

10-Step Rapid Course Creation Planning Template

Why Use This Template

It can be tempting to start by creating a series of slides as a short cut to creating your course. After all, you'll end up with slides. So, why not start with slides?

The problem is that even though it seems like a short cut, starting with slides actually takes longer. This is because you are trying to decide what to teach and what order to teach it in all in your head. Our brains weren't made to do this.

Don't believe me? Try this experiment. How many combinations of the letters A and B are there? How many combinations of the letters, A, B, and C are there? How about A, B, C, and D? See how quickly you get stuck? And, these are just letters.

When you are creating a course, you are dealing with complex ideas, not simple letters. So, you get stuck a lot sooner. This leads to seemingly endless revisions and an end product that just doesn't seem as good as it could be, although you won't be able to quite put your finger on why. This leads to more revisions.

I can remember a class where my client started with slides. After 53 rounds of revisions, we laid all 80 slides on the floor and started swapping them around. In the end, the course turned out okay. But, it could have been a lot better and it could have been done a lot faster if the client hadn't started with slides.

How to Use This Template

Using this template is simple. Start at the beginning and work your way through to the end, no skipping around. However, you can stop and pick up again anywhere within the template.

Write your "plan" in a separate place so that you can re-use this template again and again.

Once you've completed this template, you'll be able to put your slides together in a snap. You'll know what should go on each slide and the best order in which to sequence the slides. Even better, your course will have a logical flow that is easy to teach and that is easy to follow.

The 10 Steps

1) Determine the goal of your course.

Write a *single sentence* that describes what you want learners to be able to DO at the end of the course.

2) Decide how to organize the information in your course.

The organization of your course should *mirror the actual work* learners will be doing as closely as humanly possible.

At work, we generally:

- Complete tasks
- Solve problems
- Answer questions

Pick one of these organization schemes.

3) List your high level topics.

The organization scheme you pick, determines the topics you'll cover.

Topics can be:

- Tasks if you are teaching multiple tasks or steps if you are teaching a single task,
- Problems or,
- Questions

List the tasks, steps, problems, or questions you'll cover now.

4) Group your high level topics into logical chunks.

Once you've listed the tasks, steps, problems, or questions, group them into logical chunks. Your goal is to include no more than 7 to 9 tasks, steps, problems, or questions in each chunk. This is because people can remember a maximum of 7 to 9 things at a time. More than that is overwhelming.

Grouping by time, such as weekly tasks or post-sale questions, works most often. You can also group by type, such as financing questions.

The 10 Steps, cont'd

5) Sequence your groups.

Here are some ideas for sequencing:

- Logical order in which people will deal with the task, step, problem or question
- Frequency of occurrence
- From easy to difficult

6) Develop your detailed content.

Here you will flesh out the details of the content you will cover in each topic. What you are writing will eventually end up on a slide or in your instructor notes.

You may think some of what you are writing is self-evident. But, you'd be surprised by what gaps in understanding learners have. So, make sure to include this level of detail even if you think it is, or should be, obvious.

Bear in mind you don't need to write an essay. Notes that you can use to identify key points and to teach from are sufficient.

It can be tempting to jump to creating your slides at this point. But, taking the time to write your content first will make your slide creation go much faster. So, fight the temptation.

Here are the details of what you should write depending on type of topic.

For each task, write:

- A brief description of the task (what)
- The reason learners need to do the task (why)
- The conditions that indicate learners should do the task (when)
- The place learners will do the task (where)
- The people, besides learners, who are involved (who)
- The steps to do the task (how)

The 10 Steps, cont'd

6) Develop your detailed content. (cont'd)

For each step, write:

- A brief description of the step (what)
- The reason the step must be done and can't be skipped (why)
- The people involved in the step (who)
- The materials, supplies, information, equipment, etc. that are needed to do the step (what)
- The place learners will do the step (where)
- The conditions that indicate the step should be done, if applicable (when)
- The instructions to do the step and the quality criteria that indicates the step was done correctly (how)

For each problem, write:

- A description of the problem (what)
- The reason the problem occurs (why)
- The conditions that indicate this particular problem is occurring (when)
- The place this problem is likely to occur, if applicable (where)
- The people most likely to be involved in some way with the problem (who)
- The steps to resolve the problem (how)

For each question, write:

- The question (what)
- The reason someone might ask the question (why)
- The conditions under which this question might come up (when)
- The place this question is likely to come up (where)
- The people likely to ask the question (who)
- The answer to the question (how)

The 10 Steps, cont'd

7) Create your slides.

Create the following slides:

- a) Title slide with the name of your course
- b) Goal slide that shows the overall goal of your course
- c) Overview slide that shows all of your groups
- d) Divider slide with the name of the first group
- e) Group slides that highlight the key points
- f) Thank you slide to conclude your course

Repeat steps c and d for each group. As much as possible, follow the same flow for each group. For example, you might start with a “what” slide, followed by a “why” slide, and finish up with a series of “how” slides.

As you create your slides, try to stick to the 6-pack rule to ensure the content is legible. The 6-pack rule says you can have one title plus 5 bullet points on each slide. You can also add an image. And, you can create some slides with just a title and an image. To get ideas for images, check out <http://billiondollargraphics.com/graphic-cheat-sheet/>

You are probably wondering what happens to all the content you wrote that didn't end up on a slide. This content becomes part of your instructor notes. It doesn't have to be on a slide to be part of your course.

8) Add stories and examples.

At this point, what you've got is just the facts. People don't do a very good job of learning and remembering facts. However, they are hardwired to learn from and remember stories.

Review your slides and look for places where you can add stories, examples, and anecdotes to illustrate your key points and make learning sticky.

The 10 Steps, cont'd

9) Add activities.

Activities do not have to, and in fact shouldn't be, super clever. The purpose of activities is to give learners a chance to practice what they will be expected to DO after the training. The more closely activities mirror the work learners will have to do after training, the better. Avoid the temptation to add in activities just for the sake of interactivity. These types of activities are a waste of time.

Here are some ideas for activities that mirror the job:

- Case studies
- Role-plays
- Presentations
- Games that directly mirror the job (E.g., a race to scan bar codes)
- Storytelling

Once you've figured out the activities, you'll need to:

- Add them to your slide deck:
 - Introduction
 - Instructions
 - Wrap up
 - Transition to the next topic
- Create any handouts
- Gather any additional supplies you'll need to do the activities

10) Check your work.

Review your slides and your notes to make sure that if learners learned everything you plan to cover, they would be able to achieve the goal you set for the course. Even better, run your slides and notes by a colleague to see if they think you missed anything.

More than likely you will have a set amount of time in which to deliver the training. Run through your materials to get a sense of timing.

Here are a few "gotchas" to watch out for:

- People will arrive late at the start of class
- People will return late from breaks
- Activities will take about 25% to 50% longer than you think they will
- Questions will take more time to answer than you anticipate

The 10 Steps, cont'd

10) Check your work. (cont'd)

Once you've looked at timing from a worst-case scenario perspective, look for places you can trim content.

Here's a key thing to remember. People are not computers. You can't download a bunch of information into their heads for later retrieval.

This means you should really cover only what's essential for them to meet the goal of your course. They will need to learn some things on the job.

However, if you are very worried about what you'll have time to cover versus what they need to know, you can always create a reference guide they can refer to after the training.

By all means, try very hard not to cut activities to save time. If people don't have a chance to practice, what you are teaching turns into a big blur and they may leave your class more confused than when they came in. Practice makes perfect!