

Tutorial 1:

Designing Adventure- Based Learning Experiences



1. Aim / Learning Objectives

This tutorial introduces learners to techniques that help design adventure-based learning experiences by using challenge-based activities to encourage critical thinking and media literacy, instilling activism and empathy for the active participation of young people in real-world environmental issues. By the end of this session, participants will be able to design stories in accordance with adventure-based learning experiences and adapt them to suit different age groups and learning difficulties.

Key Learning Objectives: • Understand the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) principles in educational settings • Master four learning styles in the Experiential Learning Cycle • Experience phases of group development

2. Introduction

Adventure-based learning is rooted in curiosity, challenge, reflection, and collaboration. It creates “adventures” where learners stretch themselves, face the unexpected, problem-solve, question assumptions, and connect with others.

Think of travelling to a new place, venturing into nature, or trying something outside your comfort zone. Such moments spark resilience, combining fun with discomfort, self-reflection with reliance on others.

Their impact deepens when placed within the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC): learners engage in an experience, reflect on it, draw insights, and then apply those insights to new contexts such as school, work, or personal life. Through this cycle, adventure-based learning becomes a powerful means of supporting growth, leadership, and teamwork in collaborative settings.

3. Step-by-Step Guide

a) Step 1: Establish Learning Objectives:

Apply KSA (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Action): Ask yourself what learners should know, be able to do, feel, and act on after the experience.

Choose your learning domain focus:

- **Knowledge goals:** Climate science, systems thinking, policy analysis, environmental justice
- **Skills goals:** Collaboration, critical thinking, decision-making under uncertainty, communication, conflict resolution
- **Attitude goals:** Environmental concern, collective efficacy, hope, agency, empathy for affected communities
- **Action goals:** Behavioural change, civic engagement, community participation, leadership development

Make objectives measurable and observable: Write outcomes that can be assessed during the experience.

➤ For example:

- Learners will analyse trade-offs between competing climate solutions using evidence.
- Learners will recognise how individual choices impact the environment.
- Learners will weigh short-term benefits against long-term consequences.
- Learners will explore how collaboration can lead to better outcomes than acting alone.

Keep these objectives visible as you design your story. They serve as a compass, guiding each stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.

b) Step 2: Design the Concrete Experience

Create scenarios that present the reader with meaningful challenges. The story should immerse them in a situation where their decisions matter.

Tips for youth workers:

- Use vivid, descriptive writing so learners feel like the hero.
- Introduce dilemmas or conflicts where there is no single “right” answer.
- Link challenges to your learning objectives (e.g., protecting resources, resolving a dispute).
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c) Step 3: Build in Reflective Observation

After major decisions or story events, pause the narrative and invite learners to reflect.

Examples of reflection prompts:

- “Why did you make this choice?”
- “How do you think other characters felt about your decision?”
- “What might have happened if you chose differently?”

You can also add reflection spaces in the book (such as journals or discussion notes) or encourage group dialogue if the activity is facilitated.

d) Step 4: Connect to Abstract Conceptualisation

Help learners see the bigger picture behind the choices they made. This is where the experience turns into transferable knowledge.

How to do this:

- Add short explanatory notes or teacher/facilitator guidance.
- Link the scenario to real-world concepts: “This mirrors the challenge communities face when balancing economic growth with environmental protection.”
- Encourage learners to extract lessons: “What does this teach us about leadership, responsibility, or sustainability?”

e) Step 5: Encourage Active Experimentation

Give learners opportunities to test new strategies and apply their reflections.

Storytelling techniques:

- Offer branching story lines so they can revisit choices.
- Include “reset points” that allow learners to try alternative paths.
- In a group setting, let different teams follow different routes, then compare outcomes.

This experimentation stage empowers learners to explore consequences, adjust their thinking, and apply new insights.

f) Step 6: Evaluating and Refining Learning Design

- **Assess objective achievement:** Evaluate whether learners actually developed the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions specified in your learning goals
- **Observe learning behaviour:** Look for evidence that learners are engaging in the cognitive processes your objectives target (analysing, evaluating, creating, collaborating)
- **Gather pedagogical feedback:** Ask learners about their learning process - “What helped you understand X?” rather than “Did you like the story?”
- **Iterate for learning outcomes:** Adjust based on educational effectiveness - if learners enjoyed the experience but didn't meet objectives, revise the pedagogical design

Choose a way for readers or youth workers to evaluate learning by linking objectives to story-based reflection, conceptual tasks, and real-world application (reflection questions, match with a lesson, create a map, plan a small action, or simple self-assessments)

4. Themes and Narrative Development by Age Group

▪ 16 to 20 years:

- Engaging themes: rebellion, justice, uncertain times, heroes
- Narrative approach: adventure, fantasy, narrative comics, emotional realism, choral narrative, podcasts, etc
- An example: stories based on the work of heroes such as Greta Thunberg (intersection of SDGs 13 and 16) or Alice Patexo (intersection of SDGs 13 and 15)

▪ 21 to 26 years:

- Engaging themes: work, environment, politics
- Narrative approach: adventure, fantasy, narrative comics, memoir, systemic narrative, critical dialogue, etc
- An example: stories based on the work of heroes such as Bob Geldof (intersection of SDGs 13 and 17) or Vandana Shiva (intersection of SDGs 13 and 2)

▪ Environments and modes of use:

- Classroom: shared reading, guided discussion
- Workshop: collaborative writing, performative storytelling
- Outdoor environment: experiential storytelling, moving oral narratives

5. Practical Activity Example: SDG Adventure Experience

1. The youth worker defines the learning objective and selects or creates a short adventure story linked to a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).
2. Participants become the heroes, facing challenges related to their SDG.
3. The story presents dilemmas with at least two possible choices.
4. Example challenges: deciding between economic growth or environmental protection, ensuring food security, or designing low-emission transport.
5. Participants make decisions and experience the consequences in the story.
6. Reflection prompts guide them: “Why did you choose this path?” “How might your decision affect others?”
7. Group discussions or journaling help participants explore alternative strategies.
8. The youth worker highlights real-world connections and broader concepts behind the story.
9. Participants consider how lessons learned could apply to their own communities or daily life.

6. Inclusiveness Considerations

- Provide explicit visual maps and easy-to-understand rules for game-based activities using simple language so all participants can follow activities without confusion
- Multiple participation modes: Offer different ways to engage in role-playing so participants can choose methods that match their comfort levels and communication preferences

7. Expected Outcomes/Conclusion

Upon completing this tutorial, participants (including young people and youth workers/educators) will be empowered to design and/or implement interactive stories grounded in adventure-based learning principles, such as the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC), the four learning styles, and Challenge by Choice. With knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals, critical thinking, media literacy, pro et contra activities, and Emotional Intelligence principles, they will create and/or implement experiences inspired by heroes such as Bob Geldof, Alice Pataxo, Greta Thunberg, and Vandana Shiva. Participants will develop empathy, activism, and creative problem-solving skills, enabling them to address climate change challenges in a holistic manner.

8. Recommended Tools/Resources

Audacityteam.org - Free software for Recording and Editing Audio:

Audacity, a free audio recording and editing software, can be utilized in interactive games to create immersive learning experiences that foster critical thinking and media literacy. It can be used to create a musical background for videos and games, and to create content such as podcasts, which will also allow them to explore the consequences of different choices.

9. Additional Resources:

- Inklewriter- a free tool designed to allow anyone to write and publish interactive stories.
- More on Climate change as SDG: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

10. Bibliography

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