

Implications for Teachers / Tutors

- The teacher is a learning resource for the participants rather than a traditional instructor
- The teacher avoids 'talking down' to participants and instead tries to identify and meet their learning needs
- Failure to make use of the learner's experience is tantamount to rejecting the learner as a person
- No questions are 'stupid': all questions are opportunities for learning
- The primary emphasis on the session is on students learning rather than teachers teaching
- Involvement in such things as case histories and problems to be solved generally offers a greater learning opportunity for adults than 'talking to' them

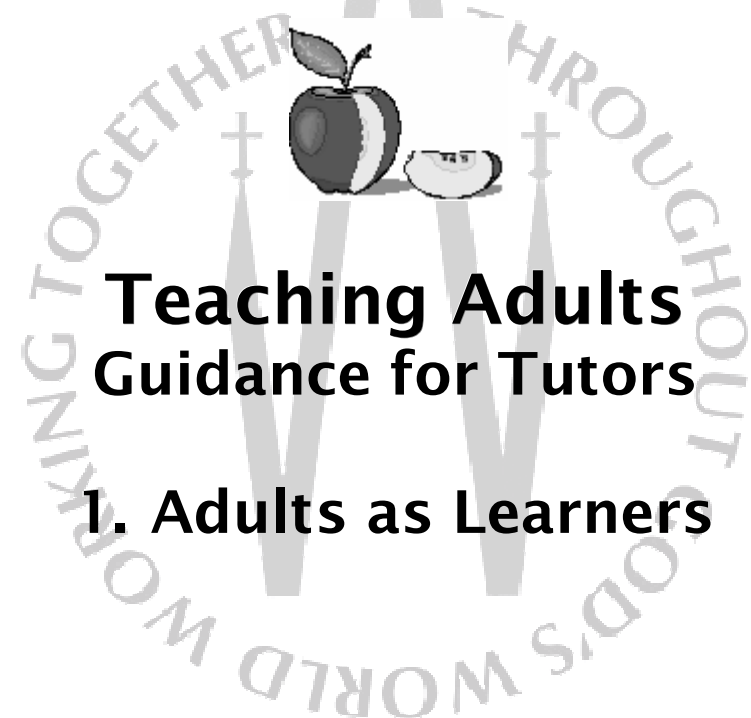
REMEMBER: Three Key Principles of Adult Learning

- Adults come with experience and resources
- Adults have normally already adopted a preferred learning style- see leaflet no. 3 in this series
- Tutors / teachers also need to be learners!

August 2006



Wakefield Ministry Scheme



Teaching Adults Guidance for Tutors

1. Adults as Learners

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Adults as Learners

Those preparing sessions for groups of adults need to bear in mind that teaching adults is different from teaching children. The educationalist Malcolm Knowles claimed that adult learners

- Prefer to be 'self-directing', i.e. like to choose how and when to take up their own learning
- Bring a lifetime of experience to the learning situation and define who they are in terms of their experience
- See learning in the context of a need to acquire new competences in connection with particular roles
- Think of learning as a way to be more effective in solving problems

Factors that may put adults off learning

- They expect it to be a passive, formal experience
- They suspect it is about experts and people in authority
- They think it should be an individual and private matter
- They fear they may be shown up as ignorant
- They feel it is alien to their cultural background
- They would rather be told what to think by the teacher
- They are anxious about having to change their views
- They have painful negative memories of 'school' etc

At least some of these attitudes may be present in any adult learning group and the teacher / tutor needs to be alert to the signs of them and adjust his or her style accordingly.

These distinctive characteristics of adults as learners have **implications for Adult Education practice:**

- A climate of openness and respect is helpful in identifying what the learners want and need to learn
- Less use is made of 'transmittal' (didactic) techniques; more of experiential techniques
- Mistakes are also opportunities for learning
- To reject the adult's experience is to reject the adult
- An adult's readiness to learn and 'teachable moments' peak at those points where a learning opportunity is co-ordinated with a recognition of the need to know
- Adult education needs to be problem-centred rather than theoretically oriented
- Adults need the opportunity to apply and try out learning quickly
- Adults need to be involved in evaluating their own progress
- Discovery of how to learn from experience is often the key that unlocks the door to personal growth
- Following a 'traditional' curriculum is less important than finding out what adults *need* to learn