

Ohio State University Fact Sheet

State 4-H Office

2120 Fyffe Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1084

Nonformal Teaching Methods

4H-018-99

Larry L. Hall

Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development, Knox County

Education extends beyond the classroom. Whatever their age, people should be prepared for lifelong learning, wherever they happen to be. 4-H members and volunteers play a large part in an education process which must address the needs of many learners.

Why Worry About Different Types of Teaching Methods?

Individuals learn in different ways. The Edgar Dale Cone of Experience summarizes how learners retain information. A person remembers 10% of what they read, 20% of what they heard, 30% of what they seen and 50% of what is seen and heard. The percentage increases for those fortunate enough to read, hear, see and do things in actual or practical experiences.

I'm Not a Teacher, What Can I Do?

Adult or youth 4-H volunteers do not need a teaching degree to educate others. What volunteers do possess are unique individual experiences which can provide opportunities for teaching. Volunteers bring life experiences and apply what they already know to group-centered experiential teaching methods. These teaching methods, which are acceptable to learners, can provide a satisfying service to the community and make an impact on the lives of people both young and old.

What Teaching Methods Are Useful?

When choosing a teaching method it is important to know the learners. What are their experiences, interests and goals? When youth are asked what they wish to learn, they may not know enough about a subject to form an opinion. However, if they are involved in selecting goals, they have a stronger sense of ownership. Youth learn best in an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance. They should be actively involved in setting goals and planning their learning activities.

What are the different ways people learn? A visual learner may only need to see an item in writing to remember it. An example is a small child who looks at alphabet cards and can identify the letters. An auditory learner will best be served by having the information spoken to them or repeated by them. By hearing and repeating the 4-H pledge members may quickly learn to associate the words with the four Hs. Kinesthetic learners may need to touch items to determine size, shape, texture, and weight. This allows them to compare and contrast elements as they learn. They can then internalize the concept.

Involving youth in different activities while they learn new material strengthens knowledge retention. This will create new experiences for them to share with others, which also reinforces the learning process. Consider some of the following learning techniques, some of which are

traditional:

Lecture

This method is probably the most common form of education. It allows the educator to deliver a large amount of information in a short amount of time. Preparation is done by an individual and can be repeated on a routine basis for each new group of learners. Auditory learners are the best receivers of lecture information. However, this method can cause learners to become bored and easily distracted.

Demonstration

A skilled educator may wish to both tell and show what steps to take in an educational process. This allows another element to assist in gathering knowledge. By seeing a task performed, learners are more aware of what materials are needed, remember steps in the process, and observe the final outcome of the task.

Discussion

A way to create an exchange of ideas is to provide two way communication through discussion. The educator speaks directly to a learner, asks questions or makes comments, then waits for a response. This helps auditory learners retain the material.

Another setting may allow a group of learners to either take a stand on an issue or be assigned a position. The groups can then discuss their views with each other. Continuing this open conversation enables learners to express themselves and may provide new areas for learning.

Role playing

Placing learners into roles where they act out ideas and reactions can be rewarding. By active involvement, learners of different types will retain more than if they merely sat and watched a skit or video performance. Each group differs in how the message is delivered and interpreted. If the educator is trying to make certain points in the exercise which are not obvious, then additional processing and discussion of the material may be required.

Hands on (experiential)

One of the most dynamic ways to deliver information is to provide hands on activities. This opportunity may be highly directed or a free-form opportunity for learners to be creative and progress at their own pace. One reward for volunteers can come when a young person grins and indicates that they "got it" in reference to an idea or task. To maximize learning, youth should be allowed to inquire into, rather than be instructed in subject matter. The self satisfaction and self-esteem gained in learning by doing is the basis for 4-H activities. Learners learn what they practice.

Experiential learning may take much longer to accomplish but will be retained better by youth. The group size, number of volunteers, and materials available may limit the amount of hands on experience you can offer. The visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners all benefit from such a technique.

Is That All There Is?

An important part of learning occurs after information has been offered. The final step is taking time to review what the group has learned. This technique is called processing. The volunteer may want to give each member an opportunity to share what they gained individually from their experience. This gain can be actual knowledge or how to apply this information. Members may also keep a journal of their learning activities and prepare to present them to other members.

While high marks and good grades are desired in formal teaching, praise is a powerful reward in

all settings. Celebrate successes, no matter how small, with youth because success is a strong motivating force.

The most enjoyable aspect of teaching and learning can occur when a variety of teaching methods are used. Be creative and imaginative. The use of costumes, dances, songs or other types of music can make the lesson come alive for learners of all ages.

References

Helt, J. R., & King, D.R. Working With Youth., Lesson Plan Unit 2, Columbus, OH. The Ohio State University.

Newcomb, L.H., McCracken, J.D., & Warmbrod, J.R. (1993). Methods of Teaching Agriculture. Danville, IL: Interstate.

Ohio 4-H Program Agent's Handbook, 3rd. Edition. (1994). Columbus, OH. The Ohio State University.

All educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, age, disability or Vietnam-era veteran status.

Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Ag. Adm. and Director, OSU Extension.

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

| [Ohioline](#) | [Search](#) | [Fact Sheets](#) | [Bulletins](#) |