In [***Andragogy***](https://the-adult-learning-theory-andragogy-of-malcolm-knowles/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-top-facts-about-adult-learning-theory-every-educator-should-know&utm_medium=link) or adult learning theory, it is presumed that adults have specific learning requirements. The [***adult learning theory***](https://the-adult-learning-theory-andragogy-of-malcolm-knowles/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-top-facts-about-adult-learning-theory-every-educator-should-know&utm_medium=link) also suggests that the best learning environments are the ones that are collaborative and utilize a problem-based approach.It is important to note that not every student is in the adult learner stage. With this in mind, it is encouraged that students be made aware of the traits of adult learners, and aspire to gain a few of these characteristics.

**6 Main Characteristics of Adult Learners**

There are 6 main characteristics of adult learners according to [***Malcolm Knowles***](https://the-adult-learning-theory-andragogy-of-malcolm-knowles/?utm_campaign=elearningindustry.com&utm_source=%2F6-top-facts-about-adult-learning-theory-every-educator-should-know&utm_medium=link) (1980, 1984) who was one of the pioneers in this field.

1. **Adult learning is self-directed/autonomous**Adult learners are actively involved in the learning process such that they make choices relevant to their learning objectives. As such, adult learners also direct their learning goals with the guidance of their mentors. As an educator, it is important to facilitate the process of goal-setting. Students need to be given the freedom to assume responsibility for their own choices. When it comes to workload, they also need to be proactive in making decisions and in contributing to the process.
2. **Adult learning utilizes knowledge & life experiences**Under this approach educators encourage learners to connect their past experiences with their current knowledge-base and activities. Learners are taught ways to bring to their current placement past knowledge, opinions, and experiences. Educators need to be well-versed in how to help students in drawing out relevant past knowledge and experiences. In addition, educators must know how to relate the sum of learners’ experiences to the current learning experiences.
3. **Adult learning is goal-oriented**The motivation to learn is increased when the relevance of the “lesson” through real-life situations is clear, particularly in relation to the specific concerns of the learner. The need to acquire relevant and adequate knowledge is of high importance. With this in mind, adult learning is characterized as goal-oriented and intended learning outcomes should be clearly identified. Once the learning goals have been identified, it is now imminent to align the learning activities such that these objectives are fulfilled within a certain period of time. This approach is a great way to maximize a students’ learning experience.
4. **Adult learning is relevancy-oriented**One of the best ways for adults to learn is by relating the assigned tasks to their own learning goals. If it is clear that the activities they are engaged into, directly contribute to achieving their personal learning objectives, then they will be inspired and motivated to engage in projects and successfully complete them.
5. **Adult learning highlights practicality**Placement is a means of helping students to apply the theoretical concepts learned inside the classroom into real-life situations. It is very important for educators to identify appropriate ways and convert theoretical learning to practical activities! Learning is facilitated when appropriate ways of implementing theoretical knowledge in real life situations are made clear.
6. **Adult learning encourages collaboration**Adult learners thrive in collaborative relationships with their educators. When learners are considered by their instructors as colleagues, they become more productive. When their contributions are acknowledged, then they are willing to put out their best work.