



*Cultivating a dynamic, effective UDL field*

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## The Three Principles of UDL

Three primary principles, which are based on neuroscience research, guide UDL and provide the underlying framework for the Guidelines:



### Principle I: Provide Multiple Means of Representation (the “what” of learning)

#### I. Provide Multiple Means of Representation

##### Perception

##### Language, expressions, and symbols

##### Comprehension

Learners differ in the ways that they perceive and comprehend information that is presented to them. For example, those with sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness or deafness); learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia); language or cultural differences, and so forth may all require different ways of approaching content. Others may simply grasp information quicker or more efficiently through visual or auditory means rather than printed text. Also learning, and transfer of learning, occurs when multiple representations are used, because it allows students to make connections within, as well as between, concepts. In short, there is not one means of representation that will be optimal for all learners; providing options for representation is essential.

### Principle II: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression (the “how” of learning)

## **II. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression**

**Physical action**

**Expression and communication**

**Executive function**

Learners differ in the ways that they can navigate a learning environment and express what they know. For example, individuals with significant movement impairments (e.g., cerebral palsy), those who struggle with strategic and organizational abilities (executive function disorders), those who have language barriers, and so forth approach learning tasks very differently. Some may be able to express themselves well in written text but not speech, and vice versa. It should also be recognized that action and expression require a great deal of strategy, practice, and organization, and this is another area in which learners can differ. In reality, there is not one means of action and expression that will be optimal for all learners; providing options for action and expression is essential.

## **Principle III: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (the “why” of learning)**

### **III. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement**

**Recruiting interest**

**Sustaining effort and persistence**

**Self-regulation**

Affect represents a crucial element to learning, and learners differ markedly in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn. There are a variety of sources that can influence individual variation in affect including neurology, culture, personal relevance, subjectivity, and background knowledge, along with a variety of other factors presented in these guidelines. Some learners are highly engaged by spontaneity and novelty while others are disengaged, even frightened, by those aspects, preferring strict routine. Some learners might like to work alone, while others prefer to work with their peers. In reality, there is not one means of engagement that will be optimal for all learners in all contexts; providing multiple options for engagement is essential.

The pedagogical, neuroscientific, and practical underpinnings of UDL are also discussed at greater length in books such as *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age* by Rose & Meyer (ASCD, 2002), *The Universally Designed Classroom* (Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, Eds.; Harvard Education Press, 2005), and *A Practical Reader in Universal Design for Learning* (Rose & Meyer, Eds.; Harvard Education Press, 2006).