

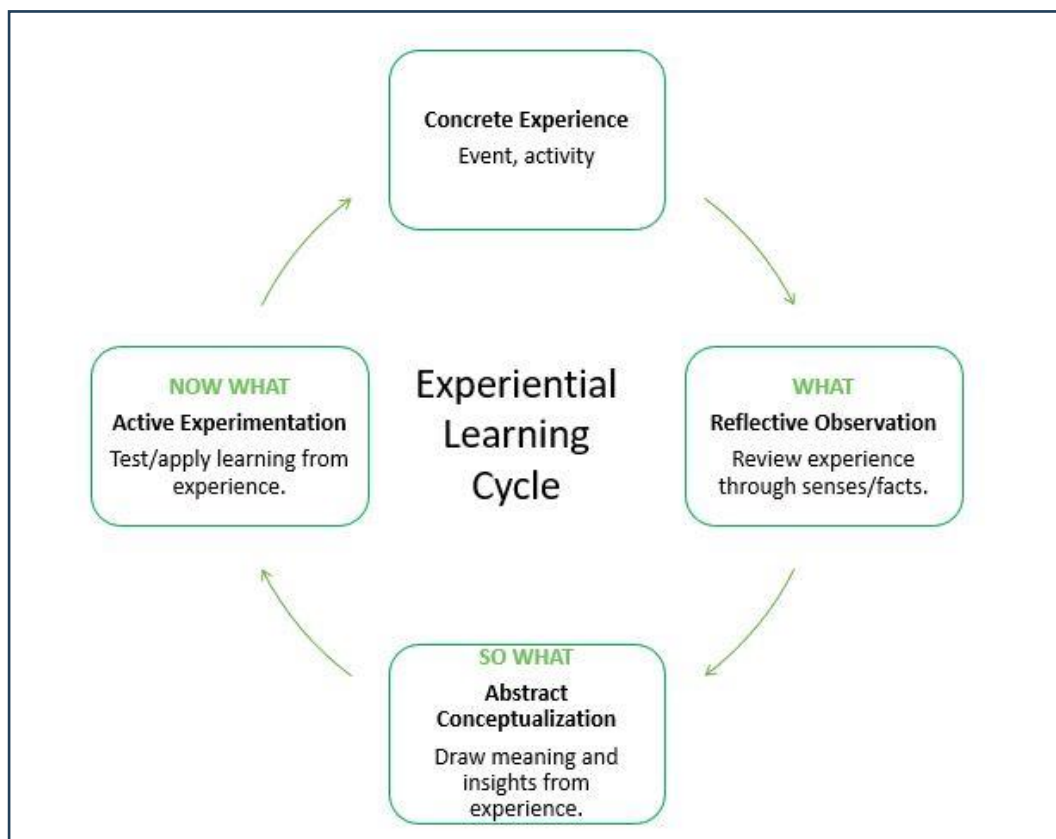
# Designing an Experiential Learning Session

*“We do not learn from experience.  
We learn from reflecting on experience.”  
John Dewey*

## What Is Experiential Learning?

Experiential learning is the process of gaining knowledge through personal, hands-on, or on-the-job experience. David Kolb is a psychologist who developed a theory of experiential learning that organizes the process, or cycle, of experiential learning into four stages.

Effective learning is seen when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: of (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then (4) used to test a hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.



Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

## Design Components of an Experiential Learning Session

Component	Purpose	Description
<b>Concrete Experience</b> <i>The doing stage</i>	Be engaged in an activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An activity that is structured to enable learners to become actively involved in "doing" something.</li> <li>Activities range from the more passive (e.g., lectures, film viewing) to the more active (e.g., role plays, simulation exercises, community visits).</li> </ul>
<b>Reflective Observation</b> <i>The processing stage: what?</i>	Describe observation (senses) and reactions (feelings); state facts (who, what, where, when)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners share individual experiences and their reactions to the experience.</li> <li>The trainer guides the processing of information through questions like: What happened? How do you feel about what happened?</li> </ul>
<b>Abstract Conceptualization</b> <i>The generalization stage: so what?</i>	Make sense of observation and reactions; surface meaning, significance, insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners determine how the patterns that evolved during the experience phase of the learning cycle relate to the experiences of everyday life.</li> <li>The trainer helps learners to step back from the immediate experience and draw conclusions through questions like: What did you learn from this experience? What does this mean to you?</li> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Active Experimentation</b> <i>The application stage: now what?</i>	Make connections from experience to further positive and productive actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the insights and conclusions gained from the previous steps, learners identify and share how they plan to use these new insights in their everyday life.</li> <li>The trainer helps learners develop plans for more effective performance and behavior in the future through questions like: How will you apply what you have learned to your work/life? What will you do differently?</li> </ul>

Adapted from: Gormly, W. J. & McCaffery, J.A. (1982). Design components of an experiential training session. Training Resource Group.

## Examples

Component	Example 1: Open Access Fishing Game	Example 2: Community Visit
<b>Concrete Experience</b> <i>The doing stage</i>	In this game, the facilitator puts candies on a table and tells participants to stand around the table. Their goal is to get as many candies as they can in 5 seconds.	Community leaders from a new Fish Forever (FF) site join a learning visit to an old FF site that has consistently been recognized among the top performing towns in the country for fisheries management.
<b>Reflective Observation</b> <i>The processing stage: what?</i>	The facilitator asks participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did all of you get food? How many of you did not have any food?</li> <li>• To those who got a lot of food, how did you feel? To those who got few, how did you feel? To those who did not get any, how did you feel?</li> </ul>	At the end of the day, participants share their experience by answering questions like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you remember most from today?</li> <li>• What inspired you from today's activities and interactions?</li> </ul>
<b>Abstract Conceptualization</b> <i>The generalization stage: so what?</i>	The facilitator asks participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is this experience similar to fishing?</li> </ul>	The facilitator conducts a Think-Pair-Share** activity using the following guide question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors enable effective fisheries management?</li> </ul>
<b>Active Experimentation</b> <i>The application stage: now what?</i>	The facilitator asks participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you explain the effects of open access fishing to others?*</li> </ul>	The group creates a 6-month action plan using a template and the following guide questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What fisheries management strategies and activities will you continue doing?</li> <li>• What will you change?</li> <li>• What will you stop or start doing?</li> </ul>
<p>*The Open Access Fishing Game (see Annex) is a knowledge-building game originally designed to demonstrate the concept of open access fishing to community educators. The game ends at the generalization stage of the experiential learning cycle through a synthesis led by the facilitator. When an activity like this is integrated into bigger learning sessions, the application stage can be delayed until after other related activities have been completed.</p> <p>**Think-Pair-Share is a collaborative learning strategy where participants (1) think individually about a topic or question, (2) pair with a partner to compare ideas, and (3) share the pair's insights with all participants. This strategy encourages a high degree of participation in discussions while also providing an opportunity for individual reflection.</p>		

## Enrich Your Knowledge

- Article: [Kolb's Learning Styles And Experiential Learning Cycle](#)
- Video: [This Is Experiential Learning](#)
- Video: [David Kolb's Experiential Learning](#)
- Lesson: [Drawing Out Ideas](#) from Introduction to Facilitation pp. 19 29.
- Job aid: [The Focused Conversation Method](#)

### Sources

Gormly, W. J. & McCaffery, J.A. (1982). *Design components of an experiential training session*. Training Resource Group.

McLeod, S. (2023, June 16). [Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning cycle](#). SimplyPsychology.

Training Industry. (n.d.). [Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle](#).



## Annex: Open Access Fishing Game

### Objective

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to explain how open access fishing depletes marine resources.

### Key Takeaway

Open access fishing is not sustainable. Fisheries management measures must be in place to ensure that there will be fish forever and for all.

### Participants

5 to 20 participants

### Duration

15 minutes

### Materials

Candies, table

### Procedure

1. Set-up: Put candies on a table.
2. Invite participants to gather around the table, and tell them that on your go signal, they will have five seconds to take as many candies from the table as they can for themselves and to take home to their families.
3. Give the go signal. After five seconds, tell participants to go back to their seats.
4. Debrief the activity using the following questions:
  - a. Did all of you get food? How many of you did not have any food?
  - b. To those who got a lot of food, how did you feel? To those who got only a few, how did you feel? To those who did not get any, how did you feel?
  - c. How is this activity similar to fishing?
  - d. What term describes the type of fishing where everyone can fish wherever, whenever, and in whatever way they want? (Answer: Open access fishing)
5. Synthesize using the following main points:
  - a. Open access fishing is when fishing is unrestricted and the right to catch fish is free and open to all.
  - b. If we continue to practice open access fishing and not manage our fisheries effectively, our marine resources will eventually be depleted.
  - c. In addition, open access fishing creates uneven distribution of marine resources where some acquire more, leaving others with less.