

Best Practices, Do's, Don'ts and Pitfalls

Best Practices, Do's, Don'ts and Pitfalls (click to follow link)

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1. Teaching - Do's and Don'ts

http://docs.moodle.org/en/Teaching_do%27s_and_don%27ts

a. Do's:

- Do encourage Students to learn together through shared moodle-based experiences
- Do motivate Students to go back and review materials in this very dynamic environment
- Do encourage Students to be security-conscious
- Do start small but think big
- Do save, save, save
- Do show Students how the logs work
- Do enter brief, helpful summaries for your resources
- Do set an Enrollment Key
- Do encourage Students to think before they post
- Do use Labels to appropriately divide/annotate your course sections/weeks
- Do set up your new course with same number of Weeks/Topics/Sections prior to importing or restoring from another course
- Do encourage Student feedback about mCourse structure, usability, content etc.
- Do hide menu options on internal resources pop-up windows
- Do create custom grading scales
- Do share with colleagues
- Do make a sincere effort to keep the size of uploaded files as small possible
- Do make the links to uploaded files self documenting

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b. Don'ts:

- Don't let moodle overwhelm you – its help is everywhere at your fingertips
- Don't dominate discussions
- Don't assume that the coolness of moodle will inspire or motivate your students
- Don't violate copyright laws
- Don't forget to check users' Profiles
- Don't encourage users to run large presentations, Power Point or others
- Don't be afraid to experiment
- Don't be distracted by “shiny stuff”

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2. Preventing eLearning failure

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0MNT/is_8_56/ai_90512523/

10 common pitfalls and how to avoid them:

1. Believing that eLearning is a cheaper training alternative. Like most investments, money must be spent to make money.
2. Overestimating what eLearning can accomplish. eLearning will never completely supplant instructor-led training.
3. Overlooking the shortcomings of self-study. Unless learners are highly motivated, they may not complete the training.
4. Viewing content as a commodity. Content is one of the most significant factors contributing to the effectiveness of elearning.
5. Assuming that learned knowledge will be applied. Learners need opportunities to practice new skills.
6. Failing to look beyond the Course paradigm. One of the most powerful non course eLearning approaches is electronic learning support systems.
7. Ignoring technology. It's crucial to understand the technological issues when implementing eLearning.
8. Failing to involve IT. People with technical expertise must be involved in eLearning's selection and implementation.
9. Fixating too much on technology. Ask, “How will eLearning affect the people using it?”.
10. Believing that because you implement eLearning, people will use it. It's not quite that easy.

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3. Some reasons for eL failure:

<http://www.ecampus.com.au/blog/ten-reasons-elearning-can-fail>

Examples:

- no overall aim
- vague planning
- poorly designed content
- poor knowledge of the technology in use in order to best apply resources
- hard to use or the Course doesn't work properly on Student computers
- lack of testing
- inadequate tracking of enrolments and results
- Stakeholders not consulted
- poor support and help
- poor documentation
- poor workflow integration in lessons
- *and more*

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4. "Writing for the Web" – Concepts and Best Practices

Basic principles on how to write for the web, knowing that:

- people tend to scan web pages, instead of reading them word-by-word;
- reading from computer screens is 25% slower than reading from paper;
- other general rules apply - like:
 - "5 minutes, 3 screens" guideline - an online learner should go through 3 screens of content, within 5 minutes timeframe;
 - a "learning object" should take no longer than 5-15min for a user to complete;
 - each **web page** should take **less than 20sec** to load. Pages that take longer than that can loose up to 50% of their visitors;
- keep your documents well managed removing outdated or duplicate files;
- optimize your audio, video and PDF files to reduce their sizes – here is how:

"Effective content practices – Reducing File sizes"

https://books.google.pt/books?id=kVL-J2BDpoQC&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&dq=moodle+optimize+file+size&source=bl&ots=q8-ZVslzWz&sig=L0u0ijZ16X2R8cTYHeV7SRR_4ZI&hl=pt-PT&sa=X&ei=mhAQVb22Kcb0UKHlg-gE&ved=0CEEQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=moodle%20optimize%20file%20size&f=false

Writing for the Web...

When "borrowing" graphics, images, text or other material from another person make sure you credit their Author and Site, or link to the original source.

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a. on using text:

http://legacy.earlham.edu/~markp/moodle/best_practices.html

- documents to be read online should be well structured for easy scan reading with
 - text divided into segments,
 - descriptive headings - use them as headings, as a signal of new topic and not to add emphasis,
 - meaningful sub-headings - not clever ones,
 - highlighted important words and sections,
 - the "inverted pyramid" – the most important info is at the top, start with conclusion – more: <http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/9-editorial-style/2-structuring-prose.html>
- format consistency is key
- Web content should be 50% of print content - ½ word count of conventional writing
- use meaningful sub-headings, not clever ones
- don't be afraid to leave blank lines create white space
- link titles in the text with the titles you've given to the resource
- bulleted/numbered lists make it easy to scan the page
- links should be easily visible from other content
- one idea per paragraph and in short paragraphs
- cut out needless words - don't bury important information in a lot of text
- use hyperlinks and **PDF's**
- write for your target audience
- do not use technical jargon
- be precise - avoid ambiguity
- text should be concise and have an objective and a scanable layout
- save your word processing file as PDF or RTF file to avoid compatibility issues
- Convert other MS Office files (Word, Powerpoint, Excel) into PDF/Acrobat format.

Advantages:

- Read only. Students cannot easily copy the contents of what you have written;
- Not every student has MS Office which is rather expensive. Acrobat on the other hand is a free download from [Adobe](#);
- File size is generally smaller, specially with Powerpoint.

and

- use the 4-eyes rule: have a second person proofread your document, spellcheck or edit it

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b. on using images:

Rules of thumb for optimization, compression and re-sizing:

- using images and graphics in Courses can increase learning by up to 89%
- don't overuse images; they take time and bandwidth and can be confusing and distracting
- remember that not all browsers support graphics
- compress and optimize images: keep images small, in presentation and file size - save images as both **JPG** or **PNG** (instead of GIF) and compare which is smaller
- the fewer the colors, the smaller the file
- Crop (remove unnecessary elements) or scale (shrink) the physical size of the image; it will decrease load time and make the Site more accessible
- don't use graphics as text unless necessary
- don't resize the image in HTML; use instead an image software such as Photoshop or another.

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c. on using audio:

- use audio as an additional channel to convey info to Students
- review/test: voice, (conversational) tone, pace and inflection
- speak in the 1st and 2nd person
- audio feedback to Students (for ex in Assignments)
 - should be up to 02min long (max)
 - should not be presented in a very formal way
 - should complement what was written in annotations
- good to help explain a complicated image/graphic – lots of text and complicated images at the same time can become visually overwhelming
- use a Replay button with the audios
- avoid echo and background noise

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5. “Teaching with moodle” – Best Practices for Course Design

Creating a functional moodle Course is more than just transfer educational content to an online format. Care should be taken in its design to make it effective, engaging and user friendly to all learners.

a. moodle-Course design Tips:

<http://www.slideshare.net/michelledmoore/teaching-with-moodle-best-practices-for-course-design-i-moot-11>

- Do use Topic Summaries for titles – not for contents (for easy navigation)
- Don't use more than 3 fonts per page (cognitive load)
- Do maintain consistency
- Don't use the Course Page for content – load/read it from elsewhere
- Do use the Course Page as a launch pad
- Don't make your Users scroll from side to side or down, down (“scroll of death”)....
- Do make sure the week/topic contents fit the screen
- Don't forget the value of Logs;
 - links created as Labels do not show up (are not logged) in the activity reports (Resources only)
- Don't overdo the Activity names – keep them short and simple

- Do use Labels to guide Students
- Don't be afraid of white space
- Do use (reasonably sized) images/pictures to enhance your mCourse
- Do simplify delivery
- Don't be afraid to branch out – sections continued somewhere else...
- Do dock Blocks (when Template is compliant) - Navigation and Settings – for more space for contents
- Don't overdo conditional Activities
- Do give your Students Completion Tracking – so they can easily see what is done and what is not; *and finally*
- Don't do all the work yourself
- Do let Students collaborate and participate!

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Keep also in mind...

b. 10 Ways to reduce the size of a moodle Course:

The recommended maximum mCourse site size is 1GB

How can you check the size of your mCourse?
By doing a full Backup.

You should

- keep your files small - under the size upload limit
- keep your mCourse contents well managed – delete documents not in use for
- less processing and transfer time
- less amount of storage space used
- faster Backups
- *and more*

How to:

<http://www.iteachwithmoodle.com/2013/06/05/10-ways-to-reduce-the-size-of-a-moodle-course/>

1. Convert your documents into moodle webpages
2. Save your printable documents as PDF
3. Reduce the size of your Microsoft Office documents
4. Reduce the size of your PDF files – to convert and compress them: <http://smallpdf.com/>
5. Reduce the size of your images – by compressing them
6. Reduce the size of your media files
7. Make use of online external Repositories:

How to manage - Audio and Video Content Storage

For efficient storage usage, audio and video files should be *referenced from within the Platform* instead of uploaded to the Course:

- Use DropBox, Google Drive or You Tube
 - Upload your audio or video files
 - Set the appropriate share permissions – ex. “Share - Anyone with the link can see it”
 - Instead of uploading, link only to files from within moodle, by using the Resources
 - “URL” or
 - “File” – for ex. with DropBox you may choose to “Create an Alias/Short cut” instead of making a “Copy of the file”
 - more info: <http://youtu.be/FFvwcaCq8TU>
8. Link to external images
 9. Make use of streaming services – YouTube, Soundcloud - saving space and bandwidth
 10. Embed, embed, embed... - <https://it.umn.edu/moodle-30-32-manage-size-your-course>

Manage the size of your mCourse:

Large files should not be stored in Moodle. They slow down your course site and make copying/restore the mCourse forward for another semester very difficult.


All uploaded files contribute to your site's size.

The recommended maximum mCourse site size is **1GB** - so

- Store audio and video in YouTube
- Store folders or files in Google Drive
- Remove unnecessary files – duplicates, zipped, backups...

- **How to embed a YouTube video & Playlists:**

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/171780?hl=en>

You may use the “Page” Resource; click the HTML button  and paste the embed code into the **Page Content** text box.

- **How to upload videos longer than 15 minutes long**
<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/71673?hl=en>
- **How to upload Files & Folders to Google Drive -**
https://support.google.com/drive/answer/2424368?hl=en&ref_topic=2375187

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6. See also...

http://docs.moodle.org/en/Teaching_tips_and_tricks

<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/> - Jakob Nielsen

<http://www.sun.com/980713/webwriting/> - Sun

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