

Introduction to Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework, based on cognitive science, that is designed to optimize learning for all students. It focuses on the why (engagement), the what (representation), and the how (action and expression) of learning. The goal of UDL is to create a flexible learning environment that can adapt to the diverse needs of all learners, ensuring equal access and opportunities for success.

Although getting started with UDL can be intimidating, think about adapting the “one more” mentality: Add “one more” opportunity to engage, format of representation, and/or option to express learning.

Core Principles of UDL

Engagement

- What: Provide multiple ways for students to engage with the material, each other, and the instructor
- Why: Motivates learners, sustains interest in learning by appealing to the preferences of diverse learners

Representation

- What: Provide content in various formats
- Why: Allows students to learn in ways that fit their preferences, styles, and needs

Action & Expression

- What: Allow students to demonstrate their knowledge in different ways
- Why: Learners accurately express what they know

Quick Start Tips for Faculty

Engagement

- Think about: How will learners engage with the lesson?
- Provide: Options to engage and interest all learners (ie. video, audio, text)
- Provide: Choice on how the learning objective(s) will be reached (i.e. writing, creating, recording, quiz)

Representation

- Think about: How is information presented to learners?
- Provide: Various formats of content (i.e. print/display, auditory, visual)
- Provide: Background information and clarifications

Action & Expression

- Think about: How are learners expected to act strategically and express themselves?
- Provide: Various formats for submission of work (i.e. essay, quiz, video, audio)
- Provide: Choice on how learners will demonstrate knowledge