

— HOW TO CREATE — A GREAT eLEARNING COURSE



WHAT CONSTITUTES A GREAT ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE ?

This is probably the number one question Thought Industries' instructional designers receive each day. While each eLearning business differs, there are definitely some best practices for teaching online and reaching adult learners (andragogy) that we are happy to share with you.

THE QUICK ANSWER?

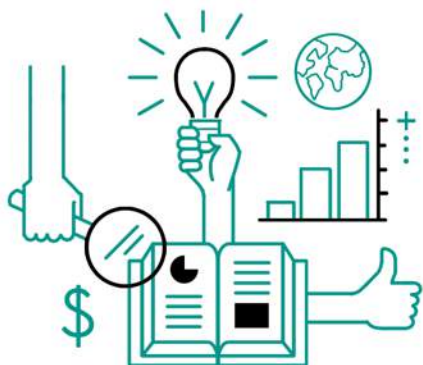
Design your learning experience for your learners!

It sounds simple, right? But oftentimes, there is a lot to think about. Keeping in mind the specifics of how learners will use this experience, what they really need to learn, how they like to be taught, and what they may already know will help you to make the best instructional design decisions.

You began this process when you completed **Thought Industries' Learning Experience Questionnaire**, which attempted to get to the heart of why your learners have selected you and what they hope you will provide. Beyond that first line of questioning, here are a few more questions for you to ponder as you are developing your learning experience.

#1 Question:

Is this an interesting and engaging learning experience?



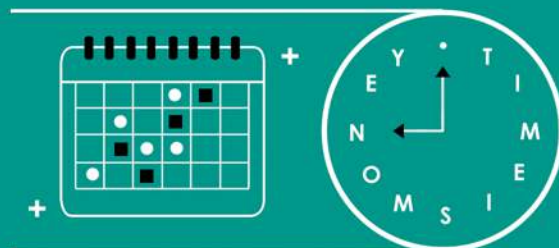
Best practice:

Facts are widely available, but interesting, engaging learning experiences are not. Your learners will likely come back to you if you can provide them with this type of learning experience! Think about your topic as a story. Take the bird's eye view of the topics your learners need to understand, then see how the topics interrelate. Are there aspects that learners will need to know first, next and last? Is there a story or interesting lens through which these topics could relate? Is the content interesting? If not, how could you make it more interesting?

Whenever possible, move in the direction of teaching rather than telling; let learners make discoveries and interact with your content to acquire knowledge. You may have a lot of content, but is it the content your learner wants and needs? Is the content engaging? You will want your content to be succinct and on point. Tap into the Resources section of the Thought Industries platform to provide learners with deeper dive content like research articles, case studies or reading lists. You can use this space within your instance to create opportunities for “a-ha” moments.

#2 Question:

Does the length of the learning experience meet the needs of busy adult learners?



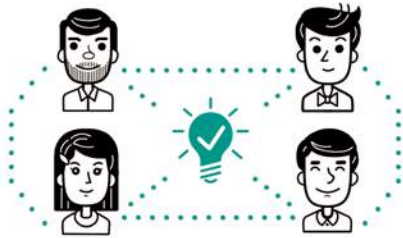
Best practice:

Because adults are often juggling many conflicting responsibilities, chunking your content into 30-60 minute groupings will give adults a chance to both start and finish a Lesson. Think about when your learners have time to learn—train commutes, post-tuck-in time, lunch breaks, etc. Keeping the time commitment for each Section relatively similar throughout your learning experience (try not to exceed 2 hours) will be appreciated by your learner. They will come to know how and when they can fit this learning into their busy lives.

So, how long should the entire learning generally, adults want to be able to start, engage and complete a learning experience within a “reasonable timeframe.” While it depends on what you are trying to teach, a general rule is that if you find yourself with more than 6-8 Sections, you probably have enough content to create an additional learning experience. *Remember to factor in Introduction and Conclusion/Wrap-Up sections in your 6-8 count.

#3 Question:

Does the learner have a chance to engage with the content in a meaningful way?



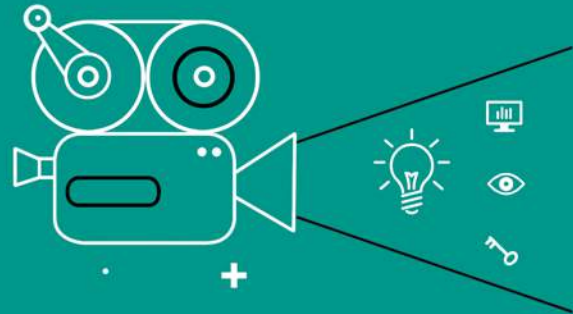
Best practice:

Adult learners crave the opportunity to learn, practice, possibly fail, and then try again. Adults understand that learning is an iterative process. Ask, what do my learners want? They seek to expand their already robust knowledge base by engaging with content that has personal and/or professional meaning to them and is directly applicable to their lives. Ask them to apply the principles you are teaching to their own situations. Let them test out concepts and approaches through real-world scenarios and case studies. Give them opportunities to learn from their peers and sort out their understanding in a non-threatening way.

Why non-threatening? First, a quick word about testing: In case you are one of the rare adults who loves to be tested a lot, it's good to know that most adults really don't enjoy lots of quizzes and tests when trying to learn something new. That is, unless by taking a quiz or test, they can test out of something and save themselves time and money. However, sometimes you may feel it is necessary to test your learners in a quantitative way. In that case, be sure to provide rejoinders so your learners can understand why their answers were correct or incorrect.

#4 Question:

Does my learning experience need to feature video content?



Best practice:

No. And also, yes. There are many subjects you could successfully teach adults without the use of video. However, due to the widely available nature of visual stimuli in our culture, there are adults who think they need video to learn. Final answer: If you have the budget to shoot video, then do it. Keep run times for shorter, introductory videos between 3 and 5 minutes, and longer, instructional videos between 10 and 12 minutes. Select on-camera personalities who are comfortable on camera, friendly, knowledgeable and well-rehearsed. Provide up to $\frac{2}{3}$ B-roll clips to help learners better understand the content. Alternately, consider whiteboard animation or visually rich slides with audio narration. In addition, remember to tap into the interactive tools in the Thought Industries platform — like the Interactive Hotspots, Hot Zones, List-Roll or Workbooks — to increase engagement and appeal directly to your visual learners.

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