

Adult Learning Styles

Activists (Kinesthetics)

Activists like to be involved in new experiences. They are open-minded and enthusiastic about new ideas but get bored with implementation. They enjoy doing things and tend to act first and consider the implications afterwards. Activists like working with others but tend to hog the limelight.

Activists learn best when	Activists learn less when
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involved in new experiences, problems, and opportunities.• Working with others in games, team tasks and roleplays• Being thrown in the deep and with a difficult task• Chairing meetings and leading discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listening to lectures or long explanations• Reading, writing, or thinking on their own• Absorbing and understanding data• Following precise instruction to the letter

Reflectors (Intrapersonal)

Reflectors like to stand back and look at a situation from different perspectives. They like to collect information and think about it carefully before coming to any conclusions. Reflectors enjoy observing others and will listen to their views before offering their own.

Reflectors learn best when	Reflectors learn less when
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observing individuals or groups doing something• They can review what has happened and think about what they have learned.• Producing analyses and reports doing tasks without tight deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acting as a leader or role-playing in front of others• Doing things with no time to prepare• Being thrown in at the deep end

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being rushed or worried by deadlines.
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Theorists (Logical)

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex and logically sound theories. They think problems through in a step-by-step way. They tend to be perfectionists who like to fit things into a rational scheme. Theorists tend to be detached and analytical rather than subjective or emotive in their thinking.

Theorists learn best when	Theorists learn less when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are put in complex situations where they must use their skills and knowledge. • They are in structured situations with a clear purpose. • They are offered interesting ideas or concepts even though they are not immediately relevant. • They have the chance to question and probe ideas behind things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have to participate in situations which emphasize emotion and feelings. • The activity is unstructured, or briefing is poor • They must do things without knowing the principles or concepts involved. • They feel they are out of tune with the other participants., e.g. with people of very different learning styles

Pragmatists

Pragmatists are keen to try it out. They want concepts that can be applied to their job. They tend to be impatient with lengthy discussions and are practical and down to earth.

Pragmatists learn best when	Pragmatists learn less when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an obvious link between the training topic and their work. • They must have a chance to try out techniques with feedback, e.g., role playing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no obvious or immediate benefit that they can recognize. • There is no practice or guidelines on how to do it

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are shown techniques with obvious advantages, e.g., saving time or money. • They have a role-model and credible expert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no apparent payback to learning. E.g., no time or money saved. • The event or learning is ‘all theory’
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Most of us have elements of more than one learning style. Knowing which your strongest and weakest styles are will help you identify how you best learn. As a trainer, having an appreciation of the different styles will help you to design stimulating and effective training sessions.

Your Learning Style Can Affect Your Training Style!

As a trainer, be aware of how your own learning style may affect your choice of activity. Aim to appeal to all learning styles and pick a range of methods, not just those that you might naturally favor.

<p>ACTIVISTS are more likely to favor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of different activities • Experimental activities • Brainstorming • Games and role playing • Group tasks • Icebreakers and activities • Problem-solving activities • Unstructured “play-it-by-ear activities” 	<p>THEORISTS you may be more likely to favor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of information • Handouts with detailed background information • Presentation of theories, models concepts, systems • Questions and answer sessions • Relating the training activity to the relevant theory/model • Structured situations
<p>REFLECTORS ARE more likely to favor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities building on pre-course work. • Exchange of information 	<p>PRAGMATISTS are more likely to favor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities that have quantifiable end result. • Anything with an immediate practical recommendation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing or using observers • Preventing research and analysis • Reviewing group activities to learn lessons. • Showing DVD's and videos • Structured group discussions • Using video to record activities or role plays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies closely linked to people's experiences. • Demonstrations • Practical exercises that give participants the opportunity to try things out. • Simulations of "real" situations
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Considering these differences, there are no "one fits all" approach for adult teaching. However, what can be said for sure is that all different types of learners will prefer an interesting mix of different learning methods over a series of monotonous lectures without any interaction.

Hence, understanding the adult learner is critical to the success of this learning approach. Adult learners need continual opportunities to identify their needs and recognize the relevance of their learning in terms of their own lives. Adult learners need self-directed learning opportunities in which they can actively participate (KROEHNERT 2007). They need to actively think, do, and to reflect on experiences, to discuss with others, and to practice and learn new skills. The adult learner needs interactive communication with both the facilitator and fellow learners, which is different from one-way facilitator-to-learner communication. The learner needs to continually reassess the question, "Where am I now and where do I want to go?"

Applicability

Understanding the adult learner is very important to give any successful training courses for adults. It is crucial that the trainers are aware of the different ways people learn and know how they can address these different learning needs.