

# 8 Ways to Motivate Adults to Learn

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It's well known that children learn in heaps and bounds, every day! They do this simply by playing with toys, solving puzzles, and observing the environment around them. In fact, children learn so much so quickly that they achieve a vocabulary of around **6,000 words** by the age of six.

But what *motivates* them to learn? Well firstly, kids are curious. Secondly, they don't have the stresses and constraints of a job, mortgage and all the other responsibilities that come with being an adult.

Yet, in the techno-savvy times of today, adults are expected to learn and adapt to changing work demands all the time. But they're busy, preoccupied, and often lack the motivation. And without motivation, all the training in the world won't lead to real learning.

So, what motivates adults to *want* to learn? We have a few tricks up our sleeve.

## Eight Tips for Motivating Adults to Learn

Adults can be stuck in their ways, and even closed-minded. This can make the task of motivating adults to learn rather challenging. But the good news is that it's far from impossible. It's all about having the right tips.

Let's take a look at some of the secrets to motivation in adult education:

1. [Make learning so relevant it can't be ignored](#)
2. [Provide opportunities for exploratory learning](#)
3. [Take learning to the learner](#)
4. [Make learning convenient and accessible](#)
5. [Appeal to different learning preferences](#)
6. [Create a human learning experience](#)
7. [Offer regular constructive feedback](#)
8. [Reward learning with fun and games](#)

If you want to know more, keep your eyes on the page. Next, we'll unpack these eight tips for training adults in the workplace.

## 1. Make learning so relevant it can't be ignored

Adults lead busy lives (and don't you know it!). So when there's barely enough time to hit the gym or spend time with family after a long workday, it's no wonder that learning is low on the list of priorities for most adults.

The key is to make learning relevant to career and personal growth aspirations. Training that draws on real-life scenarios, storytelling and case studies that adult learners can relate to is naturally more interesting. And when learners are interested, they're usually motivated, too.

Take this tip a step further by building pre and post-tests into the learning experience. This way learners can see where their own knowledge and **skills gaps** lie and will be motivated to change and improve. Of course, if the knowledge and skills they seek to improve are clearly linked to their career goals, the motivation to learn from training is just about guaranteed.

## 2. Provide opportunities for exploratory learning

As a child, mistakes are accepted as part of growing up. But if personal growth and development is a lifetime journey, then why should mistakes ever stop being acceptable, even when we become adults?

**Branching scenarios** and other learning activities that require decision-making and problem-solving are just some of the ways of motivating learners to explore. By involving adults in active rather than passive learning, they'll be free to make mistakes in a safe space.

And while the risks of exploratory learning are low, the potential benefits are endless. Because exploration, an open mind and trying new ideas can lead to all sorts of exciting innovations.

## 3. Take learning to the learner

A frequently asked question is “What draws adults to learning?”. But what if the best way to motivate adults to learn is not by taking adults to the learning, but rather taking the learning to them?

You see, as the Millennial population starts to dominate the workforce, working adults are spending an increasing amount of time online and on their phones. In fact, the average person spends more than three hours on their phone every day. And this isn’t just social. Work tasks often take place on a desktop or mobile phone, too.

So, be smart and make learning opportunities available on the online platforms that you know learners are already frequenting, like social media and mobile phones. By finding a **Learning Management System** with **iOS and Android compatibility**, learners will be able to learn on the tools they feel most comfortable with. Not to mention the convenience.

#### 4. Make learning convenient and accessible

We’ve already established that adult learners have tight schedules. So, often what motivates adults to learn is something as simple as convenience.

Structure learning as bite-sized chunks of information (like short videos or infographics) that can be easily consumed. This is called microlearning, and it means that employees can learn a quick new skill or understand a new piece of information while eating lunch, traveling to their next client, or catching the train to work. How’s that for fitting a schedule?

Then, by encouraging self-directed **just-in-time (JIT) learning**, where employees decide what they need to know and when they need to know it, they’ll be motivated to engage in continuous training and development.



#### 5. Appeal to different learning preferences

When it comes to motivating adults to learn, individual preferences is something that just can’t be ignored. Some adults learn better through visual materials, like graphics and presentations, while others find that workshops or videos keep them engaged for longer.

Furthermore, some adults might prefer live, scheduled learning activities, while others are motivated by the freedom to learn in their own time and at their own pace. For these learners recorded webinars might be better suited.

Of course, it's also important to consider which content formats are most appropriate for the learning objectives. For example, **learning objectives** aimed at practical skills, like conflict resolution tactics, are more effectively achieved through live practical learning activities. Whereas information on a new product, like a vitamin supplement, might be sufficiently achieved with written notes.

## **6. Create a human learning experience**

Social interactions are an important part of how adults learn in the workplace. Employees learn from their peers, their leaders, and even their subordinates. And these social engagements motivate them to discover new knowledge and practice new skills.

So, leverage online learning tools like discussion forums, chats, and live workshops to create opportunities for learning through collaboration, debate, and teamwork. Learning activities like group projects can also be a great way to motivate teams to work together toward solving a problem or presenting an idea.

Then, giving learners access to advice and guidance from a subject matter expert can also make the learning experience more 'human', and prevent adults from feeling isolated or alone in their learning journey. Because let's face it, it's tough to stay motivated when learning feels like a one-man show!

## **7. Offer regular constructive feedback**

Motivating adults to learn requires regular feedback in all shapes and sizes. This can be real-time quantitative feedback, like automated grading on a quiz. Or it could be personal, written feedback on a case study assignment from a subject matter expert.

Either way, **feedback** is what helps adults to measure their learning progress and to refocus on the areas that need extra attention. Even better when feedback comes from different perspectives, like self-assessment, peer-assessment, and feedback from a mentor or leader.

But this tip only works when feedback is constructive, practical, and tailored to the individual learner. Feedback should emphasize ways for a learner to leverage their strengths and improve their development areas, rather than focusing on mistakes or weaknesses.

## **8. Reward learning with fun and games**

Incentivising children to learn can take nothing more than a candy bar, or turning homework into a game. But while most adults might still be suckers for chocolate, you're probably still wondering how to make learning fun for adults?

The answer: Gamification. **Gamification** is all about making learning fun for adults by recognizing small wins, fostering competition, and introducing curiosity into the learning experience. Badges, leaderboards, certificates, and progression to new and undiscovered 'levels' in an eLearning course could be the trick you need for motivating adults to learn.

But, these fun rewards aren't always enough for long-term adult learning motivation. So, it's important to also link learning objectives to performance reviews, so that employees feel real recognition by their team and leaders for their learning achievements.

## Have You Tried Them?

Implementing the tips above is the first step toward motivating adults to learn. So go ahead and try them out in your own team or organization.

But we also know that these aren't necessarily the only tips that work. So, we'd love to hear your stories and suggestions about motivation and adult learning. Share your thoughts in the comments section below!