E-Learning Toolkit

for the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

by Paula Wansbrough on behalf of PRIMAL GLOW Communications, March 2024

Laptop and lightbulb images: NicePNG

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Introduction

What is e-learning?

- The use of technology to promote learning
- More than just information delivery
- E-learning encourages the user to interact with the material -- ask questions, reflect, select activities and responses, choose pathways -- and receive feedback

Examples

- Blog with or without active commenting
- Frequently asked questions (FAQ)
- Slide show
- Webinar
- Video
- Podcast
- Shared survey: user completes in a survey which, once submitted, shares the aggregated input of all respondents
- Discussion forum
- Branching activity: user can choose at various points which learning path to explore
- Quiz / question and answer activity: user answers a question and is presented with an response, the correct answer and/or a grade
- Multi-module course
- Social media posts, such as definitions, tips, answers to frequently asked questions, most effectively done as a series (e.g. dispels myths about sexual violence)
- A combination of the above

Timing

- How long it takes:
  - Can vary: from very short activities completed in a matter of minutes to multi-module courses completed over weeks or months
- When it occurs:
  - Synchronous: happens at a set time (e.g. webinar at 3PM EST, Dec. 5)
    - Suitable when
      - There is a cohesive group of people wanting to interact in real time
      - There is a presenter/instructor available at a specific time
  - Asynchronous: the learner can participate at any time; also known as self-directed

- Suitable when
  - You won't have a moderator/instructor
  - There is no cohesive group
  - Learners' schedules vary
  - Learners are motivated
  - **Blended learning** combines both synchronous and asynchronous components:
    - It includes in-person or live virtual activities, such as workshops and one-on-one sessions, with self-directed online activities
      - Example: An online course could run from Sept. 1 to Nov. 30, with webinars every Tuesday evening from 7-8PM. The discussion forum and slide presentations can be accessed at any time over the life of the course.
- How long it's offered:
  - An asynchronous training can be available for a long time
    - Keep maintenance in mind: content can grow stale, inaccurate, links become inactive

Thinking strategically

Why create an e-learning?

- To inspire better understanding of a topic by a specific group of people
- To meet a knowledge/skill gap or learning need
- To connect learners in different locations and/or with varying schedules
- To provide content in an accessible way
- To reach a large audience
- To make a process more efficient and effective
- To demonstrates an organization's expertise on a topic

Is e-learning the right solution for your problem?

Could other tools, resources or activities meet your need more effectively and efficiently?
Such as:

- Face to face event(s), such as workshop or conference
- Telephone conference call
- Print document, such as an instruction sheet or toolkit

> **Ask yourself**
>
> Is Training Really the Answer?
> https://blog.cathy-moore.com/is-training-really-the-answer-ask-the-flowchart/

Benefits of e-learning compared to other options

- Reach a larger audience
- Connect with underserved populations (e.g. isolated people, people for whom travel is a challenge, people with caregiving responsibilities and other time limitations)
- Convenient for most learners (i.e. in comparison with travelling to a location)
- Asynchronous e-learning can be done on the learner's schedule
- Can satisfy various learning styles
- May be adaptable to the learner's need (e.g. can skip optional activities)
- Can be less expensive to provide than in-person events

Challenges of e-learning compared to other options

For e-learning providers

- Requires specific skills to develop (content expertise, online learning know-how, technological savvy)
- Technology to develop and deliver may be expensive
- Must be accessible for learners with various disabilities, low internet bandwidth, limited literacy and limited English/French

> **Make it for everyone**
>
> 7 Tips for Designing Accessible E-learning
> https://www.elucidat.com/blog/designing-accessible-elearning/

- Learners may have expectations for a specific look and feel
- Often unclear how to measure success
- Asynchronous e-learnings need long-term maintenance

For learners
- Need access to and comfort with technology
- Need a conducive learning environment
- May feel isolated and unmotivated
- May be concerned about privacy

Questions to ask at the earliest stage

- What is it you want to teach? What do you have to offer?
- Does e-learning fit with your organization's mandate and mission?
  - Does it fit with your organization's strategic plan?
- Does your organization have the capacity? If not, how can you get it?
  - Requires: planning, communication and technical skills; access to technology; and a development, implementation, evaluation and maintenance plan
- Has anyone else done what you propose to do?
  - If yes, what would your e-learning offer that others haven't? (e.g. information specific to your local community, greater accessibility)
  - If no, is there a good reason why this has not been done before (e.g. the topic is too sensitive or complicated for the online environment)?
- What is your timeline?
- What is your budget?
- What are the ethical considerations?
  - Privacy (providers & learners)
  - Safety (providers & learners)
  - Accessibility (AODA)
  - Inclusivity
  - Accuracy and reliability
  - Copyright of internal and external content, resources, images
  - Legal issues, such as accuracy of the law, privacy, jurisdiction

> ### The audience you may not expect
>
> If your e-learning is openly available online, anyone from anywhere in the world can access it. Keep this in mind when talking about local services, the law or anything else that might be specific to your community.
>
> Also consider that people who have or might commit a sexual assault can access your e-learning too. What will *they* learn from your material?

Your audience: The most important part of any e-learning

User-centred

You would never create a face-to-face service without keeping support seekers in the centre of the process, right? Creating e-learning is the same way.

Who is your audience? What do they want and need to know? What formats and tools will meet their needs? What technology do they use and where and when will they do their learning?

Keep asking those questions as you plan and build your e-learning.

Who do you want to reach?

- Who is your primary audience? These are the people you are mostly focused on.
  - Your secondary audience are another group (or groups) that might also be interested in the e-learning.
- Think about basic demographics
  - Age
  - Gender identity
  - Sexual orientation
  - Ability
  - Geographic location
  - Race
  - Religion
  - Culture
  - Immigration status
  - Economic situation
  - Education
  - Employment (relevant when creating professional development training)
- Characteristics specific to your audience and topic
  - Motivations and interests
  - Accessibility needs
  - Safety needs
  - Communication and learning style
  - Access to technology (internet, data, earbuds, webcam, smartphone, laptop, tablet, desktop computer)
  - Technological skills and expectations
  - Setting (where are they learning?)
  - Time expectations

What does your audience want to learn?

- Why will someone do your e-learning? What's in it for them? What will "hook" them?
- What do they want to know? What questions do they have?
- What do *you* think the audience needs to know? How is this different from what they want to learn or know?
- Could your audience have mis-information you'll need to tackle?
    - There are so many sexual assault myths! Where to begin?
    - Consider the impact of American TV on Canadian's understanding of the law
- Understanding your learners' motivations is important and a bit tricky. Sometimes what motivates them is not what you expect.

What do they already know?

Every user comes to you with lived experience and knowledge. Tap into this to:
- Let users know you are aware of and value their experience
- Know what you don't have to explain
- Build on what they already know
- Provide relevant examples

   Example: If your organization serves rural areas, acknowledge in the e-learning the specific challenges a rural woman might face in accessing services, feeling safe and overcoming stigma.

Learn about your audience

- Wanting to develop an e-learning for support seekers? Have informal conversations with people who already use your services about what they'd like to see in an e-learning
- Review the feedback received about your organization's online content: what gets re-tweeted or comments? What pages of your website are visited most frequently? What do people email your organization about?
- Conduct a formal needs assessment with online and in-person surveys, interviews and focus groups

User profiles

Develop 3-5 descriptions of people you imagine using your e-learning. These could be compilations of real people you know.

Try to identify a few common types, as well as a profile of the kind of person you may not see often but represents an important population you want to reach. Be specific about demographics, characteristics, experience and needs. Give them names, stories and photos to help make them feel real.

For more tips, see **Learner Personas for eLearning:**
http://theelearningcoach.com/elearning_design/audience/learner-personas-for-elearning/

- Look at research that's already been conducted about your target population, for example, high school aged youth. What devices and social media are they most likely to use? What issues are they dealing with?
- Have conversations, formal or informal, with people who know your audience well, such as other community services

When your audience are people who have been sexually assaulted

A challenge with creating an online resource for support seekers is that any type of person can be subjected to sexual assault. The demographics can be very broad, unless you focus on a specific topic, such as sexual violence on campus or in specific workplaces.

Some things we know about sexual violence survivors that are relevant to building online resources:
- Trauma impacts learning
    - How can you make the information as easy to understand as possible? Some strategies are plain language, repetition, consistency, ease of use and downloadable documents for later reference.
- Safety is of high concern
    - Can the learner can leave the e-learning quickly? Is there emergency information? Are there tips for online safety? Are there trigger warnings?
- You have a responsibility to protect their privacy
    - What information is your organization collecting about your learners? What about third-party services you are using?
        - Tip: If a tech tool is free, read the policies carefully.
- Everyone is vulnerable to sexual violence, but some people are targeted more often than others and will face greater challenges to finding and receiving meaningful support
    - Make sure images, examples and language are inclusive and that the e-learning is accessible

Content development

Outlining the curriculum: Prioritize and organize

Establish learning objectives
- These are the key concepts you want people to learn
- The clearer and more straight forward a learning objective, the easier it will be for the learner to grasp
- The length of your e-learning will dictate the number of learning objectives
  - A short video for social media will only have one learning objective
  - A longer e-learning, such as a webinar or course, can have three or four
- As you develop your e-learning, always keep your learning objectives in mind

> **How to get focused**
>
> Writing Performance-Based Learning Objectives
> http://theelearningcoach.com/elearning_design/two-types-of-learning-objectives-part-i/

Compile material you have about the subject
- Be prepared to exclude some – we all want to provide more information than our learners want or need
- Feel free to re-purpose existing resources or content you have already created, but plan on re-formatting it for the e-learning

Flag and fill information gaps
- Do you have information that is relevant to your specific audience? e.g. scenarios, images, external resources
- Is your information current? e.g. latest statistics, recent news stories, up-to-date legal information

Prioritize
- If the information is critical and essential to the learning objectives, it's "need to know" information
  - Need to know information goes at the beginning and gets repeated in different ways throughout the e-learning
- Much of the information will be "nice to know" – it's not essential to the learning objectives but is still helpful
  - It might expand and explain the learning objectives in greater detail
  - Nice to know information goes later and in less prominent locations or formats and is not usually repeated
  - If your e-learning feels too long or complicated, this is the material you will need to cut back on

Think about how the information flows
- Create logic for the learner: what do they need to know first, before they can learn the next thing?
- If you have you already **successfully** presented on the topics in other contexts -- for example in workshops or counselling sessions -- consider following that flow in the e-learning

Break the information into topic and sub-topic areas
- In a webinar, these would be sections after which you might ask questions or take a break
- In an online course, these would be modules
- It's helpful for learners when segments are of a consistent length and style
  - However, be true to the content: sometimes important but small topics deserve to stand on their own

Think about the flow of the content from different perspectives
- Refer to your user profiles: how would these people move through the content? Would some get stuck at any point? Would some want to go in a direction you haven't offered?
- If you are creating an e-learning for a large and diverse audience, you might want to acknowledge that some learners will be more familiar with some areas of content, e.g. "If you've used our services before, you might be already aware that…"

Writing content

Whether it's a video transcript, text in a slide show or survey questions the content, here are some things to keep in mind as you write or edit.

- Use plain language
  - Be concise
  - Use shorter sentences
  - Use common words
  - Avoid jargon
  - Use consistent terms
- Because people don't read online as much as they skim, text works best online these ways
  - Bulleted lists
  - Lots of explanatory headings
  - Paragraphs of no more than 2-3 short sentences

> **Repeat, repeat, repeat**
>
> Repeating key concepts helps learners remember them.
>
> - Where in the e-learning does it make sense to remind the learner about these concepts?
>
> - How you can use various formats (text, images, video, etc.) to repeat, build on and reinforce the learning objectives?

- Slides with no more than 2 ideas at a time
- Bold key words
- Provide definitions of content-specific terms (e.g. sexual assault, rape kit)
- Acronyms, slang or colloquialisms can make material feel familiar and contemporary
  - BUT such terms can also be alienating or confusing to people for whom English is not a first language or who are new to the context (e.g. new to Canada, new to your community or organization, new to a stage in life such as college or university)
- Proof read!

More writing tips

From usability experts Nielsen Norman Group

- Rewriting Digital Content for Brevity
  https://www.nngroup.com/articles/rewriting-content-brevity/

- 4 Tips for Bulleted Lists in Digital Content

  https://www.nngroup.com/videos/tips-bulleted-lists-digital-content/

- 5 Techniques for Long-form Content
  https://www.nngroup.com/articles/formatting-long-form-content/

Free images

Please respect the guidelines for these open source image sites

OpenClipArt
https://openclipart.org/

Nappy: Free Photos of Black and Brown People
https://nappy.co/

The Gender Spectrum
https://genderspectrum.vice.com/

Flickr
https://www.flickr.com/

Using Accessible Images to Make Your Website More Inclusive
https://www.accessibilitychecker.org/blog/accessible-images/

Images

- Images can be very powerful
- They can make people feel excluded or included
- Unless they are directly related to the content, images can also distract users from learning
- Don't rely on an image as the only way to provide specific information: the message must also be conveyed in a manner that is accessible to people using screen readers or who are visually impaired
- Purchasing images can be expensive. Provide copyright information on free images
- Selecting the right images is time-consuming; budget time wisely

Different ways to present e-learning content

E-learning content can be provided different ways. It's much better for learners if your content is available in a variety of formats.

- Some learners will have slow internet that prevents them from viewing videos
- Learners with hearing impairments or who are in noisy surroundings need transcripts and captions for audio and video
- All learners – but especially those living with trauma or people with cognitive disabilities or new to the English language – benefit from repetition and plain language
- People have different learning styles. Some people learn from abstract concepts and others from concrete examples. Some prefer images to audio. Many learners benefit from physically engaging with the content, even if that only means clicking selections.

    Example: Let's say you want your learners to understand that a person is more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know rather than by a stranger.
    - You might begin with a captioned video clip of a survivor telling their story
    - This could be followed by text that describes the issue, lists statistics and refers to how the survivor's story is an example
    - A graph or diagram could accompany the text illustrating the statistically likelihood
    - Later, the learner tests their understanding of this topic by clicking an answer for a question in a quiz

Webinars and other virtual events

- Various video conferencing platforms let you deliver live virtual presentations and workshops
- To engage participants, integrate slide shows and features like polls, chat, white boards and break out groups
- Create a game that engages everyone as they learn
- Improve accessibility by including interpreters and captioning (warning: captions will have inaccuracies)
- Practice setting up and delivering the presentation ahead of time
- If you're recording a webinar, be prepared to edit out any technical issues or participants who have not given consent to share their likeness

> **Virtual event tips**
>
> Hosting a Video Conference Event
> https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Hosting-a-video-conference-event-Slides-May-2023.pdf

Video or audio

- These can energize, create a mood and provide a lot of information quickly
- Thanks to YouTube and podcasts, many people now expect these formats in e-learnings

- If possible, give learners the option to control volume and speed, and go forward and backward
- Videos are large files: warn learners about sound and bandwidth requirements
- Don't assume all learners will be able to access video or audio
  - Keep this in mind when designing your plan
  - Include transcripts
- If you don't own the media, be clear about copyright
- How to make it
  - Make an informal video and audio using a smartphone
  - Record a Zoom presentation without an audience
  - Use Canva.com to create a video from a slide show
  - Always ensure your audio is clear

Tell a story

Inspire learner motivation and memory. For tips see: Scenario-based E-learning Examples, Expert Tips and How-to
https://elearningart.com/scenario/

Static resources

- These are usually PDFs that can be downloaded
- Keep learners in mind as you create them
  - Because not everyone has access to a printer, never require learners to print documents
  - Might downloading a document onto a device be safety or privacy issue for a learner?
  - Is the resource formatted for screen readers?
- This is a great way to provide
  - Video or audio transcripts
  - Summaries of key concepts
  - Infographics
  - Details not easily remembered, such as complicated instructions, contact names and numbers
  - Off-line tasks, like group activities or reflective questions
  - "Nice to know" information
  - References for your sources
- Offer workbooks, checklists and other fillable PDFs
- These resources might live a long time after your e-learning
  - Include your organization's branding, contact information, the date of publication and copyright

Learn how

Accessibility Services Canada
https://accessibilitycanada.ca/

Discussion forums

- An e-learning might integrate a private social media group where learners can connect and learn from one another
    - All learners must have an account
    - The group may want to discuss privacy, safety and other considerations before using this strategy
- Learning management systems (LMS), which are platforms for learning and are usually costly, often offer password protected discussion forums

Surveys

- Using tools like Microsoft Forms and SurveyMonkey, you can enable survey respondents to see the aggregated responses
- Gather feedback from learners after they complete your e-learning; reward completed evaluations with a certificate and/or a link to further resources

Quizzes

- This is a common feature in e-learning tools; however, depending on your topic and audience, quizzes can make some learners feel anxious and judged
- Quiz questions might be multiple choice or true and false
- If you are offering a moderated e-learning, you can have more complicated questions; the moderator would need to review the answers users input
- Use a quizzing tool to pose an easy-to-answer question (e.g. Sexual assault illegal in Canada: True? False?); once the learner selects an answer, provide more information about that topic (e.g. when it became illegal, what the laws are, etc.)
- For optimal learning, always show the correct answer as soon as a learner answers a question

Navigation

It doesn't matter how great your content is or how effectively it's presented, if a learner can't find their way around your e-learning, they'll become unmotivated and they'll quit.

You want your learner to focus on the content, rather than get frustrating trying to use your e-learning. And while they will need some guidance, they'll also want to have a sense of control over their journey.

- Provide highly visible, clear and brief instructions about what learners are to do
- Let them know what will be covered
- Make their path forward really obvious: for example, number each component
- Give headings, links and resources meaningful names
- Learners like knowing they can skip parts of the content. Keep them happy by making "nice to know" information optional

Provide warning

Some content may trigger people: let learners know what they can expect.

Tools

Repurpose everyday tools to make e-learning content. You know how to use them and your learners likely do too.

Delivering live virtual events

Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams – video conferencing platforms for virtual events; integrate slides, captions, polls and other features
> Zoom integrates many apps: https://www.zoom.com/en/blog/start-using-zoom-apps/

> **Thinking about purchasing new tools?**
>
> Assess your options with the comparison charts in Emerging Stronger: Promising Practices for Virtual Service Delivery https://www.oaith.ca/resource_library/advanced_search.php

Creating presentations

Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Slides – create slide shows for use with other platforms

H5P – create slide shows with integrated quizzes; add bookmarks, links and other features to videos; other content types available
> Free, public and open source: https://h5p.org/
> Paid and private: https://h5p.com/
> Clear information about accessibility: https://help.h5p.com/hc/en-us/articles/7505649072797-Content-types-recommendations

Zoom – narrate and record slide presentations; more expensive accounts can generate a captioning file (VTT)
https://support.zoom.com/hc/en/article?id=zm_kb&sysparm_article=KB0064927

Canva – with an array of graphic designs and images, create slide show PDFs and videos with integrated audio; edit videos
https://www.canva.com/designschool/tutorials/video/

Prezi – create slide presentations; privacy control and lots of design options
https://prezi.com/

Powtoon – create animated videos with a range of designs and images
https://www.powtoon.com/

Zubtitle – for creating and editing video captions
https://zubtitle.com/

Making content available

Google Drive – share your files (PDFs, videos, etc.) privately and publicly
https://www.howtogeek.com/727849/how-to-share-folders-files-and-documents-on-google-drive/
> To share with people who don't use gmail:
> https://support.google.com/drive/answer/6033939?hl=en

WordPress, Wix, Weebly – these website builders allow you to integrate presentations you create with other platforms; upload video files or embed code from presentation platform

H5P – share your H5P content through their platform or your website
Publicly (free): https://h5p.org/; privately (paid): https://h5p.com/

Slideshare – hosts slide presentations for public sharing
https://www.slideshare.net/

YouTube – free hosting for video; some privacy features
https://www.youtube.com/

Vimeo – hosting for video; privacy features and excellent data with paid account
https://vimeo.com/

Integrating surveys and quizzes
Quizzes capture information about respondents so consider privacy obligations

Google Forms – create free forms, quizzes or surveys; invite select respondents by email

H5P – create various kinds of quizzes and games

SurveyMonkey – create surveys; invite select respondents by email or share the link publicly

WordPress, Wix – e-learning plugins that include surveys and quizzes are available for website building platforms; some plugins may be free (e.g. H5P) but watch for privacy, stability, how the plugin impacts your site's speed