

# Characteristics of Adult Learners

*Directions: Fill in the blanks as you read the online material.*

**Adult learners have . . .**

## **1. Specific purposes for coming to class**

In general, adult learners have a specific reason for taking a class. Sometimes adults begin attending classes after a \_\_\_\_\_, such as a marriage, divorce, a new job, or sudden unemployment. Others may desire to learn specific information or knowledge. Regardless of the reason they joined the class, adults have \_\_\_\_\_ in mind for education and expect those results quickly. Some adults have dropped out of educational settings before and will do so again if they are dissatisfied or if something else temporarily takes priority in their lives.

## **2. Numerous obligations**

Adults are busy people with many obligations in their lives. Adult learners often have to juggle their jobs, their households, taking care of children, and sometimes taking care of their parents. Consequently, adult learners may have \_\_\_\_\_. Often, a change in the work schedule, an opportunity for overtime, or a sick child will mean the adult learner will miss class. Likewise, some adult learners may have little or no time to \_\_\_\_\_ or other out-of-class assignments due to their many other obligations.

## **3. Rich life experiences**

Adult learners have a broad \_\_\_\_\_ upon which to relate new learning. Oftentimes, adult learners are experts in areas that the classroom teacher knows nothing about. It is advantageous for the adult education teacher to find ways to incorporate adult learners' past experiences, knowledge, and skills when planning lessons. Occasionally, adult learners may \_\_\_\_\_ new information that contradicts their previous beliefs or experiences.

## **4. Diverse abilities**

Adult learners bring to the classroom differences in \_\_\_\_\_ and ability. For example, a student could have good English listening skills but poor reading skills. Another could have strong reading skills but poor math skills. Regardless of how the class has been leveled for enrollment, there is bound to be a variety of skill strengths and weaknesses in any class group.

## **5. Physical considerations**

Adult learners, especially those who are older, may have some \_\_\_\_\_ that must be taken into account such as trouble sitting for long periods of time. Adults may have difficulty hearing the teacher or their classmates. Adults may also have trouble seeing the board or smaller fonts on a handout.

## **6. Established sense of self**

Adults have established a sense of self prior to enrolling in class. Previous bad experiences in school or frustrations over an inability to express themselves well in English can affect adult learners' \_\_\_\_\_. Regardless of whether their self-identity is strong or weak, positive or negative, adults want to be defined by their abilities, not their deficiencies. Adults appreciate opportunities for learning that support self-esteem instead of focusing attention on perceived limitations.

## **7. Changing lives**

While adult learners are enrolled in class, some are in the process of undergoing \_\_\_\_\_ in their lives due to immigration, loss or gain of employment, health issues, or family situations. Sometimes returning to school affects the dynamic of relationships adult learners have at home, at work, or in the community. Improved academic or employability skills may lead to future changes as they transition into higher education, specialized training, or new occupations. All of these changes could impact \_\_\_\_\_ or services needed outside the class.