

# Outdoortopia | What is Experiential Education?

A Quick Guide to Experiential Learning



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## What Is Experiential Education?

In a nut shell, experiential education is best defined as "Challenge and experience followed by reflection leading to learning and growth" *Association for Experiential Education*. It's a philosophy and structured methodology of teaching used in a wide variety of disciplines and settings including both indoor and outdoor environments.

Experiential education in the outdoors is just that - learning by doing outside the walls of the classroom.

## Who Is It For?

The tools and techniques of experiential education can be used to engage both youth and adults.

Experiential educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection, in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities.

## Why Educate Experientially?

Good question! Well, there's a growing body of evidence to show that learning through experience is one of the most engaging and efficient approaches to learn new skills and retain fresh knowledge.

**The Hierarchy of Skills** (the Theory of Developing Competency) by Igor Kokcharov Ph.D shows:

- ✓ *Learning through doing results in an impressive >75% retention of learning*
- ✓ *Learning through participation (play, exercises, discussion and demonstration) leads to healthy gains in learning retention of between 20% - 75%*
- ✓ *Traditional audio-visual learning results in only <20% retention of learning*

Experiential learners are actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning which helps develop individuals on many levels.

## Who Are Experiential Educators?

Experiential youth educators include classroom teachers, environmental educators, outdoor guides and instructors, camp leaders, therapists, coaches, mental health professionals and many more.

Experiential approaches to learning are used in many disciplines and settings including:

- Nature-based learning
- Adventure and expeditionary learning
- Place-based education
- Project-based education
- Global citizenship education
- Sustainability education
- Student-centered education
- Non-formal education
- Active learning
- Service learning
- Cooperative learning



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