



# Classroom accommodations for older adults

**Julie MacDonald**



## Land Acknowledgment

ISANS acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded past and present territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We are all treaty people.

At ISANS, as we help settle newcomers to Nova Scotia, we also teach them about the history and rights of Indigenous Peoples in Mi'kma'ki. We honour the enduring presence and contributions of the Mi'kmaq people, and we are dedicated to fostering meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

## African Nova Scotian Affirmation

We also acknowledge that people of African descent have been in Nova Scotia for over 400 years, and we honour and offer gratitude to those ancestors of African descent who came before us to this land.

# Goals

- Share older adult learner experiences
- Consider classroom accommodations from sensory perspectives
- Introduce a classroom accommodations handout

# 55+ Literacy Program

The program is for older adults who have identified a want or need for:

- classroom accommodations
- slower paced learning
- daily living language



# Poll



Answer these polls to share your experience

1. Have you been successful in welcoming older learners?
2. Do you know where to go to find accommodation supports?

# National LINC Curriculum Guidelines

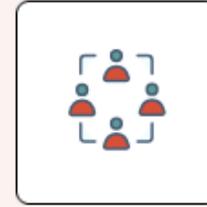
## EDII Considerations for LINC

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) comprise the values and beliefs around fair treatment and accessibility for all people, particularly those who have faced underrepresentation or discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion and other attributes. Indigenization is creating awareness of and incorporating Indigenous worldviews into non-Indigenous systems and structures.

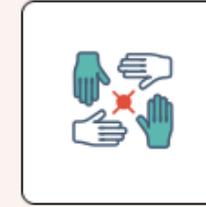
In this section, there is information about Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenization (EDII) and the role they play in creating safer and more inclusive LINC classes, while preparing learners for living and working in a diverse multicultural country.



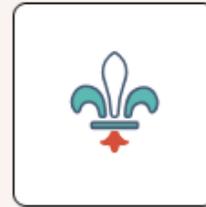
2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion



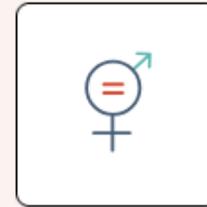
Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)



BIPOC and Anti-Racism



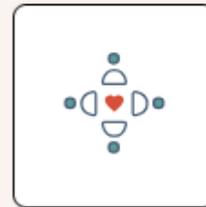
Francophone Perspectives



Gender Based Analysis (GBA) Plus and Intersectionality



Indigenization



Intercultural Competency



Trauma-Informed Practice



Women and Gender Equality

# National LINC Curriculum Guidelines

## Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)



## Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** can support you in creating accessible, inclusive spaces for your learners. The focus of UDL is to change the design of the environment rather than the learner. The UDL framework guides the design of learning environments and supports all learners in taking ownership of their own learning.

Some ways you can ensure learners with disabilities or neurodivergence can fully participate in LINC programs include:

- Making accommodations to the physical environment (building accessibility, moveable desks and chairs, and so on)
- Providing assistive technologies when needed
- Providing quiet learning spaces for learners with sensory issues
- Providing or connecting learners with other support services
- Implementing policies and standards that minimize discrimination and hardship based on learners' disabilities
- Providing and/or supporting professional development opportunities that address accessibility and inclusivity in the classroom

<https://nlcg.achev.ca/how-to-use-the-national-linc-curriculum-guidelines/edii-considerations-for-linc/accessibility-and-universal-design-for-learning-udl/>

# CAST UDL Guidelines



**UDL GUIDELINES** ENGAGEMENT ▶ REPRESENTATION ▶ ACTION & EXPRESSION ▶ MORE... ▶

This page is for Guidelines 3.0. If you are looking for Guidelines 2.2, please navigate to the [Downloads](#) page.



## The UDL Guidelines



### The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

The goal of UDL is **learner agency** that is purposeful & reflective, resourceful & authentic, strategic & action-oriented.

**Design Multiple Means of Engagement**



**Design Multiple Means of Representation**



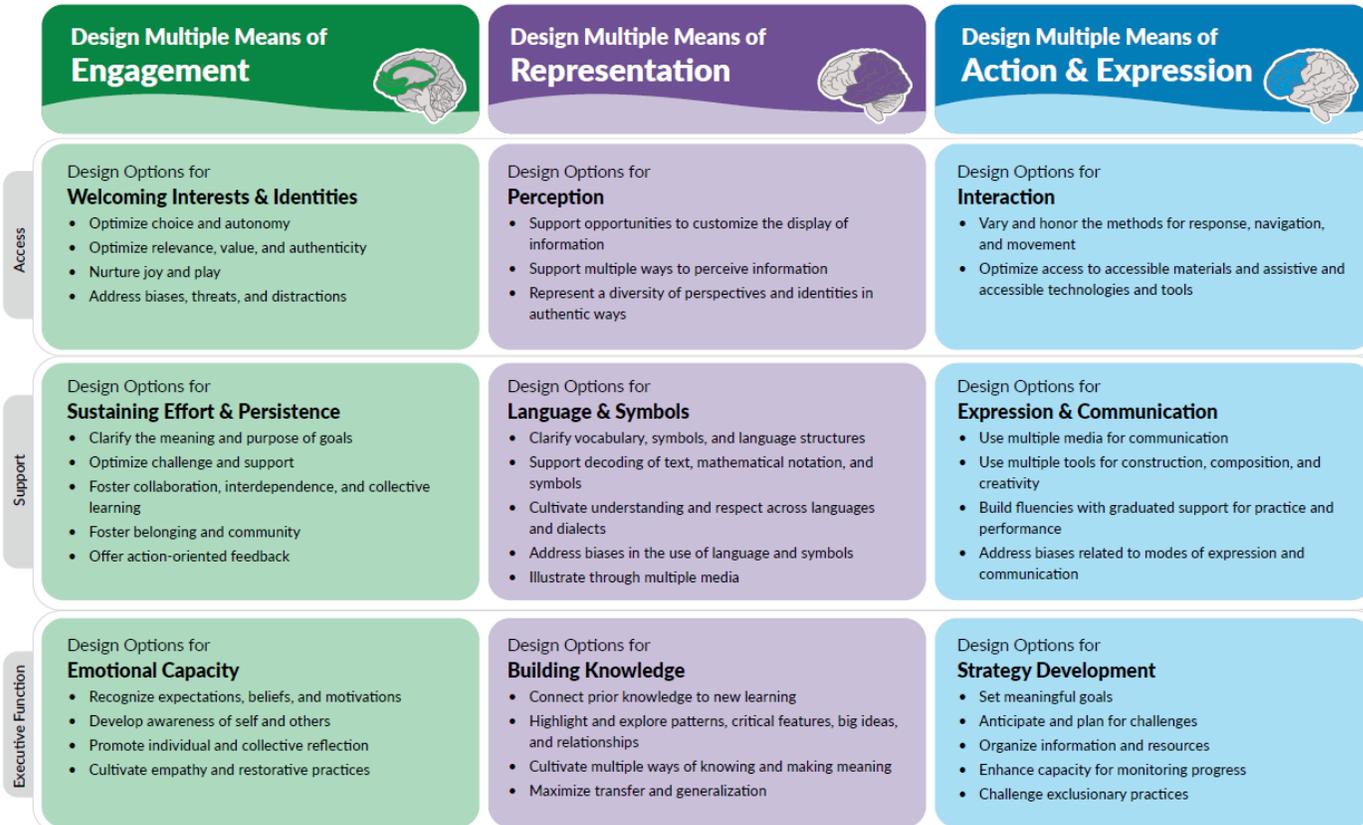
**Design Multiple Means of Action & Expression**



# CAST UDL Guidelines

## The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

The goal of UDL is **learner agency** that is purposeful & reflective, resourceful & authentic, strategic & action-oriented.



## Key Questions to Consider When Planning Lessons

### Think about how learners will engage with the lesson.



Does the lesson provide options that can help all learners:

- regulate their own learning?
- sustain effort and motivation?
- engage and interest all learners?

### Think about how information is presented to learners.



Does the information provide options that help all learners:

- reach higher levels of comprehension and understanding?
- understand the symbols and expressions?
- perceive what needs to be learned?

### Think about how learners are expected to act strategically & express themselves.



Does the activity provide options that help all learners:

- act strategically?
- express themselves fluently?
- physically respond?

[https://udlguidelines.cast.org/static/udlg\\_graphicorganizer\\_v2-2\\_numbers-no.pdf](https://udlguidelines.cast.org/static/udlg_graphicorganizer_v2-2_numbers-no.pdf)

[https://udlguidelines.cast.org/static/cast\\_-\\_key-questions-to-consider-when-planning-lessons.pdf](https://udlguidelines.cast.org/static/cast_-_key-questions-to-consider-when-planning-lessons.pdf)

# Poll



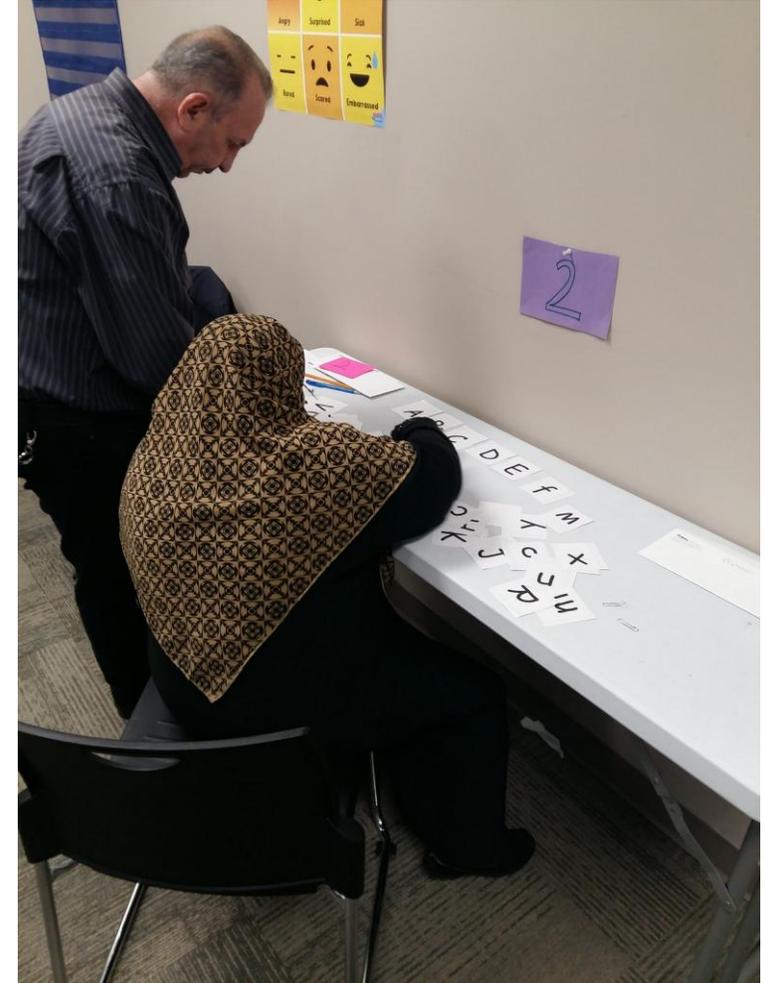
Answer these polls to share your experience

1. Can you respond to barriers to participation?
2. Can you anticipate barriers to participation?

# Learning opportunities

Aim to avoid

- Do you understand?
- Don't you remember?
- Why can't you do this?
- Why are you so slow?



# Successes

Aim to try

- Offer lots of choices
- Routine, repetition, reflection & review
- Instruction & Concept Checking Questions
- High contrast materials
- Low distraction environments
- Slower pace & smaller steps



# Sensory Perspectives



# Sensory Perspectives



- Clear
- Access
- Proximity

# Sensory Perspectives



- Options
- Needs
- Preferences

# Hand Exercises

## Hand Exercises

Name	Instructions	Picture
<b>Thumb stretch</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Palm up</li> <li>2. Stretch hand</li> <li>3. Bend thumb in</li> </ol>	
<b>Claw stretch</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Palm up</li> <li>2. Bend thumb in</li> <li>3. Bend fingers in</li> </ol>	
<b>Make a fist</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make a fist</li> <li>2. Bend thumb across</li> <li>3. Stretch hand</li> </ol>	
<b>Make a C</b> <b>Make an O</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Palm up</li> <li>2. Curve thumb in</li> <li>3. Curve all fingers in</li> </ol>	

<b>Finger bends</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Palm up</li> <li>2. Curve thumb in</li> <li>3. Curve 1 finger in</li> </ol>	
<b>Finger lift</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Palm on table</li> <li>2. Lift 1 finger up</li> <li>3. Put 1 finger down</li> </ol>	
<b>Wrist stretch</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arm out</li> <li>2. Palm down</li> <li>3. Bend wrist down</li> <li>4. Gentle push</li> </ol>	

### More hand and body exercises

1. Wrist circle in and out
2. Shoulder up and down
3. Shoulder roll backward and forward

## Literacy Toolkit

Presented to ISANS

By: Janine Hancock, Chantal Haddad, Nicola Forster & Danielle Haskett

# Classroom Accommodations



## General Tips for Working with Older Adults

- Establish a routine. Begin classes at the same time and in the same way to help learners feel confident.
- Minimize distractions. A calm, well-lit environment with minimal background noise is ideal.
- Be patient and understanding. Older adults may learn at a different pace. Avoid judgmental phrases like "Don't you remember?"
- Simplify complex information. Break down tasks into smaller steps and avoid asking too many questions in rapid succession.
- Provide materials in advance. When using handouts or other materials, share them ahead of time so learners can prepare.
- Connect learning to learners' lives. Incorporate their interests and experiences into the curriculum.

## Vision Considerations

- Introduce yourself clearly. Verbally identify yourself at the start of each class and announce when you leave.
- Offer assistance but respect independence. Ask if learners want help navigating the space and avoid assuming their needs.
- Clear obstacles. Ensure walkways are free of furniture, electrical wires, and other obstructions.
- Provide accessible materials. Offer materials in large print, Braille, or audio as needed.
- Describe visual information. When sharing visual aids or demonstrating tasks, provide clear verbal descriptions.
- Provide magnification tools including reading glasses, magnifying glasses, or magnifying sheets.
- Use high contrast and accessible device options. Avoid low lighting, low resolution, and low contrast when possible.

## Hearing Considerations

- Get learners' attention before speaking. Gently tap the desk or wave to avoid startling them.
- Use clear and simple language. Speak at a level appropriate pace and avoid using jargon or complex terminology.
- Face learners directly and maintain eye contact. Ensure your face is well-lit and unobstructed.
- Use visual aids, realia, and written materials to supplement verbal communication.
- Provide captioning or sign language interpretation as needed.
- Ensure learners are seated where they can best access communication.
- Use phonics phones or whisper phones for independent learning activities.

## Cognitive Considerations

- Repeat key information and provide class goals, summaries, and prompts to help learners connect previous classes to the current class and to future classes.
- Use a variety of teaching methods. Incorporate games, activities, outings, and hands-on learning experiences.
- Encourage active participation and peer support by incorporating lived experiences.
- Break down tasks into smaller steps and provide frequent breaks to address potential memory and attention challenges.
- Offer choices, offer positive reinforcement, and celebrate successes.
- Offer multi-sensory tools and learning opportunities to engage different parts of the body and different parts of the brain in classroom activities.

## Multi-sensory Considerations

- Incorporate games, fidget toys, and puzzles into the learning environment.
- Adaptations of popular card and board games, such as large print snakes and ladders or Scrabble, can be beneficial for learners with cognitive decline and/or memory loss.
- Games like bingo, dominoes, and word searches are also suitable as they do not require recalling complex information.
- Some research suggests that Mahjong and Shiritori can help maintain cognitive abilities and delay cognitive decline. These games offer the additional advantage of connecting learners to cultural experiences.
- Encourage learners to share games from their culture as a memory boosting option.

## Classroom Considerations

- Consider the physical layout of the classroom.
- Stick to a routine, such as using the same greeting and starting class the same way each time, in order to support learners with cognitive decline and/or memory loss.
- Provide a calm and well-lit learning environment with minimal distractions. This can help learners feel more confident and in control of their environment.
- Ensure the classroom is kept tidy and consistent so learners can remember where to access relevant learning tools such as reference sheets or classroom supplies.
- Reflect on the format of services offered. Ask learners to give feedback and suggestions on the classroom set up, learning environment, and classroom activities.
- Learners may experience difficulties with fine and gross motor skills, affecting their ability to walk, type, or hold a pen. Chronic illness, disease, or disability can impact this further.
- In-person class may be a better fit than virtual class, as it allows for better reading of body language and facial expressions.
- Some learners may need to be reminded to bring necessary supplies to class, such as dentures, hearing aids, glasses, medications, mobility aids, or smart devices.

## Instructional Considerations

- Be mindful of language preferences. Incorporate biliteracy and multi-lingual learning into classroom activities and instruction.
- Some learners with cognitive decline and/or memory loss may revert to their first language over time.
- It may be necessary to integrate translation apps into classroom tasks. A family member or an interpreter may need to accompany the learner for larger or complex activities.
- Address potential hygiene changes, depression, isolation, and elder abuse when concerns are shared.
- Older adults may experience isolation due to changes in their brain that affect communication and socializing. Cognitive conditions like Alzheimer's can impact this further.
- Support learners to access conversation circles, senior centres, or multicultural support groups for peer connections.
- Be mindful of cultural differences and individual learner preferences.
- Create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment.
- Partner with community organizations that offer specialized services for older adults.

Note: These are general suggestions and individual needs may vary. It is important to communicate with learners and assess their specific needs to determine the most effective accommodations.

# General tips

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# Poll



Answer these polls to share your experience

1. Have you identified ways to modify your classroom set up?
2. Have you identified ways to modify your classroom materials?
3. Have you identified ways to modify your instructional approach?

# Resources



# References

## **SAISIA**

<https://saisia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Tip-sheet-Working-with-newcomers-who-are-Deaf-or-hard-of-hearing.docx>

<https://mansomanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/EN-Tip-Sheet-Blind-or-partially-sighted-1.pdf>

<https://saisia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Tips-for-working-with-newcomers-who-have-Alzheimers-disease.docx>

## **ISANS**

<https://isans.ca/resources/integrated-sight-loss-teacher-toolkit/>

## **SeaChange CoLabs**

<https://training.seachangecolab.com/courses/core-skills-of-accessible-communications--d7693140-c67c-4c5d-b9e6-bce9278c52ba/salespage>

## **Alzheimer Society**

<https://alzheimer.ca/en/help-support/dementia-resources/more-languages/multiple-lang>

## **CNIB**

<https://www.cnib.ca/en/resources/when-someone-you-know-blind?region=on>

## **CLESE**

<https://clese.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Tips-for-Teaching.doc>

# Questions?

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# Thank You

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