Create e-learning content that actually works

Creating engaging e-learning content isn't often easy, at least not at first. You need to learn new tools, adapt to diverse online teaching environments and maybe even change your whole mindset about learning. Don't get discouraged, though, even if it seems like your online courses aren't working as well as you would like them to. There are a lot of ways for you to improve them.

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ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL ASPECTS OF ONLINE LEARNING IS YOUR CONTENT:

Your text documents, your videos, your assignments and all that good stuff that helps people learn the subject you're teaching. This piece will focus on creating and structuring content that is exciting, engaging, and clear to your learners.

WE WILL HELP YOU CREATE ENTIRELY NEW E-LEARNING CONTENT AS WELL AS TWEAK YOUR EXISTING LEARNING MATERIALS. DIVE IN!

1. Give your online learners clear instructions

Do your learners know what they are expected to do? This knowledge gap can become a legitimate issue in online learning if instructions are not provided correctly. At worst, it will impair a learner's progress so much that they will drop out from the whole course, and it's not even entirely unreasonable of them if you think about it. Do you remember the last time you were in a situation where you didn't quite know what you were supposed to do and how frustrating that felt? If you don't, consider yourself extremely lucky, but trust us, it can break your motivation.

Giving instructions in a physical classroom setting and doing it in an online environment is not the same. There are often more back and forth interaction when you're providing instructions face-to-face. In that situation, it's easier to ask follow-up questions and experience important "aha" moments when the other person is standing right in front of you. Interaction, in general, feels more natural. In digital learning, teachers and learners don't necessarily meet even once during a course. Even if you organise regular video lectures, the participants don't have the same opportunities to go through their study plans. They might not feel encouraged to take the time to discuss their work which will lead them to keep their problems to themselves and possibly lose motivation.
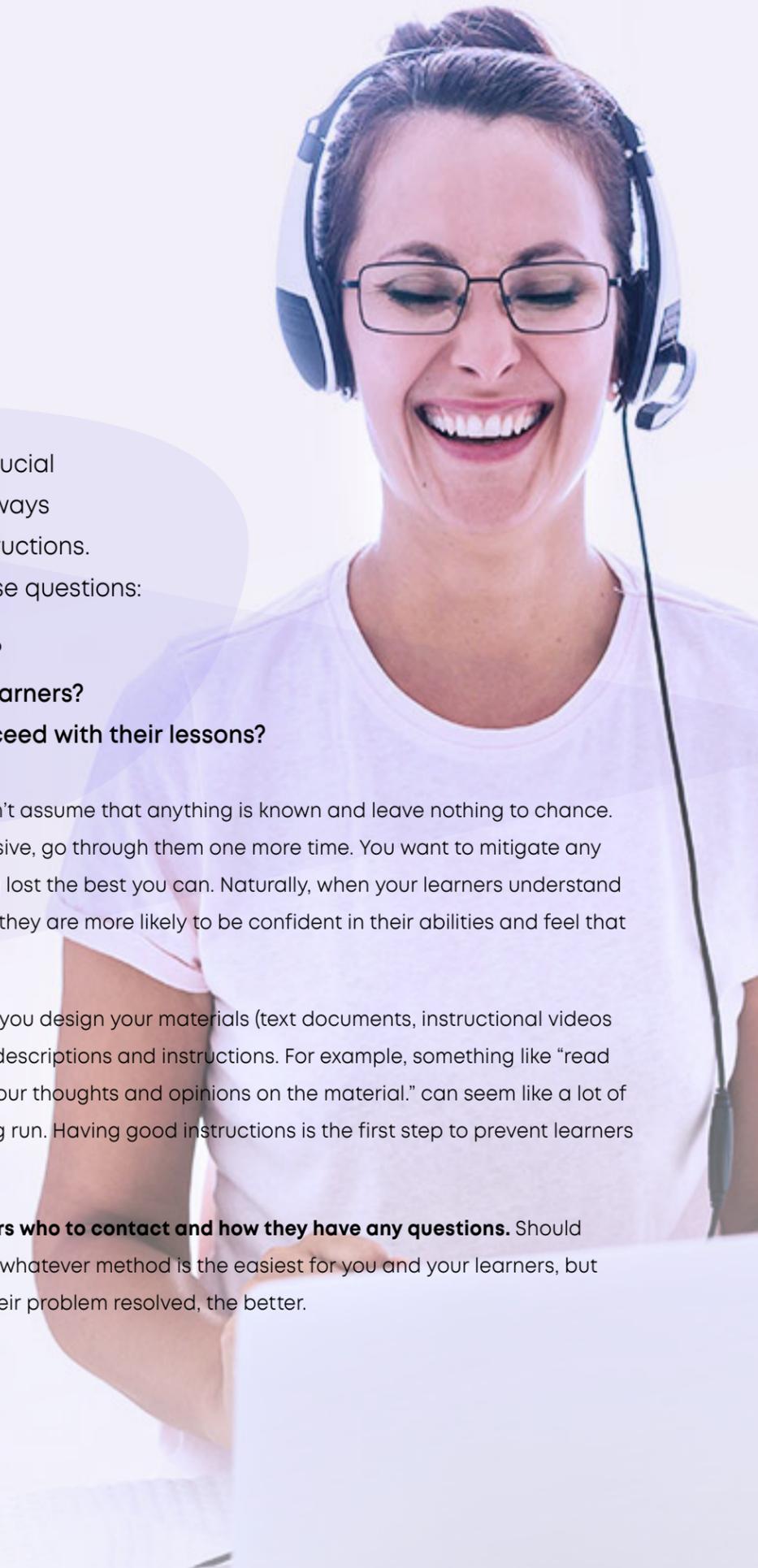
As you notice, instructions are crucial in digital learning. You should always provide extensive and clear instructions. They should at least answer these questions:

- What does the course cover?
- What is expected from the learners?
- How should the learners proceed with their lessons?

Explain everything in great detail. Don't assume that anything is known and leave nothing to chance. If you think your instructions are extensive, go through them one more time. You want to mitigate any feelings of confusion or sense of being lost the best you can. Naturally, when your learners understand what they should do and how to do it, they are more likely to be confident in their abilities and feel that they can be successful.

Then take it even a step further. When you design your materials (text documents, instructional videos etc.), make sure all of them have their descriptions and instructions. For example, something like "read the attached article and write down your thoughts and opinions on the material." can seem like a lot of extra work, but it will pay off in the long run. Having good instructions is the first step to prevent learners from dropping out of your course.

Finally, don't forget to tell your learners who to contact and how they have any questions. Should it be by email, chat or phone? Choose whatever method is the easiest for you and your learners, but remember that the quicker they get their problem resolved, the better.

2. How does your e-learning content look? Boring or engaging

When you have your instructions in order, or even before that, you should take a step back and look at your learning materials as a whole. **What do you see?** Is it a solid grey wall of text, or is there some colourful variety of content sprinkled between the course? Any type of content can be engaging, but learning might get monotonous if you don't mix them at all. Think of it as eating the same food every day; you will eventually get bored of it no matter how delicious it tastes the first time.

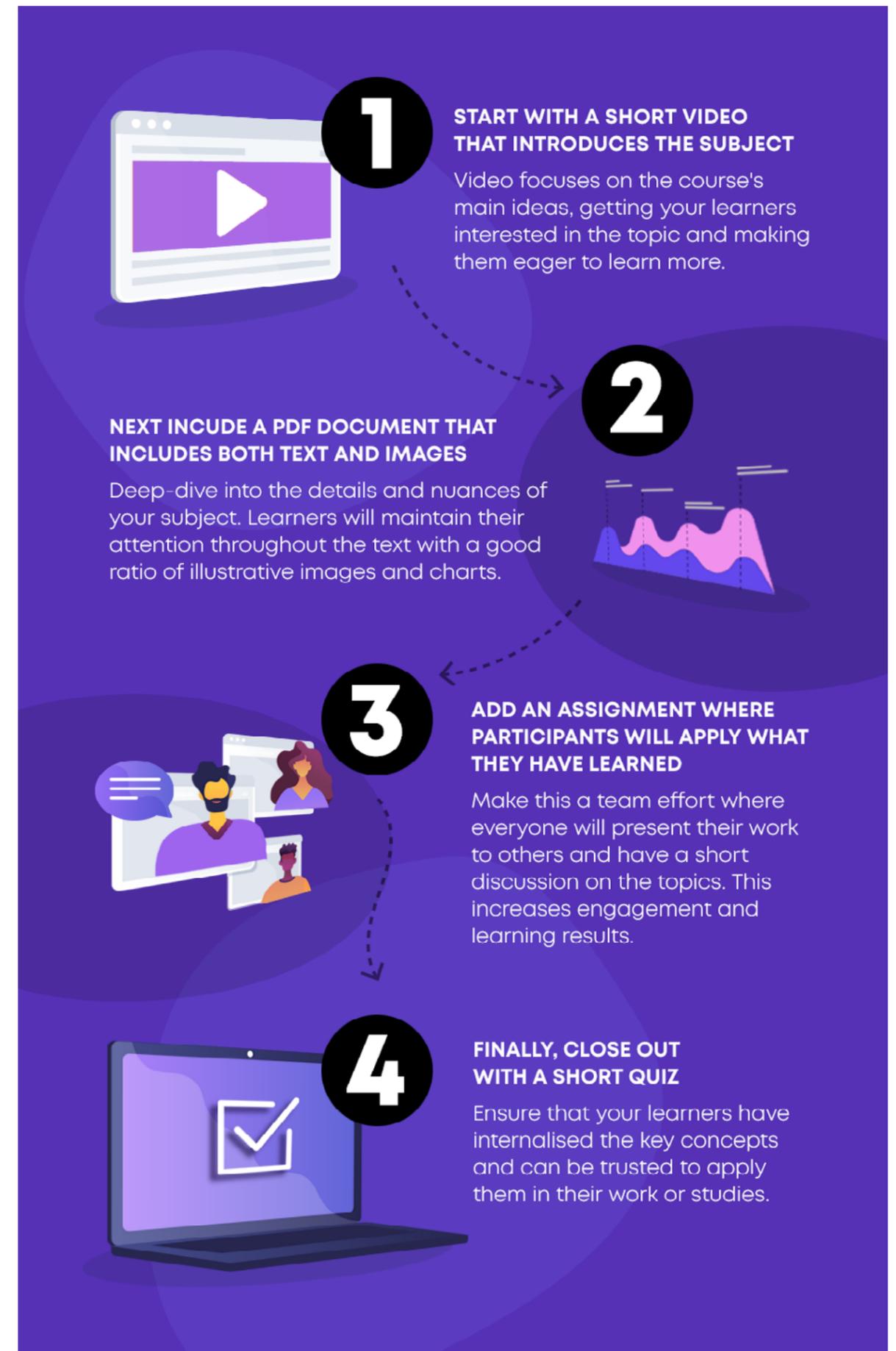**The central point here is that you should try to include various content types in your online courses.** You can use text documents, short videos, assignments or VR games. Only the sky's the limit. If you have only used text documents, try including some videos or other media content to engage and excite learners.

To make your e-learning content shine, you should make it interactive. By ensuring that learners can quickly post comments about the content, ask questions, discuss any issues, they might have and share notes. It helps them get more out of your materials and to learn better. Claned, for example, is built this kind of contextual collaboration. Allowing users to markup content for personal and group use, comment on specific elements inside the materials, whether video or pdf. Other learners are also able to respond to those comments in context.

As the final point, you should ask for feedback from your learners to determine which parts of your content are working and which parts aren't. Without honest comments from the people who use your e-learning content, you can only make educated guesses. You can study theory and practices to produce quality materials, but it's ultimately your learners who will know for sure what works and what doesn't work. It would be a good idea to ask for short feedback for every module your learners complete.

Learners might not always be able to identify what is wrong with a particular piece of content, but they will point out the materials that aren't performing well. The insight allows you to take a closer look at those pieces of content and think of ways to improve them. Claned platform analytics, for example, can provide more specific insight into why those materials are failing to perform.

You see, digital technology gives us access to so many options for delivering information. It's wise to use them.

1 START WITH A SHORT VIDEO THAT INTRODUCES THE SUBJECT

Video focuses on the course's main ideas, getting your learners interested in the topic and making them eager to learn more.

2 NEXT INCUDE A PDF DOCUMENT THAT INCLUDES BOTH TEXT AND IMAGES

Deep-dive into the details and nuances of your subject. Learners will maintain their attention throughout the text with a good ratio of illustrative images and charts.

3 ADD AN ASSIGNMENT WHERE PARTICIPANTS WILL APPLY WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED

Make this a team effort where everyone will present their work to others and have a short discussion on the topics. This increases engagement and learning results.

4 FINALLY, CLOSE OUT WITH A SHORT QUIZ

Ensure that your learners have internalised the key concepts and can be trusted to apply them in their work or studies.

3. Rethinking how you do assignments in online learning

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF STUDYING?
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

At least one of the main goals should be to use the knowledge you have gained and apply it to academic and real-world situations. The way to teach this in your courses is by giving out assignments. Assignments and projects are a critical step in the learning process. Having learners apply the knowledge they have gained allows them to connect the information to their experience and internalise it.

As an assignment, you might ask your learners to write an essay or do a presentation related to the course topic. These are tried and true techniques, but, like with other course content, you might want to consider adding a nice twist to your assignments as well. You can supply a variety of creative challenges. For example, instead of writing a report, you have learners make a video. You can use all forms of interactive content to motivate learners. Remember that not every type of assignment is for everyone. If it's possible, you can even let your learners choose for themselves the medium they find the most interesting. Recording a short podcast can fit some learners better, whereas others prefer a more traditional written report.

Like with other e-learning content, you would be wise to include teamwork in your assignments. Studies have shown that learning together increases motivation and promotes better learning results. Creating an environment that encourages working together makes learners engage more with your content.

For example, learners can be divided into groups where they collaborate to complete a collective assignment, such as a report. Another way to include interaction is to have learners complete their assignments individually then present their work to each other. With time to discuss their work, the group can refine the most exciting ideas and arrive at new discoveries.

To make collaboration easy, you should provide designated spaces (e.g. an online group space on a learning management system (LMS)) and allocated time for group discussions where learners can ask and answer questions from each other. Many people are inclined to put more effort into their work when seen and reviewed by their peers.

The main takeaways TLDR

Many big and small aspects affect your online courses' success; none of them should be disregarded. Overall you can always find ways to improve your courses even more, but if you start with what we have discussed here, you will be on the right track to offer better education and training.

Here are the main points to take away from this article to improve your e-learning content:

1. **Provide unambiguous instructions to mitigate any feelings of confusion**
2. **Add variety to your learning materials: text, videos, audio files, assignments, VR games etc.**
3. **Request feedback from your learners often**
4. **Use assignments and add variety to them as well**
5. **Include learner collaboration in your assignments**
6. **Encourage learners to collaborate in general to achieve better learning outcomes**

USE THESE INSTRUCTIONS TO START CREATING KILLER CONTENT AND INCREASE THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF YOUR ONLINE COURSES. MAYBE THAT COULD BE YOUR NEXT ASSIGNMENT TO YOURSELF.