

# Checklist for strong elearning

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This tool will help you evaluate an elearning project and identify ways to make it more powerful.

The checklist is designed to evaluate **self-paced materials** created for **adults at work**, such as standalone short courses or the self-paced, online components of blended projects. If you're in academia or teach children, this checklist might not apply to you.

Ideally, this evaluation happens during a much deeper design process. For example, if you use action mapping as your design approach, you could refer to this checklist during the storyboarding phase to make sure you stay on track.

## How to use the checklist:

1. For each item, judge the current state of your material and mark the corresponding spot on the spectrum.
2. When you've rated all the items, look down the spectrum column and identify marks that you'd like to move to the left, toward a more action-focused approach.
3. Rework your materials and evaluate them again.

| Action-oriented materials   | Spectrum  | Information dump   |
|---|-----------|--|
| The goal of the project is to change performance in a visible, measurable way.  | - - - - - | The goal of the project is to transfer information into learners' brains.  |
| Objectives describe visible, on-the-job behaviors that are necessary to reach the project goal ("sell," "lead," "encrypt," "schedule," "design"). | - - - - - | Objectives describe knowledge ("understand"). If behaviors are described, they're behaviors that happen during a test ("identify," "explain," "define"). |
| The format of the materials is determined by the necessary activities and references (website, PDF, slides, video, emails...).                    | - - - - - | The format of the materials is predetermined by tradition, the LMS, or stakeholders who aren't designers.  |
| The materials feel like one immersive, challenging activity or a series of activities with little interruption.                                   | - - - - - | The materials feel like a presentation that's occasionally interrupted by a quiz.  |
| The authors appear to respect the learners' intelligence and previous experience.   | - - - - - | The authors appear to doubt the learner's ability to draw conclusions and assume the learner has no experience.  |

| Action-oriented materials   | Spectrum | Information dump  |
|---|----------|---|
| Activities make learners practice applying new knowledge or skills to challenges like the ones they face on the job.  | -----    | Activities are quizzes, trivia games, or other knowledge checks that don't happen on the job.   |
| Activity feedback <b>shows</b> learners what happens as a result of their choice; learners draw conclusions from the result.  | -----    | Activity feedback explicitly <b>tells</b> learners "correct" or "incorrect"; learners aren't allowed to draw conclusions.   |
| Learners can skip or place out of material they already know.   | -----    | Learners are required to view every screen regardless of their existing knowledge or performance on activities.   |
| Reference information is supplied outside the course in job aids; learners practice using the job aids in activities.   | -----    | Reference information is delivered through the course; learners are expected to memorize it or come back to the course for review.  |
| Characters are believable; they face complex, realistic challenges with emotionally compelling consequences.  | -----    | Characters seem fake (e.g. preachy or clueless); their challenges are minor and are presented as intellectual exercises.  |
| Visuals are used to convey meaning as much as possible.   | -----    | Text or narration is used to convey meaning; graphics are used as "spice."  |
| Visuals of people show believable humans with realistic expressions.  | -----    | Visuals of people show stock photo models who are over-acting.  |
| Audio narration is used only for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dramatic realism (e.g. characters' voices in a scenario)</li> <li>• Explanations of complex or rapidly-changing graphics</li> <li>• Motivational messages and explanations from people who really exist (e.g. CEO, subject matter expert)</li> </ul> | -----    | Audio narration is used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver information while displaying simple, static screens</li> <li>• Redundantly read text on the screen to the learner</li> <li>• Lecture the learner about what they should or shouldn't do</li> </ul> |
| The writing is concise, uses contractions, and sounds like a magazine (Flesch Reading Ease score of 50 or higher in Word)   | -----    | The writing is wordy and stiff; it sounds like a textbook or insurance policy (Flesch Reading Ease score of 49 or lower in Word)  |

### More information

- How to design activity-rich materials: [www.elearningblueprint.com](http://www.elearningblueprint.com)
- Design tips and discussion: [blog.cathy-moore.com](http://blog.cathy-moore.com)
- Help with your projects: [www.cathy-moore.com](http://www.cathy-moore.com)
- Quick ideas: @CatMoore on Twitter

Please send me your suggestions through one of the above sites. Thanks!