



I N F O R M A T I O N

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E-LEARNING TRAINING GUIDE

How to get the most out of your e-learning course

Like most of us, you probably “learned how to learn” in a classroom. But that was then, and this is now, the era of e-learning. E-learning is a super-efficient way to learn – if you use it right. Here are 10 tips to help you get the most out of your e-learning experience:

- 1. Be an active e-learner.** In a traditional classroom, the instructor takes care of the student. The instructor sets up the classroom, maintains order, keeps you on-schedule, and even double-checks to make sure you are learning what you need to learn. By contrast, in an e-learning course, the learner has to work harder at all of these chores. Success at e-learning requires that you take an active role in making learning happen. Sound difficult? It's not, it just takes concentration. And most adults enjoy the sense of control they get in an e-learning environment.
- 2. Set aside time.** Compared to classroom learning, e-learning tends to be a time-saver. However, you do have to invest some quality time if you want to see results. That means forwarding your calls and putting up an “*In Training until __:__ – No Interruptions Except for Emergencies*” sign on your cubicle. It also means resisting the temptation to catch up on your paperwork – or your Solitaire game – during the training session.
- 3. Take control of your environment.** E-learning is work – a special kind of work that requires you to concentrate, think, listen, and interact with the computer screen. If there is too much noise and activity around you, you can miss out on important learning. If the room is too bright or too dark, you may not see all that you need to see. If the area is too hot or too cold, you may be sleeping or shivering rather than thinking about learning. To the extent possible, do what you can to minimize distractions. E-learning does not require a special room, but it does require an active learner who does what it takes to make learning possible.
- 4. Meet the system requirements.** Before the training begins, make sure your computer meets the system requirements for your e-learning course. Taking a training course without the right computer system is like watching TV without any audio – you may be getting only half the message, or you may be getting the wrong message altogether!
- 5. Do the pre-work.** Many e-learning courses ask you to do a pre-work assignment before the first class session. If you receive a pre-work assignment, do it! The point of most pre-work assignments is to get all the learners up to a certain skill level before the class begins. If you skip the pre-work, you may not be up-to-speed during the session – and you will have to play catch-up for the rest of

the training.

6. **List 3 things you must learn.** The typical e-learning course contains a lot of material. Your training time is limited, of course. So, how should you spend your time? An active e-learner figures it out before the course begins. If you have been assigned to the training course, ask your supervisor questions like these:
 - Which course material should you concentrate on?
 - What will you be expected to do with what you have learned?
 - Are you supposed to know material by heart? Just become familiar with the material? Learn how to use the reference material?
 - Are you supposed to use the new skills as soon as the course is over? If not, then when will you be expected to use the new skills?
 - Are you supposed to be able to use new skills on your own or use them in a team setting?
 - Are you supposed to teach what you have learned to others?

7. **Participate.** Have you ever learned something new, but couldn't remember it later when you needed to use it? If you want to retain what you learn, you have to use it – and use it as soon as possible after you learn it. In learning science, this is called immediate reinforcement. In a traditional classroom, your instructor makes sure that you receive immediate reinforcement, by including you in discussions, practice exercises, role plays, etc. Since you have little choice and nothing else to do with the class time, you participate. In e-learning there are opportunities for immediate reinforcement, as well. The difference in e-learning is that the instructor is not right in front of you, pressuring you to complete the reinforcement exercises. In e-learning, you are truly in control. It is up to you to take advantage of the reinforcement opportunities available in the e-learning program. This requires a greater investment in time and effort – but it will pay off in better learning and retention.

8. **Ask questions.** In a traditional classroom, many people feel shy about asking questions. However, as the day goes on and they see others asking for help, they feel more confident and willing to speak up for themselves. In an e-learning environment, there is that same initial shyness, that same concern that asking a question might make you look “stupid.” In addition, there are technological obstacles: “How do I send a question?” “Will I have to wait a long time before I can expect an answer?,” etc. In other words, it takes a bit more commitment to get your questions answered in an e-learning environment. Don't let that stop you. As an active e-learner, it is up to you to take the initiative and ask your questions. Your e-learning facilitator may respond immediately, table the question for later in the session, or answer you after the class.

9. **Take advantage of the extras.** Learning does not always happen in class. Most e-learning programs provide additional resources for you to use after the class. There may be links to more information about special topics. There may be worksheets or other tools for you to use back on the job. There may be reference material for you to review later on. There may even be a Troubleshooting Guide to help you deal with problems once you begin to use your new learning. After your e-learning program, take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with these “extras.” Create a Training Folder on your computer and save these materials in it so you can access them when you need them.

10. **Evaluate the course.** Was your e-learning course effective? Did you learn what you needed to learn? Did the material seem relevant to your job? Did the technology work? Were you able to get your questions answered? As an active e-learner, your opinion counts for a lot. If there is an Evaluation Sheet for the program, fill it out and return it. If you had problems with anything in the course, be as specific as possible about what those problems were. The people who put the course together will get your feedback and use it to correct problems in the future. One more thing: If the

program was very good or very bad, tell your supervisor. Your supervisor can use the information to decide if others in your work place should take the same course.