

REACH | Five Principles for Online Designers

Based on formal research, as well as decades of experience, Global Learning Partners offers this easy acronym as a way to remember five core principles of adult learning. Keep these principles in your mind and heart as you design and facilitate online learning experiences for others. Trust us – they are more important than any platform you’ll select, any feature you employ, or any technique you use.

RELEVANT

Focus on content that people care about right now (because in our high-paced, online world that is absolutely all people have the bandwidth for). Does this mean you can’t teach a topic that people aren’t asking about? Not at all. It means that you have to find connections between what you want to teach and what is important to your learners.

*How will you ensure **relevance** between what you want to teach and what your learners care about or need?*

ENGAGING

Experiment with ways for people to interact with the content you have. For example, if your online experience includes a “real time” gathering with learners, send everyone a video link or short reading along with a few meaningful open questions as homework beforehand. (This will help introverts to engage and may minimize extroverts’ need to process aloud.)

*How will you **engage** all learners throughout their online experience?*

ACTIONABLE

Make sure learners go beyond “taking in” information to actually “taking action” with that information. For example, if people are learning about how to use public health data, give them a task that includes going to a website, finding the data about their community, and naming one way they’ll share this data with their neighbors.

*How will learners **act** on what they are learning?*

CLEAR

Think through what you want to share, with concise explanations, concrete examples, and explicit directions. Use plain language (i.e. write the way you’d talk if the learners were in the room with you). Build dialogue into your design so that you have a gauge on the clarity with which you are communicating, and so that you are clear about the learner’s perspectives.

*How can you ensure that concepts are **clear**?*

HOLISTIC

Remember that adults are always being impacted by what our intellect is telling us (ideas), what our gut is telling us (feelings) and what our physical experience is telling us (skills). Teach to all three of these – even when your time is tight – to increase the possibility of real change.

*How can you **holistically** address people's hearts, minds, and physical selves?*

All of these principles are operating in the background in a strong learning design in some way. Have fun designing with each of these in mind – it’s intentional and creative work.