



# Using the Experiential Learning Cycle as a Design Framework

The Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) provides a flexible framework for designing varied training approaches that meet the needs of learners. It can also be adapted to various content-related needs. Here are a few general guidelines to follow when designing with the ELC.

- ✱ Begin your design by entering the ELC at either the **experiencing** or the **generalizing** stage.
- ✱ In your design, move through the stages of the ELC in a clockwise direction without skipping any stages.
- ✱ End your design at the **applying** stage.

## The Experiencing Stage

Start your training design at the **experiencing** stage whenever the learning objective is knowledge-based. This will allow you to tap into the past experiences of learners in order to create a platform for new knowledge.

For example, if the *learning objective is to describe the four phases in Kolb's Experiential Learning Model*:

- At the **experiencing** stage, participants are asked to recall a time when they learned something new.
- At the **publishing** stage, participants share these stories in small groups, and select one to share with the large group.
- At the **processing** stage, participants are asked to look for similarities and developing patterns in the stories.
- At the **generalizing** stage, the facilitator relates the patterns the participants have identified to the four phases of Kolb's Experiential Learning Model.
- At the **applying** stage, participants are asked how this information might best be used to train adults.

## The Generalizing Stage

Start the design at the **generalizing** stage whenever the learning objective is skill-based. The purpose is to provide the information necessary to perform the skill before it is practiced in the **experiencing** stage. For example, if the *learning objective is to build a fire*:

- At the **generalizing** stage, participants learn the basic principles of fire building.
- At the **applying** stage, these same principles are demonstrated.
- At the **experiencing** stage, participants practice building fires on their own.
- At the **publishing** stage, participants discuss what happened.
- At the **processing** stage, patterns are identified as to what worked and what didn't.
- At the **generalizing** stage, this information is used to develop additional tips and techniques for fire building.
- At the **applying** stage, participants discuss how they will use what they have learned to teach girls how to build fires.

## Design Variations

As trainers become more experienced in using the ELC as a design tool, these variations can prove helpful.

### Mini-Loops

Use this variation to provide several experiences that relate to one concept. This will generate a rich field of data from these experiences that can be used to develop concepts in the generalizing stage. This is accomplished by publishing and processing each successive experience before moving on to generalizing. The number of mini-loops is governed largely by the complexity of the

concept that is being taught.

For example, if the *learning objective is to identify how stereotypes can be harmful*:

### First Mini-Loop

- \* At the **experiencing** stage, participants match categories of people with generally positive statements about these categories.
- \* At the **publishing** stage, the matches are shared.
- \* At the **processing** stage, participants would begin to look for patterns in their matching.

### Second Mini-Loop

- \* At the **experiencing** stage, the participants play the matching game again. Only this time, the statements are more negative.
- \* At the **publishing** stage, the matches are shared, with special attention given to determining how the matches made participants feel.
- \* At the **processing** stage, participants compare the first and second round of the matching game and discuss the differences between the two.
- \* At the **generalizing** stage, participants are provided with information about stereotypes so that they may understand how making even positive assumptions about groups of people can have the potential to harm individuals.
- \* At the **applying** stage, participants would then discuss how stereotypes might interfere in their work as Girl Scout trainers.

## Concentric Circles

Use this variation to build from smaller concepts to larger ones. This will provide a forum for learning on several levels, first at the immediate, content level and then at the higher concept level, which looks at the broader picture. Simply complete one full loop of the ELC and then use that entire loop as the experiencing stage for the next loop through the ELC.

For example, if the *learning objective is to identify ways of helping girls develop cooperative skills*:

### First Circle

- At the **experiencing** stage, participants play a cooperative game.
- At the **publishing** stage, they describe how they felt playing the game.
- At the **processing** stage, participants describe the roles they and others assumed while playing the game.
- At the **generalizing** stage, participants develop a list of key behaviors they deemed necessary to be successful at this game.
- At the **applying** stage, participants play the game again, utilizing behaviors from the list.

### Second Circle

- At the **experiencing** stage, participants reflect on how both games were played.
- At the **publishing** stage, they share their observations with one another.
- At the **processing** stage, differences between the first game and the second are discussed.
- At the **generalizing** stage, information about cooperation vs. competition among children is shared, as well as what skills they believe children need to learn in order to improve their ability to cooperate.
- At the **applying** stage, sub-groups have the opportunity to identify ways to help girls develop these cooperative skills.