

TIPS FOR TEACHING DIGITAL LITERACY



HOW-TO: TEACH DIGITAL LITERACY

- + Be prepared for a wide range of skill levels and variety in participant questions.
- + Provide class handouts and/or manuals, especially for older adults and those learning basic skills.
- + Use graphic-heavy handouts and manuals for illiterate and low-literacy adults.
- + Look for opportunities to teach how to find answers and information—every question can be a learning opportunity!

1. **Learning is social.** A successful digital literacy program will provide opportunities for learners to interact with one another. Hearing other learners' questions, having opportunities to share knowledge, and joint celebration of success are all important for keeping motivation high and solidifying knowledge.
2. **One-on-one help is essential.** Even though it's important to have space for social learning, it's equally important that adult learners are able to access individual help when they need it. Individual help makes it possible to more quickly get "unstuck" and keep going on new learning activities. In class environments, this means having aides that can work one-on-one with students during lessons; in labs it means having tutors available.
3. **Learning must be immediately relevant.** Adults are faced with more practical needs and competing priorities than younger learners, and will usually only prioritize learning when a skill is relevant to meeting a pressing need. In order to address this in digital literacy instruction, classes should be designed around learning how to complete tasks that are important to the learner and having tangible takeaways after completing a lesson.
4. **Feelings of self-efficacy and competence are important motivators.** Adult learners may sometimes feel embarrassed that they haven't kept up with technology and need basic digital literacy instruction. It's important to remind these learners that they are capable of learning and that they will eventually get the hang of technology. Try asking them about other things they have learned to do and remind them of how they were eventually able to master those skills.
5. **Adults face many personal barriers.** Low levels of basic English literacy; physical, cognitive, and age-related disabilities; lack of childcare or transportation; and less time for practice or homework are all additional barriers adults face when they are pursuing education. Successful digital literacy programs will learn which of these barriers affect their students and try to address as many of them as possible.
6. **Adult learners need continuity.** Oftentimes adults have educational goals, but not realistic plans for reaching them. To keep adult learners on track, they should have the help of instructors to develop written educational goals and plans. Learning materials, classes, and instructors should be designed for maximum continuity so that the learners can pick up where they left off if their learning is disrupted by the barriers they face.

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