



# National Association of Field Training Officers Indiana Chapter

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## **The Adults “Need to Know”**

We all know adults learn differently than children, and we should keep in mind the elements that differ in the learning process between the two ends of the spectrum. One of the principles of adult learning refers to the adult’s “Need to Know”.

For adults to learn a topic and grasp its importance, they must understand WHY they need to know the subject before they will learn it. The adult learner needs to place the subject into a context that allows them to understand and retain the information. Once this is accomplished the learning process becomes much smoother.

Adults will spend considerable energies trying to understand the positive and negative benefits of the subject before investing time in the learning process. Often the energy put into discovering the reason why is greater than the act of learning in the first place.

Why is this important to the FTO? By understanding elements of the adult learning theory, the FTO can recognize performance errors caused by a resistance in the learning process. For example, a new recruit with little experience may not understand the importance of watching suspect’s hands during a field interview. Therefore it is important that the FTO not only explain the officer safety concepts to the new recruit, but utilize role playing or scenario training to provide the new recruit with the WHY.

If your new officer is struggling with a topic make sure you have explained the reasons he needs to understand the topic before expecting him to invest time and energy into the learning process.

The “Need to Know” is only one element of the adult learner and in future tips we will discuss other aspects that relate to the learning process.

*-Steven Kellams*