

## Incorporating Adult Learning Principles into Injury-Free NC (IFNC) Academy Guidance for Trainers/ Presenters/Facilitators<sup>i</sup>

- I. Purpose of this document:** Having a comprehensive understanding of adult learning principles (ALPs) is important to designing training sessions that result in participant engagement and facilitate learning. This document provides brief guidance and tips for IFNC Academy trainers/presenters/facilitators to ensure training content and instructional design methods incorporate ALPs. It includes information about the different ways adults learn and principles to consider when designing your training content/presentation/learning activity for the Academy.
- II. How Adults Learn:** There are three primary learning styles. Although many adults have one dominant learning style, many learn through a combination of the three learning styles. It is different for everyone, and how one learns often depends on many factors, including the topic/content. For this reason, trainers/presenters/facilitators are encouraged to consider all three learning styles when designing their training content/activity.

We retain approximately **10 percent of what we see**; **30-40 percent of what we see and hear**; and **90 percent of what we see, hear, and do**.

Visual Learners	Auditory Learners	Kinesthetic Learners
<p><b>Visual learners</b> tend to learn by looking, seeing, viewing, and watching. Visual learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need to see a trainer’s facial expressions and body language to fully understand the content being presented</li> <li>• tend to sit at the front of the room to avoid visual distractions</li> <li>• tend to think in pictures and learn best from visual displays</li> <li>• tend to take detailed notes to absorb information during a lecture or discussion</li> <li>• Tend to have difficulty following verbal instructions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Auditory learners</b> tend to learn by listening, hearing, and speaking. Auditory learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn best through lectures, discussions, and brainstorming</li> <li>• interpret underlying meaning of speech by listening to voice tone, pitch, and speed and other speech nuances</li> <li>• don’t absorb written information until they hear it</li> <li>• benefit from reading text out loud and listening to recordings</li> <li>• Tend to have difficulty following written instructions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kinesthetic learners</b> tend to learn by experiencing, moving, and doing. Kinesthetic learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn best through a hands-on approach and actively exploring the physical world around them</li> <li>• tend to have difficulty sitting still for long periods of time</li> <li>• tend to easily become distracted by their need for activity and exploration</li> </ul>

- III. Training Methods that Incorporate all Three Learning Styles:** When possible, trainers/presenters/facilitators should design their training sessions to appeal to all three learning styles and provide both verbal and written instructions.

For example, a trainer could start with presenting key information about a topic using PowerPoint slides, incorporating large group discussion and brainstorming throughout the presentation of key information (call and answer), followed by an activity that uses case studies, role plays, practice sessions (for knowledge/skill-building) and other activities that involve participants “doing” something to apply the information that was presented.

**Below are some training methods that often appeal to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners:**

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Videos	Lectures	Role plays
Slides	Group discussions	Simulations
Flip charts	Informal conversations	Practice demonstrations
Readings/case studies	Stories and examples	Writing/note-taking
Demonstrations	Brainstorms	Activities/exercises

**IV. Adult Learning Principles.** Consider the following adult learning principles as you plan your training:

- 1. Adults are autonomous and self-directed.** Adults like to direct their own learning. As much as possible, the trainer/facilitator should actively involve adult participants in the learning process, guiding participants to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with all of the facts. Engage participants in discussions, presentations, and group-based tasks.
- 2. Adults bring knowledge and experience to each learning activity.** Adults have accumulated a wealth of life experiences and knowledge. This may include family memories, work-related experiences, and previous education. Linking new material to learners’ existing knowledge and experience creates a powerful and relevant learning experience. Acknowledging participants’ wealth of experience/knowledge and recognizing the value of these experiences/knowledge throughout the training is important. Avoid speaking from a position of authority and having all the answers.
- 3. Adults need learning to be relevant and practical.** Every day, the human brain takes in hundreds of thousands of sensory inputs. As the brain processes these inputs, it begins to sort out information it deems relevant and important. Relevancy increases the likelihood that information will be retained. Adults need to see a reason for learning something and the learning must be applicable to their work or other responsibilities in order for it to be valuable for them.
- 4. Adults are goal-oriented.** Adults primarily participate in learning programs to achieve a particular goal. Therefore, they appreciate an educational program that is organized and has clearly defined learning objectives. These need to be communicated to participants at the beginning of each training module/activity.
- 5. Adults are problem-oriented and want to apply what they’ve learned.** Adult learners want to be able to apply their learning to their work immediately. Using examples to help them see the connection between what they are learning in the Academy and practical application; utilizing problem-solving activities as part of the learning experience; and giving them the opportunity to create action plans will help participants understand how they can apply what they are learning in their work.

- 6. Adults have different learning styles.** As mentioned previously, a learning style refers to how a person learns, categorizes, and processes new content. Each person may have multiple preferred learning styles. When designing and delivering training sessions, use mixed training methods that appeal to different learning styles and to keep participants engaged

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<sup>i</sup> Information synthesized from:

1. National Highway Institute. [Principles of Adult Learning & Instructional Systems Design](#). No date.
2. Solution Design Group. [Training: Principles of Adult Learning](#). No date.
3. Pedialink: The AAP Online Learning Center. [Principles of Adult Learning: A Brief Overview](#). No date.