MOVING TO ELEARNING

283 Tips on Shifting Content and Experiences

THE ELEARNING GUILD

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Ninety-Four Tips on What's Critical When Preparing to Develop eLearning from Face-to-Face Content

I've found that eLearning content needs to be chunked up into smaller sections. eLearning needs to move along faster than classroom learning.

Michelle Pellersels, PPGNHI

Planning for the gaps. In instructor-led training (ILT) situations, it is easy for the subject matter expert or presenter to answer an on-the-spot question that the material doesn't cover. eLearning content needs to prepare for those questions and have suitable content or resources available to address those situations.

Ben Roberts, Global Excel Management

Know your audience. Seems like a no-brainer, but: We often assume everyone can navigate a basic webpage, so an eLearning module should be pretty intuitive, right? Not always the case. What is intuitive for some groups of learners will leave others frustrated trying to figure out how to advance slides or get back to that main menu. Make sure you give your learners the support they need to navigate your course successfully.

Maggie Baker, Trans-Matic Mfg.

Not all classroom content directly translates into eLearning. You need to ask yourself whether it makes sense in the context of your eLearning, and whether it adds up to the story that you are creating.

Denice De Carlo, PwC

Make sure you fill in the gaps from what was spoken in class to what someone might read or say in the web-based training. Too often, I see people try to just dump their classroom presentation into an "eLearning" and not add in speakers' notes and content, or stories from the classroom are missed.

Andrew Marsula, UPMC

Pick only what is very important. Nobody wants to make a thousand-page-long online course.

Francisco Azevedo, Escola Nacional de Seguros

Remember to provide the proper level of context, without inundating the learner with so much background info that they become overwhelmed.

Darrell Walker, VMware

Evaluate how much learning content is on the slides and notes and how much is still in the facilitator's head.

Kelly Prince, Relias

Pay attention to the content itself, not how the content was presented in the classroom.

Mary Masi, Palm Beach State College

Make sure you have access to the subject matter expert who presented or knows the content. You will have questions.

Denise Wilson, CCC Information Services

I find it crucial to clean up the content (classroom training can be full of additional information that can be covered in a separate online course) and to break down the content in a new way so it makes sense to online learners.

Iris Peceny, UTC

Determine what requires hands-on classroom learning and what is "content" knowledge that can be converted to an online course. Not everything in a classroom learning experience can be done online.

Michael Theimer, USA Shooting

Get your subject matter experts (SMEs) to help you determine the most important thing to include from each topic. eLearning tends to be a shorter version of the instructor-led on-site training, so you need to pick and choose what you include. Your SMEs are vital during this part of the process.

Donna Wyvill, Borderless Learning

Think visually first. Don't think words first. Try to think in small chunks of the minimal information necessary. Don't put up a deck of slides with bullets on them. Think: "Would I enjoy taking this course?" If not, re-create it.

Beth McGoldrick, RiverSource Insurance

Use well-developed, real-world examples and interactions.

Jessica Schemrich, Western Reserve Hospital

Make sure you have the proper programs to handle eLearning—for example, a robust LMS that is accessible to all without being blocked by IT.

Rachael Assignon, Christian Care Ministry

Remember that interacting and doing are the pathways to learning. Just because you are not physically in the same space (or time, if the course is asynchronous), that doesn't mean you are limited to just pushing content to learners. Get to know the options available to you in the tools you will be using. Don't be afraid to experiment and try new things. What works for one course or audience may not work for another. Don't use all of the bells and whistles just because they are available, but have many tools in your toolbox so you can pull out the right one for the right context.

Valary Oleinik, Weil

When we transfer classroom training to eLearning, we start with all the content. We let the SME tell us everything they want to explain while letting them know that we have to prioritize what content goes in the course. It is critical that we pull out the main points and do not cover more than we can expect the learner to get out of the course.

Mira Mendlovitz, Medline Industries

Timing is still the most critical element. I need to estimate how much time each module will require, and to understand how much time the slowest learners will require to advance through the modules. Providing accurate estimates is important for businesses to budget time for learners to take away from work and make realistic expectations for each learner. I try to place a time estimate on each element that respects the user's time and allows for each user to plan their learning schedule accurately.

Anne McElvain-Volm, Becton, Dickinson and Company

Take into consideration the overall user experience. When the content is designed for the classroom, there is consideration for what these learners will be doing while participating. The same needs to be used for eLearning—how are the learners or users going to experience this training?

Eric Rowland, MAXIMUS

Revise materials according to input, questions, and feedback from the learners during classroom experience.

Susan Hickert, CardinalCommerce

eLearning should be short, to-the-point, well organized—same as an in-class course.

Randy Meredith, Huntington Bank

Add engagement. It's tempting to take your classroom content and just move it over to eLearning with no adjustments. I've found that thinking about how to give the learner opportunities to engage with the information, instead of just reading it, has supported our success with eLearning.

Kelli MacIver, Cydcor

I think the first thing to do is a "what not to do." It is important to not think of online classroom translation as simply uploading a 60- to 90-minute lecture. Students just will not listen. The other thing is that PowerPoints without notes and interaction beyond clicking will not be effectively utilized. That said, your voice and images are important and are effective when they are chunked into smaller pieces with interactivity interspersed.

Tess Crossen, instructional designer

"Capture" the missing content. One of the great benefits of classroom training is that you have a facilitator or instructor who can, and most often does, fill in the gaps that are simply not in the training. You do not have this luxury in eLearning. Therefore, it is vital that you take that "undocumented" knowledge that the facilitator fills in and put that in your training. You can link to reference material. You can add content and context. You can even record the facilitator. Just make sure you get the information put into your training.

Paul Blount, Amazon

Provide clarity in assignments. As there is no verbal interaction if students have questions after reading the description, the assignment descriptions should be very clear and set clear expectations.

Suchitra Veera, Snayu

Revisit the objectives and question everything. Just because it's been taught that way doesn't mean it should continue to be taught that way. Migrating content from face-to-face to eLearning is a good time to sit down and reevaluate the course. If you don't do this out front, content-objective mismatches will likely be discovered later in the development process, causing tons of rework.

Madelaine Whalen, Great Dane

Consider how best to break the material into manageable chunks. What could have been one or two hours when sitting in a classroom is way too long when staring at an eLearning screen.

Laurie Cohen, ACLC

Remember that each learning activity must hold value and needs to be placed in the right context. Why does this learning activity need to be here? What will the learner achieve by accessing and engaging with this activity? There is no one in the room to position the learning, so each activity must work hard.

Debbie Lawley, WillowDNA

Begin with the outcomes or objectives for the education or training, and then design backward and see how your current content fits. Then begin looking at activities and assessments to see what might need to be modified. From there, you can modify and write the pieces of content that are missing.

Stevie Rocco, Penn State

Having all the materials used in the class in an electronic version is key. I start by grabbing information from the PowerPoint, participant workbook, and leader's guide and putting it all together on a slide or two so I can see what I have. From there, I can start removing things that are duplicated and combine them to get a good overall picture of the content.

Kristen Nichols, TJX

Know the audience and know how the eLearning will be accessed. Most importantly, though, just like good classroom instruction, you have to know the learning goal of the lesson and keep that at the forefront while designing. If you don't have a road map, how do you know where you're going?

Katrina Fogelson, Arizona State University

Our first step was to go and meet with those who gave the instructor-led sessions and ask them what were the most important points that learners should take from their instruction. This helped us correctly focus the idea and knowledge straight to the learner without sacrificing the expected benchmark to be met.

Don Jones, Daktronics

The outline—what is my desired goal for the end user? What do they need to walk away with?—is critical to be able to effectively learn or perhaps change a behavior. I need to know who my audience is and what topics to give them to bring about the desired objective.

Nancy Barfknecht, freelance contractor

Make certain that your instructional course objectives match your instruction and assessments. Align!

Vickie Derrick, University of North Georgia

Just as in the classroom, attract the learners' attention first. Too many courses, both ILT and eLearning, begin with a table of contents. Think instead of a book cover, which uses imagery, story, and emotions to draw readers in.

Eric Kammerer, Domino's

Redesign the flow and interaction based on the learner's move from group interaction and dialogue to a self-paced and solitary learning experience. What is the objective of the training, what content needs to be covered, and how can I make each section useful and engaging?

David Neun, SECU of Maryland

Give your users a chance to ask questions somewhere in your course. This is what users miss most when making the transition.

Christy Hollingshead, Heap

In the classroom, the instructor holds the students' attention and can keep students focused even if the materials are very basic. With eLearning, you don't have that luxury—you have to hold students' attention just with the materials. Keep things moving, keep the visuals changing, and don't leave students staring at the same thing for too long, because they'll just disconnect.

Jon Regan, Guidewire Software

Does the content itself adapt well to the online environment? That is, can the learner gain the same information or have the same experience whether the information is delivered face-to-face or online? If a course is more hands-on (e.g., CPR, engine repair, piloting a plane), then think about what parts of the course can be made available online and what parts really need to continue to be made available in person.

Randall Ulrich, Southern Nevada Health District

Have clear-cut learning outcomes from the course to the assignment level. This, to me, is the most important thing for a strong class.

Kathryn McCormick, University of Central Missouri

In a class, the instructor can react to the nuances of how learners react and can change it up on the fly as needed: asking more questions, prompting and guiding discussion, and leveraging contributions from the learners. It's very difficult to accommodate many challenges with online learning, so it's best to make it as active as possible, putting new information and learned skills to work ASAP by using challenging activities (more than just recall) and by leveraging case studies and scenarios that require critical thinking and creative solutions.

Terry Follmer, Second Opinion Learning

Personality. When you are in a classroom setting, your personality as a facilitator or trainer comes through. It's your human characteristics that are sometimes missing from eLearning. Intentionally adding a conversational voice and flow makes your course more human-to-human.

Ruth Fidino, Bright Horizons Family Solutions

I find clearly understanding the learning outcomes to be of critical importance when you're preparing to develop eLearning based on content from a face-to-face classroom experience.

Freddy Angel, Champlain College

I find learning objectives to be critical. They are the backbone of the course and will help you recognize the "must know" versus the "good to know." You can't cram a textbook onto a computer screen, so you must be choosy when deciding what to present.

Karen Sparks, Alliance Safety Council

Take apart a classroom experience, down to the bare bones, and rebuild it for a new learning experience. Treat each as a new experience rather than a rewriting of the original.

Rebecca Tanguay, Westat

Create a detailed outline (we call it a blueprint) identifying how each chunk of content will be presented online: video, HTML page, question, quiz, exercise, etc.

Candace Marles, SAS

The end goal of eLearning content development is to reach the target audience. It must meet the needs of the target audience. Solving this problem is critical in order to generate clear, concise, and smart objectives for the course.

Henry Ogundolire, TechLearning Studio

Face-to-face is a social and synchronous experience, while eLearning allows for the added dimensions of asynchronous activity and personalized learning. Determine how this can be leveraged to meet your needs in a blended or 100 percent digital setting.

Brenda Braitling, Pondering Press

If you're trying to convert your course straight into the LMS, it won't work. Plan out the structure of your course on paper or in a planning sheet before you even touch an LMS.

Monica Garcia, 81 Training Support Squadron

Set expectations. Focus on what you want the learners to do—the behavior change or the actions on the job that your stakeholders want to happen. They will tell you "they need to know all this stuff" or "we have to go over all this stuff," but that's not effective learning. Learners need to have guided practice and independent practice, and you should always focus on replicating as much as possible the actual task they are expected to learn.

Janet Ann, Alaska Airlines

Analyze the content to find the critical pieces of information that must be included in the eLearning and determine which content is not needed. This is critical because in the classroom you can see when you have a captive audience and adjust. With eLearning, you need to make sure the content is not long-winded and will keep your audience engaged with short chunks of information or scenarios that require user interactivity.

Russell Amundsen, JPMorgan Chase

I like to sit in an instructor-led session to determine what assumptions the instructor may have as to the knowledge of the learner entering the session, and if the instructor provides instruction beyond the scope of the content. In essence, a personal critical review in an attempt to prepare a solid eLearning offering.

Paul Lush, Zebra Stripes

The face-to-face classroom experience allows teachers to have instant feedback even if no one speaks. You can see faces, attitudes, and postures and instantly know if something's off. With time, you will sharpen your instincts and learn to understand eLearning's unspoken feedbacks. In the meantime, remember your course objectives and create engaging and appropriate content.

Ariana López Di Rocco, EdCatedra

Remove extraneous content.

Kenneth McDonough, BMPC

It's very important to keep the language of the classroom style and not convert it to formal written text. The user needs to feel like you are talking to them, like in the classroom. The language should be simple, to-the-point, friendly, and motivating.

Polona Frumen, Interact Programme

Adapting activities from the classroom for online often means creating entirely new activities to keep the course engaging and effective.

Jenna Gallagher, EnerSys

Engagement is critical. Learners have to feel like they're in control of their own learning experience—giving them exactly what they need and providing additional information if they would like to dig deeper.

Michael Whatley, Cox Automotive

When moving content from a face-to-face experience to one that is housed in an eLearning platform, I believe it is critical to scope and sequence out the content while thinking about how the learner will respond to and maneuver through the content.

Zoa Bonofiglio, Auto-Owners Insurance

I always revisit the business goal, the learner persona, the learner's goal, and the expected behavioral outcomes of the course before jumping in to create the eLearning version of the same course. While it seems like I'm needlessly starting from scratch, I often find that this is an excellent opportunity to confirm that we're doing the right project before we dive in.

Megan Torrance, TorranceLearning

Make it engaging. No one wants to sit through a bunch of PowerPoints you created. Have them read articles, and incorporate multimedia, real-life scenarios, and short games. Or have them create multimedia projects, scenarios, or short games. This will make your course fun and increase retention.

Kendra Barker, University of Missouri–Kansas City

Know the goal of the course and keep it at the forefront. What is critical for learner success? You cannot take an eight-hour classroom experience and make it an eight-hour eLearning. What can stay? What can go? What can you adjust to provide interaction with the material? Repeat your defined mantra often: In the end, what do I want my learner to know and do at the end of this?

Jean Marrapodi, Illumina Interactive

Get out of the realm of words and into the world of pictures. Think of eLearning as your own little movie. You want to make it engaging and interesting to watch. Wherever you can, eliminate words from the screen and use pictures and animations instead.

Marie DesJardin, Verint Systems

Create an outline of the course flow. Each bullet point is an objective. Create a module around that one objective, pulling together content, visual aids, questions, and audio. Then move to the next.

Mabry Escobedo, Waste Management

You must extend the learning beyond the "one and done," which is unlikely to be remembered. I like to build in pre- and post-work around the eLearning to pique their interest, prime their minds, and keep the content in front of them (for repetition and spacing).

Jane Martel, Arapahoe Libraries

Be sure you completely understand the true learning outcomes desired and objective(s) to achieve. This is the foundation for everything you will design and develop.

Scott Matthews, Learning Evolution

Make sure you have a subject matter expert available. Sometimes the person who designs the eLearning is not the one teaching it. So you need an SME on hand to help you determine what you need to include in the class and where learners have issues in class that you can address via eLearning.

Nancy Miranda, MGCS

You cannot just dump content from one experience to another. You have to rework the content to the best fit for the eLearning environment, which may include: an LMS and its many idiosyncrasies; a redesign of content that takes advantage of online tools and resources; and a consideration of how people learn, with emphasis on instructional methods rather than on instructional media that merely carry the methods.

Don Shannon, self-employed/contract

Your learners will likely be learning in isolation (relative to a classroom situation), and you won't be there to respond to confused looks or ad hoc questions. Before putting pen to paper, put yourself in your learners' shoes. Anticipate what their needs are likely to be and how they'd like to receive messages you're hoping to impart. For example, an interactive graph might be more fun and memorable than a simple list of numbers.

Pete Brown, Cooee Productions

When content is delivered in the classroom, it is the instructor who brings the information to life. Instructors are often very animated, interacting with and engaging their audience. There is usually no way to re-create the exact experience in an eLearning module. But, if you are very thoughtful, you can create a different experience that will still engage the audience. Engagement activities are crucial; it's just not as easy as putting the material that was in the classroom straight into a module and thinking you will get the same experience. Take your time and think of different activities that will engage your audience the same way the instructor did in the classroom.

Anne Paine, American AVK

I need to understand the context in which the content will be used. Is this a call center environment where employees will access content at their desks? Or is this a retail store where associates have just one training computer in the back room and limited time to access it? eLearning must be designed to match its context. Therefore, the content must evolve from the classroom to match. Rather than replicate it exactly, I try to use a variety of digital content options, including eLearning, job aids, etc., to help the employee do what they need to do.

JD Dillon, Axonify

The script is critical. Trainers are often so good at what they do that much of their management of the learning process can be intrinsic—what they say in the room, how they read learners' reactions, when they adapt their approach based on what's in front of them. Capturing that is essential to the ultimate quality of any digital learning product. Walking through a curriculum or workshop agenda with a trainer who would deliver it face-to-face is key to identifying potential interactivity points and crafting scenarios that are realistic for the learner's experience, things you might not necessarily extrapolate from what's on paper.

Tamara Neff, ETR

For the most part, you won't be there to "deliver" the content—and to adapt, change, or add nuance to the content based on immediate reactions of students in the face-to-face classroom setting. So content must become secondary to process: having your students do things that require them to access, chew on, apply, puzzle over, argue over, and collaborate on the content in order to make, solve, and present. Rethink what you want the learners to be able to demonstrate after they complete each lesson. What types of problems should they be able to solve, or what tasks should they be able to perform? Then teach backward from that end point, providing students with lots of opportunity for practice and immediate feedback.

Troy Challenger, California State University–Monterey Bay

Engagement is key! When learners have compliance training that needs to be completed annually, it can be a challenge to keep them engaged online. In person, you can make eye contact and switch up the approach to boost engagement. Online is very different, and ensuring you create a course with need-to-know information that is evidence-based and relevant to their everyday work is critical.

Trina Mackay, Ontario Retirement Communities Association

It is critical not to limit your thinking to what can be delivered via the classroom. Online interactions are not limited by physical space, and with a creative mindset, you can present content in a variety of ways as well as check for retention in a number of ways.

Jeff McLanahan, Service Experts

A storyboard really helps. Sometimes I have a difficult time getting SMEs to review a written storyboard; they seem to like a visual one. But for your visualization, creating a storyboard where you have everything already laid out before development is a helpful tool.

Tina Moreno, City of Phoenix

Remember that learners are not there with you, so body language and voice aren't there to bolster the learning. Words and graphics must replace the face-to-face interaction.

Kevin Jacobs, Geisinger

Cut, cut, cut! You can pack a lot more content into a classroom experience than an eLearning experience before learners get overloaded.

Allison Goldthorpe, Goldthorpe Learning Solutions

Didactic courses tend to add a lot of "nice to know" information. Getting down to the "need to know" from your SME is extremely important. This takes time and patience when working with SMEs because they may think it is all "need to know" information!

Darcy Richardson, Mayo Clinic

The part of face-to-face learning that is hardest to simulate online is the sense of common purpose driven by a group engaged in meaningful social activities. Online communities (such as games and their guilds) have many ways to achieve this, and teachers should be seeking these out and adapting them.

Benjamin Balak, Rollins College

You really have to know all you can about the target audience, since you won't have the chance to learn about them that you would in the classroom.

Patricia Myers, Oak Grove Technologies

Write your material as though you're preparing someone else to teach your class. It's surprising how much information we hold in our heads and never think to put down on our slides or in our notes.

Adam Judge, de Beaumont Foundation

Feedback and remedial content are not always present or explicit. In face-to-face learning, such content is the domain of the educator, usually not available in the presentation materials. This content needs to be made explicit for inclusion in any eLearning endeavor or online interaction.

Marc LaTourette, LaTourette Instructional

Understand the limitations of the organization's learning management system (LMS), and build content that the LMS can support.

Kiesha Byers, Healthcare Pathways

It is critical to meet with SMEs or stakeholders early on to gather information and establish the scope of the project, determine the target audience, and start to think about a realistic deadline. People without eLearning authoring experience often have no idea how long it takes to create quality programs. Depending on how complex the topic or project is, it takes much longer than the week or two that you might need to develop a classroom course. Even if they give me a PowerPoint presentation for "seed material," that is just the beginning and there is no way to convert instructor-led slides into eLearning slides with the touch of a button. Importing those base slides may be the first step, or you may not be able to use them at all and have to build everything from scratch. I like to have the SME provide me with the slides and speaker's notes, and then present the class to me while I make additional notes and ask questions for clarification. This helps me understand those spoken concepts and examples that we will need to bring into the module. I ask: Are there related policies, procedures, references, or handouts that we might consider attaching to this eLearning? Are there logos or colors associated with the class? Will it have audio? I always ask what the learner should be able to do after completing this learning, in order to shape the objectives and determine what information the learner needs to have and what they may already know. I share some information with SMEs about how eLearning is different and let them know (in a gentle or subtle way) that I may change things so that we have the best chance of achieving the objectives, but that I will share the work in progress and prior to release to make sure it meets their needs and expectations.

Rhonda Hansen, Lee Health

It is essential to build in a lot of checks for understanding and interactivity. During face-to-face instruction, you are able to get a read on level of understanding and engagement. It's very easy for people to tune out during eLearning while they attempt to "multitask." So requiring frequent interaction helps prevent this from happening.

Becky Shiring, Squirrels

Keep your content short, snappy, and interesting. It is very easy for online learners to get distracted and lose their motivation.

Ryan McInnes, The Learning Rooms

It is critical to separate the nice-to-know information from the need-to-know. By having a clear vision of who your audience is (experience, existing knowledge, use of technology, etc.) and solid learning objectives, you can focus the content.

Kristy Macintosh, OMAFRA

Learner analysis is critical. Who are they? What do they need? How will they use this learning?

Andrew Greene, New York University

As much as you can, try to get the classroom model out of your head. Brainstorm with your team about innovative ways you can deliver the material, possibly very differently than the classroom version—as long as they are better, not worse, ways for people to learn. Try to draw from examples you've seen and dream big. Then come back down to earth and choose things that are within your realm of possibilities. But don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. You may have job aids that you distributed print versions of in your class. If appropriate, convert the MS Word files to PDFs that learners can download.

David Perry, Ford Motor Company

One critical thing is to answer this question: What do you want the learner to do differently after taking this course? What do they need to take away? Then, how can you create something with eLearning that allows for that, considering your specific context and the range of resources and tools you have at hand?

MaryBeth Faccioli, Learning Alchemy

eLearning is a different medium than a face-to-face classroom—a medium that people have been working in for a couple of decades now. Look at what other people have found effective when moving from face-to-face to eLearning, see what the research says makes successful eLearning, and apply that when developing your eLearning. Stand on the shoulders of giants.

Kevin Gumienny, Microassist

Break the learning objectives down into smaller chunks or learning modules. Do not try to mirror the classroom content and timing. Breaking the content down into small chunks or modules allows the learner to maximize the benefits of eLearning. The learner can choose how many modules to complete based on available time. The learner can easily revisit and target specific skills and concepts where additional review may be needed during the program—or months or years later.

Joe Ilvento, Commvault

If you can, talk to someone who has delivered the classroom content and ask what areas of the information they typically saw people struggle with. Those insights can help you know when to invest the time to build out a section of your eLearning with additional information or resources to help those who are struggling.

Bianca Woods, The eLearning Guild

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Ninety-Seven Tips on Adapting Classroom Content and Experience

Focus on learner engagement, as that's one element that often gets lost when transitioning from face-to-face to online.

Jackie Bruso, Regent University

Trust your presenter notes. If your ILT content had support notes for the presenter, then they are worth saying and often worth expanding on for your eLearning content.

Ben Roberts, Global Excel Management

Think outside the box. Sometimes that killer activity you run in class can be modified to be an interactive activity. Make sure your interactions are mindful. Don't add interactivity and flashy games just to add them—make sure they have a point, just like in your classroom. Look to eLearning sites to get ideas of how you can have your learners apply their content or problem-solve to really solidify learning objectives.

Maggie Baker, Trans-Matic Mfg.

One of the best ways to make content memorable is through stories. Bear in mind that some stories lend themselves to eLearning better than others. Sometimes you will have to reimagine the whole training session and think up a new story for the same content. The great thing about creating stories with eLearning tools is that there are way more possibilities to convey ideas visually.

Denice De Carlo, PwC

Be sure to introduce prerequisite concepts first, building toward more complex concepts. Face-to-face may lend itself to "coming back to that later"; eLearning is better when modular and progressive.

Mary Masi, Palm Beach State College

Use the online medium for what it's good for: allowing choice. I design my content with opportunities to read, watch, and do. (Articles, eTextbooks, and slide decks to read; homegrown and YouTube videos to watch; activities like interactive objects, assignments, discussions, wikis, projects, and group tasks to apply the knowledge and skills.) Not every student will absorb the reading, but they can watch the videos—and vice versa. Allowing choice is more appealing to students than one-size-fits-all models they often get in face-to-face classrooms.

JoAnn Roe, Plano ISD eSchool

Do not assume classroom content is transferable to eLearning. Often, facilitators create a dynamic learning environment with the things they say in the classroom. However, rarely are these discussions and techniques documented. The transition to eLearning requires capturing the classroom discussion dynamics to build engagement and relevance to the online learner.

Sean Colfer, Point Loma Nazarene University

A classroom session is normally hours of lecture time. Sometimes professors record their one- to two-hour lecture as a video and post it to their online course; that is not a good practice. Videos should be cut into shorter versions that will allow students to review and focus on certain topics one at a time.

Yi Zhang, St. John's University

Probably the most challenging thing is thinking about interactivity. You may have already identified some type of in-class activity that you might consider adapting. That can often be impossible. Role-play, however, is easily adapted, and there are lots of great role-play characters already built in to programs like Articulate.

Sally Breaux, INfraSTRUCTION

Look at what is effective about the in-person content and what falls flat. Perform a new analysis and identify new learning strategies to support your objectives. Online learners aren't passive receivers of information. Have fun with a new mode of interactivity, and engage your learners with a tailored learning experience! Brainstorm new ways to showcase your learning content.

Kelly Prince, Relias

I always try to remember what it was like going to a knitting class versus a YouTube video on how to do a particular stitch. You need to remember that information is consumed differently in a class (interaction with a human and real-world activities) than in eLearning. You will need to make design decisions about what to leave out (just as important) and how to present and practice what you include. The chunks are a lot smaller.

Denise Wilson, CCC Information Services

Think minimum necessary. In a classroom, we might build in more history and concepts. But make the eLearning course more experiential with activities that engage the learner—role-plays, quizzes, etc.—to get them to think about how to engage with and use the content.

Beth McGoldrick, RiverSource Insurance

Online learners have limited attention spans when it comes to staring at a computer, so I like to break content into chunks and provide short videos or articles and activities (maximum 20 minutes). They may have to do several of them to cover the content, but when it is chunked, it seems less overwhelming— especially for those who have time-management issues.

Linda Bryant, RIT/NTID

Think of this as a wonderful opportunity to cull the content, revise it, and package it in a way that is engaging. Too often, people treat the classroom content and syllabus as sacred. Make sure that anything you are moving to the new environment should be there.

Valary Oleinik, Weil

Stick to the need-to-know, and keep it simple. What is the minimal amount of information needed to allow the learner to use this new knowledge in their performance?

Eric Rowland, MAXIMUS

You can create investigative stories that pull learners into scenarios that employ their decision-making safely and without consequence to see the outcomes of prudent and flawed thinking.

Tess Crossen, instructional designer

Remember that while a classroom experience is typically a longer learning event—usually from one hour to all day—eLearning should be concise, but it still needs to convey the same information. Look at individual sections of the classroom experience and consider how you can make these smaller portions into individual courses that are part of a larger curriculum.

Randy Meredith, Huntington Bank

You can still use technology to replicate some classroom experiences. Use discussion boards, social media, and other means to organize discussions, document questions and answers, or create a post-training gathering place.

Paul Blount, Amazon

Always start with the classroom interactions and activities and the objectives they're tied to. Figure out how you can re-create that interaction or activity in an eLearning setting, and let the interactions you draft guide the rest of your design process.

Madelaine Whalen, Great Dane

Ask yourself whether the agenda, lessons, Q&A sessions, etc., add value and support your objective. Just because one method worked in the live classroom does not mean it will transfer as smoothly to the eLearning classroom.

Christi Brown, ieSolutions

You can't just put it online as-is. When students or trainees can't see you, never meet you, and may be nervous about the learning (or distracted), it's especially important to be clear and consistent in all directions and conversational in tone. Above all, for instructor-led courses (i.e., not independent study), you should be present—communicating via email, discussion board, videoconference, etc.

Stevie Rocco, Penn State

A lot of the time, you may have information that is nice to know but not required. This is where you can use the Learn More button. It allows you to have the info out there for learners who may be interested while not taking time away from those who are not.

Kristen Nichols, TJX

Play to the strengths of the medium—audio, video, and hyperlinking. You can go beyond conversion to create a better overall learning experience by ditching the bullet points, digressions, and lengthy lectures that drag down even the best classroom materials.

Eric Kammerer, Domino's

If you do narrate, remember to design slides accordingly. Do not read verbatim what is on the slides. Learners categorically dislike this. When you narrate, make sure the script does the heavy lifting and that the slides support the message with engaging images and reinforcement of key words.

Christine Padberg, SSM Health

Be extremely cautious about LMS vendors who promise that their product will make eLearning a breeze. No matter how wonderful the product itself is, the content input will determine the content output. In other words, no LMS can compensate for poorly designed learning content.

LaNita Kirby, Kelemarco

Good eLearning is very lean, very direct, very to-the-point. Modularize your content if you can. While students in a classroom will sit for hours listening to an instructor, they often won't have the same patience with eLearning. Modularization gives students the opportunity to self-tailor the content, omitting topics they're already familiar with or which don't apply to them.

Jon Regan, Guidewire Software

Think experience. How can you let students explore and learn the information rather than just telling them the content? Let them be their own guides to some extent—point them in the right direction, then stand back and let them find it themselves. They will often use their own interests in their search. You can provide them some videos, audio, websites, eTexts—but have them apply the ideas to their own majors or interests. If they are allowed to, the students themselves will make the experience more engaging and relevant fairly quickly.

Kathryn McCormick, University of Central Missouri

Start small, maybe integrating microlearning videos of just a few minutes each into a traditional classroom environment. Break up your interactive lectures (hopefully, they're short enough already) with the standard content that remains unchanged session to session. You can make these available before and after the class for pre-work, and for ready access on the job, good for a quick refresh. Since learners will see the exact same content, long-term recall and retention should improve.

Terry Follmer, Second Opinion Learning

Be mindful of the learner who's sitting at a computer taking the training. Sitting in a one- or two-hour instructor-led lecture is commonplace, but you can't expect someone to take a one- or two-hour eLearning course and retain what they just learned. Chunk up information into smaller segments, and include interactive elements to keep the learner interested.

Karen Sparks, Alliance Safety Council

The learners will not have a teacher guiding them as they would in the classroom, so make sure to create a course environment that clearly guides them.

Rebecca Moffatt, Paylease

Develop an outline of your key points from the classroom. Rewrite with your new perspective. Then, consider how to create interactive elements.

Rebecca Tanguay, Westat

Choose the format that's appropriate for each type of content. Don't just create video; ask students to read when that is a more appropriate option. Transform bulleted lists into graphical content. Tell stories. Give context. Find ways to bring the human component online.

Candace Marles, SAS

Look at websites and other examples of eLearning for inspiration. Find different ways to represent the material online, and make note of what you liked.

Cheryl Lepatski, PCL

You are not face-to-face anymore. This is a major setback when looking at retention and dropout rates. Engage the learners as much as possible. Get them to interact with one another as well as with you, their instructor. Let them know they are not alone, and that there is someone there to guide them as they need.

James Washok, FlightSafety International

Consider testing the learner from the start—especially if the content is something that may be common knowledge. Then adapt the learning content to how they did with the test. This way, the learner is only exposed to content where there's a gap, and there's less chance the learner will get bored.

Phil Cowcill, PJ Rules

Get creative! Classroom exercises can be developed into an eLearning format, but you have to let go of how it was always done and reimagine how it will work in eLearning to achieve the same type of results.

Regina Haberman, Anagram Learning Solutions

Begin to think less about content and more about conveying concepts, practicing skills, and exploring the ability to apply conceptual knowledge and skills to solving problems in the learning domain of the course. Think about how to best handle the tough concepts and the skills that are difficult to master, and the size and scope of projects, papers, or research you are expected to complete on time. Reasonable effort timelines are going to be important.

Brenda Braitling, Pondering Press

Add non-graded knowledge checks at frequent intervals to give students feedback and a chance to demonstrate their new knowledge.

V Karen Miller, Design2Train

Learning outcomes and objectives should always be observable and measurable. So ask yourself, "How would I be able to both observe and measure the student's understanding in the online environment?" Not everything that works in the classroom is going to work online, so get creative and understand what tools are out there.

Monica Garcia, 81 Training Support Squadron

The LMS you use to push your courses and maintain your records is of crucial importance. Choose the right one for your needs the first time, because it's very disruptive to cut over to a new system. If your company or audience is large, make sure your LMS can handle migrating information from other sources (e.g., importing new-hire information or exporting records to Excel for data analysis). You can have fabulous eLearning, but if the learners are frustrated by the interface, they will not engage with the content.

Janet Ann, Alaska Airlines

In assessments, adapt the questions to suit the online environment. So look at using scenario questions or multiple-response questions. Just as you would with classroom content, you must make sure the questions are well constructed.

Lisa Mills-Cardoso, Queensland Rail

If you're creating a block of eLearning tutorials or something similar, try to sketch them all out in outline form before getting started. Otherwise you might find yourself putting too much content into some of your first creations.

Philip Burcham, University of Western Australia

Know your strengths and use them. If you are a good speaker, maybe you will migrate to video content. Go for it, but be concrete and organized. If you are good at design, try to create visual information. Know your audience and its needs. When selecting a platform and designing content, think about the subject, learning objectives, time, resources, and especially, what you're able to deliver without compromising quality.

Ariana López Di Rocco, EdCatedra

Be open to online communication that helps students learn from others' comments. Use learning boards and group projects, and make it real-world.

Rise Jongeling, Sioux Falls Schools Axtell Park

Record one of your classroom sessions. List the questions you ask and those your students ask. Use these to create the assessments and ensure the answers are in the content.

Kay Clifton-Shanhun, Clifton-Shanhun Dance

Pay attention to how you phrase questions to ensure that you are keeping the learner engaged. Mix up the way you ask the questions to keep them interested.

Marie Tasker, PathWise

Try and put yourself in the position of the learner. Think about what they would like to see on their screen to help them learn. Death by PowerPoint is not an option.

Shaun Bryant, CADFMconsultants

You should start from scratch. Don't try to copy and paste classroom elements into the online environment, because many techniques will probably not work in the online environment.

Polona Frumen, Interact Programme

Create downloadable handouts the user can keep handy as a reference guide.

Paul Tiley, Rotork

eLearning should offer individual interaction and feedback that cannot be easily attained in the classroom or from a book.

Stephen Foskett, EduPuzzles

Planning for the transfer of skills is more difficult in eLearning—how will you test your learners to make sure they are comfortable with the content? You may not wish to call it testing, but checking progress is important, and many learners will feel more confident if they can see they are progressing. In the classroom we give feedback all the time; find ways to do this in your eLearning. With standalone eLearning, make sure the delegate has a fallback—an online "clinic" session, perhaps, where they can connect with a trainer to iron out any questions arising from the learning.

Margaret Long, Berwin Leighton Paisner

Be very patient with the software you are using, the people you are working with, and most of all, with yourself. You will make mistakes. Learn from them and move on to the next task or project.

Maria Erin Anne Domingo, FactSet Philippines

Try to observe the course with the perspective of how it could look online. If you are not the trainer, consider sitting in on several sessions. If you are the trainer, I suggest recording your session so you can watch it from a different perspective.

Jenna Gallagher, EnerSys

Scenarios are your friend. Allowing for the learner to explore their new knowledge in a way that asks them to enter into an authentic situation or problem is one of the reasons eLearning lends itself well to transfer of learning. A learner can practice and make errors in a space that is safe. They have the ability to critically think and engage in a more timely fashion.

Zoa Bonofiglio, Auto-Owners Insurance

Consider the ILT version of the course your first iteration, and be sure to glean as much information as you can from participants, their managers, and the current facilitators to inform your design for eLearning.

Megan Torrance, TorranceLearning

There are times when content shared in a classroom training doesn't need to be included in training. Make sure to map out what should be in the training and remove what doesn't belong.

Melissa Reese, World Wide Technology

Try to think of ways to take the classroom interactions and convert them into an effective and memorable eLearning interaction. The right eLearning interaction should reflect and support what you want to teach. For example, if it's a process that needs to be completed in a certain order, an eLearning interaction can give the learner the opportunity to put the parts of that process in order.

Dan Sweigert, E-Learning with Dan

Be available to answer questions and timely. Students need to be able to contact you if they have a question, and you need to answer them in a timely manner (24 hours at the most). I like to have a discussion board for questions from the course. Therefore, not only the teacher or trainer can answer those questions, but the students can too. This increases comprehension for both students.

Kendra Barker, University of Missouri–Kansas City

Start small, then gradually expand the formats in which you deliver the eLearning. At first you may want to just record your live sessions and offer them up in an on-demand video library or company network/website. Then you may look into making small tweaks to the recorded videos or exporting them as SCORM content. You may at this stage want to look at an LMS or LCMS to help you organize and collate your content. From there, you may feel comfortable experimenting with beginner video and course authoring software that specializes in basic tasks or styles of authoring.

Renee Durrance, Alpha II

Death by PowerPoint puts a learner to sleep in any setting. Engage them. Ask questions. Make them predict and leverage what they know to keep them engaged. Break down the content into bite-size pieces, and help them digest what they are learning rather than force-feeding them more.

Jean Marrapodi, Illumina Interactive

The classroom content can be used as a basis for your audio scripts. However, don't copy it straight across. Chances are your classroom materials are intended to be a reference for students after they leave. To make a good eLearning program, strip this longer content down to the bare bones for a conceptual, versus all-encompassing, approach. Be sure to relegate highly technical or reference material to the handouts; don't try to present it on the screen. eLearning isn't an effective medium for that type of content.

Marie DesJardin, Verint Systems

Remember that adults want to feel like they are responsible for their learning. Let them pull the information they need. Make them work for it, experience it, play with it.

Mabry Escobedo, Waste Management

Your eLearning must be engaging and interactive. Look at what activities you use in the classroom. Can they be adapted to eLearning, or should you design new activities to achieve the same outcome? Always remember WIIFM (what's in it for me—i.e., the learner).

Carey Garback, Intradiem

Think, design, and build with a centralized point of view being the individual or learner. When I started my career with Apple Computers, a first must-read book was Apple's *Human Interface Guidelines*. I still use this every day and in all we do.

Scott Matthews, Learning Evolution

For eLearning, just develop the need-to-know. The good-to-know stuff goes into a guide. Also, if your eLearning crosses several subjects, reference them in the eLearning but provide links where learners can go for more info.

Nancy Miranda, MGCS

In the classroom, you are a big part of a learner's scaffolding. You answer questions and provide background or alternative views when your learners don't quite get it. Think about what you can include in your online lesson to fill these gaps. Things like case studies or online forums might be ways to provide this support.

Pete Brown, Cooee Productions

Assess use of animations and other modes of activity in the online environment, as some things do not translate well or they take too much bandwidth.

Karen Kotz, F5 Networks

Take your time and really look at the exercises: on how and why they worked well in the classroom, and how you will convert that experience when moving them to eLearning. If it was the instructor who made the exercise work well, then look at the exercise and how you can best re-create that experience with an eLearning activity. It will probably be completely different but can be just as engaging and challenging.

Anne Paine, American AVK

Don't start with the classroom content. Start with the problem you are trying to solve. The classroom was one way your organization tried to address it at one point in time. Now, with an expanded toolkit, you may find new ways to solve the same problem. Focusing on the existing material limits your potential options. Sure, you may still use some of that content, but you may also find new options that previously didn't exist.

JD Dillon, Axonify

Look critically at the learning objectives and how they're being measured. Can the objectives be adapted to demonstrate learning in a different way than would be done face-to-face? Ultimately, that's what will determine whether an eLearning experience will be meaningful for learners. Look at learner activities that support those objectives, and how they can be facilitated using technology.

Tamara Neff, ETR

Really think about engagement and how you plan to keep learners engaged. You're going to be battling losing their interest in the blink of an eye; all it takes is them opening up a new tab in their browser.

Roberta Dombrowski, The Predictive Index

Involve the learner emotionally with the content. Create context that motivates the learner to actively access the content to solve real-world problems. Start every lesson with a story that connects the lesson with the learner. Stress the problems to be solved or deeds to be accomplished, and demonstrate how you would go about using the content to solve or do.

Troy Challenger, California State University—Monterey Bay

Use the activities you do in the classroom to inspire ideas for developing online activities—but not to constrain you, as it may not be appropriate or useful to try to deliver it in the exact same way.

Tracey Innes, University of Aberdeen

Do not try to create a four-hour online session to replace a four-hour classroom offering. You will be amazed at how effective an online course can be in a considerably shorter time frame.

Jeff McLanahan, Service Experts

Allow learners to make mistakes. Give them not trick questions but realistic alternative distractors in knowledge checks. I believe learners retain information that they need to learn if they are allowed to make mistakes and have do-overs. Then they really have to think about the information.

Tina Moreno, City of Phoenix

We utilize the IGNITE model to move classroom content to eLearning. IGNITE stands for intervals, grouping, novelty, interconnectedness, technology, time, and environment. We attempt to use short intervals of grouped content, changing the type of delivery (didactic, interactions, games, role-play, etc.) for novelty where the learners are interconnected through social technology (discussion boards, social media, leaderboards) in a user-friendly, risk-free environment. Our teacher becomes more of a knowledge coach, assisting the students to learn from one another. The instructional designer should spend a good amount of time working with the subject matter expert to create this interactive, rich, vibrant learning environment.

Don Griesheimer, American Nurses Association

Gain an understanding of the grammar of audio-visual presentation—i.e., conventions of video, audio, graphics, layout, and typography—in order to best use eLearning as a delivery mode. Use a modular approach to presenting the content so it is easy to navigate as opposed to a linear, monolithic structure.

Joe Windham, Sears Holdings

Have associates review your courses at several stages of development so you can address any big problems before you get too far to turn back.

Steven Landry, TSBVI

Make sure that you have some kind of visual in your content. A page of words does little for online content. Mix in pictures, videos, and interactive aspects to the lesson.

Mike Dombroski, Cottey College

Consider attention spans when transitioning from a classroom-based activity to online. While it might have made sense to present a topic for 20 minutes or more, consider breaking down didactic subjects into smaller chunks, and incorporate active opportunities for review and practice throughout.

Maria Mejia, Jefferson University

Start with the outcomes of the classroom training, then redesign the course for an eLearning delivery. Copy and paste content where you are able to, but don't copy-paste the design. Also, the content may need to be re-chunked and packaged into smaller segments. One classroom training may transform into five eLearning courses.

Luke Benfield, naviHealth

It is really important to recognize that writing for screen is very different from classroom, and I advise my trainers to do a media course so they understand the difference between talking and facilitating in a classroom and delivering content in other media, such as an eLearning module, social media, or a mobile device.

Diane Edwards, Ports of Auckland

Many people make the mistake of thinking that online students can only read and write. Not true! Your online students can record themselves, they can build things and take pictures, they can use free web 2.0 programs to make artifacts for class. Move beyond just posting your PowerPoint slides!

Beth Ritter-Guth, Union County College

One of the prime ways in which online education falls short is due to porting in the evaluation and examination tools without adapting them to a different environment. I find that this is one of the main things that requires careful redevelopment.

Benjamin Balak, Rollins College

Providing the context of information and the background and the "why" is often something that just "comes out" during a normal classroom session. You have to bake that aspect of the content into your eLearning.

Adam Judge, de Beaumont Foundation

Do not expect that everything that worked well in a classroom will work in an eLearning environment. Explore the capabilities of your eLearning tool first, and design to maximize those capabilities rather than trying to figure out how to fit a classroom activity into an eLearning structure.

Anthony Contino, Nokia

People need to be available for testing and proofreading the module once you publish and bring it into your LMS (or vehicle that it will be completed in). Don't underestimate the time needed to check for functionality in addition to typos, links working, etc., and then time to correct any identified issues.

Rhonda Hansen, Lee Health

Provide a way for students to share and interact with one another. Don't have your eLearning course just viewed in the vacuum of an LMS. Seen only once in isolation = done and knowledge gone!

Sandy Tranfaglia, Allegiant Air

In the classroom, you should be constantly figuring out how to maintain attention. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, such as movement and positioning, voice modulation, questioning strategies, jokes, stories, etc. In eLearning, you don't have the same set of tools but you must achieve the same level of attention. So you have to keep them engaged by getting them to do stuff on the screen. Don't just show a label; make them roll-over something to get the label. The principle is participation, not passivity.

Scott Ashby, Omnitec Solutions

Continue learning and expanding your skill sets! It will be necessary to customize your eLearning to suit your learners, so you must be well-versed in different technologies to make things with.

Kiesha Pearson, DISD

Make your eLearning an experience. Throw your learners into a decision- or action-driven task with all the supports they need, excellent corrective feedback for when they go wrong, and motivating reinforcement for when they excel.

Ryan McInnes, The Learning Rooms

Keep in mind that the learning methods are very different, and you should not try to duplicate what you do in class. Take advantage of tools and technologies to develop engaging and interactive eLearning courses that help the learner interact with and learn the content in a self-directed approach. Use social tools such as discussion boards or Twitter to help extend the learning, and allow the learners to engage in more in-depth learning and discussions as their interest allows.

Kristy Macintosh, OMAFRA

Once you've completed and launched a course, circumstances may push you into starting your next project immediately. Don't. You and your team first need to take a few hours to clean up all your files from the course you just finished before you archive all the project files. Delete files such as meeting minutes that are no longer relevant; delete earlier versions of files that have several iterations; delete duplicate files. Your course has now transitioned from creation mode to maintenance mode. Maintain single copies of both source files and production files. What's the difference? A source file is used to create a production file. For example, a Photoshop (PSD) file was used to create and generate a JPG image file. The PSD file doesn't end up on the web server, but the JPG does. So if a year from now you need to update text in the image file, you can easily find the PSD file, make the edit, generate a new JPG file, and then upload it to the web server. Because you have deleted excess files that otherwise make it difficult to find the correct one, this is an easy task. Also, all your production files should reside in the same folder structure as on your web server. This can serve as a course backup in a disaster recovery situation, should something happen to your web server.

David Perry, Ford Motor Company

Ask yourself: When you teach in the classroom, what is going on other than the delivery of content? How are you facilitating learning in the classroom? Then consider how you can create eLearning experiences that include these elements. Incorporate reflection, activities, realistic scenarios, discussion, and other elements that support transfer of the learning to the real-world context.

MaryBeth Faccioli, Learning Alchemy

Remember all of your learners. Some of your learners will need to increase the font size of the screen to read the content. Some will need closed captioning on audio, either because they're hard of hearing or they work in noisy (or very quiet) environments. Others will use screen readers to access the content or use the keyboard instead of a mouse to navigate. Technology-based learning solutions, like eLearning, can make it more difficult for people who have disabilities to access training. In such situations, ensuring that your eLearning is accessible to all will make sure that everyone can benefit from your training. There are a ton of tools that can help (search for "accessible eLearning"). You can also look at the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.0 for internationally recognized standards that you can apply when designing eLearning.

Kevin Gumienny, Microassist

Less is more. In other words, think of the screen the learner will see as your canvas. Yes, you could pack words and graphics onto the page and make your point; or you can break the content onto multiple pages, building knowledge, concepts, and ideas as the learner engages with the program, clicks and points to things on the page, answers questions, completes knowledge checks, and more. Allow the learning to develop and evolve with a light touch versus a dense and heavy use of content on a single page.

Joe Ilvento, Commvault

Think about not just who the audience is that you're developing your eLearning for, but also how and where they'll be accessing it. For instance, if your audience is going to be accessing your content in a noisy environment, voice-overs and other audio content might not be helpful. If they're going to be accessing it on their phone, you have to consider making navigation and interaction buttons large enough that they can be used accurately with a finger instead of a cursor and mouse. Consider the challenges and benefits of how your audience will access your eLearning in order to create the best user experience for them.

Bianca Woods, The eLearning Guild

Ninety-Two Mistakes to Avoid When Moving Content to eLearning

I let the excitement of the authoring tool get the better of me, and I dive into building content in it before taking the time to properly plan and storyboard the content.

Ben Roberts, Global Excel Management

Taking content as-is, verbatim, from a face-to-face environment and dropping it into an LMS or website. Content won't necessarily translate one-for-one, so consider adjusting it to take advantage of the unique benefits of online learning, such as multimedia and interactivity.

Jackie Bruso, Regent University

Going on for too long about one subject or topic. Using only one type of knowledge check. Being afraid of using branching scenarios.

Michelle Pellersels, PPGNHI

Assuming that the modalities of learning are the most important thing. Instead, focus on providing the right solution.

Anthony Williams, Mitchels & Butlers

I think the worst mistake is trying to directly translate the same stories that you would use in the classroom into eLearning.

Denice De Carlo, PwC

Too much print and not enough graphics.

Melissa Magnusson, Cyber Stone Virtual School

Huge amounts of information with no relevant content. Using too many transitions, animations, or long videos. Today we have to be more direct to retain the students' attention.

Francisco Azevedo, Escola Nacional de Seguros

Simply porting ILT to eLearning with or without a lab can be very dull. Learners usually want some level of interactivity. Without it, they can just read a book or a white paper.

Darrell Walker, VMware

Trying to replicate face-to-face activities that don't translate to eLearning. Trying to use content created for face-to-face when new content designed for eLearning would be better.

Mary Masi, Palm Beach State College

Just typing in verbatim the instructor guide. An hour of conversation in a class is not going to be an hour of eLearning—what are the key points, and what is the best way to present them? It's not just a brain dump. Perhaps record the classroom as a resource for you in development as well as for the students. But the eLearning can't just be a one-to-one crossover, or you will lose your audience fast.

Denise Wilson, CCC Information Services

I got excited with the possibilities for creating great learning and spent too much time on a module based on storytelling and gaming principles. Although the module turned out great, it did not stand the test of time (software upgrades) and in the end did not justify the effort, other than for my own learning experience.

Iris Peceny, UTC

Content was too long. After years of practice, I have learned to scale it down to the most important information first. I can always add a "Chapter 2" or another eLearning for additional information.

Kim Parker, Actsoft

Not enough preparation before beginning. If you do not have all requirements defined, timelines planned, and resources reserved before you start, you most likely will have to re-work your content and miss your deadlines. Items to consider include: What platform will the content be hosted on (LMS, website, YouTube, proprietary system, etc.)? What format does the platform support (MP4, HTML5, PDF)? Are there template requirements (resolution, colors, fonts, etc.)? When are your resources available (equipment and people)? How long does it take you and your team to create the script, record, and edit?

Donna Wyvill, Borderless Learning

Bullet slides for the whole course and no knowledge checks or engagement with the learner.

Beth McGoldrick, RiverSource Insurance

Boring slides with lots of text! All this is does is "check the box" that "training" has occurred. Make your content meaningful, fun, and interactive!

Jessica Schemrich, Western Reserve Hospital

The biggest mistake is thinking that eLearning is simply a matter of putting the information on a website or otherwise making it digitally available. There is too much focus on the "e" and not enough on the "learning" part. Technology is awesome and digital platforms offer amazing affordances, but it is still about the learner.

Valary Oleinik, Weil

Not offering practical examples of using the new knowledge.

German Paris, PyB Estrategas en Aprendizaje

When I first started, I wanted to use all the media tools. I was working in Toolbook. (Remember that?) I had someone record audio and had to re-work the audio four times at least. In the end, our network couldn't handle the file size and the eMOD kept crashing. We didn't use the audio. Moral of the story: Just because you can doesn't mean you should.

Mary Gutwein, Humana

I have seen people invest in expensive new learning technologies without testing them on the target audience, and find out only later that they take longer to develop but are no more effective in transferring knowledge to the learner. That caused budget overruns, delayed product releases, and delayed training releases.

Anne McElvain-Volm, Becton, Dickinson and Company

Moving static, poorly designed PowerPoints delivered ineffectively in the classroom onto a page in an LMS (garbage in, garbage out). Using "Cadillac" tools like Articulate Storyline when you only need narrated, cleaned-up PowerPoints or a simple video captured on an iPad.

Lisa Ferris, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

Overuse of avatars, and images that do not move the content or understanding (e.g., a retirement course with an image of an older couple working on a desktop computer).

David Roy, Government of Canada

Too much text all lumped together, or PowerPoint-style slides simply dumped online without consideration of the message intended and the message received.

Dennis Foster, Meta-Learning Solutions

Often, content migration results in the computer being turned into a lecturer instead of a trainer. Very few good trainers operate in a lecture style, so don't design in one!

Madelaine Whalen, Great Dane

Do not assume you can just transport the content from PPT slides used in a classroom to the LMS.

Laurie Cohen, ACLC

People (myself included) forget that we are experiencing learning virtually and often want to take those live classroom habits with us, when ultimately our presence cannot always be seen but must be felt.

Christi Brown, ieSolutions

Making assumptions about what students already know—just because they "should" have had the prerequisite material, doesn't mean that they did—or that they remember it.

Stevie Rocco, Penn State

We did find that it was easy to fall off the wagon, so to speak, and go back to making online sessions too long with too much content, thereby moving away from the intent to make sessions shorter and more digestible.

Don Jones, Daktronics

Not utilizing the tools readily available to instructors in LMSs and even in the free apps. Yes, it takes time to learn and vet the apps, but the improvements in presentation and collaboration are worth the time and effort. If the tools are learned and used, then they can easily be carried over into future iterations of the courses or even serve as a foundation for new courses based on different subject matter.

Tim McMahon, Emily Griffith Technical College

Assuming students know how to use or have access to technologies required for effective online learning.

Tacha Gennarino, Pearson

Often, people put way too much text on a page. People don't want to read a ton of content. That's what knowledge bases are for. Use video heavily, and only add text that enhances or highlights what you cover in the video.

Christy Hollingshead, Heap

Using the same content designed for instructor-led training results in a poor eLearning experience.

Mark Roberts, Timken

The biggest mistake I've seen is trying to do too much, which tends to take too long. There's an amazing variety of things you can do with eLearning, but they all take time, and that time adds up. It doesn't matter if your training is amazing if it's not available when your students need it.

Jon Regan, Guidewire Software

The number one challenge I've seen is assuming that one hour of classroom time equals one hour of eLearning. It is very similar to the difference between a book and a screenplay. The book may be 250 pages, but the screenplay from the book is seldom even half of that.

David Lewis, r-Lab

Recording an instructor presenting a five-day class to a live audience, and then posting each day's video as an eLearning.

Lisa Hazerjian, Dell EMC

Trying so hard to simplify content that I made it more complicated (breaking things down too far into too many folders or links). The general rule of thumb is no more than three clicks to reach the content.

Kathryn McCormick, University of Central Missouri

Too much content without enough chunking into manageable sizes. Twenty minutes online can feel as long as an hour in a boring lecture, and one hour online can be so much worse. Designing in smaller content blocks makes editing easier and faster, and allows more flexible delivery for different skill sets: Reuse and sequence as needed for a variety of learners in different job roles.

Terry Follmer, Second Opinion Learning

We are now working to clean up a four-hour eLearning experience that was created several years ago. I hate to think about the pain we have caused learners with the current experience.

Ruth Fidino, Bright Horizons Family Solutions

Presenting too much information on the screen! It's easy to fall into the "death by PowerPoint" trap when designing eLearning courses.

Karen Sparks, Alliance Safety Council

Placing the entire contents of a classroom script (one to two paragraphs) directly onto a single slide.

Rebecca Tanguay, Westat

I think the biggest mistake I have seen is that when a program is adapted for online learning, some people want to re-work and re-work and re-work it until it is perfect, thinking that putting your content online is a one-time event and that once there it will run like a well-oiled machine. While this may be true for rudimentary topics where little has changed in 10 or more years, it is never true for technical or trade topics, which are evolving every year.

Jeffrey Holt, Toyota Motor North America

The biggest mistake is to just record classroom content and expect it to work in an online environment.

Candace Marles, SAS

You need to check to see what restrictions your LMS has. Because of the restricted bandwidth, I had to move my videos to another server and then link them within the course.

Phil Cowcill, PJ Rules

The biggest mistake I see is when presentation decks are just copied and pasted into an eLearning course. Not only is it really boring, but the learning objectives will not be achieved.

Regina Haberman, Anagram Learning Solutions

Stay focused on eLearning design before you start thinking color, branding, interactions, etc. It's easy to get sucked in with the sexy stuff rather than putting your up-front time into a solid design. Unfortunately, not focusing on a solid design first can lead you to ineffective eLearning in the end.

Kelsy Colwell, WSECU

The most frustrating mistake that is made in porting content and experiences is selecting the wrong medium or the wrong time frame. Sometimes a worksheet or a glossary remains the easiest way to convey something. Please don't force everyone to watch you read 52 slides in a single-speed video when you can give them a glossary to download and study.

Brenda Braitling, Pondering Press

A reliance on too many videos and too many lower-order cognitive skills. Challenging learners to create their own learning (heutagogy) involves higher-level thinking, rather than merely dumping content on learners who do not always know how to effectively sift through information overload.

Jens J. Hansen, Woodhill Park Research Retreat

I have overused some things. Like with everything, do it in moderation. A funny YouTube clip is good every other week—but every week? An article here, a dash of memes, and a whole lot of what makes you, you.

Richard Darling, Mildred Elley College

Assuming that all the content in the face-to-face session is sufficient. Often, research is still required.

Paul Lush, Zebra Stripes

Just moving content with a lot of text. It is critical to include frequent interactions to engage students. This could be a quick quiz or discussion forum, or a drag-and-drop activity.

Kerry Trabinger, Canberra Institute of Technology

Overstuffing eLearning materials with content and making them too convoluted.

Philip Burcham, University of Western Australia

Believing that one kind of content is enough, or believing it's engaging or effective for everybody.

Ariana López Di Rocco, EdCatedra

Trying to put too much information in and overloading the learner.

Su Howker-Whyte, Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust

Allowing the excitement of building in a new technology to take over the purpose of the eLearning. Keep a keen eye on the purpose of the eLearning.

Stephen Foskett, EduPuzzles

Doing things because you can, not because you should, is a mistake. Many years ago, I created a course on funds for investments and added a bouncing ball for each fund that came in, staggered around five seconds apart. There were approximately 30 funds. While I thought it was super-cool at the time, I soon discovered it was a slow and frustrating experience for the end user, and amended based on feedback.

Paul Tiley, Rotork

Choosing the right method or channel for the content is critical. Today the tendency seems to be that everything is eLearning, but this can be exhausting for a learner, too.

Virpi Halttunen, UPM Raflatac

Not setting up expectations with the stakeholders. Not creating a deadline for each task.

Maria Erin Anne Domingo, FactSet Philippines

Assuming that I can still fit all of the content from a day-long training into a short eLearning course. Sometimes the scope and focus of your content needs to change a bit!

Jenna Gallagher, EnerSys

It is always concerning when I see passive, click-next learning in an eLearning space. When I see learners just clicking through page after page of content, it saddens me. Many authoring tools allow for the uploading of a slide presentation, and some instructional designers do little to tailor the content in a way that fully utilizes the vast options available in eLearning. Engaging a learner to be actively involved in their own learning is such an amazing goal to work toward. So, get creative and keep thinking outside of the brick-and-mortar model of classroom learning—because eLearning knocks down the walls, but only if you go outside of the box and think beyond the chalkboard and worksheets.

Zoa Bonofiglio, Auto-Owners Insurance

The biggest mistake is taking content from SMEs and assuming that they know what works for eLearning. You end up with very long, dry eLearning that no one wants to build, let alone watch.

Jonathan Davis, Jenobi

I've seen designers use new interactions available in eLearning simply because they want to use the new interaction somewhere. For example, a multiple choice question gets converted into a slider interaction, where the use of the slider doesn't add to or relate to what you want the learner to understand. As designers, we always want new interactions because they give us more options for how to convey the content, and a variety of interactions can keep the learner engaged. But if the interaction doesn't support, but distracts from, what we want learners to understand, it can clutter the mind.

Dan Sweigert, E-Learning with Dan

Adding audio that reads the exact text on the screen.

Carolyn Dickerson, WestRock

The biggest mistake you can make is to bite off more than you're ready for or capable of delivering. Plan out the development of the eLearning like any project, with milestones, resources, and deliverables. Make sure ahead of time that you are fully aware of the scope of the project and the end result is attainable.

Renee Durrance, Alpha II

Posting a poorly done recorded webinar into the LMS and making it required training is akin to making someone watch their neighbor's distant cousin's terrible home movies for several hours. If it isn't well done and adding value, don't make people watch it. Build something better, designed for the platform delivering it.

Jean Marrapodi, Illumina Interactive

Rambling on as one might do in the classroom. You can be casual, but you must be succinct!

Marie DesJardin, Verint Systems

A "read and click" pattern that goes on for pages and pages is a kiss of death for learners. Also, beware of gratuitous images that are perhaps eye candy but do nothing to support the content in a meaningful way.

Jane Martel, Arapahoe Libraries

The biggest mistake is when someone takes the classroom PowerPoint and dumps it into an authoring tool, thinking this will suffice for eLearning. Dumping classroom materials into an eLearning tool does not make the end product eLearning. It makes it a glorified PowerPoint. The key to remember is design. What changes from the classroom to an online product? Those differences must be addressed.

Carey Garback, Intradiem

Using material that is far too theoretical in nature, and not understanding how to connect that information to past experiences or future knowledge the students expect to gain.

Robert Holloway, Top Leadership

Trying to include everything in one course. Remember, your full in-class course can be segmented out into smaller chunks, modules, topics, or courses. Don't assume the amount of time spent in the classroom will be the same as out of the classroom. It might be less, but it could be more.

Tracy Parish, Southlake Regional Health Centre

The biggest mistake is the literal porting of content from an instructor-led format to eLearning. This is sometimes driven by subject matter experts who don't want to let go of what they have, which may have taken a long time to develop. This often results in a poor experience for the employee, who loses all of the benefit of the classroom but gets none of the potential improvements of technology-enabled training.

JD Dillon, Axonify

Bad scripts. Writing good eLearning content is about delivering information in a conversational tone, rather than for an academic or informational article. In a face-to-face setting, trainers don't read from a script—they are typically speaking naturally. Capturing that same style for eLearning, whether as audio recording or written text on the screen, makes a significant difference for the level and quality of learner engagement you can achieve with an eLearning product.

Tamara Neff, ETR

Having too much content and too many activities in too short of a time to allow for students to engage, interpret, apply, and gain feedback before being inundated with more. eLearning makes it all too easy to continue to add on more examples, content, videos, etc. But less is more when it comes to learning.

Troy Challenger, California State University—Monterey Bay

Not checking to make sure all links for video, slide shows, audio clips, and even PDF or text documents are functional.

Marilyn Ebler

Trying to re-create activities that heavily rely on trainer support for their success is a mistake and can leave learners feeling lost. This can be particularly challenging for activities requiring participant reflection if they don't have someone present to ask questions or gain clarification. Making sure these types of activities are supported in some way, through online discussion forums or similar, is crucial.

Tracey Innes, University of Aberdeen

When I first started delivering synchronous sessions, we focused too much on the lecture. We were all new at it, and the instructor was used to having control over what content was to be delivered and how it should be delivered. He generally had the final say. Those early sessions were very "talking head"—heavy and not very interactive. Learners told us via feedback that they struggled to stick with the sessions. We have revamped our synchronous sessions to make them much more interactive, and we focus on making the content practical and tying it to participants' work expectations.

Terrance O'Neil, Shriver Center

I assumed that the learners knew more about how to participate in online courses than they actually did. I should have spent more time developing the course instructions, as well as explaining the goals and approach of the course material.

Steven Landry, TSBVI

If at all possible, don't start from a slide deck. It gets you thinking in a linear manner.

Simon Blair

Time and time again, I've seen educators simply record themselves and expect long attention spans to translate on screen, ignoring the fact that there are distractions competing for your learner's attention. Take the time to analyze your audience. What devices do learners have at their disposal? Are they in an open environment where headphone use is prohibited? Do they have personal devices and broadband access? What information do your learners absolutely need to know? Are there external resources to leverage that can augment or complement your education (such as demonstration video)?

Maria Mejia, Jefferson University

If I started again, I would invest more time educating managers on when eLearning is and is not appropriate, how it can be used, and the possibilities beyond simply uploading content. I found that many saw eLearning as a checkbox exercise for compliance training, rather than a useful tool to facilitate training.

Diane Edwards, Ports of Auckland

It is often difficult, when working in technical areas, to own the content when you collect it from SMEs. SMEs tend to want to provide you both content and delivery structure and sequence. Unless you use the tools of task and knowledge analysis and learning design, you'll be led by the nose, your materials will remain out of your control, and neither of you will know if they work or not. Use the tools of the trade: analytical devices, measurable learning objectives, measurable performance objectives, Bloom's taxonomy, learning hierarchies, digital media composition, interaction design, and developmental testing and revision of both interface design and learner mastery as measured in interaction with the materials.

Robert Edgar, Stanford University

Do not assume all SMEs have experience with creating eLearning. It would be a good bet to assume they have no experience at all! Explain and show SMEs work you have done before, and give them options on the different tools you have. Set expectations of them and say what they can expect from you. Agreeing on who does what and by when is also very important. I also now assure the SME that I will take care of them and they are not doing this on their own. We are a team.

Darcy Richardson, Mayo Clinic

Adding "fluff" or filler information is a mistake and can easily distract the learner in an eLearning setting.

Jennifer DeLarm, ConnectWise

Assuming that my knowledge base is about the same as the people I'm developing eLearning for. This is another place where a traditional classroom session can smooth over the bumps. In eLearning, you have to give them everything they need—there may not be much (or any) opportunity to back up and provide additional explanation if you haven't anticipated the need.

Adam Judge, de Beaumont Foundation

The biggest mistake is turning a boring classroom lecture into a boring eLearning "page-turner." Boring is boring. You need to keep the learners engaged and involved often. Another mistake is using course elements (graphics, sound, animation) without purpose. Everything included in the course must support or reinforce what is being learned.

Anthony Contino, Nokia

Mistake: Not involving an instructional designer, educator, or someone familiar with adult education principles and knowledge of how people learn in the development of, approval of, or input into all modules before they are assigned to staff. Anyone can slap together a PowerPoint presentation, but that doesn't mean it is good or will translate into an eLearning module that people will actually learn from.

Rhonda Hansen, Lee Health

Jamming a 15-week semester of content into a seven-week course for online delivery. This is simply overcommitting your students to cover the content, it sets unfair expectations, and ultimately it sets them up for failure. You will lose students, potentially forever, and not make a great reputation for yourself along the way. Don't do it!

Tishaq Radcliffe, Aquifer

Using technical terminology that the learner might not understand.

Kristy Macintosh, OMAFRA

Delivering longer courses with limited practice opportunities. Learners need to be able to apply the skills they learn while in a learning mode, not just learn and go back to the phones and wait for that type of scenario to come their way. In addition to that, you need to reinforce what they have learned after the course is completed. What they have learned may not come up right away, and they need to keep it fresh so they don't lose the skill before they have the chance to use it.

Cherie Lucio, Gant Travel

"Shovelware": taking the print or text-based materials from a classroom experience, pasting them into an authoring tool, and putting it online. Many times it amounts to nothing more than "eReading." If people only need to read material, send them a document.

Jane Bozarth, The eLearning Guild

One mistake I've seen made is not listening to the experiences of learners. The move to eLearning involves systems and processes that are new to everyone. Sometimes those who create the systems and processes are not involved in the same day-to-day experiences that the learners are. Learn about the obstacles learners experience (time, equipment, login issues, etc.), and address them. Another mistake is assuming that learning the eLearning product is all that's needed. Just like learning Microsoft Word doesn't make one a good writer, learning the eLearning software alone isn't enough to create quality eLearning. Instructional design, graphic design, learner experience design, application of adult learning principles, application of learning theory, and the human side of LMS administration are all necessary components. This requires resources you may not have planned for.

MaryBeth Faccioli, Learning Alchemy

Underestimating the time it takes to develop eLearning. You can tweak face-to-face classroom courses until the last minute, and then the instructor can adjust them in the classroom. In eLearning, you need to think all of that through before the class is even given—there's no instructor to read the audience and adjust as they go. Pre-thinking and appropriately designing eLearning courses takes time, often more time than you'd think. The savings come when, after they're developed, you can train a lot more people—and train them more consistently— than you can when delivering face-to-face curriculum in a classroom.

Kevin Gumienny, Microassist

Be careful not to let the structure and limitations of the learning management system force you into making all your content text-based to conform to the tools. Consider how to create the activities you need with various tools and techniques, even if you must turn to third-party apps.

Kelly Elander, Harding University

One thing I've seen, especially with people new to creating eLearning experiences, is a lack of consistency in the design. The user interface changes from screen to screen, colors signify different things in different places, the layout of screens is sloppily inconsistent, and/or the look and feel isn't cohesive. These design considerations may not be something people have thought much about in classroom experiences, but this kind of consistency is key to helping make an eLearning experience easy to use for your audience.

Bianca Woods, The eLearning Guild