Course Design with Autism in Mind: Incorporating Three Universal Design Principles to Benefit All Your Online Students

Jane Wolfarth
Instructional Designer
1 in 60 Utah 8-yr-olds is diagnosed with ASD
Items that trip up an autistic student (and many neurotypicals!) in online courses

- Sensory obstacles
  - Busy screens and other distractions
  - Presentations in a single modality
- Open-ended group member roles
- Projects due as a whole instead of in parts
- Unclear assignment directions
- Non-intuitive course navigation
- Inconsistency in presentation and assessment
In the Beginning:

Now:

What is Universal Design, anyway?

Curb Cuts

OXO Products
Three Universal Design Principles

1. Equitable use: The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

- Autism Spectrum Students
Three Universal Design Principles

1. Equitable use: The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

   ➢ Autism Spectrum Students

   ➢ International Students
Three Universal Design Principles

1. Equitable use: The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

- Autism Spectrum Students
- International Students
- Harried Students
Three Universal Design Principles

2. Flexibility in use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

- Closed-captioning
- Customizable group projects
  - Option to work independently
  - Team member roles clearly defined
  - Project has sequential deliverables with feedback given for each piece
- Written vs. audio assignment submissions
Three Universal Design Principles

Simple and intuitive: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

- Clear assignment directions and due dates
- Simple, consistent course navigation
- Clean screens with minimal clicking
- High-stakes assessments consistent with practice items
Nordic Countries

Objectives

1. Explore how the Nordic countries approach adult education, including public policy, availability, and funding components
2. Examine how older adults are treated or valued in the Nordic countries
3. Recognize the benefits and barriers of the LLL situation in the Nordic countries

LLL Perspective

Readings and Resources

1. Nordic Countries: Chapter 28
2. Adult Learning, Education, and the Labour Market in the Employability Regime
3. A Global Examination of Policies and Practices for Lifelong Learning (optional)

To-Do List

- Module 9 Quiz

Tips for the Week

Note that your topic needs to chosen and submitted for approval by the end of the next module.
Three Universal Design Principles

1. Equitable use: The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
2. Flexibility in use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
3. Simple and intuitive: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
“The Principles of Universal Design were conceived and developed by The Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. Use or application of the Principles in any form by an individual or organization is separate and distinct from the Principles and does not constitute or imply acceptance or endorsement by The Center for Universal Design of the use or application.”

Lockheed Ventura Mk.II AJ 311 cockpit. (U.S. Air Force photo):
http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Upcoming/Photos/igphoto/2000548646/

All other photos ©Jane Wolfarth

More information about this topic can be found at the excellent University of Washington DO-IT website: https://www.washington.edu/doit/programs/center-universal-design-education/overview