Learning as an Adult

You have expectations as you register for and take classes, as well as work through your program in higher education.

Higher education also has expectations of you! It has its own rules, patterns, and culture. There are important differences between private and public schools, community colleges and universities, liberal arts and research institutions, graduate schools, etc.

Key concepts in higher education include disciplines/departments, scholarship, research, verbal orientation, tenure, collegiality, academic freedom, etc. Take time to understand the culture of higher education.

Significant groups include faculty and students, administrators and trustees, alumni, and even larger communities and legislators. They all are important resources. Staff also is there to help you, and wait for you to appear so that their services and centers can help you succeed.

Do you wonder about your skills in finding your way around this strange land of higher education?

As an adult learner, you

- tend to be self-directed
- have a rich reservoir of experience that can serve as a resource for learning
- are frequently affected by your need to know or do something
- tend to have a life-, task-, or problem-centered orientation to learning as opposed to a subject-matter orientation
- are generally motivated to learn from within (internally/intrinsically) as opposed to being obligated, or subject to, external or extrinsic forces

adapted from Imel, Susan, Guidelines for Working with Adult Learners. ERIC Digest No. 154 ERIC Identifier: ED377313, 1994-00-00

Reference: www.studygs.net
**Adult learners**, as they return to, and progress through their education, often question and reevaluate their original assumptions and motivation as they use education to re-create their lives.

**As such, you’re learning will be more successful if you**

- **Take an active role** in planning, monitoring, and evaluating your education
- **Discard preconceived notions** about what college is and isn't; open your mind to the experience
- **Choose subjects and courses that** are most relevant to your job/profession or personal life that fit into your academic program

**Course descriptors important to adult learning**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<td>Shared responsibility for learning objectives</td>
<td>Integrates thinking and learning</td>
<td>applies learning to practical applications</td>
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<td>Continuous negotiation, or openness to renegotiation</td>
<td>Problem-centered rather than content oriented</td>
<td>issue-centered curricula</td>
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<td>Non-prescriptive; open to change</td>
<td>Demand mutual respect &amp; equality for learners</td>
<td>Multiple/diverse sources of information</td>
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<td>Value process</td>
<td>Incorporate, promote dialogue &amp; openness</td>
<td>Variety of format</td>
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<td>Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>Recognizes the value of experience in contributing to learning</td>
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<td>Includes projects and/or active learning (as opposed to lectures and/or passive learning)</td>
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<td>Built in monitor for feedback and evaluation</td>
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Helpful strategies in a program of learning:

**Write out your goals and expected time commitments.**
This will be helpful in avoiding stress and over-scheduling yourself.
Refer to the Guide on Setting goals/making a schedule

**Establish a good rapport with your instructors/professors** in the classes you take.
This will be helpful in negotiating optional learning projects
that have more relevance to your situation and goals.
Refer to the Guide on Influencing teachers.

**Develop an awareness of how you learn,** or have learned best in the past;
this will help you focus your energies in the most productive way,
and alert you to areas where you may need help
(i.e. speaking, writing, math, testing, etc.)

**Your learning style** defines how you acquire and process information (learn!) and has nothing
to do with being "smart." You could refer to it as to how your brain works, or the parts of your brain work.
Each person has a very particular way of learning. Research has identified many
"learner characteristics" and ways of typing them.

**Your academic counseling center or study skills center**
is a good place to begin. They not only have testing instruments to help you, but also the professionals who are able to interpret and apply the results.

**Self-assessment web sites on learning styles:**

- **DVC Learning Style Survey for College**
  has a good introduction, four categories of styles (visual/verbal; visual nonverbal;
tactile/kinesthetic; auditory/verbal), and a self-assessment web-based tool. Results/scores
  are based upon 32 questions.

- **Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire** (Felder/Silverman)
  introduction, learning preferences on four dimensions (active/reflective, sensing/intuitive,
  visual/verbal, and sequential/global); and a self-assessment instrument self-scored.
  Results/scores are based upon 44 questions.

- **The SuccessTypes Learning Style Type Indicator** (Pelley)
  based on the Myers Briggs Type Indicators (Extraversion, Introversion, Sensing, Intuition,
  Thinking, Feeling, Judging, Perceiving) Introduction and links to related Myers
  Briggs type indicators. Results/scores are based upon 28 questions.

- **Learning Disabilities Resource Community**'s
  self-assessment instrument is based upon Howard Gardner's work on multiple
  intelligences (linguistic, mathematic, visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, naturalistic, music,
  interpersonal, intra-personal). Results/scores are based upon 80 questions.
Resources for learners in higher education:

Academic counseling centers
Learning Centers
Writing centers
Reading and/or study skills centers
Multicultural/cultural centers
Women's study centers
Academic dean's offices and services
Dean of students offices and services
Department chairs
Instructor/professor of a course you are taking!

Reference: www.studygs.net