

# Universal Design for Better Living

## Tips for Using the Universal Design Teaching Guide



### Situation

Many studies have shown that most older adults want to stay in their own homes as long as possible, “aging in place,” yet few live in homes that were designed to accommodate their changing needs. The problem is especially challenging in rural counties where many homes were built before indoor plumbing was available.

Once rural electrification came to Iowa in the late 1940s and early 1950s, bathrooms could be installed. They were often tucked away under a stairs to the second floor, on an enclosed back porch, or in a converted pantry—spaces too small for easy access. Few older homes have no-step entrances. Steps are a nuisance when carrying groceries or moving furniture and a barrier for people with mobility limitations. Individuals can become prisoners in their own homes when steps prevent them from going outside to enjoy the yard or to take a trip to visit a friend.

### Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to show how the new concept of *universal design* is being incorporated into products and features for the home environment that can facilitate aging in place. It is important to understand that *universal design* is not just another name for design for people with disabilities. *Universal design* has “invisible features” that make homes appealing and convenient for all users, and also for people with disabilities.

This guide provides detailed instructions for teaching five different lessons on various aspects of universal design. The lessons include audience participation activities—using items from the gadget kits—along with PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and evaluation forms for both participants and instructors.

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University Extension

## Teaching Tips

Computer access is essential.

Adapt lessons to suit your needs.

Ask Questions.

Send Feedback.

Lessons at a glance:  
Lesson 1

You will need to have access to a computer to print visuals, participant handouts, and evaluation forms, as well as read background information to prepare for the lessons. These materials can be found on the Iowa State University Extension Web Site on Universal Design & Home Accessibility: [www.extension.iastate.edu/universaldesign](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/universaldesign)

Look for the section labeled: Resources from Iowa State University, then click on "Universal Design for Better Living" to find the materials for each lesson. Review other portions of the Web site to find additional resources and information on all aspects of universal design. The Web site will be updated as new information becomes available.

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You can present only one lesson, or plan an entire series of lessons, culminating in a community-wide event that features the universal design display trailers. Selected activities from a single lesson could also be used when a shorter meeting format is needed.

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If you have questions as you are preparing to teach a lesson, don't hesitate to call or e-mail:

Mary H. Yearns  
Phone: 515-294-8520  
E-mail: [yearns@iastate.edu](mailto:yearns@iastate.edu)

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Evaluation forms for both participants and instructors are included. Please offer your comments on how the lessons worked for you and suggestions you have for improvements.

Return forms to:

Mary H. Yearns  
62 LeBaron Hall  
Iowa State University  
Ames, IA 50011

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**Universal Design: Better Tools for Everyday Tasks**  
(32-47 minutes)

**Activity:** Compare products with traditional features vs. those with universal design features

**Handouts:**

"Universal Design: Better Tools for Everyday Tasks" (UDBL 1)

"Where to Get Gadgets and Gizmos" (UDBL 2)

**Set mini-goal:** Explore or decide whether a product with universal design features could make life easier.

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## Lesson 2

### The Easy-Visiting Home (37-52 minutes)

**Activity:** Could your best friend visit your home?

**PowerPoint presentation:** "The Easy-visiting Home" (UDBL.PP 1)

**Handouts:**

"The Welcoming Home" (Pm 1804)

"Where to Get Gadgets and Gizmos" (UDBL 2)

**Set mini-goal:** One thing I will do to make my home more visit-able.

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## Lesson 3

### The Essential Bathroom (42-52 minutes)

**Activity:** What is the minimum amount of space it takes to create a convenient bathroom?

**PowerPoint presentation:** "The Essential Bathroom" (UDBL.PP 2)

**Demonstration:** Gadgets to Make Your Bathroom More Convenient

**Handouts:**

"The Essential Bathroom" (UDBL 5)

"Where to Get Gadgets and Gizmos" (UDBL 2)

**Set mini-goal:** One thing I will do to make my bathroom more convenient.

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## Lesson 4

### Update Your Home for a Lifetime of Living (37-47 minutes)

**Activity:** What was the most useless birthday gift you ever received?

**PowerPoint presentation:** "Update Your Home for a Lifetime of Living" (UDBL.PP 3)

**Handouts:**

"Update Your Home for a Lifetime of Living" (Pm 1824)

"Where to Get Gadgets and Gizmos" (UDBL 2)

**Set mini-goal:** One thing I will do to update my home.

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## Lesson 5

### Planning an Educational Event on Universal Design in your Community

**Activity:** Using the Universal Design Display Trailers

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