

Guideline Universal Design

Sheet 2: Didactic Principles



What?

Didactic principles are prerequisites for achieving meaningful, fascinating and sustainable learning. ¹ Taking these principles into account facilitates and supports the learning of various groups of students. Examples are language-developing, activating and motivating teaching.

Why and for whom? ^{2, 3, 4, 5}

Applying didactic principles such as language-developing, activating and motivating teaching has several advantages. This way, students' chances of success increase, they act more effectively, they learn more in-depth, they show higher task performance and they experience more pleasure in education. In addition, including the embedding of these principles, it provides support for students with language problems, a migration background, a disability or, for example, fear of failure.

Tips & Tricks ^{6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12}

Language-developing teaching

Academic language proficiency is important for succeeding in higher education. However, not all students are well-prepared for higher education. Respond to this by taking the following advice into account:

- **Recognizable framework** | Offer learning material within a recognizable framework, make the connection with the professional field.

- **Interaction** | Provide space for interaction. By talking and writing about the subject matter, students process the subject matter better and learn to use the subject language.
- **Language offer** | Choose consciously for a well-cared for and rich but accessible language offer.
- **Technical terms** | Gradually apply words and expressions that fit within a certain field and provide sufficient possibilities for in-depth processing.
- **Language feedback** | Provide language feedback on assignments and papers.
- **Visual support** | Provide visual support, such as diagrams, images or mindmaps, to support the curriculum / to clarify complex and abstract concepts.
- **Language support** | Provide language support by providing intermediate steps for complex assignments or by splitting them into partial assignments.
- **Formulate instructions** | Formulate instructions briefly and clearly with an example or illustration.
- **Simple** | Use simple terms and formulations.
- **Meaningful** | Choose written and oral language tasks that are functional and meaningful.
- **Clear expectations** | Provide information about expectations (style, shape, length, layout, etc.).
- **Supporting materials** | Offer supporting materials (a writing frame, word spider, structure, etc.).
- **Support** | Provide intensive support during the writing process (e.g. language and writing workshops).

Motivational teaching

Autonomous motivation, in which the student learns and acts from his own goodwill and interest, can be stimulated by focusing on three basic psychological needs.

Stimulate autonomy

- Choice** | Let students choose topics themselves whenever they are able to do this.
- Independence** | Ensure that students are allowed to perform tasks independently and encourage this.
- Clear expectations** | Ensure that it is clear what is expected of the student.
- Interests** | Respond to the interests of the student.
- Positive language use** | Adjust your language, do not speak about "must" but about "want" or "can".
- Alternation principle** | Work according to the alternation principle: alternate work forms to meet the strengths, preferences and interests of all students.

Stimulate involvement

- Own environment** | Make sure that students feel involved with the subject matter: make connections with their own environment and pay attention to the diversity among students.
- Clarity principle** | Work according to the principle of clarity: make the subject matter visible by presenting learning contents based on the different senses.
- Choice** | Let students choose topics themselves whenever this is possible.
- Positive learning environment** | Create a positive learning environment and show enthusiasm (check out Sheet 4: a powerful and safe learning environment).
- Connectedness** | Make sure that students feel connected with each other and with you.

Stimulate competence

- Success experiences** | Ensure that students go through success experiences. By being able to do something well, students will repeat this experience, making them even better at it.

- ❑ **Integration principle** | Work according to the integration principle: activate the student's prior knowledge.
- ❑ **Graduality principle** | Work according to the graduality principle: give students more responsibility and fewer scaffolds. For example: from observation, to imitation, to independent execution in similar contexts to independent execution in other contexts.
- ❑ **Empowerment** | Empower the student's successes, give positive feedback and tips.
- ❑ **Structure** | Provide sufficient structure.
- ❑ **Appointments** | Make clear rules and agreements and be consistent with them.

Activating teaching

By giving activating lessons, students remember more of the subject matter and are more involved. Their attention will increase, as well as the learning effect. A few tips:

- ❑ **Purposes** | Use activating teaching for different purposes: for example, activate prior knowledge, gain insight, and practice knowledge.
- ❑ **(Post) discussion** | Provide time for (post) discussion after applying an activating method to guarantee effectiveness.
- ❑ **Between students** | Take a seat between the students and in the room, do not stay at the front.
- ❑ **Rules and timing** | Set clear rules to keep the course structured and keep an eye on timing.
- ❑ **Smooth transitions** | Ensure that the transitions between the activities and the instruction are logical and smooth.
- ❑ **Balance** | Find a good balance between activating methods and instruction.
- ❑ **Ask questions** | Encourage students to ask questions during class.
- ❑ **Power of peers** | Use the power of peers: students who consult with each other must express their ideas.
- ❑ **Variation** | Ensure variation in the types of activating work forms.
- ❑ **Activation principle** | Work according to the activation principle: let students actively cooperate and think.

- **Cognitive overload** | Avoid cognitive overload, focus on the core information.

For an overview of possible (activating) didactic methods, check out Sheet 3: didactic methods.

Know more?

- Check out [the presentation by Cajot, Heeren and Vrijds \(24-10-18\) on academic language skills](#), given at the VLOR study day "building bridges between secondary and higher education about the educational career of young people" (Dutch).
- Discover here [20 tips for activating teaching to large groups of students \(Dutch\)](#).

In practice

“We focus on authentic education: during theory lessons we make the connection with the practice. We have few dry theory lessons, but we tend to work more with guest speakers. We always look at what the theory actually means in practice. The student then realizes: "That is why I am learning this.””

“Motivate them by letting them choose things themselves, for example in terms of subjects. There is no template for our portfolios, there is only a guideline about which four issues should be addressed. They can choose how they process this.”

“We stimulate language-developing teaching. We received a sheet with tips from the language policy department. All teachers have also filled in what they are already doing. We then discussed this in team, what everyone is doing, to learn from each other.”

References

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