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How to create an online course in 12 steps

Everything you need to know to create an online course: from choosing the topic, to promoting and evaluating the course.

Creating an online course is a complex process that requires very different skills. In this article we will see the 12 steps that characterize a good eLearning course design.

1. Analyze the training needs

First, you'll need to define why people need your course. Then ask yourself what outcomes you expect, what you hope your learners will get from this training, and how it will help them achieve their goals.

In other words, it all starts with a careful **analysis of training needs**. This analysis can be done through interviews or through more in-depth data collection methods. Either way, the results of this analysis will become the basis for course design and allow you to evaluate the results achieved.

2. Know your audience

One of the reasons many corporate training programs fail is that they are not appropriate for the level of knowledge of the employees (because they are too easy, or too difficult, or even irrelevant to personal growth). By knowing your target audience well and learning what they need, you can create better, more effective content.

So avoid treating your audience with a one-size-fits-all approach. There's nothing more wrong than ignoring your target audience's technical skills, existing knowledge, and goals.

3. Define learning objectives

Learning objectives are nothing more than the skills you want your students to acquire. You can set specific objectives for each lesson or learning unit and use them to break down the course content.

Make sure your objectives are measurable, relevant to your students, and achievable by the end of the course. Start by choosing three or four and make sure your content doesn't stray too far from these goals.

4. Gather information and materials

At this point, you can focus on finding the information, images, and reference documents you will use to create your course. Work with subject matter experts and other interested parties to understand what should be included and whether it is relevant to the learning objectives of the course.

At this stage, we are very likely to get stuck because of the sheer amount of information we have gathered. Therefore, focus not only on what you will need to include in the course, but also on what you will need to discard.

This is when the research you will have conducted in steps 1 and 3 (i.e., the training needs analysis and the definition of learning objectives) will come in handy. As you review the collected materials, throw out anything that is not directly related to achieving a learning outcome.

5. Define the instructional design plan

Once you have gathered the information, you will need to decide on your instructional strategy - the approach you want to take to developing your course. To ensure that your course is as effective and engaging as possible, you will need to be aware of the different **principles of adult learning** and the different ways in which you can deliver your training: video tutorials, slides, live webinars, podcasts, etc.

Be sure to strike a balance between visual methodologies in order to provide an optimal learning experience where everyone feels engaged.

6. Prepare learning materials

Audio, video, handouts, assessment quizzes or satisfaction surveys. There are many different **types of content** you can include in your online course. This is the time when you have to be creative and bring your learning materials to life.

7. Prepare a content storyboard

A storyboard is a rough visual structure that helps you organize your materials and sketch out the layout and appearance of text, images, and other elements on the page. This step is very important because it will help you understand how the page will look and what graphic choices will best suit your course.

8. Write a script

Now that you know the structure of your course, you need to write the script. Normally, you will have to deal with two types of scripts: the **on-screen text** and the **narration script**.

If written well, these scripts will serve as the backbone of your course design.

9. Choose the technology

Once you have approved the content and structure of the course, you must choose (if you don't already have them) the content creation tool (authoring tools) and the learning management platform (LMS) with which to build and deliver your course.

The **choice of the LMS** is extremely important and can determine the success (or failure) of the training course. When choosing the right learning management system, evaluate first of all what your needs are: do you want to deliver courses in synchronous or asynchronous mode? Do you also want to deal with the sale of courses or only with didactic management? If you're not sure if you'll be able to do this, then consider reviews, features, functionality and budget.

10. Create a prototype of the course before publishing it

At this point, you can build a working prototype or a basic version of your course to ensure that everything is working properly. The prototype should include all elements of the course: content, quizzes, interactions, etc.

Share your prototype with project stakeholders and ask for their feedback. Be sure to get thorough feedback so that you can minimize subsequent revisions.

Once the prototype is approved, you can build the actual course. Again, we recommend that you have your team or clients test the course so that you can make any additional changes before publishing it.

11. Promote your course

If you think your work ends when you publish your course online, you are sadly mistaken: now the real work begins!

Once it's published, you'll need to take care of promoting and marketing your course. Whether it's an external audience or your company's employees, you'll need to highlight the benefits your course offers and use them to engage your audience.

12. Measure and evaluate results

At this point, comes the most important part of the instructional design process. The success of a course also (if not primarily) depends on evaluating the results. So determine the effectiveness of your course by asking your students for feedback (even anonymously). This will help you understand what works and what can be improved.

You can track several metrics:

- completion rate: how many people who purchased your course actually completed it?
- bounce rates: do people visit your course page and leave soon after?
- conversion rates: of the people who visit your course page, how many actually buy the course?

Metrics like these show how people are responding to your marketing messages and course material, as well as giving you insight into how to create and market your next online course.

If you're not sure where to start, take a look at the **top training evaluation models** and choose the one that best suits your needs.

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