

*Purpose of this segment:*            *Participants will learn strategies for creating an effective learning environment/experience for adults.*

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Notes

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## **Seven Strategies for Adult Learning**

### **1. Recognize participant experience/expertise.**

- Ask about level of experience with your topic. Acknowledge that all the expertise in the room will greatly enrich the class.
- Incorporate small group discussions in which people can share their experience.
- Instead of answering every question yourself, ask participants to answer; or ask them to add their own experience to your answer.

### **2. Address audience interests and/or concerns.**

- At start of class, find out what people hope you will cover, questions they hope you will answer, etc. Collect ideas on a flip chart, and keep it posted.
- Tell them which topics will be covered, which will not. Offer to talk at break or after class about those that will not be covered.
- Incorporate their questions into your presentation.

### **3. Make the material relevant and practical.**

- Relevance: Ask audience about their level of experience and questions they have (previous two sections).
- Practicality: Ask yourself:
  - Is this the right time of year to be presenting this topic?
  - Does this audience have any special needs/limitations that I need to consider?
  - What can I present that people can go home and put into practice right away?
  - Whenever possible, get advance information about participants' expectations, experience, needs, etc.

**4. Make learning accessible for different learning styles.**

- People have different learning preferences. While it is not practical to address all preferences all the time, we can provide something for everyone at some time in the class.
- Examples of different preferences:
  - prefer to learn through interaction with others vs prefer to learn on one's own.
  - prefer to read vs prefer to listen to a lecture vs prefer to do actively explore
- Important alternatives to include in your presentation:
  - providing information visually vs aurally vs through an activity
  - processing information as individuals or in a small group
  - using logic and analysis vs imagination or invention
  - reading something vs hearing a lecture vs video or slides vs talking to others

*Note: Strategies 5, 6 and 7 have to do with helping adults continue to learn after the class is over.*

**5. Encourage networking**

- Adults learn by being connected to others who share their interests. Whenever possible, provide opportunities for participants to get to know each other and learn who in the class would be good partners to continue learning after the class is over.
  - Use small group discussions and change groups several times.
  - Organize a group project (for longer classes).
  - Work in pairs on activities and change partners when possible.
  - Use name tags or name tents. Use people's names as much as possible.
  - Do a quick ice-breaker that helps everyone learn who else is in the class.
  - Have breaks and, if possible, refreshments to share.

**6. Model life-long learning.**

- Share your own on-going education in composting, and ask others to do the same.
  - Tell stories about your experiments and experiences and what you've learned from them.
  - Describe how you try to solve different types of problems in your garden.
  - Talk about what you want to try next.
  - Share where you go to get your questions answered.
  - Admit your failures and frustrations.
  - Build in activities in which participants do one of the above and share it with the class.

**7. Provide links to resources**

- Adults want and need to be self-directed learners. Show them how to find information for themselves by sharing:
  - a bibliography of the references you used
  - favorite books, websites, catalogs, print materials, etc.
  - public gardens that have compost operations, Master Gardener projects, etc., where they can continue their learning

**Practicum**

Plan how you will incorporate at least four of the seven strategies into your presentation. One action on your part may represent more than one of these strategies.