

Pre-Assignment

CASE STUDY

As new trainers, sometimes we are the most comfortable delivering training in the way we prefer to learn. A great trainer is able to adjust their style and appeal to all learning types in order to get participants interested and engaged in what is going on. No matter what type of training you are preparing to deliver (information or skills) or who you are planning to deliver it to (a workplace, volunteers, or community groups), you'll find that knowing how people learn and what they expect in terms of training makes you a better trainer.

Adult learning theory has been around for a long time, as have theories of temperament. Both of them help to explain features of our personalities that are important for trainers to understand. One main point to keep in mind is that learning is about the learner, not the lesson plan or your objectives or you as the trainer. Your primary function is to make sure that learning takes place, and that your learners, whom we often refer to as participants, can take what they learn with them and apply it in their intended environment.

You may already know that people learn information in different ways. In broad terms, some learners need to see things in order to grasp concepts (visual learners), others need to listen to instructions or information (oral learners), and some want to touch and experiment (kinesthetic learners). If you are familiar with temperament theory or have done a course in Myers-Briggs (MBTI), Personality Dimensions, or True Colors, you will have learned that people can have a vast range of preferences, and you will see these ranges in your training. They may prefer information that is laid out in a linear fashion, prefer to create mind-maps and drawings, get outside and build or create rather than be in a classroom, and so on.

Where some people are very strong at learning in one particular way, most of us have a preference for learning environment but will also take in information through the other modalities. Since most school programs are delivered for visual learners, many participants are comfortable learning that way. Learning, however, can happen in many settings and so, depending on the course and your training group, it's important that you are ready for everything. Typically, adults enjoy self directed learning, and learn more effectively if they are allowed to participate in the process.

Participants come from a variety of backgrounds and sometimes, with a lot of experience. Use their strengths to your advantage, and be open to the insight, depth, and value that they offer. They may come to you for skills or knowledge training of something that is quite new, or they may also enroll in order to find validation of what they know. Part of your job is to use their knowledge as well as their motivation for joining you to encourage them to fully participate in the learning process.

Another note for you as you prepare to learn is that not everyone comes to a class with the same capacity for engaging in learning. Some will have more inquisitive natures or background skills and knowledge than others. It will be important for you to be able to flex your approach and materials to allow for different backgrounds.