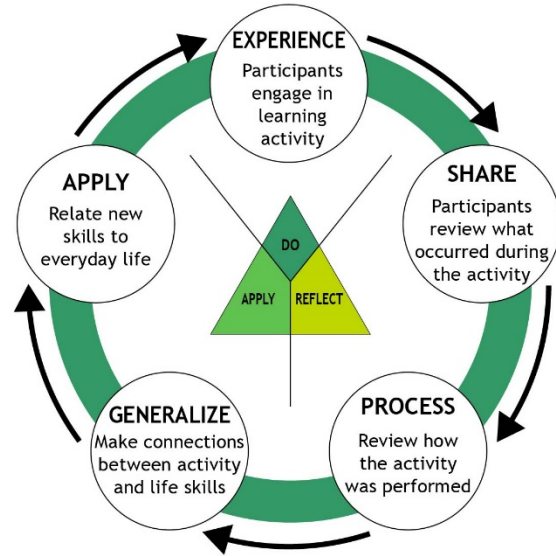




There are 5 steps divided across 3 essential parts of the Experiential Learning Model. Each step should naturally lead to the next, and the process can become somewhat circular, as it makes sense to practice newly learned skills in different contexts. You do not have to go through each step in every activity, but it is helpful to work through all 5 steps over the course of a unit or series of activities.

Planning/Preparation:

At first, it may take more time to plan an experiential learning opportunity than an activity focused on more traditional learning methods, but the long-term benefits make it worthwhile. Participants will learn faster and can help more with planning, and the experience is usually more enjoyable for youth and adults.



There are several considerations that volunteers should take into account when using the Experiential Learning Model:

- Be clear about the learning objective, or what the youth are meant to learn. Which life skill(s) are you trying to teach?
- Make sure the experience or activity lends itself to that life skill. Here are some examples of interactive activities that lend themselves to certain skills:

Activity	Skill
Play a game	Teamwork, risk taking
Experiments	Decision making, problem solving
Planning activities	Teamwork, planning, leadership
Giving presentations	Communicating
Interviewing others	Communicating, relating to others
Solving problems	Decision making, problem solving
Making models & products	Problem solving, leadership, accessing resources

- Consider reflection ahead of time. What developmentally appropriate questions will you ask in each step of the method?



Experiential Learning: Step-by-Step

Step One: DO—Experience

This is the DO section of the model. Youth will take part in an activity that allows them to explore and practice certain life skills without too much direction from adults or older youth. Volunteers should provide guidance but should not direct the learning too closely. The volunteer role is to be more of a coach than a boss: encouraging youth to explore, do the activity, and problem solve on their own rather than telling them what to do.

Step Two: REFLECT—Share

In the first part of applying and reflecting on the learning experience, participants should focus on the activity. Ask them to describe what happened and how they responded. The conversation should generate information for the next step, which is to process.

Example questions:

- How did you plan? Tell about most/least favorite parts.
- What did you learn? What surprised you? What was easiest?
- What did you do? Where did you go? What was your goal?



Step Three: REFLECT—Process

This step focuses on the process of the activity, highlighting how the experience was conducted or the activity was done. Youth identify the most important parts of the experience, which will lead to the next step, to generalize.

Example questions:

- What procedures or steps were used?
- What problems came up as you did the activity?
- How did you deal with these problems?
- Why is this skill important?



Step Four: APPLY—Generalize

In this step, the focus shifts from the activity to the life skill(s) that participants were practicing. The questions become more personal, exploring what the experience meant to the participant and what they learned. The discussion should set up information for the final step, applying the life skill to other situations.

Example questions:

- What did you learn about [life skill] from this activity?
- How does this relate to other things you have been learning?
- What are some similar experience you have had with [life skill]?

Step Five: APPLY

Finally, youth should apply what they have learned to their everyday lives. Discuss ways they could use this learning in other situations or change how they approach certain tasks in the future. The focus here should be on gaining knowledge and practicing skills rather than the subject matter of the activity.

Example questions:

- How does this activity relate to your everyday life?
- What have you learned about yourself? Others?
- How will you act differently as a result?

General Suggestions:

In working through the Experiential Learning Model, it is important to remember that debriefing and discussing the experience moves youth from simply doing an activity to learning through it. The model allows participants to integrate their learning. It provides closure. It is important to set aside plenty of time to reflect, ask the right questions, and listen carefully.

Some general suggestions when leading group discussion:

- Form pairs or groups of three youth to discuss outcomes. Then ask them to report back to larger group.
- Focus the group by asking the same question or finishing a statement (“I learned that...” or “I felt...”)
- Adjust questions based on responses to previous questions.
- Help participants build on their experiences. Find opportunities for them to practice new skills.
- Discussion may take a short period of time (5 minutes or less).



Adapted from research by Kolb, D. (1974) *Organizational Psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, MF: Prentice-Hall; and Pfeiffer, J. W., & Jones, J. E., Eds. (1985). *Reference guide to handbooks and annuals* (revised). San Diego: University Associates Publishers.

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