

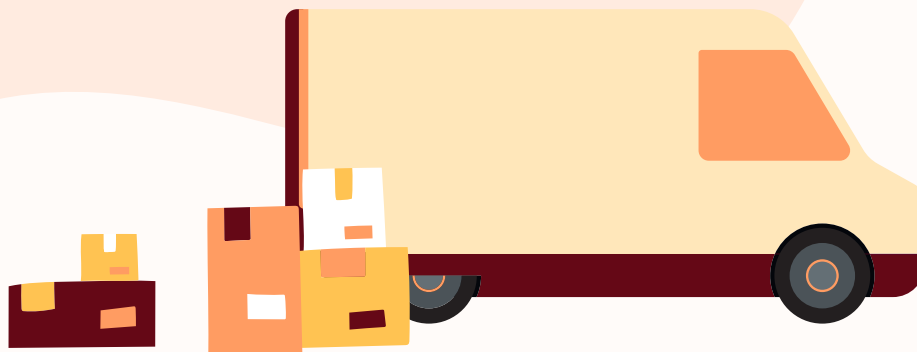
Learning experience design 101: Virtual experiences inspired by in-person learning

There's no doubt that in recent weeks, organizations of all sizes and industries have had to shift face-to-face events online, find ways to make remote working fit their organization and explore new tools to meet the demands of their constituents, customers or employees.

To ensure virtual learning experiences still have the same (if not more) of an impact as in-person events, we've created this toolkit on designing virtual experiences that reimagine learning and its impact.

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Four principles of effective learning experiences

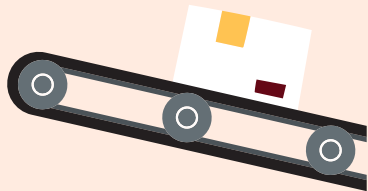
Rather than simply linking slide decks and creating video conference links for virtual learning experiences, we must consider how adults learn best online. Below we've outlined four principles of effective learning experiences and ways to design experiences for virtual impact.

Learning is purposeful.

Adults want to learn new things because of what that learning can help them do. Maybe they're looking to be more effective in a key competency or they're facing a dilemma and seeking new strategies.

TRY IT OUT

Consider the touchpoints within the learning experiences you create that can solve the problems adult learners are facing. What tools, resources and answers can you provide throughout your online learning experience?

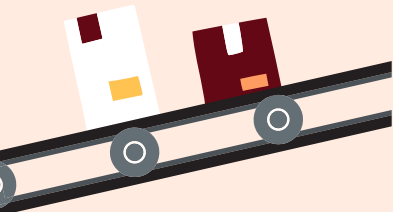


Learning is social.

We learn best when we learn with and from one another. Think through the facilitation, feedback, discussion-based and observation opportunities you can embed within your virtual learning experience.

TRY IT OUT

Build in time for breakout rooms, live online discussion forums or designated check-ins after the event to ensure adult learners are using what they learn.

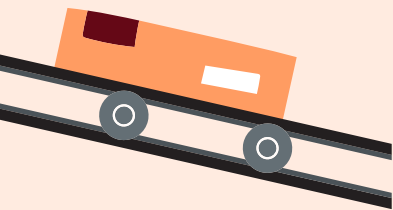


Learning is continuous.

One of the biggest misconceptions of online learning is that users completely understand a concept right after it's shared on a virtual slide deck. Rather, adults' understanding deepens when they apply their learning and revisit concepts, which takes time. Experiences build off one another, and growth happens over time.

TRY IT OUT

Be intentional about how you sequence and scaffold experiences and support. Build in continual learning opportunities, such as weekly challenges, and understand that adult learners might not have the opportunity to immediately apply the concepts given existing circumstances.

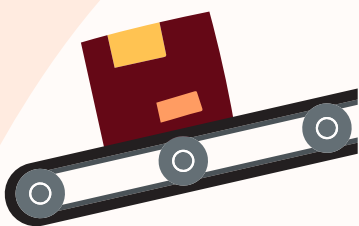


Learning honors diverse learners.

Embrace and honor the experiences and preferences of the adult learners participating in the learning experience. Some people may simply show up for resources and tools while others will dive into ongoing discussions. Consider their various learning styles and build upon them throughout sessions, workshops and activities.

TRY IT OUT

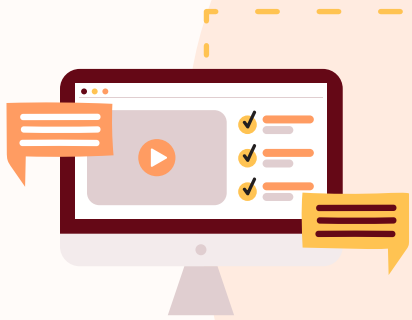
Don't rely on the same ice-breakers and entry-level content adult learners experience at every in-person event or professional development training. This is your opportunity to design new activities and guide new conversations based on the unique needs of your adult learners. By creating flexible structures with a variety of content, adult learners can navigate and explore in a way that works for them.





Learning formats

Now that you have a basic understanding of best practices for learning experiences, let's consider how to apply them to a virtual learning experience. It seems obvious that online learning and in-person learning are different, but as learning experience designers, it's important for us to think about *how* they're different.



Online Learning

Learning that happens primarily in a virtual way. This can include online course work, webinars, synchronous or asynchronous activities or the use of collaborative tools like Google docs.



In-Person Learning

Learning that happens in-person, where all participants are physically together in the same location.

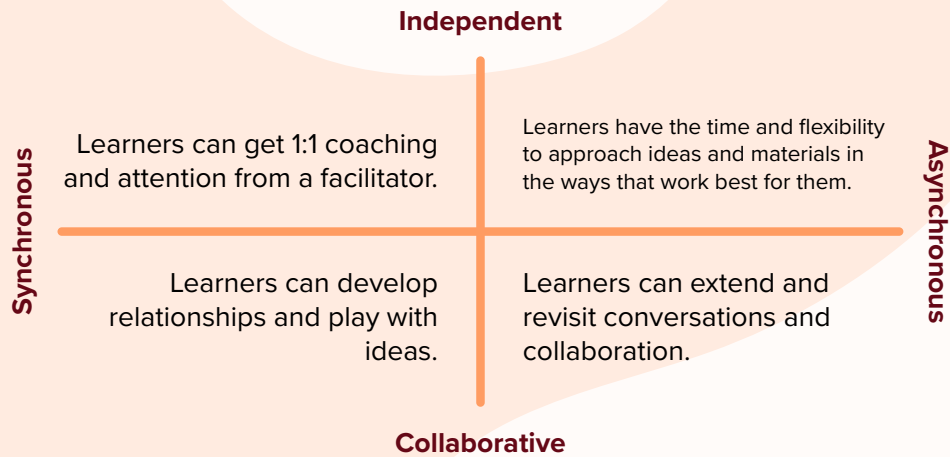
TRY IT OUT

Think through what makes your in-person learning experiences unique. Similarly, what unique opportunities can be experienced online?

What do online events allow attendees to do?
Share screens and links to more easily access new content and materials
Set their own learning pace
Save time by randomly generating breakout rooms with some video conference platforms

What do in-person events allow attendees to do?
Network and become familiar with one another face-to-face
Work with hands-on materials to solve problems
Recognize non-verbal social cues

In order to design learning experiences that are inclusive for as many adult learners as possible, it's important to think through a mix of activities that are synchronous, self-paced, independent and/or collaborative. Below is a matrix highlighting the various ways to learn throughout a virtual learning experience. Identifying these methods creates a more inclusive and accessible experience that encourages extended learning.



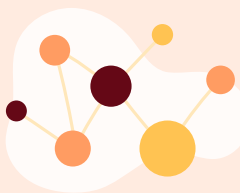
Norms for online learning and virtual events

Before your virtual learning experience, communicate norms and procedures with those participating. Make sure they have a clear understanding of the expectations for participation and opportunities to connect.



Video and audio

Switch audio settings to mute all adult learners upon entrance of a meeting. Encourage people to unmute and speak up if they have questions, especially in small group settings.



Networking opportunities

While in-person, informal networking is often easier face-to-face, consider the ways you can create organized networking or happy hours throughout your learning experience. Randomly generate groups and put adult learners in breakout rooms. Take volunteers for organizing small groups or generate links for networking groups by industry or teacher grade level.



Recordings and resources

Identify when and where recordings and resources will be available after the event.



Learning at your own pace

Encourage adult learners to find parts of the learning experience most valuable to them. If they don't feel fulfilled in one opportunity and want to join another, celebrate their learning needs and their willingness to seek out what's going to help them learn best.



As you continue on your journey of designing learning experiences to fit virtual needs, we encourage you to reimagine the ways you bring content online. Beyond content migration, focus on the unique affordances of technology, the various learning styles of your adult learners and the ways you can combine the two to create impactful, sustainable virtual experiences.

To dive deeper into virtual learning or join thousands of community members in our free online communities, visit participate.com.

About Participate

We combine your favorite parts of social media and online learning to connect community members, grow organizational impact and support scalable learning opportunities, all in one place. Trusted by school districts, nonprofits and education organizations across the nation, Participate takes existing professional learning initiatives and builds digital communities that provide value for your community members and meaningful impact for your organization.

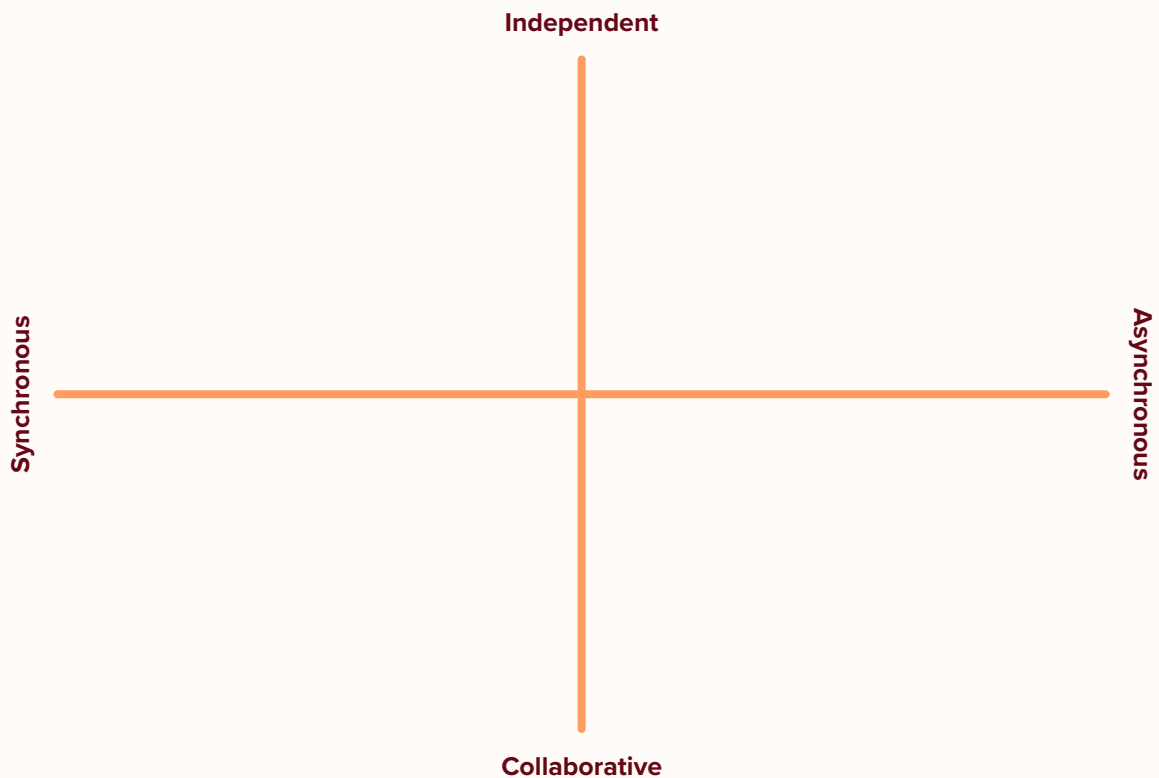
Templates

Learning formats

Use this chart to identify unique opportunities with in-person and online learning.

What do online events allow learners to do?	What do in-person events allow learners to do?

Use this matrix to organize learning activities of your event in terms of timing and collaboration.



Norm setting

Fill out this chart according to your virtual learning experience and share with attendees.

During virtual sessions our cameras will be...	
Please mute your audio during _____ but turn on your audio during _____.	
To get feedback from peers during each session, we will...	
To have small group discussions, we will...	
Breaks will be built into our schedule every...	
If you have technical difficulties during the virtual event, please contact...	
To share thoughts throughout the event, we will have an online discussion forum or shared posting space on...	
All slide decks and recorded sessions will be available on/in...	