



Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles, a leading theorist, researcher, and writer in the field of adult education, first introduced the term *andragogy* into adult education literature. He defines it as “the art and science of helping adults learn.” The four basic underlying assumptions of andragogy are:

1. *Adult learners are self-directed.* It is a normal aspect of the process of maturation for a person to move from dependency to increasing independence or self-directedness. Adults can and do make decisions on what they want to learn and when and how to learn it. Emphasis should be placed on involving the learner in the education process, with the facilitator acting more as a counselor and catalyst for learning rather than as the source of information.
2. *Adult learners learn when they are ready.* Readiness is usually a result of being at a developmental transition point. Adults are ready to learn when they experience a need for the knowledge and skills that will enable them to cope better with life’s tasks.
3. *Adult learners have many varied experiences.* As people grow and develop they accumulate a deep reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning, both for themselves and for others. Adults learn best when learning activities tap into and build on these rich experiences.
4. *Adult learners are problem-centered.* Adults want to be able to apply whatever knowledge and skills they learn today to living more effectively tomorrow. They look for real life solutions to real life concerns. Effective facilitators uncover these concerns in order to design relevant learning experiences.

Resources

Knowles, Malcolm. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*. New York: Association Press, 1980.



Philosophy of Adult Education in Girl Scouting

Girl Scouts' adult education philosophy is grounded in the key principles of adult learning. These principles state that:

- Learning is a lifelong process.
- Each learner is unique and brings a unique set of experiences to the learning process.
- Adult learners are self-directed and goal-oriented.
- The learning process is most productive when adults can apply what they are learning to real life problems and situations.

The role of the trainer or adult educator in Girl Scouting is to design and facilitate training so that every learning event successfully meets the varying needs of each adult and results in changes in thinking, behavior, or values that benefit both the learner and the Girl Scout movement. This can occur by applying these key principles of adult education within the training event. It is important that:

- Learners become involved in goal setting.
- The interests, needs, and skills of learners are assessed within the composition of the group and within the bounds of the training session.
- The purpose of the training and session outcomes are explained.

- Learner expectations and training parameters are congruent.
- The setting for the learning is physically comfortable and provides an atmosphere of friendliness, informality, and participation.
- A variety of learning methods and techniques are selected to accommodate individual and group learning styles and needs.
- Learners understand and accept responsibility for their learning.
- Facilitators demonstrate enthusiasm and flexibility.
- New ideas and practical applications are related to the past experiences of participants.
- Facilitators help participants measure their progress and recognize the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective performance.
- Participants plan for back-home application.
- Follow-up evaluation procedures are initiated to support participants' efforts to maintain and improve competency.
- The importance of constructive feedback to facilitators and other group members is emphasized.