

How to Educate Adults on Infection Prevention Topics

Educating adults on infection prevention and control topics in assisted living facilities and nursing homes can be a challenge. Identifying the most appropriate content and strategies and applying meaning to them takes great effort on the part of the trainer. A well planned and implemented training session can be extremely beneficial to participants, develop habits that can increase dialogue among colleagues and support positive public health outcomes. Below you will find guidance for how to begin to structure your training session to staff members and visitors.

What are the principles of adult learning?

There are various theories that analyze how adult learn. These are summarized in the following five adult learning principles. As the trainer, these principles will enable you to create learning experiences that are constructive and meaningful.

Adult learning principle	How can I apply this principle?
1. Adults need to know why they are learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess the learner population, identifying barriers to achieving goals and priorities. ● Clearly specify how training session objectives relate to learners' reasons for attending the training.
2. Adults are motivated to learn by the need to solve problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather information about the problems learners are trying to solve before the training session. ● Identify broad themes that capture the range of challenges reported by learners. ● Set up a problem-based training session that is learner-centered and allows them to discuss and share insights and personal experiences. ● Anticipate problems applying new ideas to their setting and offer suggestions. ● Use collaborative, authentic problem-solving activities. ● Discuss and help them plan for direct application of new information.
3. Adults' previous experience must be respected and built upon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take inventory of trainees' experiences, especially around the key topic of focus. ● Relate new material to what learners already know. ● Share your agenda and assumptions and ask for input. Adjust time for topics to fit to their needs. ● Use experiential learning techniques such as case studies or discussion that draw upon learners' previous experiences. ● Use local data to develop training materials. ● Allow learners to talk about and reflect on local data. ● Acknowledge and validate learners' experiences by making it part of the planned learning. ● Provide opportunities for learners to extend planned content. ● Suggest follow-up ideas and next steps for support and implementation after the training.
4. Adults need learning approaches that match their background and diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop multiple methods to represent different perspectives, put content into context in a variety of ways. ● Create activities that use their experience and knowledge.
5. Adults need to be actively involved in the learning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow learners to be a part of developing content and methodology. ● Identify representatives to speak for their groups in the planning process. ● Ask what they would like to know about a topic. ● Allow time during the training for learners to plan next steps and ask questions.

What types of activities can be included in my training session?

While there are many types of activities that can be included in training sessions, there are six main types that have proven to be effective for adults. These are:

Case studies	Group discussion
Group exercises	Applied practice
Role playing	Interviews

What should be considered when choosing the most appropriate content and strategy?

- Does this content/strategy provide the *best context* for learning?
- Will this content/strategy be *interesting*?
- Is the content within this strategy *up-to-date*?
- Will the learners be *engaged* in this content/strategy?
- Does this strategy provide *deeper insight* for the group? Are the take-away messages *realistic*?
- Is this content/strategy *relevant* for the learner?
- Will this content/strategy generate *thought-provoking* questions?
- Can *clear decisions/conclusions* be derived from the content through the strategy?
- Is the content in this strategy general enough to be *applied to a broader context*?
- Is this content/strategy *brief*? How long will it take to implement?
- Will this strategy enable *teachable moments*?

What else do I need to consider in order to keep participants engaged in the learning process?

1. Provide comfortable seating, room temperature, and lighting.
2. Private and friendly space.
3. Arrange chairs to encourage interaction.
4. Eliminate distractions.
5. Include snacks and/or small breaks to keep them from getting bored.

Adapted from the following sources:

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