

Some Characteristics of Adults as Learners as Compared with Children

Adults are more realistic. They have lived longer and have a different perspective of life. They no longer see life through rose-colored glasses, but as a set of realities.

Adults have had more experience. They have insights and see relationships not discerned by children. They have a sense of what is likely to work and what is not – a sort of accumulated wisdom.

Adults have needs, which are more concrete and immediate than those of children. They are impatient with long discourses on theory and like to see theory applied to practical problems.

Adults do not comprise a captive audience. They attend voluntarily and if interest is lacking, they are inclined to stop attending.

Adults are used to being treated as mature persons and resent having teachers talk down to them. A corollary is that **adults enjoy having their talents and information made use of in a teaching situation.**

Adult groups are likely to be more heterogeneous than youth groups. Differences increase with age and mobility. Therefore, adults come from a wider variety of backgrounds and intelligence levels than youth.

Adults through their fifties, and sometimes well beyond that, can learn as well as youth, although the learning rate may be slower.

Adults often attend classes with a mixed set of motives: Educational, social, recreational, and sometimes out of an over-developed puritanical sense of duty.

Adults are sometimes fatigued when they attend classes. They appreciate any teaching devices which add interest and a sense of liveliness: variety of method, audiovisual aids, change of pace, and a sense of humor.

--Taken from A Guide for Teachers and Teacher Trainers (NAPCAE, 1966) Robert L. Derbyshire, Consultant.