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4 Steps for Learning that Lasts

By [Darlene Goetzman](http://www.globallearningpartners.com/blog/author/17) on Sep 26, 2012

When you’re designing any kind of learning event – a workshop, seminar, class, meeting – one of the most important components of your design is your learning tasks, those elements of the event in which the learners *do* something with the content they've set out to learn. For learning that lasts, use the 4-A Model, a foolproof tool.

(What follows is excerpted from [*Dialogue Education Step by Step:  A Guide for Designing Exceptional Learning Events*](http://globallearningpartners.com/resources/books/dialogue-education-step-by-step), by Darlene M. Goetzman.)

**The 4-A Model - ANCHOR  |  ADD  |  APPLY  |  AWAY**



* **ANCHOR** the content within the learner’s experience;
* **ADD** new information;
* Invite the learner to **APPLY** the content in a new way or situation;
* Ask the learner to decide how or what he or she will take **AWAY** and use this learning in the future.

To design your learning tasks, it’s helpful to use the model in the order laid out above. It’s also helpful to view the 4As as though each ‘A’ is one of four components in a single learning task; these four parts – ANCHOR, ADD, APPLY and AWAY – complete a single learning cycle.



**PART 1 -  ANCHOR**

The ANCHOR part of the 4-A Model connects the topic you’re teaching to the learner’s experience. This component of a learning task ensures relevancy for your particular group of individuals and begins to indicate to them why this information is important to them right now. Through a well-crafted anchor question learners will be telling you and others in what way the content is relevant or connected to their experience.

The [newest research on how the brain creates and stores information](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/How-Our-Brains-Make-Memories.html) (creating memories) indicates that relevance, especially an affective (emotional) connection, enhances the likelihood of knowledge retention and of learners being more open to new learning.

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**PART 2 - ADD**

In the ADD task, the emphasis is on adding new and vital information, and on inviting learners to do something with the new material to make it their own. One way to increase attention to important dimensions of the material is to preface a presentation with an instruction, such as:

* As you watch this video clip, decide which features might be challenging and which may be easiest to implement at your site.
* As you listen to the reader, circle what you see in the text box as most important for your work.
* As you watch, decide which feature might be most useful to your clients.
* As you study the diagram, write your questions about . . .

This provides a clear focus for the learners, makes them an active participant in the task, and reminds them of a meaningful reason for participating in this activity. (Notice that meaningful reasons come from what the learners decide in each of the above examples.)

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**PART 3 - APPLY**

Depending upon the content, the amount of time you have, and the level of proficiency the learners and you are aiming for, a variety of ways in which the learner works with the content are necessary for learning that sticks.

In the APPLY part of the 4-A Model you will create an additional meaningful opportunity for the learner to decide and do something with the content in order to cement his or her learning. Here are three APPLY examples:

* Create a visual graphic of your responses to the questions; we’ll hear and consider these ideas.
* At your table, share what you circled as important; together create a three-column poster, naming the important items, why you see each as important, and one way you could integrate this content into your daily schedule.
* With your co-teacher, design a thirty-minute session that incorporates and reflects all you have learned about this topic while your taught it.



**PART 4 - AWAY**

Research indicates that when learners make verbal and written commitments to new behaviors or practices, the likelihood that they will follow through on these commitments increases. What will help learners make their own unique decision to do something different or new later?  An ideal AWAY provides learners with an opportunity to:

* Select a new behavior or practice;
* Commit to it; and
* Create a reminder that will hold them accountable to their commitment.

In others words, an AWAY task sets learners up to be more successful at practicing their learning when they’re back at home or at work. In reality, not every learning task has or even needs an AWAY, but every great design for a learning event has at least one! It is good practice for you to get into the habit of including an AWAY so that you are always considering what it is you hope the learner will do differently because of engaging with the content through the learning task you created.

How have you used the 4As in your work?

This is just an overview of the 4As. If you’d like to get into more depth, here are a couple of options:

1. Purchase a copy of [*Dialogue Education Step by Step:  A Guide for Designing Exceptional Learning Events*](http://globallearningpartners.com/service/courses/professional-development-opportunities/dialogue-education-step-by-step)and read Chapter 11.
2. Sign up for [*Dialogue Education Step by Step: An Introduction (or Refresher) in Learning Design*](http://globallearningpartners.com/service/courses/professional-development-opportunities/dialogue-education-step-by-step)*.* (No travel involved; work on your own from home and with other participants by phone in teleconferences - **starts Oct 8, so**[**register**](http://detc10812.eventbrite.com/)**today!!**)

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