



TEACHING OUR TEACHERS

A

HANDBOOK FOR INSTRUCTORS

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Because teaching mature adults is different from teaching children and college age students, the Curriculum Committee of FULIR charged a group of our instructors with a background in education, to come up with a short course to improve the abilities of our volunteer instructors in the classroom. The first workshops took place prior to the fall term in 2007. Two, three-hour programs were given to twenty-six potential instructors. The feedback we got from these student-instructors was very positive, and we have prepared this booklet for future FULIR instructors.

We hope that it is useful and that you use it as a beginning for a dialogue between the Committee and the instructors to improve the level of instruction in our courses to make FULIR even better than it already is.

This is not a problem unique to the adult learner. The public school systems in districts all over the country are scrambling to fill teaching positions with qualified applicants especially in difficult, vital areas like math and science. In many ways, we are lucky in that we have teachers who are well versed in the subject matter we wish to have them teach, but unfortunately, in some cases they do not have the teaching skills that are necessary.

Differences Between Andragogy and Pedagogy

	Andragogy	Pedagogy
<i>Demands of Learning</i>	Learner must balance life responsibilities with the demands of learning	Learner can devote more time to the demands of learning because responsibilities are minimal
<i>Role of Instructor</i>	Learners are autonomous and self-directed. Teachers guide the learners to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts.	Learners rely on the instructor to direct the learning. Fact-based lecturing is often the mode of knowledge transmission
<i>Life Experience</i>	Learners have a tremendous amount of life experiences. They need to connect to their knowledge base. They must recognize the value of the learning.	Learners are building a knowledge base and must be shown how their life experiences connect with the present learning
<i>Purpose for Learning</i>	Learners are goal oriented and know for what purpose they are learning new information.	Learners see no reason for taking a particular course. They just know they have to learn the information.
<i>Permanence of Learning</i>	Learning is self initiated and tends to last a long time.	Learning is compulsory and tends to disappear shortly after instruction

Adapted from Green, J. (1998). Andragogy: Teaching adults. In B. Hoffman (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Educational Technology

Needs of Adult Learners

Adults are people with years of experience and a wealth of information

- Focus on the strengths learners bring to the classroom, not just gaps in their knowledge
- Provide opportunities for dialogue within the group. Tap their experiences, (a major source of enrichment to the class)
- Remember that you, the teacher, do not need to have all the answers as long as you know where to go or to call to get the answers. Students can be resources to you and to each other.

Adults have established values, beliefs and opinions

- Demonstrate respect for differing beliefs, religions, value systems and lifestyles
- Let your learners know that they are entitled to their values, beliefs and opinions, but that everyone in the room may not share their beliefs
- Allow debate and challenge of ideas

Adults are people whose style and pace of learning has probably changed

- Use a variety of teaching strategies such as small group problem-solving and discussion
- Use auditory, visual, tactile and participatory teaching methods
- Reaction time and speed of learning may be slow, but the ability to learn is not impaired by age
- Most adults prefer teaching methods other than lecture

Adults relate new knowledge and information to previously learned information and experiences

- Assess the specific learning needs of your audience before your class or at the beginning of the class
- Present single concepts and focus on application of concepts to relevant practical situations
- Summarize frequently to increase retention in recall. Material outside of the context of participants' experiences and knowledge becomes meaningless.

Adults are people with bodies influenced by gravity

Plan frequent breaks, even if they are two-minute “stretch” breaks. During a lecture, a short break every 45-60 minutes is sufficient. In more interactive teaching situations, breaks can be spaced 60 to 90 minutes apart.

Adults have pride

- support the students as individuals
- Self-esteem and ego are at risk in a classroom environment that is not perceived as safe or supportive. People will not ask questions or participate in learning if they are afraid of being put down or ridiculed.
- Allow people to admit confusion, ignorance, fears, biases and different opinions
- Acknowledge or thank students for the responses and questions
- Treat all questions and comments with respect. Avoid saying “I just covered that” when someone asks a repetitive question. Remember, the only foolish question is the unasked question.

Adults have a deep need to be self-directing

- Engage the students in a process of mutual inquiry. Avoid merely transmitting knowledge or expecting total agreement.
- Don't “spoon feed” the participants

Individual differences among people increases with age

- Take into account differences in style, time, type and pace of learning
- Use auditory, visual, tactile and participatory teaching methods

Adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to learning

- Emphasize how learning can be applied in a practical setting
- Use case studies, problem-solving groups, and participatory activities to enhance learning
- Adults generally want to immediately apply new information or skills to current problems or situations

Note: New information and skills must be relevant and meaningful to the concerns and desires of the students. Know what the needs are of individuals in your class. Students do not wish to learn what they will never use. The learning environment must be physically and psychologically comfortable.

Adapted from California Nurses Association, AIDS Train the Trainer Program, 1988

Getting Organized to Teach

1. Identify and clarify course goals and objectives
 - a. Examples:
 - i. Class members will learn three new crochet stitches
 - ii. Class members will be able to describe the characteristics of music from the Romantic era
 - iii. Class members will be able to read / interpret the stock market page and follow the progress of three selected stocks
2. Select materials for class use
 - a. Example
 - i. Material to be Xeroxed for hand-outs
3. Determine class procedures
 - a. attendance
 - b. submitting work
 - c. break time
4. Work out schedule for achieving objectives and covering designated topics
 - a. Schedule is part of the syllabus. It should include a day by day, week by week, or month by month calendar of topics, activities, presentations, assignments, etc.
5. Select presentation methods to match topics, students' interests, learning styles, your own teaching style, etc.
 - a. Possible presentation methods for classroom use:
 - i. lecture/discussion
 - ii. small group activities
 - iii. panel discussions (guest or class members)
 - iv. question/answer sessions
 - v. know how to use of AV materials and equipment
 - vi. case studies
 - vii. worksheets
 - viii. role-playing
6. Provide for evaluation

CONTENTS OF A SYLLABUS

A good idea is to place the name of the course, your name, as well as your telephone number, your e-mail address, and when and where the class meets at the top of the syllabus sheet and be sure to hand this out, or e-mail to class participants prior to the first meeting of the class.

Brief description of the course

Materials to be used

Course objectives

Outline of topics to be covered

General requirements of assignments

Classroom procedures

Evaluation

TYPES OF QUESTIONS BASED ON BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

From Bloom, et al, 1956

As teachers, we tend to ask questions in the “knowledge” category 80% to 90% of the time. These questions are not bad, but using them all the time is. Try to utilize a higher order level of questions. These questions require much more brainpower and a more extensive and elaborate answer. Below are the six question categories as defined by Bloom.

KNOWLEDGE

1. remembering
2. memorizing
3. recognizing
4. recalling identification
5. recalling information
 - a. who, what, when , where, how...?
 - b. describe

COMPREHENSION

1. interpreting
2. translating from one medium to another
3. describing in one's own words
4. organization and selection of facts and ideas
 - a. retell

APPLICATION

1. problem-solving
2. applying information to produce some reasonable conclusion
use of facts , rules and principals
 - a. How is... an example of...?
 - b. How is... related to....?
 - c. Why is... significant...?

ANALYSIS

1. subdividing something to show how it is put together
2. finding the underlying structure of a communication
3. identifying motives
4. separation of a whole into component parts
 - a. what are the parts or features of....?
 - b. classify.. according to...
 - c. outline/diagram...
 - d. how does... compare/contrast with...?
 - e. What evidence can you list for...?

SYNTHESIS

1. creating a unique original product that may be in verbal form or maybe a physical object
2. combination of ideas to form a new whole
 - a. What would you predict/infer from...?
 - b. What ideas can you add to...?
 - c. How would you create/design a new...?
 - d. What might happen if you combined...?
 - e. What solutions would you suggest for....?

EVALUATION

1. making value decisions about issues
2. resolving controversies or differences of opinion
3. development of opinions, judgments or decisions
 - a. Do you agree that....?
 - b. What do you think about....?
 - c. What is the most important...?
 - d. Place the following in order of priority....?
 - e. How would you decide about....?
 - f. What criteria would you used to assess....?

ANSWERING AND ASKING QUESTIONS

Adapted from William E. Cashin, Kansas State U.
IDEA PAPER No. 31, January 1995

1. Students Asking Questions

What are some things that you can do, when asked a question, other than directly answering it?

Repeat the question, paraphrasing it. This serves two purposes: It ensures that the entire class hears the question. More importantly, it lets the questioner check your understanding of his or her question. When you have not completely understood, often the student will rephrase or elaborate upon the question. In doing so, the student is often “thinking out loud” and may come to his or her own conclusions without further help. This process also gives the other students time to think about the question, and possible answers to it.

Redirect the question. You might ask another student (one who might know the answer) to respond. Or you might redirect the question to the class in general, asking for an answer or comment, or an elaboration upon the issue. This procedure not only encourages more student participation, but it also implies that peers are a resource for learning.

Ask probing questions. You might respond to the student’s question by directing her or his attention to a particular aspect of the issue she has raised, or drawing her attention to some previously learned course material that is relevant to answering the question or by going beyond what the student has said in some way. The intent of probing questions is to draw the student's attention to things that may be implied in her answer, and so help her answer her own question.

Promote a *discussion* among the students. The three previous suggestions usually involve communication between two people, typically the instructor and one student, with the rest of the class simply listening. It may be that you will want to involve the majority of students in trying to answer some questions, for example, where there is considerable difference of opinion about the answer.

One reaction we generally do not recommend when a student asks a question is to assign that student the task of looking up the answer. Frequently, all this practice accomplishes is to teach the class not to ask questions.

2. Answering Questions

Directly answer the question. One obvious option an instructor has when a student asks a question is to answer it. In general, we do not recommend answering the students question directly if you wish to foster thinking or problem-solving skills. However, when

the questions ask for information that other students in the class are not likely to have (or questions asking for the instructor's opinion), directly answering the question is appropriate. Directly answering questions takes less time than attempting to have the student or the class come up with answers. If you choose to answer directly, make your answer brief and to the point. After responding you may want to check to see if you have really answered the question by saying something like: "Does that answer your question?" Or was that what you were asking?" etc.

Sometimes an instructor would like to use a student's question as an opportunity to bring in a related topic that the *instructor* wishes to cover, reasoning that students learn better when they see the material is relevant to their own interests. This should be done with care, or it may only confuse everyone. Answer the student's question first, then be explicit that you are covering something else that is on your agenda.

Postpone answering the question. Students are more likely to learn and remember if the instructor answers their questions when they ask them. Nevertheless, on certain occasions, you may decide to put off answering a question, for instance, when you are very short of time, especially if the answer is complex, or when the material will be covered in an upcoming class, or when the answer is of interest to only a few students. When the material is to be covered later, call it to the student's attention: "here is the answer to the question you asked before, Frank..." If the answer will not be covered during the course, we recommend that you offer to answer it after class or make an appointment to get together with the student sometime. By doing this you very clearly communicate to all of the students your willingness to try to answer their questions. Generally, you should answer more questions than you postpone or you're likely to find the students asking fewer and fewer questions.

Discourage inappropriate questions.

Usually students ask questions because they wish to learn, but sometimes a student will ask a question to sidetrack the class, to get attention, or even to embarrass the instructor. Handling such questions presents a dilemma. If you treat them like other questions you may encourage the student to ask more of the same, but if you turn that student down abruptly you may discourage not only that student but the rest of the class from asking any kind of question. In reacting, it is probably best to tactfully indicate what it is about the question that is inappropriate.

New teachers, especially, are often uncertain about how to tell whether a student really wants an answer or has some other purpose. This is probably best learned through experience, and new teachers will have to risk relying on their own judgment. One criterion is how relevant the point of the question is to what the class is trying to learn.

Admit when you do not know an answer. The answer to a question will probably not damage the student's confidence in you. If you do not know the answer to a student's question, we recommend that you say so.

3. Asking Questions

Ask open-ended, not just close-ended questions. A close-ended question structures the response for the student and can be answered by one word, often “yes” or “no”, or by a very brief phrase. An open-ended question leaves the form of the answer up to the person answering, and so it elicits much more thinking or information.

Close-ended questions are most appropriate when the instructor wants to check whether the students have learned or remembered specific information, or to get or keep their attention. If an instructor wishes to encourage student involvement, open-ended questions are preferable because they require a more complex student response. Instructors sometimes complain that students never enter into a discussion, that they answer only in monosyllables. This maybe because that is the only kind of answers our questions permit.

Ask divergent, as well as convergent questions. The distinction between convergent and divergent questions is whether there is a single or accepted “correct” answer (to a convergent question) or there are any number of possible answers, many of which may be acceptable (to a divergent question). Convergent questions may expect the student to repeat some conventional wisdom. Divergent questions often require new, creative insights.

Some answers to divergent questions may be more acceptable than others in terms of logical consistency, synthesis of relevant data, solutions of major aspects of the problem, etc. The major advantage in asking divergent questions is that the task they set for the students is to think about an issue or problem, not to discover the “correct” answer or the answer the teacher is looking for. Usually students are more willing to attempt answering divergent questions, because they run less of a risk of giving a “wrong” answer. Also, divergent questions require a “higher” level of thinking. They cannot be answered from just memory (unless the student has already been exposed to answers to the question in a lecture, reading , etc.)

4. Pauses and Silences

One difficulty found by both novice and veteran instructors is deciding how to handle pauses and silences after asking a question. Pauses and silence can play a useful role.

Waits, pauses and silences are not inappropriate class behaviors. The discomfort many, if not most, instructors feel when a pause leads to an extended silence probably stems from a cultural norm for social conversation, where the silence is taken to mean that there is some inadequacy in the communication. This discomfort often is especially

acute for new teachers or teachers who lack self-confidence. If such an instructor were to tape record his class, he might find that these pauses actually last only a few seconds, very often less than five, not the “eternity” it seemed during the wait. In the classroom, constant talking is neither required, nor desirable.

Wait, give the students time to think. The basic reason for pausing after asking a question is to give the students time to think about possible answers. If the question is worthwhile (and more than rhetorical), even at the memory level, it deserves a wait. Questions at higher levels require considerable time--minutes--for students to think before they can adequately answer.

After an appropriate wait, you may want to simply acknowledge the pause by saying something like: “It’s a difficult question and take some time to think about.” This clues the students that you are willing to wait for their responses. Or you may want to rephrase the question, or ask probing question, which would draw the students’ attention to relevant information.

If you really want the *students* to answer the question, you must give them enough time. You might want to try one or more of the active learning techniques. Give the students a few minutes to write out an answer. Have the students work in groups of two or three to solve the problem, or propose possible solutions. Such techniques require that all of the students are actively working on the answer, not just the smarter or faster students.

Wait, or you will establish an undesirable norm. Classes, like any group, fairly quickly establish norms, that is, standards of what will be considered acceptable behavior in that group. If, in the first week or two of class, the instructor waits only a few seconds before answering her (or his) own questions, the class will quickly learn that when the instructor asks a question, she or he does *not* expect an answer; wait a few seconds and she will answer it herself. Students are often more than willing to let the instructor answer all of the questions. If you want your students to answer the questions you ask, you must be careful to cultivate that expectation by waiting after you ask a question.

5. Creating an Encouraging Atmosphere

If encouraging students to ask questions is desirable behavior, then it is also desirable that the instructor create an atmosphere where students are not afraid to ask questions for fear of embarrassment, etc.

Ask for questions. If you want the students to ask questions, give them opportunities to do so. Pause after making an important point or explaining that topic, or say “Any questions?” or “Are you with me?” or “Do you want me to say more?” However, such statements must be more than rhetorical or a technique for you to get your thoughts together before going to the next point. Give the students time to formulate their questions before you move on. Also, look at the students to make sure you do not miss someone with his or her hand up.

Pausing to ask for questions is an active teaching device to use routinely, but if you are aware that some students are confused, it becomes a must. When some students are frowning or shaking their heads, saying something like, “Some of you seem puzzled. What don't you understand?” should elicit questions that will help you clear up the misunderstanding. Some teachers feel that they have done their duty by professing the material to the students. We believe that unless instructors help their students to learn, they are not teaching.

Answer questions. If you want your students to ask questions, then you should reinforce them when they do by answering their questions. Therefore, we suggest that you rarely postpone answering a question or ignore student questions, which is what you do if you do not call upon a student who has his hand up.

It is not unusual in a class of any size to have one or more **students who tend to monopolize class time**. One approach with such students is to give preference to those who have not yet said anything. This can be done explicitly by saying, “Let's take comments from people we haven't heard.”

Also it is not uncommon for a class to have at least one **student who appears to be antagonistic toward the instructor or hostile, to the subject matter** and who asks questions that serve only to express the student's disagreements, which often have little relationship to the rest of the class. Because such questions usually stem from emotional rather than intellectual concerns, answering only on a cognitive level serves little purpose. It is probably best to see that student outside of class and explain what seems to be going on from your point of view. Often such a talk is sufficient to enable the student, at least to censor the questions he or she asks in class, although it may do little to solve the underlying problem.

Answer student's questions adequately. It is not enough that you respond to the students' questions, but you must answer the question to the student's satisfaction as best as you can. Your answer should be concise and to the point, and you should ask the student if you have answered the question. This fosters both accurate communication of content and says to the student, “Your question is important, and I will take the time necessary to answer it, if I can.” If, after two or three attempts, you still have not answered satisfactorily, and other students cannot help answer, then it is appropriate to suggest getting together after class.

Listen to the question, or to any student comments. The way you listen to a question or comment also communicates your attitude toward the students. In most U.S. cultures, look at the students when they are talking: show that you are following by nodding, etc; check whether you really understand what they are saying by rephrasing the question.

Sometimes little things that we do unknowingly communicate something to students that is very different from what we intend. For example, one instructor used to occasionally take a look at his watch, when a student would ask a question. He found out in the end – of-course evaluation that one student interpreted this to mean that the instructor felt the

questions were wasting time, rather than that the instructor simply **wanted to know what time it was.**

Do not put down the students. In general, you should avoid anything which would embarrass a student who asks the question. Rather than responding with a value judgment to the student's question or comment, ask a probing question. You may help the student arrive at the correct answer, or an acceptable answer, in which case, rather than proving the student "wrong", you have helped him or her to be "right".

Personal Presentation Skills

Body language: be open in your manner

Smile.

Wear your name tag to every class.

Introduce yourself as class members arrive. Shake hands. If that's not your style, stand at the door and speak to class members as they enter. Tell them you are happy to see/meet them. Welcome every person personally, if possible.

Introduce yourself at the beginning of the first class. Say what your name is, a little about your background, how you became interested in your subject, etc. This shouldn't take too long, just a couple of minutes to let your class have a bit of information about you. They don't need your life history or your troubles. Be sure your name is written on the board.

Learn names. Speak to everyone every week. If the class is large, try to speak to everyone sometime before the end of class, even if it is just a nod or smile.

Laugh easily and often. Enjoy yourself. Laugh with, not at. Do laugh at yourself when it's called for! Laughter encourages camaraderie.

Be accessible to class members. Arrive early for every class. Stay a little while after the class. Mingle.

Consider giving class members your e-mail address and your phone number. Put your e-mail address on the board on the first day, along with your name.

Treat each person with the utmost respect. Learners come to FULIR with varied backgrounds. They want to learn. They have much to give. The knowledge and talent in the room will amaze you. Never, under any circumstances, devalue a person in the class.

Wear nice casual clothes. Stand up straight. Look good. You don't have to be a fashion plate, but you do want to look nice for every class. Be clean. Don't smell of perfume or too much shaving cream. Some people are allergic to such things.

Use gestures. Be animated.

Look at class members as you speak.

Move around. Be energetic. Don't stand behind a podium and lecture. Use your notes as reference to remind yourself from time to time, but do not read those notes to the class. Know your material well. Share it.

Allow spontaneity. Yes, you definitely want to be organized and ready for class, but maintain some flexibility. So what if you didn't get everything done you had planned; maybe something more exciting or more informative came up. It happens all the time. Be ready to change plans if something else will work better.

If a change in the syllabus seems necessary, discuss it with the class first. Some people schedule doctor appointments, etc, according to the topics on the syllabus.

Allow others to share with you and the class. Solicit their help. Ask for participants on a particular day for presentations on specific subjects.

When they bring in something that has to do with the class, ask if you can take it home with you. Read it, look at it. If applicable to any of the class lessons, use it and give credit to the person who shared it with you. Return it promptly and in as good a shape as it came to you

Encourage interaction and involvement during the class. Has anyone got _____? What's the best word for _____? Also, set aside a few minutes at the end of class for **questions and comments.**

Use of audio-visual aids. Posters, DVDs, pictures, music, overheads, dress the part, sing, anything to add a little pizzazz and change the routine.

Whenever you see **something that pertains to the class**, something that's informative or funny, bring it to their attention. Pretty soon they will be seeing things that relate, too, and, they will bring them for the class to see.

Every week, **remind class members** what happened last week. At the end of class remind them what's coming next week.

Remember: this is not *your* class. This class belongs to everyone in the room.

Make class interesting, and varied enough and you will catch even the most reluctant of learners along the way!

Speaking skills: Vary your tone and rhythm:

Many FULIR class members are **hard of hearing**. Speak distinctly, and loudly enough, but not too loudly. Also, some people who are hard of hearing find it easier to hear the lower tones. If you notice your voice sometimes reaches some high tones, lower the pitch of your voice.

Pay attention. Ask class members if they can hear you. Also, repeat the questions from the audience before you answer them. If someone who obviously cannot hear well is in the last row, arrange for them to move forward. Be tactful.

Listen to your tone. Tone is a complex subject. Consider how your voice sounds. Are you being condescending without realizing it? Are you speaking in the same monotone throughout the entire class? If “yes” is your answer to these questions, you must learn to vary your tone.

Change the rhythm of your speaking. For instance, you might slow down when you want to emphasize something, speed up when you are explaining something that's exciting or surprising, and slow down a bit when you are discussing something more serious. Do not be afraid to let your emotions show from time to time. It's OK to be passionate about your subject!

The same will be true for inflection and timbre. Your subject matter and your body movements will affect the way you speak.

If you are moving around the room, making eye contact, laughing a bit, enjoying your class members and your subject, you will not be speaking in a monotone. You will be animated and full of life, and so will your voice-- and the class!

Finally, THANK YOU for being an instructor!

**Please ask if you need help or have questions for our staff.
Please call the office if you will be late for class.**

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