

Inclusive Instruction: Information Literacy for Adult Learners

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Adult learning instruction strategies from a review of the library and information science and education literature:

- Make sure students in each instruction session know that the class session is not their last opportunity for library assistance; it can be just the beginning (Imel, 2001; Lange et al., 2011).
- Each group will have different dynamics and experience levels, so plan for differing levels of technology and library skills and different learning styles (Rapchak & Behary, 2013).
- Share lesson plan details with learners so they know how the class will be organized, the connections between tasks, and the objectives met. This will be appreciated by goal or task-oriented learners (Gust, 2006; Kenner & Weinerman, 2011).
- Set learning within the context of real-life conditions, giving specific examples that build on students' past knowledge and experiences to help them make connections between their learning and their outside lives (Donavant et al., 2013; Freedman et al., 2012; Kenner & Weinerman, 2011).
- Make abundant time for peer to peer learning in the classroom (for adult learners to share their knowledge with other, younger classmates and vice versa), for richer discussions and learning experiences (Donavant et al., 2013; Imel, 2001; Day et al., 2011; Currie, 2000).
- Give learners time to talk about their personal research interests and educational goals. You can then set or revise class objectives to cover the information most learners are interested in. The more adult learners are involved and invested in the learning process, the more they will learn from the experience (Cooke, 2010; Gust, 2006).
- Understand and acknowledge generational viewpoints, values, attitudes, cultures, and preferences in the classroom. Curriculum materials should be inclusive and culturally relevant, with the lived experiences of all learners represented in the classroom (Donavant et al., 2013; Imel, 2001).
- Provide an emotionally safe and sympathetic space for learning where learners feel encouraged by the instructor and other learners and are free to ask questions and admit difficulties (Freedman et al., 2012).
- Make the effort to develop personal connections with learners; this will help ease discomfort and anxiety with the library and help overcome any psychological barriers from previous bad experiences (Cooke, 2010).
- Using library technology can be challenging for adult learners returning to academia. Start with resources that learners already likely know and teach how to better use them and how to apply the same skills to using other, library resources. Teach the benefits of new strategies so learners see them as worthwhile to adapt to and beneficial for the future instead of simply hoops to jump through (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011; Rapchak & Behary, 2013).
- Help prevent information overload by using handouts and online guides that do not attempt to be exhaustive bibliographies, but are carefully curated to contain the most relevant resources for particular courses or subjects. Use these resources as jumping-off points that don't replace learner discovery or future library instruction (Lange et al., 2011)

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