R's

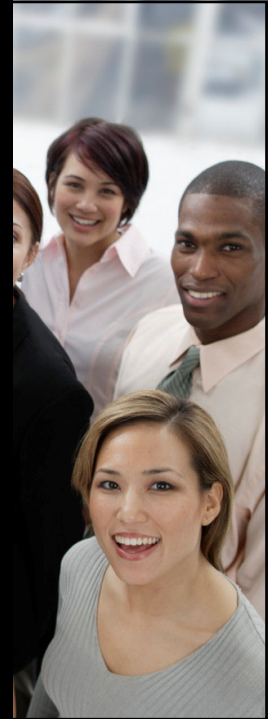
- Respect
- Respect
- Respect



Adult Learning Principles & Implications

Adults readily learn from their peers.

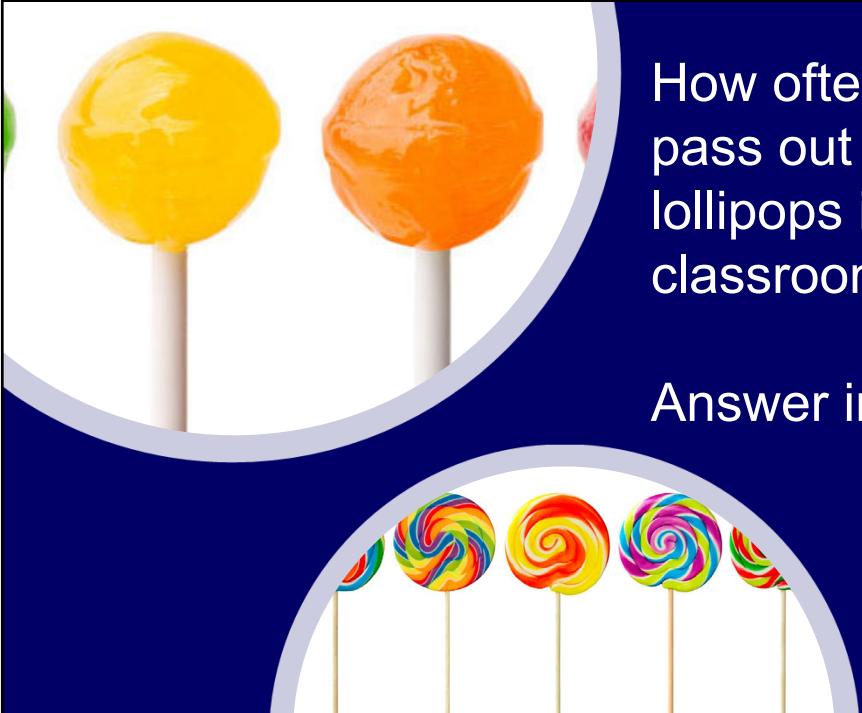
What are the implications for your teaching?



Adult Learning Principles & Implications


Adults want immediate and frequent feedback. What are the implications for your teaching?





How often do we need to pass out dopamine lollipops in the in-person classroom?

Answer in the chat tool.



Pass Out Dopamine Lollipops

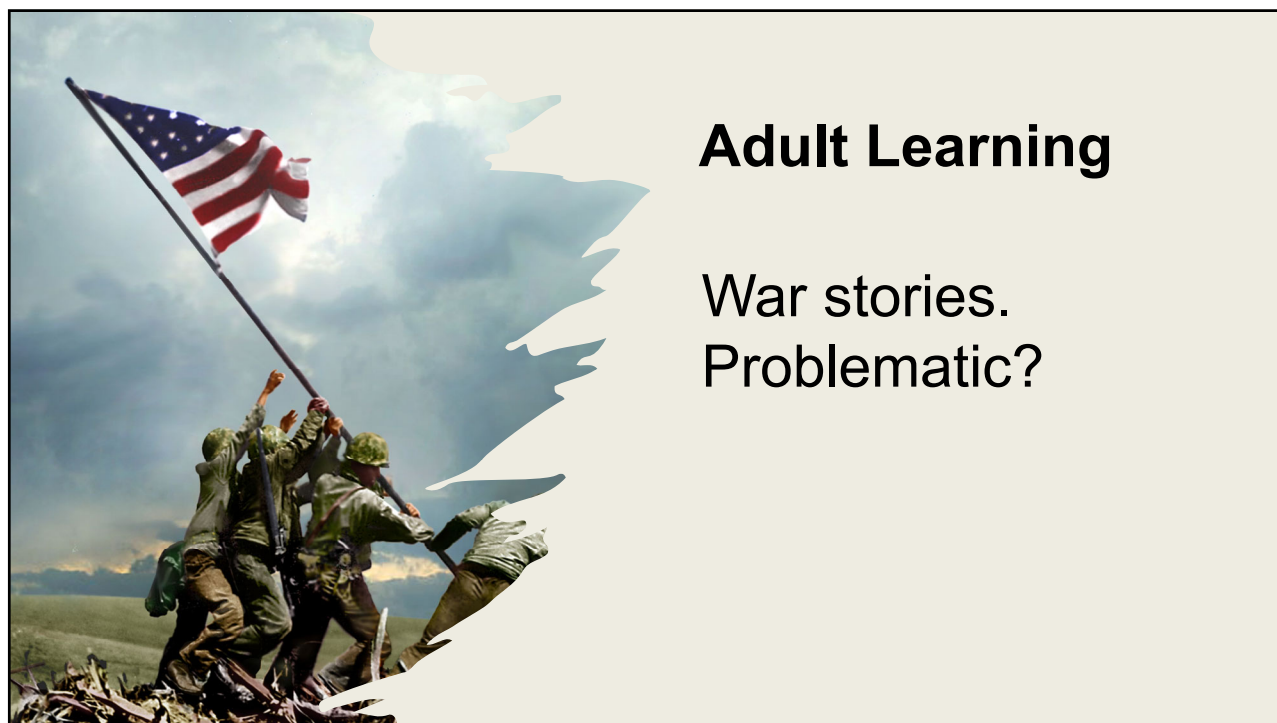
- Every 9 minutes and 59 seconds
- Reset and restart the human brain
- Use an activity to restart the brain

Pass Out Dopamine Lollipops

Do you need more, less, or the same amount of dopamine lollipops online?

- a) More
- b) Less
- c) Same





Adult Learning

Illustrative examples
or storytelling





Adult Learning

Clothes: hats,
shoes, and
Hawaiian shirts



Adult Learning

Helium hand.
Problem?



“I’ve learned that I
still have a lot to
learn....”

~ Maya Angelou



How Adults Learn

Mistakes are opportunities to learn

How Adults Learn



Instruction provides interaction

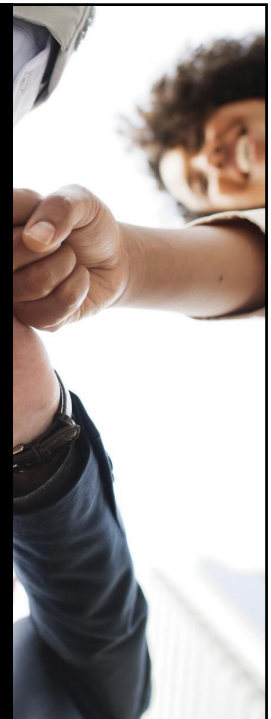
How Adults Learn

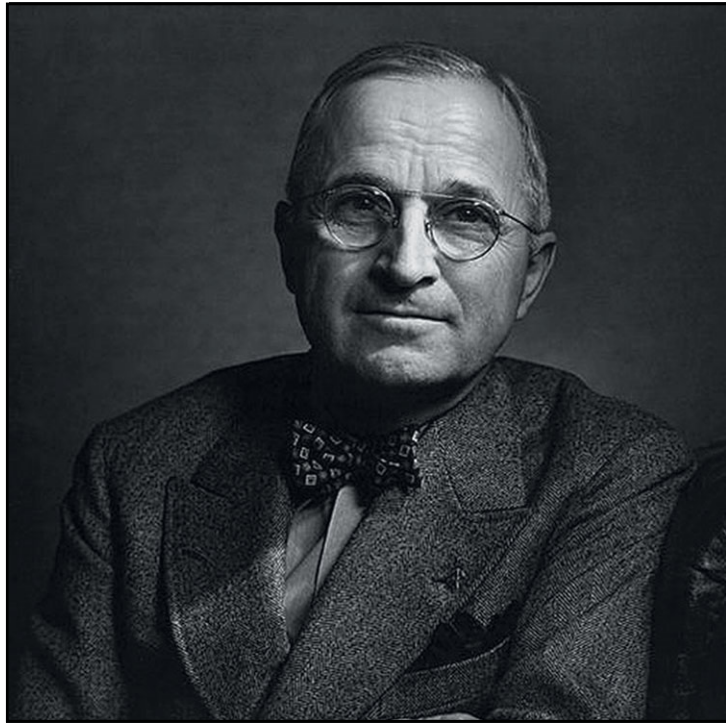
Practical, hands-on
experience preferred



Adult Learning Principles & Implications

Adults do well when
their abilities and life
achievements are
acknowledged and
respected. What are the
implications for your
teaching?





“It’s what you learn
after you know it all
that counts.”

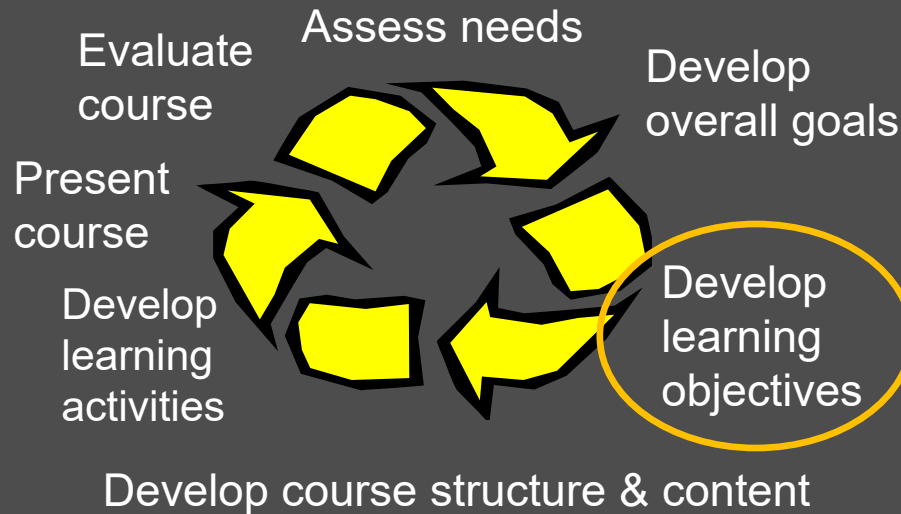
~ Harry S. Truman

Drafting Effective Learning Objectives: Creating a Foundation for Your Course



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The Planning Circle



What is a “learning objective”?



In your own words, type a definition of “Learning Objective” into the chat tool.

Definition of “Learning Objective”

What the learner will be able to do after the session that the learner was not able to do prior to the session.

Selecting Appropriate Learning Objectives

- ▶ Why was my subject matter selected?
- ▶ What is the current level of knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSAs) of participants?
- ▶ How much time do I have?
- ▶ Is breadth or depth of coverage more important?
- ▶ What are the few “essentials” in terms of KSAs that the participants need?

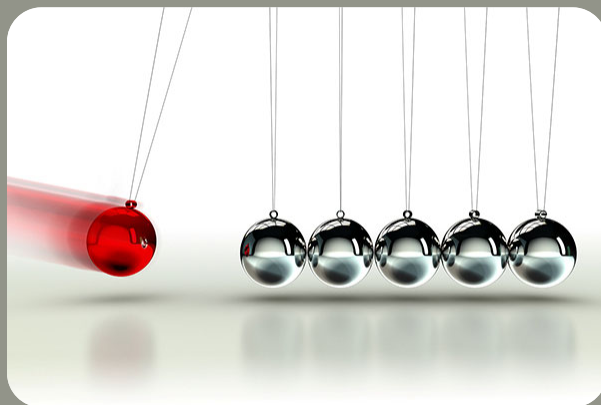
Learning Objectives - Characteristics

1. Intro Phrase: After participating in this presentation, the learner will be able to . . .
2. Action verbs (e.g., state, analyze, conduct a hearing, etc.)

Action Verbs?

After this session, you will be able to:

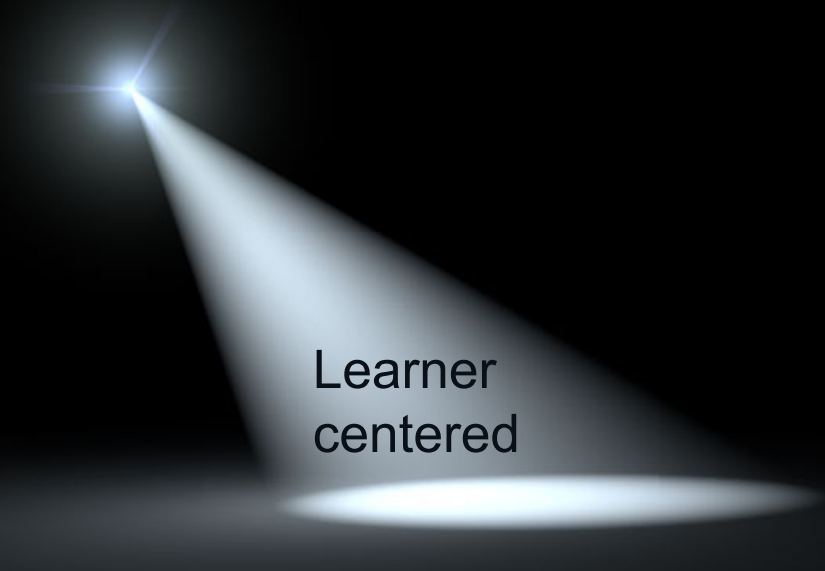
- ▶ Know ...
- ▶ Understand ...
- ▶ Appreciate ...



Learning Objectives - Characteristics

1. Intro Phrase: After participating in this presentation, the learner will be able to . . .
2. Action verbs (e.g., state, analyze, conduct a hearing, etc.)
3. Clear (specific and unambiguous) statement of what the learner will be able to do after the session

Learning Objectives



Learner
centered

Learning Objectives

Achievable

impossible



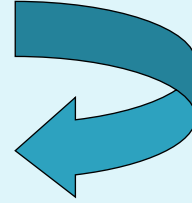
Learning Objectives

Can be observed, verified or evaluated



Today's Learning Objectives

During this segment, you will be able to:



1. Define “learning objective”
2. Draft meaningful learning objectives for your teaching

Learning Objectives are NOT

- ▶ Course title
Ethics for Judges
- ▶ General goal
This course is designed to...
- ▶ Instructor-centered
The instructor will explain ethical rules for judges.

Revising Learning Objectives

- ▶ “This session will explain what information court clerks can provide to litigants.”
- ▶ “The instructor will address effective and ineffective risk assessment tools.”

Purposes of Objectives

- ▶ Planning



Purposes of Objectives

- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Presentation



Purposes of Objectives

- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Presentation
- ▶ Evaluation



Planning Stage

- ▶ Clarify session purpose(s)
- ▶ Help in choosing . . .
 - Learning activities
 - Materials
 - Audiovisual aids
 - Classroom setup / platform setup

Presentation Stage

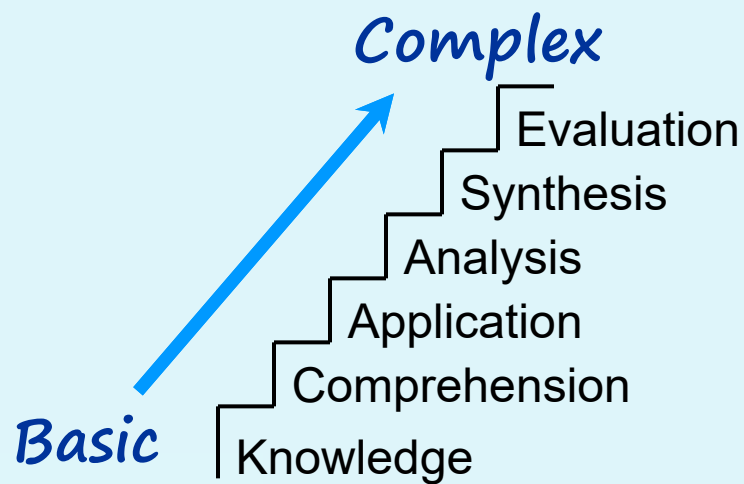
- ▶ For students
 - Clarify “what’s in it for me?”
 - Help with organization
 - Motivate the students
- ▶ For presenters
 - Re-shaping

Evaluation Stage

After the session, are the students able to?




Bloom's Taxonomy



Draft Your Own Learning Objective(s) Exercise

1. Identify educational session
2. Define session's title
3. Write at least one learning objective for session
 - ☐ Use 3 step process
 - ☐ Use learning objective verbs
 - ☐ Consult checklist



If you don't know where you're going,
how will you know when you get there?

~ Casey Stengel

Checklist for Selecting Appropriate Learning Objectives

Professor Gerald Hess

- ☐ Why was my subject selected for inclusion in the judicial education program?
- ☐ What is the current level of experience, knowledge, skill, attitudes of the participants regarding my topic?
- ☐ How much time do I have with the participants?
- ☐ Is breadth or depth of coverage more important for the participants?
- ☐ What are the few “essentials” in terms of knowledge, skills, or attitudes that the participants need when they leave my session?

3 Step Process for Writing Effective Learning Objectives

Professor Gerald Hess

Step 1

Begin the statement of objectives with:

“After this session, participants will be able to...”

or

“As a result of this session, you will be able to...”

Step 2

Select an action verb that describes what the participants will be able to do:

“define” “discuss” “produce” “design” “organize” “critique”

Step 3

Complete the objective with the appropriate content:

“As a result of this session, you will be able to draft effective learning objectives for judicial education sessions you will teach in the future.”

Verbs for Learning Objectives

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
count	associate	apply	analyze	categorize	appraise
define	convert	classify	arrange	combine	assess
describe	defend	complete	break down	compile	compare
identify	discuss	compute	combine	compose	conclude
label	distinguish	demonstrate	design	create	contrast
list	estimate	discover	detect	derive	criticize
outline	explain	divide	develop	generate	critique
read	extend	interpret	differentiate	group	determine
recall	extrapolate	modify	discriminate	integrate	grade
recognize	generalize	operate	illustrate	order	interpret
record	give examples	prepare	relate	organize	judge
reproduce	infer	produce	select	plan	justify
select	paraphrase	show	separate	propose	measure
state	predict	solve	use	revise	rank
write	summarize	rule		transform	rate
					test