

# Teaching adults technology: the possible learning barriers and how to overcome th...



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## **Abstract**

Industries are becoming increasingly dependent on the implementation of advanced technology. But this implementation of technology requires trained users. This rapid growth in technology sets a learning path for younger individuals to learn these advanced technologies for production and robotics technologies, but possibly jeopardizing the careers of older adult workers, ages 45 and up. So, to be applicable in the workforce, older adults need to learn something that is just short of foreign to them. Emotions, physical abilities, psychological being and social interaction all play a part in an individual's learning... whether it be a child, teenager or older adult. All these aspects affect how we learn and why we learn, but these aspects can also be a barrier to learning for the older adult. This paper will review studies on how these aspects can hinder, or become obstacles, in the learning process of the older adult and the best methods or ways to approach overcoming them.

Keywords: technology, how do adults learn, overcoming barriers, adult learning process, curriculum

Teaching Adults Technology: The Possible Learning Barriers and How to Overcome Them

Over the centuries the structure of the American economy and the type workforces the economy needed has changed drastically. Older workers (workers roughly 45 and over) that are employed in the production industry, generally chose these occupations because they offered job security and a good income. These industries have now become increasingly dependent on the implementation of software and advanced skills within its production

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approach (Technology, 1985). But this implementation of technology requires trained individuals. This rapid growth of technology may be jeopardizing the careers of these older workers. Younger individuals are learning these technologies for production, robotics, and computers in trade schools or Universities. If the older workers don't receive the extensive on-the-job training required to improve their productivity for their businesses or employers, they may be forced to retire or forced into low skilled, low-paying position/jobs. Those older workers who do lose their jobs may have difficulty finding new employment at previous pay levels (Technology, 1985).

## **Differences in Teaching Older Adults**

The adult student comes with a whole set of learned habits, components, and traits. While adult learners may have many common attributes, no two are the same and this can make teaching adults a challenging audience for any instructor. An example would be that one adult may learn better in a group setting, sharing with others, while another adult may prefer to work independently from others. To improve an adult's initial skill and understanding, the instructor must first understand how adults learn. Today, when we think of educating or training, we conventionally think of schools, universities, seminars, and courses. The difficulty with this approach is that not all of them are designed for the older individual or student. With age, an adult develops certain thoughts and impulses that differentiate them from who they were in junior high, high school, and even in college (if they attended). How adults learn change as well. The main difference in learning between the younger generations and the older adults is: younger generations learn for the future. Older adults learn for the present.

## **Learning Issues Faced by Adults**

Older adults are faced with many issues or difficulties in learning, whether it be learning something simple like riding a bike to something advanced like technology. Creating adult training curriculums can be just as difficult as well. So, it is important to be mindful of the challenges faced by adult learners and how to overcome them.

Unlike their younger counterparts, older adults have many things going on in their lives. Families and all the responsibilities that entail. Managing finances, family relationships and health concerns (both their own and of their family) is another burden they deal with. Issues at home or at work, no matter how large or small, can cause difficulties in concentrating and learning (Tusting & Barton, 2003). This does not even consider the anxiety of studying and learning something new, possibly just remain employed.

These responsibilities can also make adult learners be impatient, especially if they feel that their time is wasted. They need immediate gratification or feedback. Adults want to apply what they have learned immediately, creating learning reinforcement.

Something as simple as adults' routines that they have created in their home and professional lives has turned into strong habits, and adults don't like change. So, adults can even fear change, which can come from changing those routines, or habits. At this age, changes can possibly, but not always, have psychological consequences. To some, a change basically implies that whatever they've been doing until now hasn't been proficient enough, thus it requires them to concede that they weren't right or competent. Here's the

place trouble lies. No one likes being told, even if it's just implied, they are incorrect, let alone admitting it.

Adults will find that their study or learning habits, as well as, cognitive functions are not what they once were. This too will put a kink in their routines. They will possibly have to spend more time studying than doing what they normally would. If they feel over-burden, this will affect their motivation and ability to understand, or absorb, the information. Some adults are cautious about any new ideas. After all, if they haven't heard of the new idea in all those years, there must be a reason for the change.

With aging, adults can experience impaired sight, hearing or physical discomforts which can also lead to learning difficulties, as well as diminishing their self-esteem. Most adults are often forced to take to learn new technologies to enhance their skills, keep their job or to get a job. All this makes it difficult to motivate adults and make them active and willing participants (Van Roy, 2003).

Adult students have normally accumulated more life experience and combined a more extensive learning base than their young counterparts. They don't like to be treated like children and often are anxious or worried that participating in a group that might make them look weak or ignorant, either professionally or personally.

### **Overcoming Learning Issues**

So, it is important to be mindful of the challenges faced by adult learners and how to overcome them.

Because adults need immediate gratification or advice, they will want to apply what they have learned immediately, creating learning reinforcement. Instructors will need to communicate realistic expectation and goals with them prior to training. Underscore the real-world benefits. The adult learners need to be informed of the real-world benefits beforehand, and periodically, they should be reminded of these benefits (Lieb, 2003). An easy way of doing this would be adding a side note to each training module, explaining what real-world benefits it offers. By doing this, the adult will realize the purpose behind the educational experience, so that they become motivated and excited. Learning must be pertinent to their work or other responsibilities to be of value or interest to them. The reoccurring and continuous reminder of the training real-world benefits will help to keep adults motivated and interested (Lieb, 2003).

Also, by giving them immediate constructive criticism, they can learn from mistakes that might have been made and knowing that there was an alternative problem-solving approach. This will make their learning experience more effective. You are providing them with the opportunity to learn from mistakes by catching them at the moment they occur and seeing the direct consequences of that error, rather than waiting until the moment of need has passed to offer invaluable criticism.

Instructors need to keep in mind also, that if an adult has been doing something for years, they've had enough time to be reaffirmed by others and develop the internal certainty that their behavior is right.

Include activities and assignments that encourage adult learners to explore. Adult learners accumulate knowledge most effectively when they are active participants in their own learning process. Activities or assignments that encourage them to explore a subject matter on their own and learn from personal experience enhances the learning experience. When adults gain knowledge on their own, they become inspired to pursue other means of self-study and online education, and they also become more fully engaged in training (Lieb, 2003).

impaired sight, hearing or physical discomforts which can also lead to learning difficulties, as well as diminishing their self-esteem. Some helpful tips for course designers would be to utilize visually satisfying outline components. Stylishly satisfying training modules can be more effectively accommodated by adult students, also that can make a more intuitive and outwardly invigorating knowledge. Incorporate convincing and rousing pictures, beautiful textual styles, and realistic components that assistance to attract their consideration regarding the center parts of the modules (Lieb, 2003). Also, the instructor needs to take measures to ensure that the physical and social environment (training space) is safe, comfortable, and enjoyable (Van Roy, 2003). Many times, this is something that overlooked. It may seem like a minor thing, but it can make a big difference.

Instructors need to identify their participants' needs, develop training concepts and learning objectives to these identified needs. Provide opportunities for older adult participants to apply the new information and skills they have learned. Use training methods to allow participants to practice new skills and receive prompt, reinforcing feedback. By giving them <https://assignbuster.com/teaching-adults-technology-the-possible-learning-barriers-and-how-to-overcome-them/>

immediate feedback, you are making their learning experience more effective. You are providing them with the opportunity to learn from mistakes by catching them at the moment they occur and seeing the direct consequences of that error, rather than waiting until the moment of need has passed to offer invaluable feedback. Finally, provide opportunities for older adults to apply the new information and skills they have learned.

Remember not to over-burden them with content. Split your substance up into little lumps to help keep away from subjective information. Refrain from using large squares of content and select visual cues or numbered records. Additionally, you might need to consider planning smaller modules on specific topics, as opposed to long seemingly never-ending lessons that cover an extensive assortment of subjects (Lieb, 2003).

Most important, the instructor needs to consider the experience and background that is the substance of the adult student. Adult students have normally accumulated more life experience and combined a more extensive learning base than their young counterparts. Adults bring a great deal of experience and knowledge to any learning situation (Tusting and Barton, 2006). The instructor needs to show respect for each participants' experience by asking them to share ideas, opinions, and knowledge. Verbally recognize that they may be a good resource for reaching your teaching goals. By performing a needs assessment, the instructor can tell more about the individuals in their group. Moreover, if they already know the participants, the instructor may realize that some individuals could provide helpful input before, during, or after your training session(s).



When designing training workshops, educational exercises, and discussion sessions develop them to help people feel comfortable enough to ask questions and confident enough that they will be respected. Instructors shouldn't ask anyone to take risks too early in the training unless they already know each other well. They need to provide opportunities and allow time for individuals to establish themselves in the group (Tusting and Barton, 2006).

Not all adults experience the type obstacles to learning that have been previously discussed. Some adults welcome learning opportunities making them feel relevant and not outdated. But for those that do, an instructor being aware or sensitive to the adult student's capabilities and expectations, together they can overcome most of adult student's learning barriers making for a positive learning experience.

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