

## Generational Characteristics\* and their Relationship to Learning Preferences

Baby Boomers (b. 1946-1965)	Generation X (b. 1966-1980)	Generation Y (b. 1981-2000)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓May use technology as the means, not the end</li> <li>✓Very Competitive</li> <li>✓Insist on fairness</li> <li>✓Sensitive to criticism and how the look to their peers</li> <li>✓Believe experience is more important than education</li> <li>✓Desire quality</li> <li>✓Workaholic--at work and in the classroom</li> <li>✓Willing to put in extra effort to achieve success</li> <li>✓Question authority, turned off by authority figures</li> <li>✓Want to interact with others, but prefer stable, orderly, risk-free learning environment</li> <li>✓View themselves as forever young</li> <li>✓See training as a benefit or perk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Want to use technology when possible</li> <li>✓Adapt to change, comfortable with and seek out new approaches</li> <li>✓Self-reliant, risk takers</li> <li>✓Prefer independent, self-directed learning</li> <li>✓Like to learn by doing</li> <li>✓Enjoy less-authoritative teachers</li> <li>✓Enjoy irreverent humor that pokes fun at societal ills</li> <li>✓Want control over schedule</li> <li>✓Resist workaholic approach to training</li> <li>✓See training and development as career security and a plus for the job market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Expect technology to be used in learning</li> <li>✓Multitaskers</li> <li>✓Want clear expectations and instructions; efficient learning paths</li> <li>✓Want to be entertained and learn at the same time</li> <li>✓Prefer fast-moving, interactive activities with much feedback from facilitators, trainers</li> <li>✓Impatient with “wasted” time, schedule changes, variance from the agenda</li> <li>✓Prefer group diversity</li> <li>✓Prefer collaborative classrooms and peer-to-peer interaction, less comfortable working independently</li> <li>✓Peer opinion is important</li> <li>✓See training as a means to an end--economic gain.</li> </ul>

\*The start and end dates of the generations identified are subjective and not fully agreed upon time spans. The variation between sources, however, does not significantly affect the characteristics listed. It is also important not to stereotype generations based on the information provided. It is intended solely as a guide to aid those who teach multi-generational courses.

## Tips for Instructors to Provide an Effective Learning Environment in Multi-Generational Classrooms

Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Treat boomers as equals, even if you are younger. (Baby boomers do not want to feel they are 20 years older than their instructor--even if they are.)</li> <li>✓ Create a training environment that is safe for open discussion.</li> <li>✓ Create fair rules for all activities.</li> <li>✓ Use storytelling and anecdotes to relate to boomers in a friendly, peer-to-peer fashion.</li> <li>✓ Incorporate practical and fun activities that allow boomers to work in small groups.</li> <li>✓ Use caution with role play, which may be fraught with too much potential for failure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Set out benefits of the training and establish expectations early. Relate the learning to their career goals.</li> <li>✓ Get to the point, efficiently. Don't waste time with too many examples or anecdotes.</li> <li>✓ Incorporate a lot of activity--group exercises, discussion, role play.</li> <li>✓ Avoid cliché and hyperbole, and make it relevant.</li> <li>✓ Give Gen X-ers the freedom to come up with answers and alternatives. More discussion, less lecture.</li> <li>✓ Use appropriate humor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide a clear structure for the learning at the outset, learning objectives, materials, and how they will be evaluated. Stick to the agenda.</li> <li>✓ Show how the training can help them meet organizational and personal goals. Link training to the big picture--earning potential.</li> <li>✓ Provide attention, direction, and feedback.</li> <li>✓ Use less lecture, more discussion.</li> <li>✓ Make it fun and entertaining. Gen Y-ers responds well to games, recognition, prizes. Include multimedia, music, games, etc.</li> </ul>

Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
<p>✓ Choose activities that will not put them on the spot or potentially expose weaknesses in front of others.</p> <p>✓ Be aware of their sense of urgency, and be sure to manage time effectively in any learning event.</p> <p>✓ Show boomers they are valued. Give feedback, take advantage of their extensive experience by asking for input and referring to their experience.</p>	<p>✓ Make materials visually appealing. Avoid large blocks of text. Incorporate well-made illustrations, cartoons, graphic design, etc.</p> <p>✓ Use feedback, but don't mentor.</p> <p>✓ Use technology wherever it makes sense.</p>	<p>✓ Use technology with this group. Gen Y-ers like to be "linked in".</p> <p>✓ Utilize learning techniques that incorporate team interaction and hands-on participation such as team projects, presentations, case studies, teaching others, etc.</p>

## References

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