

# Adult Education Techniques for Teaching Life Skills

## How do youth and adults learn?

The *Basic Skills for Living* resources are based on community development principles. The process below describes how a new skill is learned and the best practices for success when working with teens and adults who are challenged with literacy.

Educators recognize that learning a new life skill requires a change in behaviour by learners. Change is not easy! A learner must be motivated, supported and involved in the decision-making in order to make change possible in their lives. Educators need to have respect for the learners as adults, and recognize the strengths and past experiences the learner brings to the learning situation.

## KASA Change

“KASA Change” is a process that refers to a *life skill educational model*. We have adapted it from basic extension education theory as referenced at the end of this section. It works like this . . .



*The steps are progressive*—which means you begin by determining the learner’s **knowledge** of the life skill. To do this, one could use an assessment tool found in one of the resources, or use an informational interview with the learner. From the assessment, one determines what the learner’s needs and wants are. Does the learner have the information they need? What does the learner want to achieve? Then **goals** of what they want to accomplish can be identified.

Involving the learner in setting goals helps with a change of attitude towards learning a new skill. It is **the attitude** that will provide the *motivation* needed to change and practise a new skill until it is adapted. **Skill development** follows.

The last stage is using the newly learned skill in real life until the skill is **adapted** to the person’s everyday living. This forms the *values and priorities* for the learner’s future. This is when success has been achieved and the learner has reached his/her goal.

*Here is an example:* A learner wants to balance his bank statement. He wants to know how much money he has left in his account. First the educator needs to know what he is doing now, and what skills he wants to learn. Next, the educator reviews the steps of balancing an account—refer to the **Banking Skills** section and select appropriate activities for the Stage of literacy the learner is at. Next, the educator would have the learner balance his account using the steps outlined. (Practise the skill.)

Then, ask the learner to do this on his own the following month and check. Repeat until the learner feels he can do this on his own correctly. This means the skill has been adapted. (This may also lead to other skills being needed and learned, i.e. recording banking transactions in a record book.)

## Steps for success!

Adult education theories of learning and their application have been used in the *Basic Skills for Living* resources.

As an adult educator, you can consider the following points when using these resources. They have been adapted from the **Extension Handbook**, Donald J. Blackburn, Editor.

1. The learner must be an *active participant*. Draw upon existing skills and involve the learner in assessing where they are now and what they want to achieve as their goals.
2. Repetition is necessary in acquiring a new skill and guaranteeing retention. Use repetition in an *innovative and creative way*.
3. *Positive reinforcements* are more effective than punishment.
4. *Motivations* are important in influencing learning. Adult learners learn more when they are interested and can see how a new skill will improve their lives or situation.
5. Make provision for *dealing with frustrations* of learning, so the learners will not be inclined to withdraw from the learning situation. Be sure to select the appropriate level of skill development and literacy for success.
6. Activities must be meaningful and *relevant to the learner's life*. For success, adapt the activities to the learner's situations.
7. The learners need *feedback* in testing various approaches to the solution of a problem. Again, the worksheets and handouts can help, as does the successful completion of an activity. If the learner is discouraged or lacks interest use another approach.
8. The learner needs to *share in the choosing of topics* and activities so as to be involved in their learning program. This is an important source of motivation for a learner-focused approach.
9. *Individuals learn in a variety of ways*. Therefore, determine which ways work the best for each learner—it may be visual, auditory, or kinesthetic (by movement, i.e. “hands on”). For this reason choose more than one activity to reinforce learning of a concept.
10. If individuals are to develop in self-confidence the educator must support the learners' efforts at *originality*, so as to make the skill “their own” and something they value.

A chart on the following page summarizes teaching techniques that may be selected to develop a new skill using the **KASA Change** model of gaining knowledge, changing attitudes, learning new skills and adapting to form values.



## Appropriate teaching techniques for defined objectives

Levels of educational objectives				
Teaching technique	Knowledge/ Attitude awareness	Understanding	Skills/Behaviour	Values/Priorities
Assigned reading	X	X		
Brainstorming	X			
Buzz groups	X	X		X
Case studies		X		X
Circle response	X	X		X
Contracts			X	
Demonstration/ practice		X	X	
Discussion	X	X		X
Experiments	X	X	X	
Field projects	X	X	X	
Field trips	X	X		
Games/stimulation		X	X	
Learning log		X	X	X
Lecture	X	X		
Media	X			
Panel	X	X		
Programmed instruction	X	X		
Role play	X	X		X
Student teach	X	X	X	X
Values clarification				X
Workshop	X	X		

Reference: Blackburn, Donald J. [Extension Handbook](#)  
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