

# TEACHING THE MILLENNIAL STUDENTS

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## *ABSTRACT*

The millennials, or Gen Y, born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, learn differently than the previous generations. Their characteristics would lead them to learning best with active learning techniques. The following paper presents both their characteristics and learning techniques that would be most effective with this generation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Millennials, or Generation Y, are the current generation in college. They were born in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They are the largest current generation making up 36% of the U.S. population. They are the most diverse generation, being 31% minority. They were born as parenting styles became more protective. This generation is used to adults asking their opinion and participating in decisions that will affect them. They are different from their teachers and those teachers' teaching styles. Whereas Millennials grew up immersed in technology, and collaboration. Teacher programs are largely founded on "baby boomer" centric models of one-on-one mentoring that are often counter to millennial strengths and preferences.

## **MILLENNIALS' CHARACTERISTICS AND HOW TO PRACTICE THEM**

The following lists some of the characteristics of millennials and suggestions on how best to practice that characteristic in and active learning environment:

- very much "riders" on the information superhighway
  - give assignments using data bases and the Internet as much as possible
  - send and request e-mail (a favorite way for them to communicate) from them
- comfy in both virtual and physical space.
  - develop critical thinking skills by learning principles, organizing knowledge, enhancing retention, and retrieving information
- like to collaborate,
  - provide a learning-centered syllabus, with rules, regulations and explicit directions for course assignments, and consequences if any of the above are violated
  - provide group assignments, 2-6 students, in and out of class; they feel safe in a group to offer ideas
  - in some groups, add an independent assignment for each person
- prefer graphics before text
  - present the summary portion, e.g., graphic aids or summary lists before the longer chapter passages.
- prefer random access
  - structured thinking can be taught by use of comparing and contrasting, classification, organization and the use of analogies

- thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards
  - provide active learning techniques from day one
- provide “quality” feedback
  - include notes on good and bad aspects (use constructive criticism; use question format)
  - provide in a timely manner
- expect adults to consult and include them
  - give them help to learn how to think independently and how to make decisions, since they’ve been “hand held” in school to t his point
  - instructor should be a facilitator of learning
- give positive reinforcement
  - direct quality contact between students and teachers, e.g., in class, one-on-one, e-mail, extra-curricular activities
  - give “pre-reading” assignments with review questions to focus them on the main points of each chapter
  - use humor and create a fun learning environment (teacher shouldn’t take self too seriously).
- prefer autonomy
  - sometimes is at cross purposes with the collaborative characteristic
- encourage them to take risks and break the rules so that they can explore new ways of learning.
  - give some assignments that will encourage various endings

The traditionalist and baby-boomer ways of learning aren’t as effective with the millenials. Text and lecture style won’t work as well; however, this generation is a collaborative and social generation that has a focus on understanding and building their knowledge through various forms of media in order to discover the answers.

## REFERENCES

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