

# TRAINING ADULT VOLUNTEERS

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# DID YOU KNOW?

AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE MEMBERS

**DID YOU KNOW** that adult learning is best described as a process of self-directed inquiry?

Traditionally, teaching strategies are considered to be focused on children's learning and development. In recent years, research has been done on the best ways to teach adults effectively. Compared to children and teens, adults have special needs and requirements as learners. Understanding adult learning principles is the key to developing successful training approaches that engage trainees and facilitate learning whether it is on-the-job training or in a class room. On-the-job training is usually more effective than a classroom setting for most volunteers. The following points will assist you in tailoring training methods to meet the needs of the adult volunteers.

Training for adult volunteers should be:

### Self-directing

Adults need to be in control and have choices in the process of what they want to learn. Instructors need to act as facilitators, guiding participants to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts. By being in-tune to and anticipating (through pre-session inquiries or assessments) the learners' needs, an instructor can develop learning objectives based on those needs.

### Experience-based

Instructors should connect learning to the knowledge/experience of the participants thereby making the practical connection necessary for them to learn what is being taught.

### Respectful

Establish a climate of respect and comfort. Provide for the participants' physical needs, i.e. breaks; validate and affirm their knowledge, contributions and successes; don't talk down to them; and ask for feedback.

### Goal and relevancy-oriented

The program should be organized and results-oriented so that the participant can see a clear path toward the goal they are trying to achieve. Adults need to see a reason for learning something whether it be applicable to their work or other aspects of their lives. Instructors must identify objectives for adult participants before the course begins by involving them in the planning stages.

### Practical

Adults are practical. Participants want to know how the lesson will be useful to them thereby justifying their attendance.

Keeping these points in mind will not only strengthen your weekly meetings, it will assist in retaining volunteers and encourage an atmosphere of growth and learning.

Source: International and Internet research - [www.Teachermentors.com](http://www.Teachermentors.com), [www.southernhealth.org.au](http://www.southernhealth.org.au); (CDC—Niosh); PA Pathways 12/02, and <http://Honolulu.hawaii.edu>