

E-learning: A usability template

The aim of this template is to provide a practical guide to designing usable e-learning material. Follow the simple instructions and tick items as they are completed.

1) Before starting work on e-learning content and design, consider the learner and context.

The 5Ws - who, what, when, where, why

Do you know:



- The age range of learners and whether English is their first language
- The intended learning outcomes and how the learner will achieve these
- Why e-learning has been chosen over other ways of delivering teaching content
- Where e-learning will take place
- Whether the slowest broadband connection and other technology avenues, if required, can support the use of e-learning

Learning styles

Have you thought about::



- Which learning styles the majority of learners prefer/do not prefer and why
- Which learning style(s) the e-learning will be suited to and why
- How e-learning material could be designed to suit more learning styles

The H - how

Do you know:



- Which hardware will be used for e-learning and why
- Which software/media will be used for e-learning and why
- Whether the chosen software/media and hardware are compatible
- If learners are familiar with the chosen software/media

2) Next consider the technological aspects of e-learning design.

Navigation

Is there:



- An introduction and list of contents
- Paper-based/electronic help and documentation for the e-learning
- An e-mail address/phone number to contact if help is needed

Can the learner:



- Move forwards and backwards between parts/sections of the e-learning
- Access the contents and help and documentation when needed
- Exit/close the e-learning material when desired

Learnability

Is the learner:



- Competent at using the e-learning
- Shown on-screen messages when errors/problems occur
- Competency improved by using help and documentation when needed

Visual clarity

Is/are:



- The font type and size consistent throughout the e-learning and the text readable
- The background colour/design and text colour(s), including colour of hyperlinks, consistent throughout
- The layout of icons/buttons consistent and the meaning/purpose of them clear
- Short paragraphs and appropriate pictures/graphics used

3) Now think about the content of the e-learning material.

Educational content

Is/are:



- The depth and breadth of content consistent with learning objectives
- Learning objectives clearly stated
- Summaries given to highlight the key points of the e-learning

Explicitness and clarity

Is/are:



- The meaning of sentences clear and jargon understood by the learner
- Grammatically correct sentences used with no spelling or punctuation errors
- Simple and compound sentences used
- Paragraphs no longer than six-eight lines long with double line spacing (where appropriate)

Interactivity

Does the e-learning:



- Predominantly require learners to read text
- Allow input from the learner e.g. by typing/adding text, moving objects on-screen
- Feature sound/audio tracks/video clips
- Enable interaction/contact with other learners
- For slideshows: Is the slideshow animated?

Assessment and feedback

Is/does the learner:



- Tested on the knowledge gained using a quiz/assessment, based on the learning objectives
- Receive informative feedback after the quiz/assessment giving the marks, and highlighting correct/incorrect answers and why
- Provide feedback to the designer about the e-learning

4) ACTION PLAN

Finally, consider making changes to improve the usability of your e-learning material. Use the items of the template that have not been ticked as a guide to deciding suitable improvements.

Devise an action plan using the appropriate headings below.

Learner and context

Technological aspects of design

Content of e-learning
