

# QUALITIES OF THE ADULT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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## **Physical qualities**

1. The room set-up signals informality, comfort, easy participation, respect for learners.
2. Furniture is comfortable to use for lengthy periods of time.
3. Everyone can see everyone else easily for lateral communication with good sight lines to the instructor.
4. No physical barrier is used between the instructor and the learners to indicate separate levels of authority.
5. The facilities and furniture make it easy for learners to be physically arranged frequently into pairs, trios, quartets, small groups, larger subgroups, etc., for purposes of interaction and learning together.
6. Tables and chairs are easily moveable; there is enough space in the room for furniture to be separated appropriate distances to permit subgroup discussions without noise interference.
7. The floor is carpeted for warmth and atmosphere.
8. There is plenty of light for everyone to see easily and the lighting can be dimmed or raised in brightness to suit different learning situations.
9. Participants are physically active during the learning session by moving around into and out of subgroups, encouraged to walk outside during breaks, or just asked to stand in place and stretch from time to time.

## **Psychological qualities**

10. The instructor becomes immediately known to and regarded as friendly by learners.
11. The instructor accepts each learner as a person worthy of respect and individual interest.
12. Learners are helped to become better acquainted with one another early in the learning experience.
13. The instructor makes performance expectations relating to the learning session absolutely clear and answers any questions about those expectations prior to moving very far forward in time.
14. There is classical or baroque music playing in the immediate environment during appropriate times in the session (e.g. pre-session, during breaks, when individuals or small groups are reading, completing instruments, or otherwise working together, at the after the session has ended until the instructor leaves).
15. The instructor makes it easy for different people to express different perspectives and to maximize their learning in different ways.
16. The instructor encourages relationships of mutual trust and cooperation among learners and avoids creating competitiveness or being judgmental of others.
17. The instructor provides continuous developmental feedback to individual learners and the group.
18. Instructor authority is always used first to authorize learning, participation, and risk-taking in learning sessions; only rarely, under extreme conditions, is instructor authority used to control behavior.

### **Emotional/Spiritual qualities**

19. The instructor encourages and participates in the humorous aspects of the learning situation; laughs easily and helps others to do the same.
20. Learners are encouraged to align their individual learning goals with the learning goals of the course or session to help develop commitment to learning.
21. Enthusiasm, curiosity, critical thinking, participation, willingness to take prudent risks, and high energy are valued by the instructor and encouraged in the learners. Cynicism, uncritical acceptance, passivity, risk aversion, and laziness are actively avoided in the learning situation.
22. When appropriate, the instructor guarantees learners will be held harmless from adverse consequences of trying something new in order to learn something important. The instructor make it clear that the learning environment is a safe zone; the only way the learner can fail is by not engaging actively as a participating learner.