

Universal Design Principles

The principles of universal design, which originated in architecture, can be applied to teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum development to varying degrees. These seven principles may not be relevant to every design change that an institution or faculty member plans for.

1. **Equitable Use:** Provide the same means of use for all users.
2. **Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. **Simple and Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
4. **Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
5. **Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
6. **Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
7. **Size and Space for Approach and Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

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(Note: all guidelines may not be relevant to all designs.)

Shifting Assumptions About Teaching and Learning in Four Fundamental Ways:

These principles of Universal Design can also be applied to education. Universal Design for Learning (UDL), developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology ([CAST](#)), brings equity, flexibility, simplicity and tolerance to the learning process for all students. Through the use of these seven principles, UD has shifted old assumptions about teaching and learning responsibilities and methods in 4 essential ways.

1. Students with disabilities fall along a continuum of learner differences rather than constituting a separate category.
2. Faculty adjustments for learner differences should occur for all students, not just those with disabilities.
3. Curriculum materials should be varied and diverse including digital and online resources, rather than centering on a single textbook.
4. Instead of remediating students so that they can learn from a set curriculum, curriculum should be made flexible to accommodate learner differences.

Universal Design for Learning Resources

- Institute for Community Inclusion:
<http://www.communityinclusion.org/>
 - Universal Course Design:
<http://www.communityinclusion.org/udl/>
 - Universal design principles, tools, syllabus, instructional strategies, and assessments
- CAST - Center for Applied Special Technology
 - Transforming Education through Universal Design for Learning
 - <http://www.cast.org/udl/>
 - UDL Video - <http://www.youtube.com/user/UDLCAST?feature=watch>

