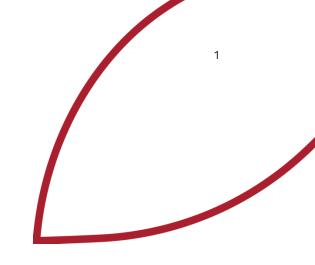


Teaching Senior EAL Learners

Alberta Routes Tip Sheet 22



Geragogy: the theory and practice of teaching older adults, recognizing their unique physical, psychological, and social realities

Strengths they may bring to learning	Challenges that may impact learning
Life experience	Physical
 Wealth of historical and cultural knowledge Wisdom and personal stories 	Declining hearing and visionMobility issues
Motivation and purpose	Cognitive
 Internally motivated (e.g. independence, seeking connections) Targeted, goal-oriented learning 	 Slower memory and recall Longer processing time
Appreciation for learning	Emotional
 More time and willingness to learn Process feedback more easily 	 Anxiety over failure Fixed on stereotype of "can't teach an old dog"
Collaborative spirit	Social
Eagerness to learn from othersInitiative to communicate	IsolationDependence on family

Teaching Considerations for Supporting Seniors

- **Acknowledge and leverage life experience.** When topics resonate, memory retention is better.
- **Allow more processing time.** Appreciate slowness. New vocabulary and grammar require more time to learn.
- **Use multisensory and repetitive techniques.** Recycling new language in varied contexts and with audio-visual-kinesthetic tools strengthens memory and accommodates different ways of learning.
- **Foster a respectful and supportive environment.** Encourage peer support and a positive atmosphere. Guard against ageist assumptions.
- Adapt materials for accessibility. Large print, clear fonts, high-contrast visuals, and slower audio playback accommodate vision and hearing challenges.
- **Encourage metacognition.** Explicit teaching of strategies like using memory aids, summarizing, and self-testing supports retention.
- **Prioritize communication over perfection.** Focus on practical language and fluency not grammar accuracy to reduce anxiety and build confidence.
- Offer consistent encouragement and feedback. Celebrate even small wins. Positive reinforcement helps maintain motivation and a growth mindset "I can still do this!"

Originally created by Alberta Routes Team August 2025: Rosalia dela Cruz