



A Guide to Get Started With Developing Online Learning Content

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Online learning is very different form conventional classroom training since there is no direct interaction with the learners. Therefore, the traditional content needs to be specifically molded for online learning; else it won't be successful in attaining its learning objectives and learners may feel disengaged. Converting this offline content to online learning or creating content from scratch could be perceived as tedious and overwhelming.

This eBook intends to provide a few tips and some simple steps which can help subject matter experts, educators, instructional designers and online course creators to get started with the development of online learning content.

Building online learning is like developing a lesson plan that you will deliver in a vacuum. You will not see or hear the reaction to what you deliver and you will have no clues to tell you if your audience is engaged, bored or still there. This holds true especially when all the learning delivered is self-paced, self-assessing and no Learning Management System (LMS) is involved.

The process of developing content for online learning is the one where we peel away a lot of the external 'noise' that we might use in a classroom situation and expose the kernels of knowledge that we then present as engagingly and clearly as possible.

Subject matter experts have this knowledge, and the development team has the skill to bring out the core information and present it in a lucid manner.

Together, online learning magic is created! This eBook reflects the directions and guidelines I use when working with subject matter experts, when they provide content for us to build online learning.

A graphic with the words "LESSON PLAN" in large, bold, white capital letters. The text is set against a blue rectangular background with rounded corners. The background of the entire page is a collage of various white icons including gears, a shopping cart, a bar chart, a globe, a magnifying glass, a play button, a music note, a dollar sign, a question mark, an at-sign, a person icon, a clock, a document, a camera, a Wi-Fi symbol, a bar chart, a globe, a magnifying glass, a play button, a music note, a dollar sign, a question mark, an at-sign, a person icon, a clock, a document, a camera, a Wi-Fi symbol, and a bar chart. The text "LESSON PLAN" is centered within this graphic.

LESSON PLAN



To create magic, you need to be aware of what to add or avoid in your online learning modules. Online learners will spend less than 60 seconds on a page before making a decision about staying or leaving. Our aim is to engage them in the first third of that time.

Key things that will turn online learners off:

- Long academic text to read online
- Insufficient visual stimulation
- Images not relevant to the topic
- A huge resource library that needs wading through
- Reflective questions that may be answered with 'don't know' or 'so what'
- Being preached at
- Being asked questions before they have been given the pertinent knowledge
- Being sent offsite to read or download large documents from other sources

Unlike a classroom situation, online learners are all alone taking the courses asynchronously and there is no human intervention to ensure that they are tied up to the learning. Therefore, it's important that you capture the learners' attention and add value to maintain it.

Key things that will engage online learners:

- Quick hits of facts and information
- Short paragraphs of detail-rich knowledge
- Clear and pertinent infographics and charts
- Games that use the new knowledge immediately
- Material that can be dipped in and out of easily and can be revisited often
- Ideas and suggestions that they can put into practice immediately
- Links to extra material supported by usage suggestions
- Reflective questions that enable genuine reflection
- A whole experience that may be completed in 15-20 minutes



01. Define the Structure

02. Define Modules Units

03. Define the Outcomes

04. Define and Develop the Content

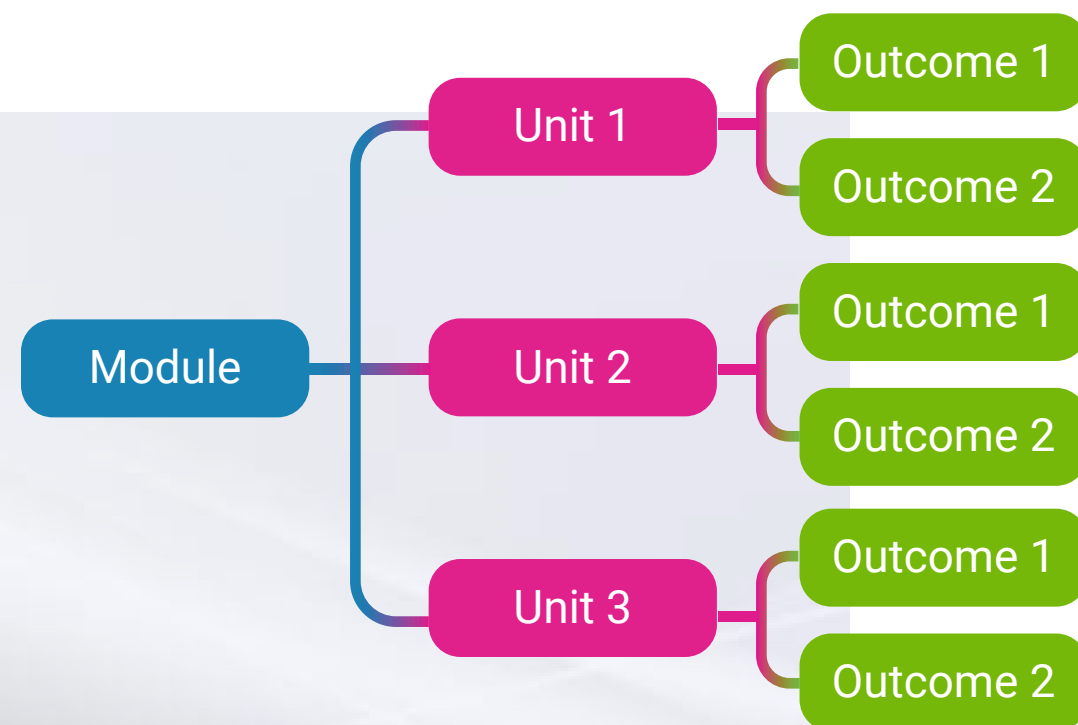
05. Present the Content

Once you know what your learners will enjoy and what they won't, you can get started with developing the online learning content. Here are the simple steps you can follow.

1. Define the Structure

Before starting with the content development for your online learning course, you should have a clear idea of how you want to structure your content. A proper structure will provide you with a high-level overview of the entire course, and will later make the task of organizing the information a lot easier.

Example of a Simple Module Structure:



- A module is a topic offered to learners.
- A module unit is an individual online learning experience that may take the learner 15-20 minutes to consume.
- Outcomes are the key messages within a module unit that will be covered.

Depending on the type, length and depth of the subject matter, you can change this structure to make it more or less hierarchical.

2. Define Module Units

A subject matter will have a clear idea in mind about what your learners might need to know in order to feel that they have expertise or new skills to manage that topic in their learning environment. All modules will vary, but it is suggested that you aim to have between 1 and 4 units of learning per module.

Let's take an example of a module on Puddle Jumping to be created for teachers as the target audience. Within this module, you may have unit titles like:

1. Understanding Puddle Jumping
2. Improving Puddle Jumping in the Classroom
3. Puddle Jumping across the Curriculum

These titles may, initially, be working titles, and something more interesting may be applied at a later stage when the content is developed.



3. Define the Outcomes

Once you have defined the unit titles, you can then consider what the outcomes are for learners who undertake those units.

Number of outcomes per unit will vary, but it is recommended that you aim to have between 1 and 3 outcomes for each unit. This offers a reasonable length of a unit and keeps the learner engaged for a reasonable time. Be careful about too many outcomes as each one requires a body of knowledge that you will have to supply.

Outcomes for each of the units defined in Step 2 for Puddle Jumping module may be like:

1. **Understanding Puddle Jumping**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define Puddle Jumping
- Explain where Puddle Jumping sits in the hierarchy of the curriculum
- Create a lesson plan that includes Puddle Jumping



2. Improving Puddle Jumping in the Classroom

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify where Puddle Jumping is missing in the classroom
- List/provide tips and ideas for including Puddle Jumping in teaching practice
- Source lesson ideas from around the world

3. Puddle Jumping across the Curriculum

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain to colleagues how Puddle Jumping impacts teachers' work
- List/provide tips and ideas for including Puddle Jumping in others' practice
- Advocate for Puddle Jumping within your setting

All of the above create the framework within which you can develop the content you want to share. From this point onward the scope for creativity increases exponentially.



4. Define and Develop the Content

The knowledge you have to share now needs to be organised into the module units and the outcomes you have identified. So, take a little time to organise your thoughts into those categories so that the last content chunk the learner tackles is as interesting as the first.

You will then need to do the following for each outcome you have identified.

Your first statement is your chance to make your first impression. What is the most important single thing that you want them to take away from this learning? State it strongly and clearly. An interesting image or video here will help get learners hooked.

“It was only in 1914 that Puddle Jumping changed its then 200 year traditional technique from using one foot to using two... When Peter Leg first introduced Puddle Jumping to his small village in Yorkshire in 1714 he was solving a local ground maintenance problem without realising the impact he would have on the whole country”



The learners will, at this point be quite clear about the knowledge being offered and will be engaged because there is no extraneous material to distract them. Additionally, it is possible to consider an interactivity that will be used to test the learners' understanding of the topic, as a pre-test.

The subject matter expert will have a good idea of the range and scope of material that may be available to share with the learner. By discussing with the subject matter expert and the development team, you will be able to clarify, refine and define specific parts that you want to include in the online module unit and also identify how to present them.



As each unit is going to be unique, it is difficult to pre-define what the final content might be or what to include or not to include. The following questions might help you make some of those decisions for yourself:

Will they already know this?

They will disengage if they think you are telling them what they already know.

Will they think this speaks to the outcome?

Look at it from their point of view, not yours.

Is it the critical information they need?

If they can implement easily, they will engage further.

Is it up-to-date and current?

Anyone can Google old stuff, give them what is relevant today.

Is it just 'nice-to-know'?

Refer to it but put it in the knowledge bank with a link.

If you had to cut the content by 50%, would you keep this in?

Look at it from their view again.

Is it fun?

Humour is a powerful tool – it is OK to have a bit of fun.



5. Present the Content

Now that you have decided what content is going in each of the module units, it's time for you to think about how you can present it creatively. Using a variety of effective presentation techniques will help you in:

- Keeping learners engaged
- Making complex concepts simpler to grasp
- Improving retention of knowledge
- Organizing content into smaller, digestible chunks

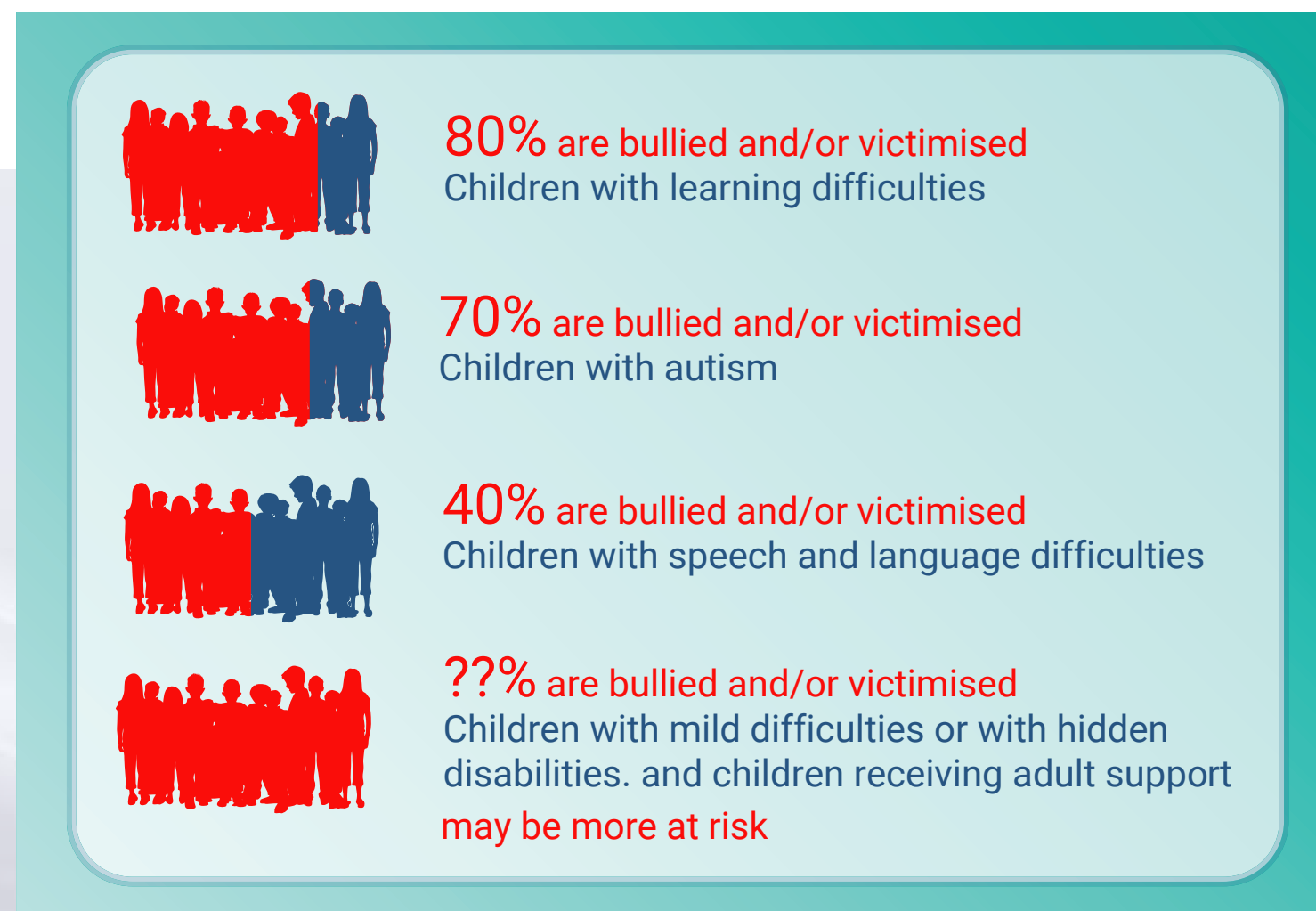
However, it is important to note that content remains at the core of any presentation technique. Presentation should be relevant to the content and should add value to it. Otherwise, it will distract the learners or could even make it complex for them.



5.1 Infographics

Many learners prefer pictures to words; and in an online environment, this is even more important. If you have a grouping of static information, don't bury it in the narrative; but think of an interesting infographic instead. The development team can come up with some ideas about how to present it for you.

Think about your audience and the overall tone you want to maintain as per the subject, so the infographic can be created more or less seriously.



5.2 Interactivities

Interactivity is an interchange between the online course and the learner in terms of action, comprehension or thinking. Interactivities, if done well, are the most engaging means of delivering learning online. Development team will have the experience and expertise to help devise appropriate interactivities for your module units based on the content you have. Talk to them when you have the skeleton of your content ready, so you don't waste time putting content together in the wrong formats.

Interactivities can deliver presentations, practice (ones that you cannot get wrong) and more rigorous testing. The following, by no means exhaustive, are content types that lend themselves to interactivities .

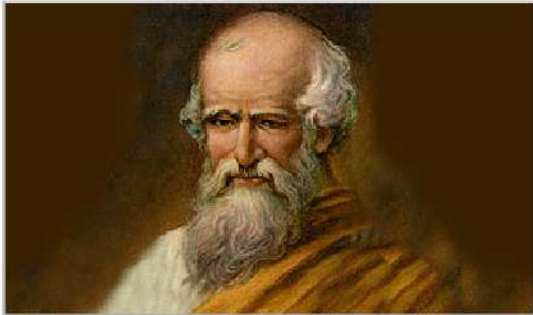
Series of Statements: Simple series of points/highlights that cannot be dressed up any other way.

Great Mathematicians

Archimedes of Syracuse 287 - 212 B.C.E.

Archimedes of Syracuse is generally regarded as the greatest mathematician and scientist of antiquity.

His major writings on mathematics included contributions on plane equilibriums, the sphere, the cylinder, spirals, conoids and spheroids, the parabola, "Archimedes Principle" of buoyancy, and remarkable work on the measurement of a circle.



Next

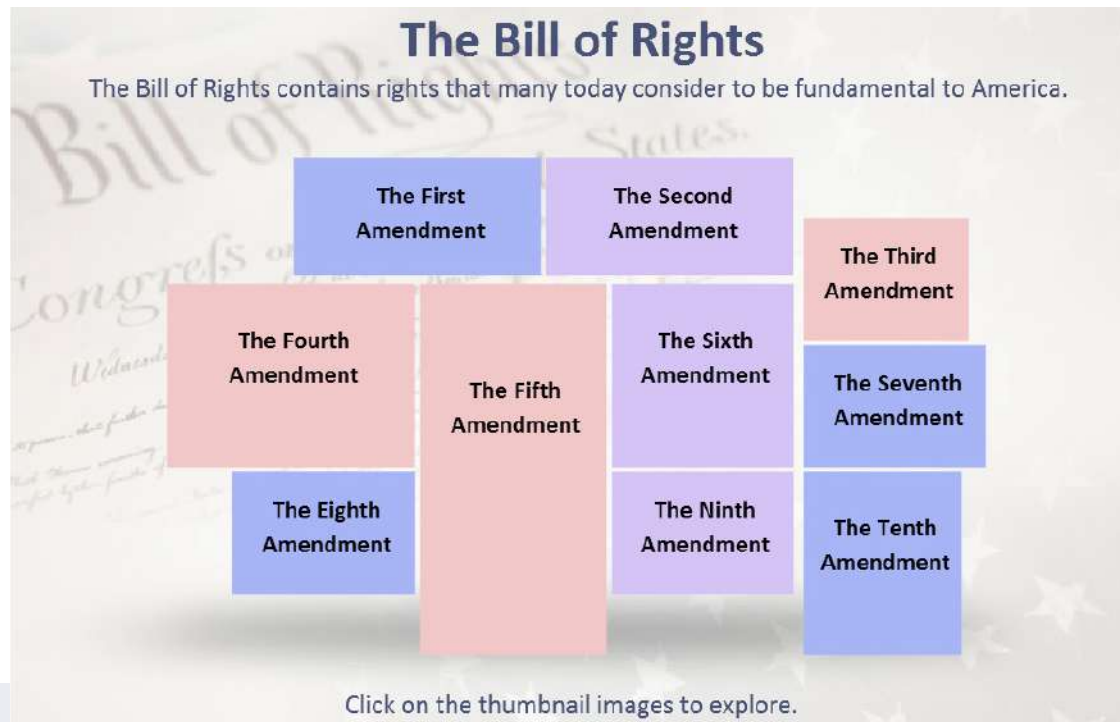
Verification of the Property

In case where the **property is ready** or is being resold the bank verifies the ownership, maintenance, age of property, quality of construction, locality and required legal clearances. The banks have qualified valuators, which assess the value of property on various parameters and decide on the amount of loan.

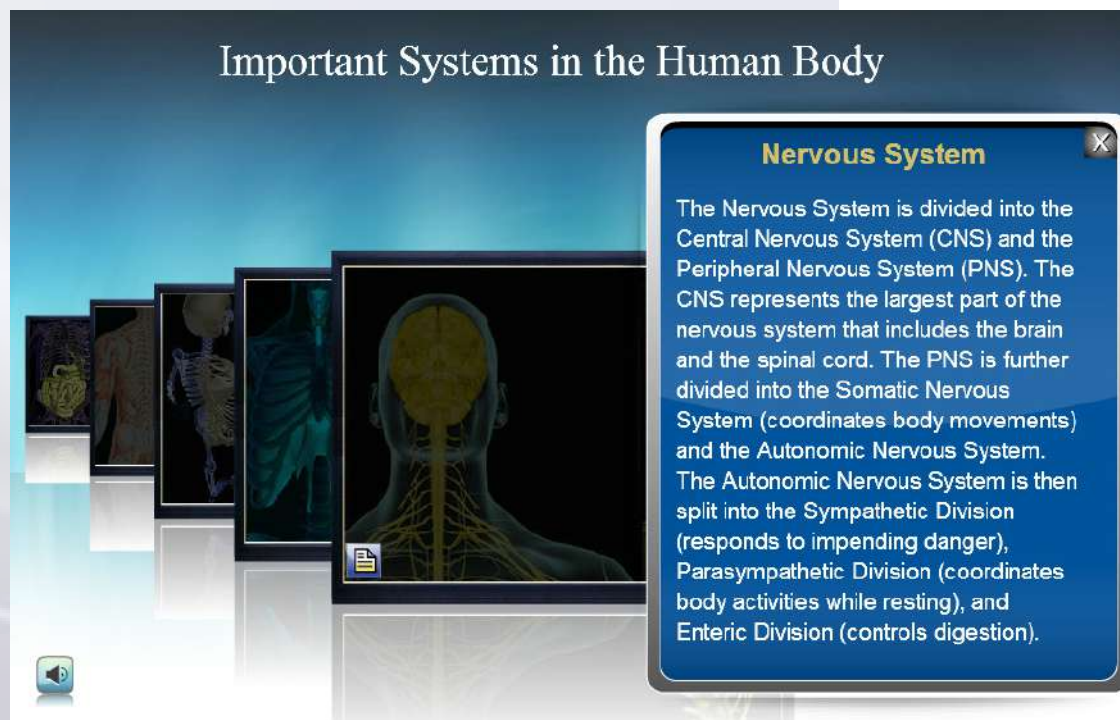
Click on the duster to view the next whiteboard content.

Restart

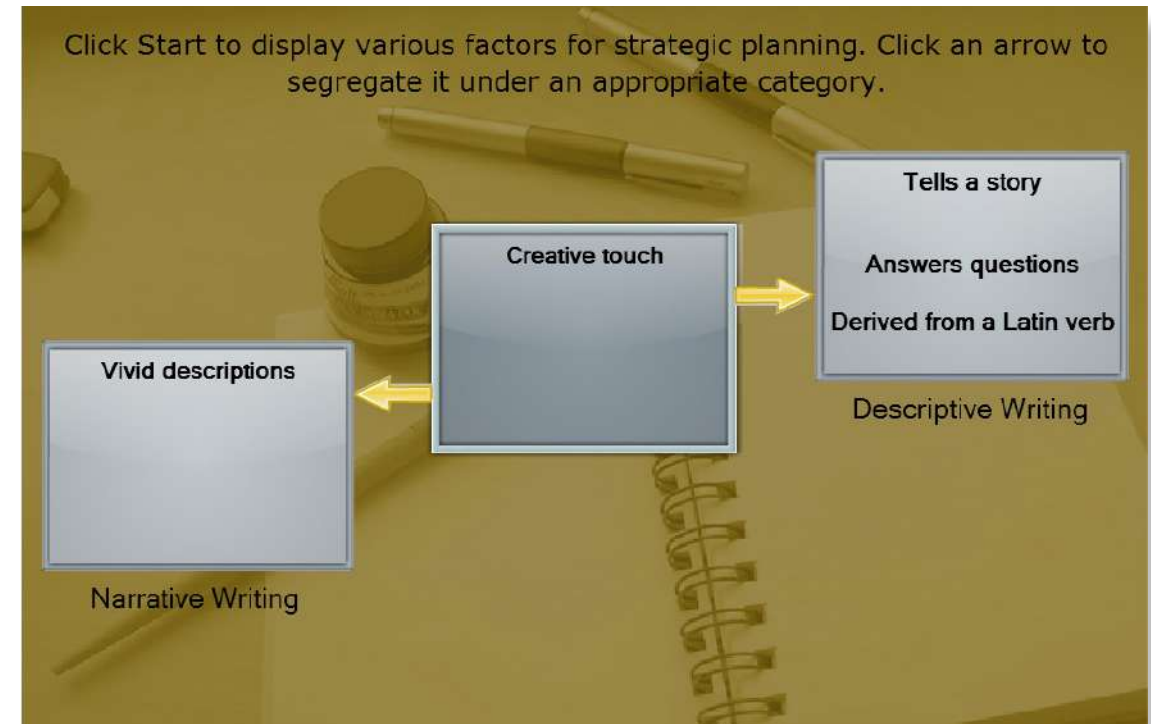
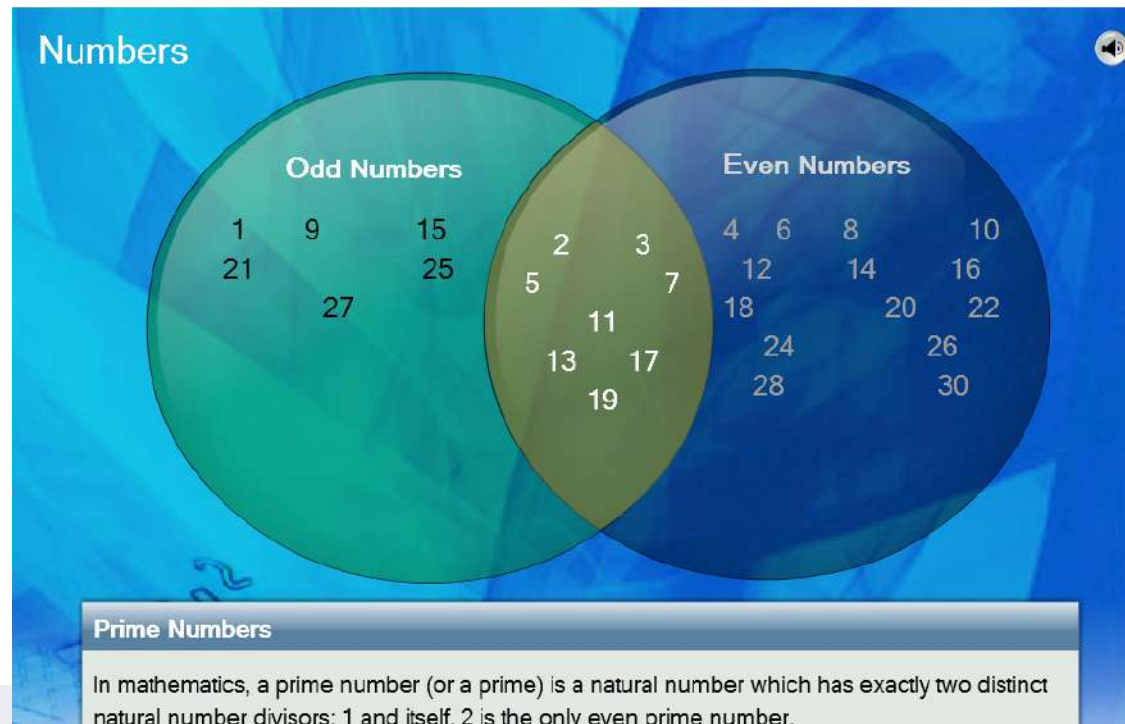
Lists: Items, actions, rules, etc. which may be in priority order or functionality order.



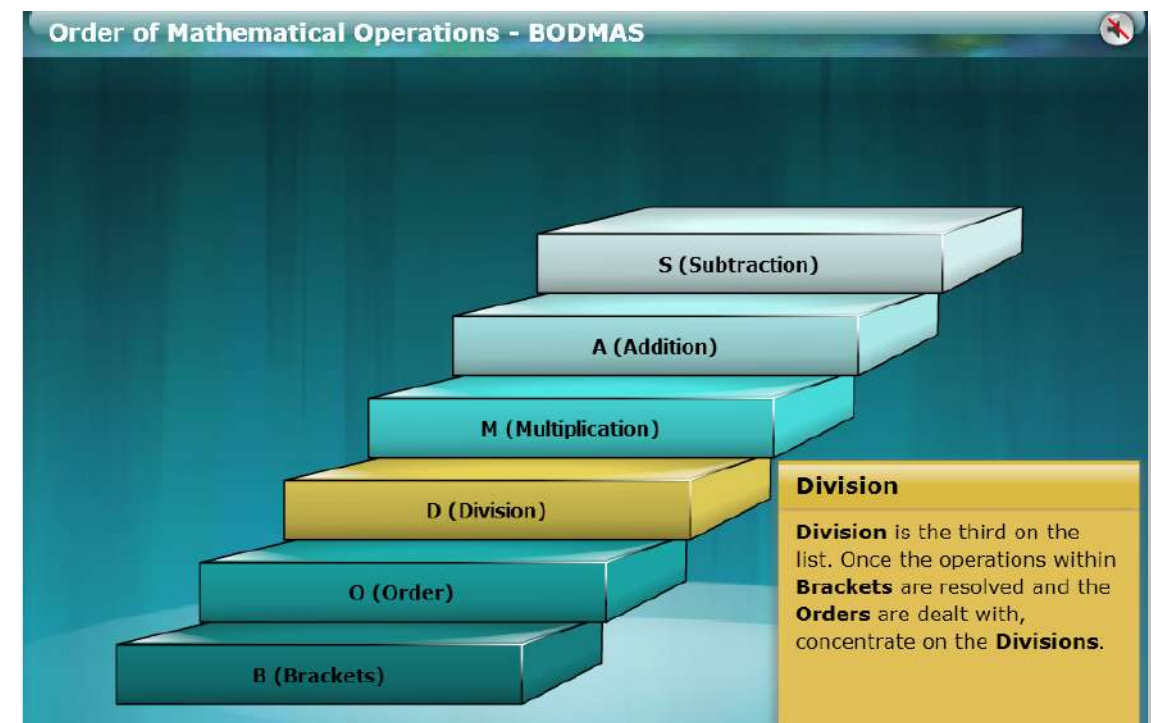
Explanations: A group of products, headings, actions along with simple explanations about them.



Classifications: Items you want to sort by their attributes; or statements that group together.



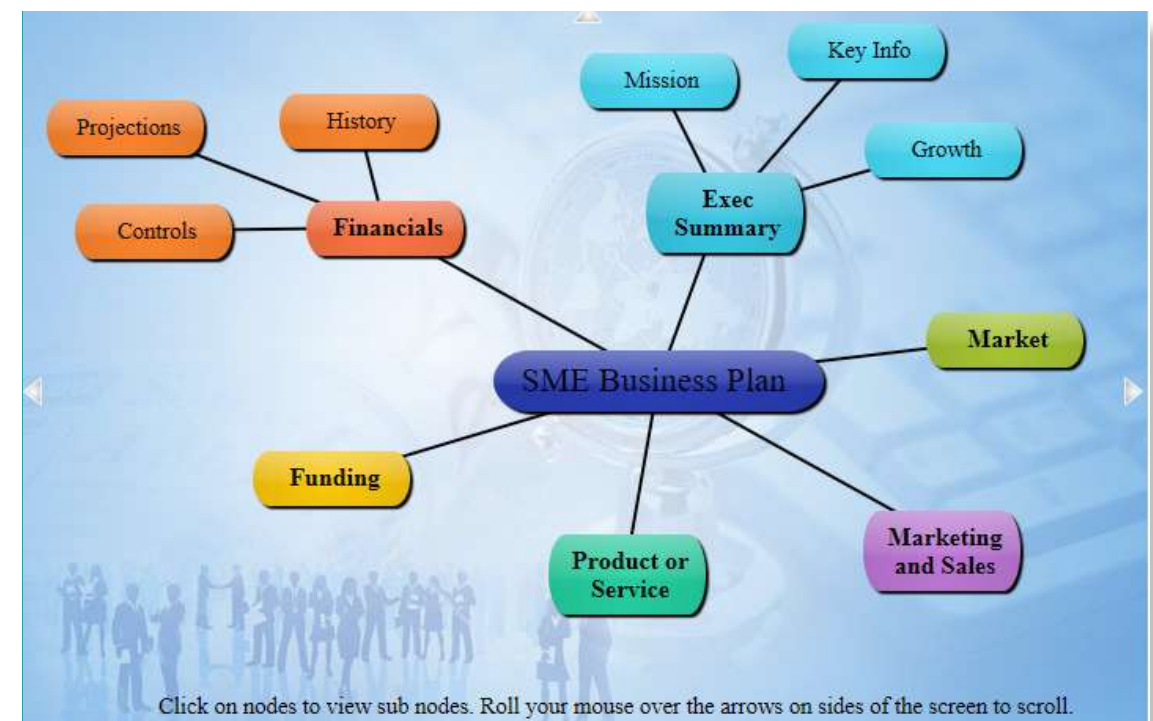
Processes: A series of actions or steps taken in a particular sequence.



Timelines: A series of events or milestones happening within a specified time period.



Hierarchies: Items ranked according to their relative status or importance.



Relationships: A group of items with sequential or non-sequential relationships.

Hospital Management

For the management of a hospital, it is very important to categorize the patients to ensure that **Intensive Care Unit (ICU)** admissions are provided to critical patients. This 2X2 matrix will help you categorize the patients seeking ICU admission and benefit the patients. Effort should be taken to reduce the number of patients in the **NO - NO** quadrant.

Comfort Care Only

YES - YES Admitted to an intensive care unit for comfort care only	YES - NO Admitted to a non-intensive care unit for comfort care only
NO - YES Admitted to an intensive care unit for active treatment	NO - NO Admitted to a non-intensive care unit for active treatment



Note: The interactivity examples shown above are created with Raptivity, the rapid eLearning interactivity building tool.

No matter which interactivity you choose, you need to make sure that you create the content as succinctly as possible and provide relevant images to be used.

5.3 Videos

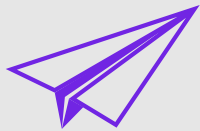
Videos are always good to embed into learning material, but they are better at 45 seconds than 4.5 minutes. They should be strong on message, or the learner will drift away.

There are various ways to use videos and make them interactive and more engaging for learners. For example, using interactivities, you can present test questions at logical sections within the video. Thus learners can be made active participants rather than passive recipients of the video.



5.4 Activities

You can always try to include an activity that the learner can perform after they leave the online learning. This might be something practical, which the learners may do individually or within a group.



What you can do

Work with one or two other colleagues. observe a meeting with a Parent or Carer (this will of course have to be negotiated with the family beforehand, with sensitivity and discretion), and observe how often they use open questioning to actively involve the Parent or Carer in constructive dialogue.

5.5 Reflection

Reflection is a good way to offer learners something to think about before they leave the page. But in an online environment, the reflection questions should be relevant and provoking enough to resonate with the learners, on their own.

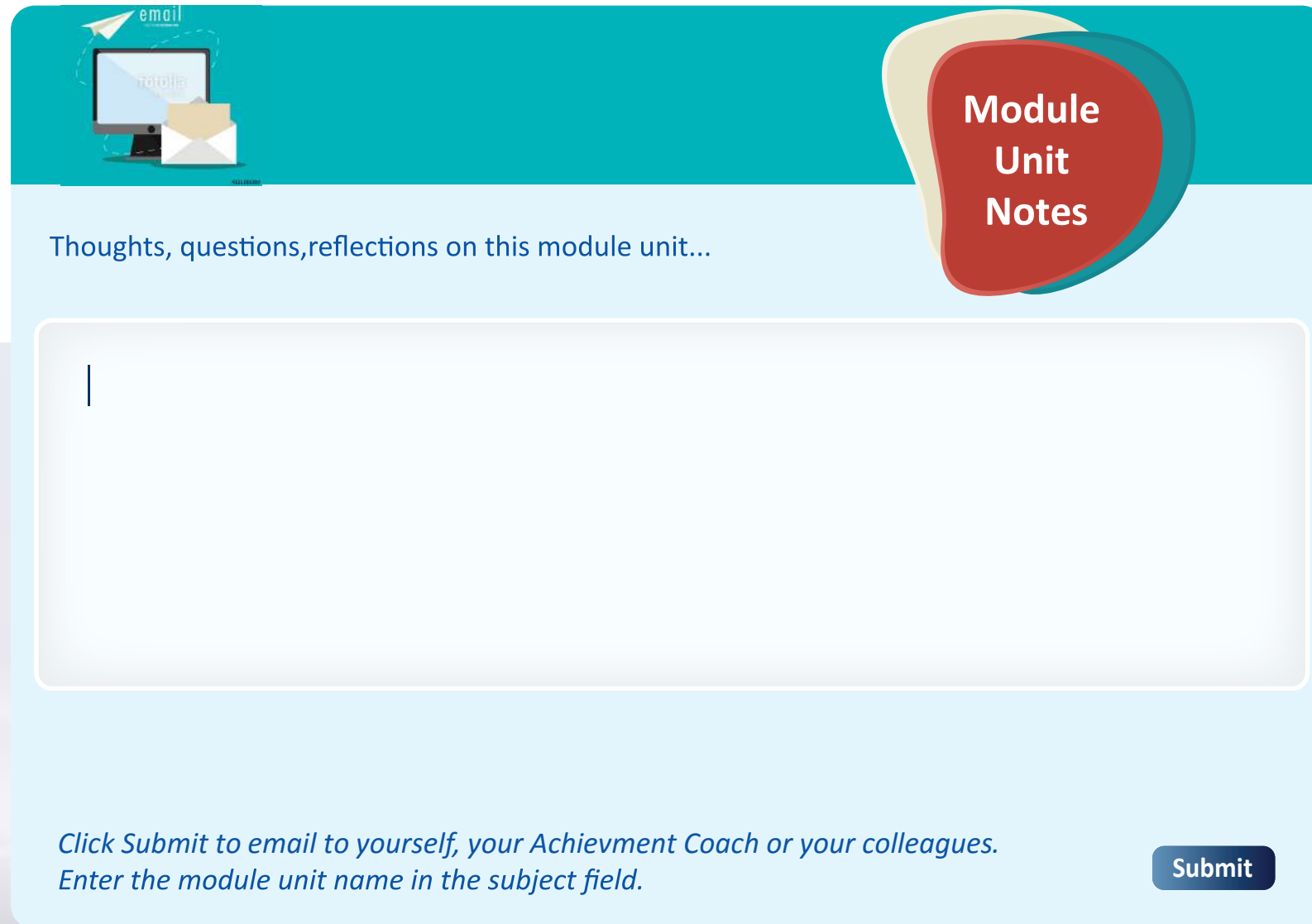


Reflection

Consider what ‘reasonable adjustments’ or ‘proactive measures’ your school might have made in using assistive technologies (including hardware and software) to support disabled young people and those with special educational needs. Assistive technologies more likely have been used to allow access across the curriculum. But can they be applied to develop, promote and support a disabled child’s fun and friendships?

5.6 Feedback

At the end of every module unit, there should be an interactivity that enables the learner to write free notes about any issues they want to revisit, discuss with a supervisor or share with colleagues.



The form is titled "Module Unit Notes" and is designed for learners to provide feedback. It features a teal header with an "email" icon and a red "Module Unit Notes" badge. The main area is a light blue box with a large white text input field. Below the input field, there is a "Submit" button and a note about email distribution.

email

Module Unit Notes

Thoughts, questions, reflections on this module unit...

|

*Click Submit to email to yourself, your Achievement Coach or your colleagues.
Enter the module unit name in the subject field.*

Submit

5.7 Knowledge, Tools and Links

Modules units, if needed, should be supported by resources that can be gathered in a library of knowledge, tools and links. Don't fall into the trap of loading this library up with material that the learner has to work through without guidance. Do add links in the body of unit but ensure that they do not break the flow of the learning or distract the learner.



End Result

The designer/developer building your module will be learning about your topic as they build it. If the content you provide is well organised, clear and interesting, then the module that is produced will reflect the enthusiasm you have generated in the designer!

Online learning is fun, and you should have equal fun sharing your knowledge and experience with your learners. While creating online content, think of different ways to keep learners continuously engaged and make effective learning happen at the same time. By doing thorough groundwork such as having clear content structure, setting learning outcomes and deciding what you want to include, building the actual content could be a piece of cake.

Together with the subject matter experts and the development team, you can then create the best possible outcomes for the learners.





Caryl Oliver,
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Caryl Oliver has been a leading voice in online and mobile learning for some 12 years and is a founding director of the International Association for Mobile Learning. Prior to that Caryl developed a series of technological developments for her own business including the first online accommodation inventory management system. In the past, Caryl has also been associated with Achievement for All, a charity that assists schools to provide support for vulnerable children.

Caryl speaks regularly at conferences, seminars and workshop on using technology to deliver training and online learning at all levels. While a Director of Australia's largest Tourism and Hospitality College, Caryl developed learning by means of handheld devices – then a first. She went on to introduce mobile learning throughout the vocational education sector. It was during this time that she first started working with Raptivity and embraced it as an engaging and valuable support for online and mobile learning. Now based in the UK, Caryl is working as a consultant for **Learning Solutions**.



Raptivity is a powerful interactivity building tool that enables creation of stunning interactions for online/eLearning courses, quickly and easily, without any programming. It offers a rich collection of 190+ Flash and HTML5 compliant interactions templates to choose from, which span across categories like games, simulations, brainteasers, interactive diagrams, virtual worlds, and many more.

These interactions are conveniently grouped into various categories for the users to choose from. Getting started with Raptivity is as simple as picking an interaction template and customizing it with your own content. You can integrate Raptivity output seamlessly with any authoring tool(s) that you use, such as: Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Captivate, Articulate Storyline, Articulate Presenter, Lectora, Claro, SoftChalk and iSpring. You can host Raptivity interactions on all major LMSs and collaboration tools, such as: Adobe Connect, Blackboard, Canvas, TalentLMS, SumTotal and Moodle.

Click here to know more about Raptivity.