

Universal Design for Learning, Summarized

Explore the page content for a summary and application. Access the links/resources for further explanation and investigation.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) takes a page from architectural and physical design for the margins and presents principles as guidelines to design intentional learning for everyone.

Three Principles of UDL:

1. Engagement

2. Representation

3. Action and Expression

1. Engagement

Have you been to a seminar where the speaker describes educators as entertainers, and everyone laughs because it is true? The takeaway is that you need to motivate students in ways they can relate to. UDL hooks your students with a valid purpose for their learning. It optimizes engagement with learning designed with relevant context, choices for learners, varied levels of difficulty, clear goals, community, and encouraging feedback.

Why they get hooked:



Context with Connections to the Real World



Perspective with Choice and Autonomy



Varied Resources, Demands and Assessments



Clear Goals,
Collaboration,
Targeted Feedback

2. Representation



Has a student shared that your course (assignment, rubric, etc.) is hard to follow or cannot be accessed? UDL removes barriers to ensure learners can access and understand the content to create an effective structure for learners with "diverse learning and life needs".

What you do:

- Introduce topics, make connections, and guide learners.
- Offer credible and accessible learning materials and tools in varied formats like aural, text, graphics, lectures, video, games, experiences, and more.
- Share clear expectations with assignment instructions, examples, and rubrics.

Recorded class sessions allow students to review and study!

3. Action and Expression



Learners express themselves in different ways, or not at all. UDL encourages [low through high-tech options](#) to engage learners and to let them demonstrate learning and knowledge. With many online course offerings, the current high-tech options can be attractive and budget-friendly.

How you do it:

- Start with small tasks and offer specific feedback that supports participation and learner growth to meet goals.
- Encourage collaboration through movement, discussion and activities during sessions and between classes to create a sharing community.
- Offer learners alternative formats to demonstrate learning as they build confidence and challenge limitations.

Three principles guide you in assessing goals, methods, resources, and assessments to reach all learners. As a result, UDL reduces barriers to learning and learners access resources, build knowledge, and develop their self, community, and ability.

Application

An Example: UDL Incorporated in a Multiple-step Project



[Business Idea Planning Board - Free photo on Pixabay](#)

For their project, student **teams choose** a company that matches the purpose, often from a themed list that **connects** with student programs of study. Opportunities to explore functions in real-world companies **motivate** students to learn about and assess business functions. To start, small, graded tasks with set deadlines **engage** students to review the project objectives and assessments and commit to their topic and collaboration. Timely **feedback** sets expectations for the team to create an effective project plan.

Project tasks are **presented** with complete **accessible instructions and rubrics** for format, organization, content, style, integrity, etc. For the **project plan**, teams write a contract to set effective project **goals**, including **collaboration** needs, **policies** to address risks, and **integrity commitments**. Tasks are **supported** with workshops, how-to videos, [interactive models](#), and draft reviews.

Students are **responsible** for their content, collaboration, and ethics, with set plans to overcome obstacles. The project **incorporates multiple media** assignments where students are challenged to **build on strengths and master skills**, with options to integrate graphics and choose a presentation style to complement their message.

Resources

Ryerson University shares best practices:

[Using Universal Design in the University Classroom \(ryerson.ca\)](http://ryerson.ca)

[UDL and Inclusive Teaching Online \(ryerson.ca\)](https://ryerson.ca/learning-centre/teaching/teaching-strategies/udl-and-inclusive-teaching-online)

Sources and Links

[Design for the Margins First | The Center for Learner Equity](#)

[UDL: The UDL Guidelines \(cast.org\)](http://cast.org)

[Universal Design for Learning \(Part 1\): Definition and Explanation - YouTube](#)

[Universal Design for Learning \(Part 2\): UDL Guidelines - YouTube](#)

[Universal Design for Learning \(Part 3\): Engagement Strategies - YouTube](#)

[Universal Design for Learning \(Part 4\): Representation Strategies - YouTube](#)

[Universal Design for Learning \(Part 5\): Action and Expression Strategies - YouTube](#)

[Noun Project: Free Icons & Stock Photos for Everything \(thenounproject.com\)](https://thenounproject.com)

[Contextual teaching \(purdue.edu\)](http://contextualteaching.com)

Student perceptions of their autonomy at University | SpringerLink

[Variety.pdf \(unbtls.ca\)](http://unbtls.ca/Variety.pdf)

[UDL: Sustaining Effort & Persistence \(cast.org\)](#) and the main menu [The UDL Guidelines \(cast.org\)](#)

UDL: Reducing Barriers - YouTube

[All UDL – Universal Design for Learning \(alludl.ca\)](http://alludl.ca) or cached site @ All UDL –

[Universal Design for Learning \(archive.org\)](https://www.archive.org/details/universal-design-for-learning)

[Writing a report | Learning Lab \(rmit.edu.au\)](https://www.rmit.edu.au/learninglab)

Using Universal Design in the University Classroom (ryerson.ca)

[UDL and Inclusive Teaching Online \(ryerson.ca\)](https://ryerson.ca/learning-centre/teaching/teaching-strategies/udl-and-inclusive-teaching-online)