

Training Development Guidelines



A Guide to Developing Training for Adult Learners

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September 2018



Table of Contents

OVERVIEW.....	1
ADULT LEARNERS	2
TRAINING TECHNIQUES FOR ADULT LEARNERS.....	7
OUTCOMES	8
LEARNING OBJECTIVES	8
HOW DO I WRITE LEARNING OUTCOMES?.....	8
EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES	10
CONTENT.....	11
CREATING CONTENT	11
BLOOM’S TAXONOMY (REVISED)	14
RESOURCES	15

Overview

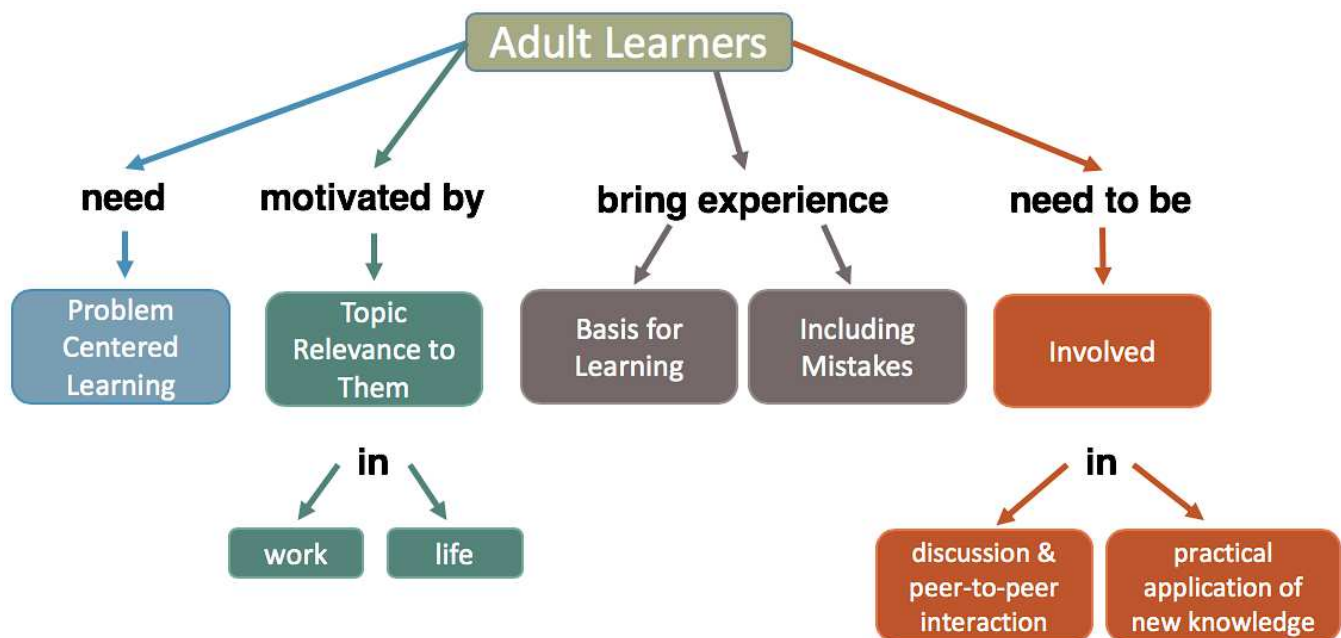
This guide has been developed to serve as a tool and resource as you create continuing education training materials for your staff trainings or to qualify for SNA continuing education credit. The principles contained within are based on Adult Learning Theory and are provided to you in an effort to enhance the learning experience of the participants.

Studies have shown that adult learners are more likely to retain educational content by being actively engaged in their learning through discussion, feedback and activities. This guide briefly touches on a few key points to help you add value to your educational training; however, it is not intended to serve as the only source of adult learning principles.

Incorporating as many of the elements, outlined in this document, as possible will improve the experience for participants and will increase the retention of information. Participant engagement should be a priority as you create your content.

Adult Learners

The development and delivery of training is not without its challenges. Your adult learners are a diverse group comprised of varying ages, education and confidence levels, so let's get started with what we already know. We know that adult learners bring a lot to the table. We know that adults come to a training session with their own experiences, biases and insecurities about learning because adults have had a lifetime of experiences. No two people are the same, nor do they learn in the same way.



The following discusses the information and concepts that you can begin using immediately in your training efforts.

1. Self-learning and Personal Beliefs

Every adult learner has some personal belief about how they learn. These beliefs have been developed through their own life experiences, learning and otherwise, that have impacted them throughout their years. These personal beliefs are based in both positive and negative experiences. Moreover, these beliefs may not be entirely accurate and can either enhance or interfere with their ability to learn. Remember that the idea of a new training program may sometimes raise insecurities in your adult learner.

Trainer Tips: As the trainer you set the initial tone of the training. You should explain to your learners why their participation is important and how they will benefit from the experience. As you set the tone of the training and your participants become comfortable they will be more open to learning. Keep in mind that you are there to help, coach, and advocate for your learners. They should always feel safe and not concerned or embarrassed about what they may not know.

2. Relevance and What's in it for Me? (WIIFM)

Adult learners need to buy into the need for the training. This is key as participants may tune out and mentally shut down if the training is not directly relevant to their life and work. They must know the “what’s in it for me” (WIIFM). Consider what makes the training necessary and meaningful? This should be addressed upfront, at the beginning of your training. If your adult learners don’t get the WIIFM quickly they will likely disconnect from the training.

Trainer Tips: During the first few minutes of your training, you should communicate the purpose, relevance and the benefit. You should have already developed clear and concise learning objectives that advise participants what they will learn. Don’t overcomplicate the concepts as this will alienate your learners. You may want to engage your learners before you begin the training by asking them why the topic is an important one, or why it is important to them and what they hope to gain from the training. By taking an active interest in your participants, they will be more open to learning and feel valued.



3. Previous Experience and New Learning

It is important for your adult learners to draw connections between the new training and their previous knowledge and/or skills. In doing so, these connections aid participants in remembering the new information and they are then more likely to implement the new concepts, information or skills being taught.

Trainer Tips: Help participants to take advantage of their own experiences as related to the new topic by encouraging discussion and opportunities for sharing. This helps your participants apply the new training to what they already know. You may need to assist or provide some guidance to help your adult learners connect the new information to their previous experience. If time allows, provide a period of peer-to-peer interaction. Remember, listening to other experiences and being able to ask questions increases attention.

4. Solutions Driven and Problem-centered

Adult learners are typically not content driven; meaning that while the content of the training is important, they are more likely looking for solutions to a problem. For the adult learner, the experience has to be more than listening to someone lecture on a topic. They want to be involved, they want solutions-oriented training that helps them make an instant connection to what they are doing on the job. This in turn, helps them to retain new information. This harkens back to the second item in our list, relevance. If the training is not relevant or if it does not help to resolve their issues, they will lose interest.

Trainer Tips: Provide specific scenarios, or case studies, and involve your participants in solving them. Engage your learners by asking them what they would do in a given situation and encourage discussion. Survey your participants throughout the training to find out how they are responding to the new concepts being taught. Offer your participants practical solutions and when possible, the time to discuss new applications.



5. Active Learning and Participation

Active participation, discussion, feedback and peer-to-peer activity adds tremendous value to adult training. Adults need to be connected to the training and each other as passivity breeds disconnection. A passive participant should be engaged or enticed into playing a more active role in the training session. The creation of a responsive and supportive training environment will create a positive atmosphere for the learner and garner positive training results.

Trainer Tips: Training content should be divided into easy-to-digest portions. If possible, look for ways to reduce the amount of lecture-only content, and provide participants with opportunities to play a more active role in their learning through problem solving exercises or group activities. Retention of learning is higher if the audience members are active and involved participants. The following quote, often incorrectly attributed to Benjamin Franklin, sums this up, “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”

6. Engagement and Emotional Connections

As a trainer you should seek to empower and engage your participants. Striking a positive emotional chord with your learners is priceless because when learning is connected to emotion, it is more likely to be remembered. Moreover, adult learners want to make a positive contribution to their learning. Providing opportunities in which they feel that they have something to offer or contribute adds value to their learning and they will be more receptive to the transfer of knowledge.

Trainer Tips: Never use fear as a motivating factor for learning as it causes the brain to react in a fight-or-flight response. Fear hampers real learning. As a trainer you are tasked with coaching your learners. Connecting to your participants right away engages them and shows that you value them. This builds their confidence and aids in their learning. Diversity in your training methods will also help to engage your learners and keep their brains active. Whenever possible, provide different types of activities or break up the content and allow time for reflection and discussion.

7. Fun and Social

As a trainer you should endeavor to make your training fun! Adults love to laugh and have fun, and we hope that you are able to have fun while you are training. Social education supports a community of learning and fun peer-to-peer interactions add value and creates a network for the learners. They see themselves in others and others in themselves, validating their need for the new information and showing them that they are not alone in their training needs.

Trainer Tips: Adding a game ‘type’ of activity encourages learning because it supports active learning and increases engagement while providing a nonthreatening space in which to make mistakes and to learn from failures. However, while games can be a great way to encourage interaction, keep in mind that adults can have fun and enjoy their training session without the addition of games as well. You may be limited by time and/or resources, so in lieu of games offer opportunities for participants to interact with each other.



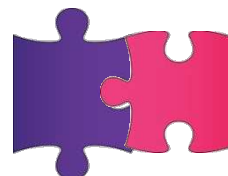
Putting the Pieces Together

Your adult learner needs to:

- Believe that they can succeed.
 - Have a sense of self-sufficiency.
- Be treated as responsible.
 - Believe that there is a partnership in learning.
- Know instruction matches their style.
 - Feel that the training is the right fit for their learning style(s).
- Be engaged in the learning process.
 - Play an active role in their learning through engagement.
- Have access to appropriate resources after the training concludes.
 - Know that they are adequately supported.
- Understand what they are being taught.
 - Meaningfulness and clarity.
- Find training content interesting and practical.
 - Buy into the training.
- Succeed early in a course.
 - Motivates and encourages.

In turn, we as trainers must communicate the following messages:

- I know who you are. (Audience Awareness)
- I know what we have to accomplish. (Intended Learning Outcomes)
- I will present you with choices in getting there. (Fairness and Support)
- I have an organized plan. (Syllabus/Agenda/Outline)
- I will provide manageable information. (Clarity)
- I will make the work appealing. (Interest)
- Involvement is low-risk and high-reward. (Participation)
- All ideas are important and valued. (Respect)
- I will use our time productively. (Relevance)
- I will help you to succeed. (Support)



Training Techniques for Adult Learners

Many teaching techniques and strategies can be used to engage active learners. There are several listed below, but this list is not inclusive. You may already use some of these and consider adding one into your next training.

- **Activating prior knowledge** provides participants with an opportunity to connect the new material to their previous experience on the given topic. The trainer can start the training with a discussion about what participants already know about a subject. Then as you present the new training, as the trainer, you can draw a connection to the earlier participants' discussion points.
- **Think-Pair-Share** method allows participants to share thoughts and ideas. This short activity allows for the participants to 1.) individually *think* for a few minutes about a question or case study; 2.) work with another participant (*pair*) to discuss their thoughts; 3.) *share* the results of their discussion.
- **Questioning** engages participants to read the material. It helps participants to engage in new concepts and ideas. There are several types of questions that can be used: closed ended, open ended, clarifying, probing and rhetorical are just a few. Some of the benefits of using questions are (1) it keeps the participant's interest; (2) it encourages participation; (3) it is a way to check for understanding; and (4) it keeps participants focused on the material.
- **Case studies** are good group activities. Provide the participants with an issue or topic that is related to the training material. In small groups, have participants discuss the issue or topic, and apply information learned in the training. Participants then present their findings to the whole group. The rest of the group can then offer other solutions if time permits. This gives them the opportunity to learn how to handle similar situations at work.
- **Reflection** exercises are a way for participants to look back at what has been discussed in the training. It is a way to review what they learned. This type of activity should be done towards the end of the training. Participants will remember different segments of the training which helps everyone to learn.

Outcomes

Why are learning objectives important?

1. Learning objectives, that are written during the planning stages, provide the trainer a way to structure the training.
2. Learning objectives provide participants with a clear understanding of what they are going to be learning.
3. Learning objectives, when evaluated, help trainers measure the success of their training.

Learning Objectives

1. Learning objectives are brief measurable statements that describe what an attendee is expected to learn from the educational instruction.
2. The learning objectives **MUST** provide a detailed description of what the attendee will be able to do when the instruction has concluded.
3. Learning objectives should be used as a learning directive to help attendees make practical use of the information being imparted during the instruction.
4. Learning objectives should be measurable, meaning that upon the conclusion of the instruction, the attendee should be able to evaluate the session as to the extent in which the learning objective(s) were achieved.



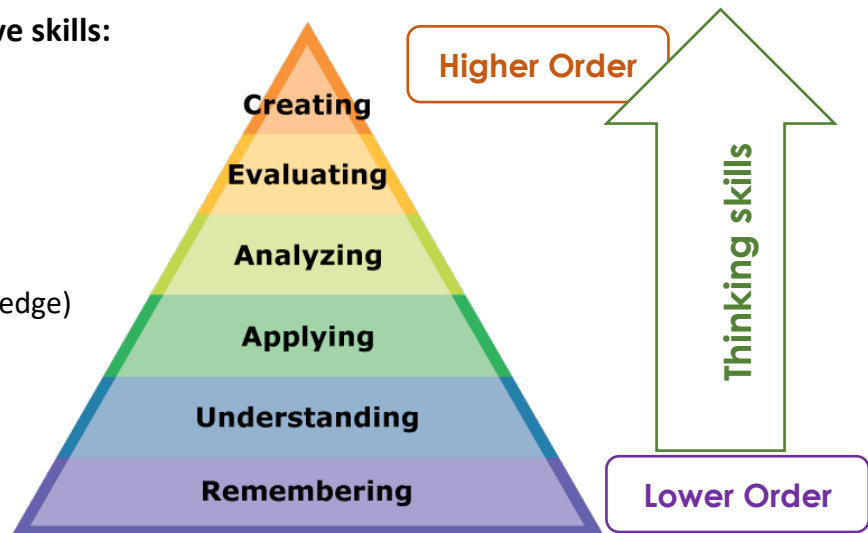
See Page 3 for
Learning Objective
examples.

How do I write learning outcomes?

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (published in 1956 and revised in 2001) provides the methodology to express learning outcomes in a way that reflects cognitive skills. Utilizing this approach has become the standard and affords attendees with the ability to evaluate the degree in which the objectives have been achieved.

There are six levels of cognitive skills:

- Creating (Synthesis)
- Evaluating
- Analysis
- Applying
- Understanding
- Remembering (Knowledge)

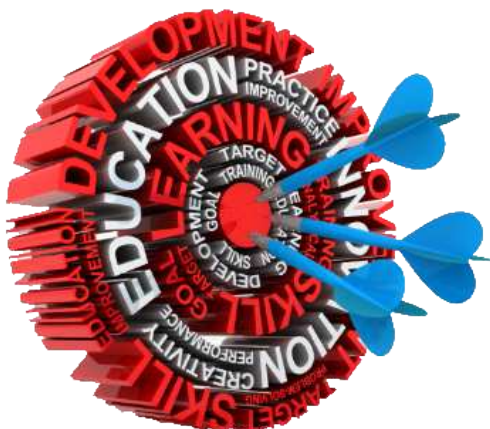


Based on Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001).

Learning objectives are introduced by stating:

“At the conclusion of this (lecture, workshop, session, etc.) you will be able to...”

- **Create a separate objective for each action.**
 - *End each objective with a period.*
 - *Use upper and lower case appropriately.*
 - *Do not abbreviate or use unusual characters.*



The participant “outcome” should be measurable, actionable or observable.

It is important to note that there are some verbs to avoid when writing learning outcomes. These verbs are vague and oftentimes are not observable or measurable. For example, how would you measure whether someone has “become familiar with” a particular tool? Use a more specific verb, like identify, discover, describe, etc. See Taxonomy, attached.

Examples of Learning Objectives

“Upon the conclusion of this (lecture, workshop, session, etc.) you will be able to...”

Poor choices

1. **Understand** the benefits of implementing healthy food and beverage standards/policies for middle and high schools.
2. **Become familiar with** three (3) strategies for effective marketing of healthy foods and beverages.
3. **Appreciate** the strategies used by a sample of school districts to increase participation in the National School Lunch Program as a means of revenue generation.

Acceptable choices

1. **Describe** the benefits of implementing healthy food and beverage standards/policies for middle and high schools.
2. **Identify** three (3) strategies for effective marketing of healthy foods and beverages.
3. **Summarize** the strategies used by a sample of school districts to increase participation in the National School Lunch Program as a means of revenue generation.



Content

Creating Content

It is useful to divide your content into three content areas to help shape the module design and delivery. Some content elements may fit in more than one of these categories.

- **Materials and information** that participants can read and review on their own.
 - Includes pre- and post- activity materials
- **Knowledge and information** that benefits from listening and questioning a subject matter expert.
- **Shared knowledge and experiential learning** that benefits from interaction between participants.

Dividing your content allows you to start constructing your program into a series of segments, including pre/post-activity work.



Content

Content is described as **the body of knowledge that will be presented to meet each learning objective**. Each learning objective should be clearly addressed and identifiable within the content of the presentation.

Training content can also be broken into asynchronous and synchronous learning. That is, content that the participants can review/read/complete on their own and the content that you will provide live with a group of participants. You may not always be able to use this method, but when pushed for training time, this method helps.



Asynchronous	Synchronous
Learning that takes place before or after live “instructor” time that participants complete on their own, outside of the standard training environment.  This is accomplished through assigned tasks or reading that is done at the participants’ own pace on their own time. Asynchronous Examples: • Pre-reading materials, including slide presentations • Self-assessment survey • Problem to solve • Pre- and post-test to establish a knowledge baseline	Instructors and participants are engaged at the same time, either in a live setting, or online.  Synchronous Examples: • Moderated Q&A • Problem solving exercises with brainstorming, categorizing or prioritizing • Ideation activities prompted by images, graphics, video clips • Storytelling and reflection • Quick polls • Team building discussions

Pre-Activity (Asynchronous)

Ideally, educational and training content should be developed with interactive and engagement in mind. If you utilize this approach, participants should be made aware that there will be material that comes before the actual presentation. This material will assist the participant in relating the content to their own positions.

Content Delivery

Content should be developed with the highest degree of participant engagement. Providing handouts of your presentation will assist participants in following along and encourages note taking. Content should be easily relatable to pre/post-activity exercises. Results from the pre-activity exercise should be quickly summarized at the beginning of your presentation. The traditional “dump” of information via didactic lecture should be avoided.

Interaction should be further encouraged via question and answer periods, and/or polling questions, throughout your content in an effort to continually engage participants.

Post-Activity (Asynchronous)

Following up with a post-activity exercise is desirable to reinforce the learning that has taken place during the live presentation.



Remember, incorporating material that participants can review before and after the delivery of live content will serve to reinforce their learning!

Bloom's Taxonomy (Revised)

Definitions	I. Remembering	II. Understanding	III. Applying	IV. Analyzing	V. Evaluating	VI. Creating
Bloom's Definition	Exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers.	Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas.	Solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.	Examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.	Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria.	Compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.
Verbs*	• Arrange • Choose • Define • Describe • Duplicate • Find • Identify • Label • List • Match • Name • Order • Outline • Recognize • Recall • Relate • Select • Show • State • Tell	• Classify • Compare • Contrast • Demonstrate • Describe • Discuss • Explain • Extend • Identify • Illustrate • Infer • Interpret • Outline • Paraphrase • Recognize • Relate • Rephrase • Show • Summarize • Translate	• Apply • Build • Choose • Construct • Demonstrate • Develop • Experiment with • Identify • Illustrate • Interpret • Make use of • Model • Organize • Plan • Select • Solve • Utilize	• Analyze • Apply • Categorize • Classify • Compare • Contrast • Discover • Dissect • Distinguish • Divide • Examine • Inspect • List • Motive • Relate • Solve • Survey	• Appraise • Assess • Choose • Compare • Conclude • Contrast • Describe • Deduct • Estimate • Evaluate • Explain • Interpret • Judge • Justify • Measure • Opinion • Perceive • Prioritize • Relate • Summarize • Select • Support	• Arrange • Build • Categorize • Collect • Combine • Compile • Compose • Construct • Create • Design • Develop • Devise • Explain • Formulate • Generate • Imagine • Improve • Invent • Modify • Plan • Predict • Prepare • Relate • Revise • Summarize

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing, Abridged Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

*** Verbs to avoid: Understand | Appreciate | Know | Familiar with | Learn about | Become aware of**

Resources and References

- 3 Tips for Writing Measurable Learning Objectives
<http://www.learninghouse.com/blog/publishing/3-tips-for-writing-measurable-objectives>
- A Model of Learning Objectives
<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching-resources/effective-practice/revised-blooms-taxonomy/>
- Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains
<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html>
- eLearning Guild Research: Reconsidering Bloom's Taxonomy (Old and New)
<http://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/1105/elearning-guild-research-reconsidering-blooms-taxonomy-old-and-new>
- Adult Learning Course Workbook (ICN)
<http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20130325091210.pdf>
- Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy: Adult Learning Theories
https://teal.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Fact-Sheets/11_%20TEAL_Adult_Learning_Theory.pdf
- Application of Adult Learning Theory
ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NEDC/isd/adult_learning_theory.pdf
- Learning Theories/Adult Learning Theories
https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Learning_Theories/Adult_Learning_Theories
- Adult Learning
http://epltt.coe.uga.edu/index.php?title=Adult_Learning
- Andragogy Adult Learning Theory
<http://www2.southeastern.edu/Academics/Faculty/nadams/etec630&665/Knowles.html>
- Learning, Training and Development
Understanding the Employee as an Adult Learner
<http://www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/learning-understanding.cfm>
- Engaging Adult Learners
Philosophy, Principles and Practices
<http://northernnc.on.ca/leid/docs/engagingadultlearners.pdf>
- SNAs Webinar Wednesday, Training the Trainer: Practical Tips for Training Adult Learners
<https://schoolnutrition.org/education/webinars/on-demand/training-trainer-practical-tips-for-training-adult-learners/>