

Franklin University

FUSE (Franklin University Scholarly Exchange)

The International Institute for Innovative
Instruction Blog

International Institute for Innovative Instruction

3-13-2017

How to Use Media Effectively in Online Courses

Carolyn Levally
Franklin University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://fuse.franklin.edu/i4blog>



Part of the [Instructional Media Design Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Levally, C. (2017). How to Use Media Effectively in Online Courses. Retrieved from <https://fuse.franklin.edu/i4blog/23>

This Blog Post is brought to you for free and open access by the International Institute for Innovative Instruction at FUSE (Franklin University Scholarly Exchange). It has been accepted for inclusion in The International Institute for Innovative Instruction Blog by an authorized administrator of FUSE (Franklin University Scholarly Exchange). For more information, please contact fuse@franklin.edu.



How to Use Media Effectively in Online Courses

March 13, 2017 | By Carolyn Levally
Educational Technology

In the online higher education community, course designers are constantly trying to develop courses that reach beyond the learner simply staring at a static screen. With the instructor and the learner at a physical distance, there are many features we use to try and bridge that gap, from online class meetings via Adobe Connect to discussion board postings to other engaging activities designed specifically for achieving the learning outcomes. However, when it comes to simple content delivery in an online setting, breaking through the wall of text by providing learners with more engaging media can sometimes be difficult. Many people work to make course content more engaging by including media, which can range from images to videos to interactive games and learning experiences. But ask yourself- are you including this media in the most effective way, a way in which the media serves not only to break up the wall of text, but is actually essential to helping your learners understand the content you're presenting?

It's then essential to find a balance of using crucial pieces of media at strategic points in the course.

When you're thinking about implementing media into your course, consider if the media does the following:

1. Helps clarify a difficult concept
2. Applies the concept to real-life situations
3. Allows learners to reinforce/check their knowledge about a concept

Let's quickly look at how each of these considerations can help your media be more effective.

Clarifies a Difficult Concept

One of the most strategic times to use media is if you're trying to teach a complex topic, process, or cycle that students traditionally have a difficult time understanding.

For a complex process or cycle, a simple visual of the process/cycle could not only grab attention, but also help explain the process to learners in a way where they could visually grasp and retain exactly how the process runs or how the parts of the cycle interact with each other. A simple visual like this (which breaks down SMART goals) could be extremely effective:



Photo credit from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SMART-goals.png>

Creating images is easy with online resources like www.canva.com and <https://magic.piktochart.com>.

For a complex topic, including a video or recorded explanation of the topic could help learners better grasp the topic. Not only would the video likely explain the concept in a different way than other readings, etc. the learner may have already completed, but this explanation could also go further in-depth. For example, if you were trying to explain a difficult statistics concept, you could use a video which discusses the concept, and then solves an example problem step-by-step. This way, the learner can go back and review the video as many times as necessary, whenever they may have questions on the topic throughout the course. Check out this [example of an instructional video of a complex topic](#)(which is [Numberphile](#) explaining why 0 factorial equals 1):

Applies to Real-Life Situations

Learners, especially adult learners, both learn and engage more if they can use what they are learning in their own lives or future careers. Therefore, using media to emphasize the real-life takeaways of a concept could be very effective. Infographics or even scenario-based trainings can walk learners through how to successfully master the concept to their benefit. For example, check out this [scenario-based learning experience](#) we developed to demonstrate how to use the Evaluation Process during a career as an instructional designer:

An infographic titled 'DESIGN' with a purple and white color scheme. At the top, a horizontal row of six circular icons is shown: a magnifying glass, a pencil, crossed hammers, a bar chart, a brain, and a star. Below the icons, the word 'DESIGN' is written in large, bold, black letters. The infographic is divided into several sections. On the left, there are three stacked rectangular boxes: the top one is light grey with the text 'Make an evaluation schedule', the middle one is dark purple with the text 'Select evaluation models', and the bottom one is light grey with the text 'Design evaluation instruments'. At the bottom left, there is a blue button with the text 'Download'. On the right side, there is a large purple circular area containing a photograph of a smiling woman in a grey blazer holding a black folder. To the right of the woman, there are two bullet points: '• Model Chosen: Kirkpatrick' and '• Using a level 2 and level 3 assessment'.











Provides a Knowledge Check

A final, effective use of media is to implement media that serves as a knowledge check or study guide for learners regarding course concepts. Let learners engage with the media and have fun as they test themselves on the concepts

covered throughout the course. Games, such as crossword puzzles, matching, flash cards, jeopardy, and wheel of fortune, allow learners to check how well they understand a concept, as well as note any concepts they may find difficult to understand. There are some great online resources which makes it easy to create an incorporate games like these into your courses, such as <https://quizlet.com> and <https://edpuzzle.com>.

[Articulate Storyline](#) is also a great resource for developing media and knowledge checks; take a look at the knowledge checks in the [instructional media](#) we created for a Criminal Justice course.

QUICK CHECK: ROLES | Drag & drop the role to its description.

 Investigator	 Line Officer	 Supervisor	 Analyst	 Executive
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involved in strategic decision making• Provide feedback on intelligence products	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interacts with the Collection phase• Gathers more information to be analyzed	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interacts with the Gathering phase• Acts as eyes and ears of government	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develops intelligence products• Develops parameters for information• Decides on audience	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assists line officers in collecting & reporting information• Communicates intelligence products to line officers

To Summarize...

Using media effectively is crucial in online courses. Don't just include an image or video because the course "needs a picture" or "needs a video." Make those images, videos, games, and trainings count by using them in strategic situations. This media then effectively enhances the course content and helps the course become meaningful and memorable.

About the Author

Carolyn LeVally

Carolyn LeVally is a content editor for Franklin University's International Institute for Innovative Instruction.