

Characteristics and Needs of Adult Learners and Implications for Teaching

Adult learners--characteristics and needs:

How tutors can address the characteristics and needs of adult learners:

Want and deserve respect

Give frequent praise and support

Design lessons so that the learner experiences success

Believe in the learner and his or her ability to learn

Treat tutoring as a partnership between equals

Are used to making decisions

Use the learner's first name only if you invite the learner to use your first name and he or she is comfortable doing so

Involve the learner in setting goals and objectives

Offer choices of activities and materials

Are busy people

Ask the learner to evaluate the lessons

Respect the learner's priorities and opinions

Develop lesson plans that address priority needs

Have to deal with emergencies and unexpected situations

Use the tutoring time carefully

Be flexible in assigning homework

Help the learner schedule homework time

Make an agreement to call if either you or the learner cannot make it to a session

Have alternative activities ready in case the learner did not have time to prepare

Adult learners--characteristics and needs:

Have a wealth of life experience

Sometimes feel insecure about using new skills on their own

Have their own values and beliefs

May have special physical needs

How tutors can address the characteristics and needs of adult learners:

Build self-esteem by emphasizing the skills and strengths the learner already has

Be open to what the learner can teach you

Design instructional activities around the learner's work, family, community, politics, hobbies, friends, or current interests

Provide plenty of opportunities to practice new skills

Practice an exercise with the learner before asking him or her to do it alone or for homework

Provide support, such as audiotapes, of a reading assignment

Encourage the learner to use computer programs, where available, to reinforce skills

Emphasize the learner's progress

Don't ask something you know the learner doesn't know

Respect the learner's values and don't try to change them; don't judge

Be sensitive to possible sight or hearing problems

Provide adequate lighting

Speak clearly

Meet in a place that is comfortable and accessible to the learner

Provide adequate break time

Adult learners--characteristics and needs:

Want to apply what they learn to their present lives

Learn by building on what they already know

May be reluctant to ask questions; might pretend they already know something

How tutors can address the characteristics and needs of adult learners:

Find out what the learner's needs are

Show how a skill or lesson helps the learner move closer to meeting those needs

Use the learner's background knowledge and experience as reference points for his or her learning

Set goals to improve current levels of skills

Develop a trusting relationship and a safe learning environment where questions are encouraged and respected

Characteristics of *Adult New Readers* And Implications for Teaching

Adult new readers share the characteristics of all adult learners. They may also have some of the characteristics and needs listed below.

Adult new readers-- characteristics and needs:

How tutors can address the characteristics and needs of adult new readers:

May fear school

Find out what school experiences were unpleasant for the learner and avoid re-creating them

Stress what the learner has done right

Do not criticize or ridicule the learner

Sit next to, rather than stand over, the learner

De-emphasize formal testing

May have problems meeting basic needs because of unemployment or poverty

Refer the learner to an appropriate source of assistance if the learner wants help, process can become lessons

May find planning for the future difficult

Help the learner set goals for reading and writing

Be prepared to develop supplemental lessons that speak to special needs or interests, such as how to obtain job training or write a resume

May be embarrassed or ashamed about being unable to read and write

Reassure the learner that many adults are in the same situation

Encourage the learner to attend a student support group, if your program has one

Be supportive and let the learner know there is nothing wrong with him or her

Find a private place for lessons if the learner is uncomfortable working in a public area

