

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Basics

What is UDL?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a proactive framework that guides educators in the design of learning environments to accommodate students' varied learning needs. It offers multiple ways for students to engage with course material, understand information, and demonstrate knowledge and skills. By reducing barriers at the outset, UDL supports student success and reduces the need for individualized accommodations later.

Core Principles of UDL

Following the UDL framework means providing **multiple means of**:

- **Engagement:** Stimulate interest in learning by offering varied options for motivating learners to participate and to remain invested in the process.
- **Representation:** Provide information in different formats (text, audio, visuals) to support different learning needs.
- **Action & Expression:** Allow learners to demonstrate knowledge and skills in various ways.

Why UDL Matters

- Helps address different learning preferences and needs.
- Improves clarity, usability, and accessibility of course materials.
- Saves instructors time by reducing reactive ad hoc accommodations.
- Strengthens student engagement, persistence by offering meaningful choices.

Practical Tips for Educators

- Provide clear instructions and goals.
- Use captions, transcripts, and alternative text for graphics and media.
- Offer options for assignments (e.g., written, video, or presentation).

Resources

CAST (2024). [CAST UDL Guidelines v. 3.0](https://udlguidelines.cast.org). <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>

CAST (n.d.). [UDL on Campus: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education](http://udloncampus.cast.org). <http://udloncampus.cast.org>