

# Adult Audience

## Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners and Listeners

Adult learners who make up **adult audiences** have six needs related to learning according to Knowles (1990) These needs are summed up in the question, What is in it for me?

### **The need to know**

Adult learners like to contextualize their learning to relate to their own lives. They need to know why they are learning and the consequences of not learning.

### **Self Concept**

The self concept and self responsibility in adult learners create in them the drives for continued education. Once in academia, the adult tends to become a dependent learner.

The exception is the paradigm shift toward independent learning as seen in external degree programs. The economy of time, resources and the reduction of listening to bad lectures has created an entirely new learning group. Independent learning has the potential to be accelerated over traditional academia.

**My Personal Experience** On completion of LPN education, it took less than 6 months of my time to complete the RN program through Regents College (now Excelsior College). This was accomplished with CLEP credits, challenging some credits, and taking some Community College Classes at the same time I was testing out of my RN program. If you would like more info, I would be glad to help. Please reach me through the contact pages of [Speechmastery.com](http://Speechmastery.com).

This independent learner is highly motivated and tend to be a continued learner throughout life.

Many who avoid this type of learning will say they need to have a structured class to learn. They also say they are not motivated to study unless they have to.

There is a prejudice against self directed or independent education. There are two possible reasons. One is the assumption of lost revenues. The fallacy of that is that in my case, I was directed through the system with Masters Prepared and PhD educators.

The second is was expressed by a doctor. He felt the independent education could not screen out unqualified people.

Although this is anecdotal, more than one of the nursing supervisors who I polled prior to signing up for my college said that they found those nurses who went through my college were actually better nurses on the average. All had known or worked with a few graduates.

The independent and self directed student will have life long continuous self study habits that the dependent student will tend to neglect. It would seem the independent learner has the best potential for continued growth and development beyond the dependent adult learner.

These individual fill a continuum from the two extremes of independent to dependent. Sometimes they can be identified in an adult audience by their choice of seating in the audience.

The ones closest to the front may tend to be more independent and self directed learners.

### **Learners Experience**

Adults have experience that becomes a learning resource.

### **Readiness to Learn**

Readiness to learn is related to need to learn. In adults it is voluntary. In an adult audience it can be noted again by location in the audience.

### **Orientation toward Learning**

in adults is toward real life situations. Motivation is related to the worth or value of learning because of what's in it for them in terms of benefit.

### **Motivation**

Most adult learners are intrinsically motivated toward learning and some are extrinsically motivated. Desire for learning is related to success and learning is viewed as a life long process among those who continue their education. Motivation is also based on socio-economic backgrounds of the adult learners.

On the other end of the spectrum are the adults with no desire to learn and they just live for today because tomorrow they will die. I am not aware of any high level studies that stratify our society and looks at percentages of those who continue to learn compared to those who do not.

Another challenge is that not all learning is in academia. Skills and crafts that are equally a part of our society are usually handed down. Sometimes they are learned by interest and dedication of the adult learner.

Bottom line, answer the question, what is in it for me within the public speaking and you will have met the primary needs of most adult audiences.