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# Apply the chunked method in an online course

***A remedy for declining attention and motivation in eLearning? The segmented lecture.***

According to a 1996 study, reported in the book The "Change-up" in Lectures by Joan Middendorf and Alan Kalish, our brain does not record all the information it receives, but it selects and segments it by organizing it into categories. Probably the most well-known part of this study is the part that says that the human brain has an **attention lapse every 15-20 minutes**.

It is useless, therefore, to give a lecture in which the speaker speaks continuously for 60 minutes; the functioning of our working memory and the loss of attention make the lecture ineffective.

Hence the need to change the way lessons are delivered, segmenting the lesson and introducing elements that can keep students' attention and **motivation** high. This theory has been called the **chunked method**, or the segmented lesson method.

What does it consist of and how can it be applied to eLearning? Let's take the case of **asynchronous and synchronous training**.

## The segmented lesson in asynchronous training

In the asynchronous mode, learners have all the course materials at their disposal and can freely choose which one to follow, if the navigation is free, or follow a predetermined training path, if the navigation is blocked. Those who use an **authoring tool** to create their online courses know that to increase student engagement, it is important to vary the format of the content by including multimedia elements. Before thinking about what video or audio to include, it's a good idea to proceed in stages:

- Select the key information to be included within the course
- Organize key content into modules, sections and topics
- Make the content usable in different formats by doing hands-on exercises through videos, games, simulations, podcasts
- Vary the type of end-of-course quizzes and organize surveys to get student feedback

Unlike **microlearning**, the most important thing is not to follow the 1 topic for 1 module rule, but to structure the course so that each topic can be followed by practical exercises and feedback. This way you create breaks, which respond to the natural memorization mode of humans and make the course more engaging.

Special care must also be taken with the visual presentation: avoid excessive text, with too long sentences within a slide, as well as too long videos.

## The segmented lesson in synchronous training

When classes are held via webinar or virtual classroom, the trainer can follow the basic principles of the segmented lesson that apply to face-to-face courses. In this case, as reminded by this Zanichelli article, it is not so much a matter of segmenting the content, but of presenting it at different levels of depth. The scheme indicated could be simplified in this way:

- **Introduction**: in a maximum of 5 minutes, a general outline of the day's lesson is outlined
- **Lesson**: enter the topic of the lesson in more detail, taking care not to exceed the standard 15 minutes (remember the attention span);
- **Activity**: you engage students, e.g. giving them the opportunity to ask questions, doing exercises, breaking them into groups for simulations for another 15 minutes.
- **Return**: a sort of immediate evaluation in which the trainer, through questions and doubts raised by the students, verifies that the knowledge has been learned and if not, restarts, perhaps in other ways, from the lesson, to the activity and back to the return. If everything is clear, you can move on to another aspect of the day's lesson, following the same

15-20 minute pattern.

The principles of the segmented method can be applied to both synchronous and asynchronous training. In the first case, it is a matter of inserting a **complete course** by skimming the main content, putting the topics into well-defined modules, always followed by an activity with multimedia files and an interactive evaluation. In the case of synchronous training, you can implement the segmented lesson that is used in the classroom, keeping in mind the 15-20 minute rule and having each lesson followed by a moment of activity and restitution.

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