



BEST PRACTICES: MODULE DEVELOPMENT



Chunk Content

Adult learners have an average attention span of about 20 minutes (1). Break learning material into manageable “chunks” to maintain interest and reduce the load on working memory.

Focus on no more than about 3 main concepts or 1 skill per chunk. Provide opportunities for learners to review or practice before moving on to the next concept or skill. Build natural breaks into learning content. Adding an interactive activity or knowledge check is one way to do this!



Less is More

Don't overcrowd your module: focus on key points to increase knowledge retention and avoid information overload. Research shows that adults' working memory has the capacity to store 3-5 items at once (2).

Use your learning objectives as an anchor. When considering adding content, ask if that content will support your audience in achieving the learning objectives. Any extraneous detail will prevent your audience from remembering the key points that you want them to take away from the module.

Avoid long blocks of text and lengthy anecdotes. Keep videos short (ideally under 3 minutes).



Provide Opportunities for Feedback and Practice

Encourage knowledge retention, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills by providing opportunities for learners to practice (for skills-based learning) and receive feedback.

This may include scenario- or case-based learning, storytelling to show context and impact, or games-based learning.

Incorporate quizzes, polls, or other types of knowledge check activities to consolidate knowledge learned and provide your audience with opportunities to gauge how well they are learning the material.



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Incorporate Multimedia and Interactivity

Represent information in diverse ways using different types of media. This promotes knowledge retention and will keep learners engaged. Promote interactivity as much as possible. Some ideas:

- infographics
- images/illustrations
- videos (keep them under 3 minutes)
- games
- quizzes, polls, drag-and-drop interactions
- scenarios, cases, and simulations



Be Aware of Scope Creep

Scope creep is the “expansion of a project’s objectives beyond its initially defined boundaries” (3). It occurs when additional content, features, or changes are introduced outside of the project’s original scope and objectives. It can negatively affect timelines, budgets, and overall project success.

Avoid scope creep with the following tips:

- Build a detailed project plan and outline for each module
- Differentiate between the “need to know” and the “nice to know” from the start: additional content can be incorporated into a phase 2 project or new project down the road
- Define learning objectives for each module and ensure assessments/the final evaluation are aligned with them. Ensure all included content can be linked to these objectives and their associated assessment/evaluation elements.
- Prioritize project requirements when developing content



Further Reading

E-Learning Best Practice Guide

Best Practices for Effective Implementation of Online Teaching and Learning in Medical and Health Professions Education: During COVID-19 and Beyond

References

1. Cooper, A. Z., & Richards, J. B. (2016). Lectures for adult learners: Breaking old habits in graduate medical education. *AAIM Perspectives* 130 (3), P376-381. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2016.11.009>
2. Cowan, N. (2010). The magical mystery four: How is working memory capacity limited, and why? *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 19 (1), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2864034/>
3. Singh, G. (1 February 2024). *Strategies to Prevent Scope Creep in eLearning*. eLearning Industry. <https://elearningindustry.com/strategies-to-prevent-scope-creep-in-elearning>