

# INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN CHEAT SHEET

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# 1. The Core ID Models at a Glance

## ADDIE

The most widely used instructional design framework.

01

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### Analyse

Identify the problem, audience, and goals

02

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### Design

Plan objectives, structure, assessments

03

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### Develop

Build the actual content and materials

04

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### Implement

Deliver or launch the program

05

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### Evaluate

Measure results and improve

## SAM — Successive Approximation Model

A faster, iterative alternative to ADDIE. Good for agile or rapid development.

### Preparation


Gather information

### Iterative Design

Rapid prototyping and feedback loops

### Iterative Development

Build, test, refine in cycles

 Use SAM when timelines are tight and stakeholder feedback is frequent.

# Merrill's Principles of Instruction

Five evidence-based principles for effective learning design.



## Problem-Centred

Learning is promoted when learners solve real-world problems



## Activation

Activate existing knowledge before introducing new content



## Demonstration

Demonstrate new knowledge – do not just tell it



## Application

Let learners apply the new knowledge themselves



## Integration

Integrate new knowledge into real-world tasks

# Gagne's 9 Events of Instruction

A sequence to structure any lesson effectively – from capturing attention to enhancing long-term retention.

#	Event	Example
1	Gain attention	Surprising fact, video, question
2	Inform learners of objectives	Tell them what they will learn
3	Stimulate recall	Ask what they already know
4	Present content	Teach the new material
5	Provide guidance	Examples, analogies, demos
6	Elicit performance	Practice activity or exercise
7	Provide feedback	Correct or reinforce responses
8	Assess performance	Quiz or task
9	Enhance retention	Job aid, summary, next steps

# Kirkpatrick's 4 Levels of Evaluation

## Level 1 — Reaction

**What it measures:** Did learners like it?

**How:** Post-training survey

## Level 2 — Learning

**What it measures:** Did they learn it?

**How:** Pre / post assessment

## Level 3 — Behaviour

**What it measures:** Are they applying it?

**How:** Manager observation, follow-up

## Level 4 — Results

**What it measures:** Did it impact the business?

**How:** KPIs, performance data

## 2. Bloom's Taxonomy Quick Reference

1	Remember Define, List, Name, Label, Recall
2	Understand Explain, Describe, Summarise, Classify
3	Apply Use, Demonstrate, Solve, Perform
4	Analyse Analyse, Compare, Differentiate, Examine
5	Evaluate Evaluate, Recommend, Justify, Critique
6	Create Design, Develop, Plan, Create

- Rule of thumb:** Entry-level programs focus on Remember to Apply. Leadership and expert programs push toward Evaluate and Create.

# 3. Learning Objective Formula

By the end of this [module / course], learners will be able to + [Action Verb] + [Specific Skill] + [Context or Condition]

## ✓ Good Example

"Apply the five-step feedback model during a real or simulated one-on-one conversation."

## ✗ Weak Example

"Understand feedback."

This is vague, unmeasurable, and not tied to any real job task.

## Quick Checklist for Every Objective

- Starts with a measurable verb
- Describes what the **learner does**, not what the trainer teaches
- Can actually be assessed
- Linked to a real job task
- Written in plain language

## 4. Content Types and When to Use Them

<b>Content Type</b>	<b>Best Used For</b>
Text + image	Concepts, definitions, facts
Video (talking head)	Storytelling, personal tone, introductions
Video (screencast)	Software or tool walkthroughs
Animation	Abstract processes, visual explanations
Scenario / case study	Decision-making, application practice
Branching scenario	Complex decisions with consequences
Infographic	Data, comparisons, step-by-step visuals
Job aid	On-the-job reference, checklists
Discussion prompt	Reflection, peer sharing
Quiz / knowledge check	Recall and comprehension check
Simulation	High-risk or technical skill practice

# 5. Interaction and Activity Types

1

## Low-Effort Interactions

- Click to reveal
- Tabs or accordions
- Hotspots on an image
- Drag and drop matching

2


## Mid-Effort Interactions

- Multiple choice with feedback
- Fill in the blank
- Sorting and sequencing
- True or false with rationale

3

## High-Effort Interactions

- Branching scenarios
- Role play or simulation
- Case study with reflection
- Project or assignment-based assessment

 **Rule of thumb:** Use at least one meaningful interaction every 3 to 5 minutes of content.

# 6. The Forgetting Curve and What To Do About It

Herman Ebbinghaus found that people forget up to **70% of new information within 24 hours** if it is not reinforced.



## Spaced Repetition

Spread learning over time, revisit key points



## Retrieval Practice

Make learners recall, not just re-read



## Interleaving

Mix topics rather than blocking them



## Application

Give learners a chance to use the knowledge right away



## Microlearning Nudges

Short follow-up content days after the main course



## Job Aids

Reference tools to reduce memory load on the job

# 7. Adult Learning Principles — Knowles' Andragogy



Understanding how adults learn is the foundation of effective instructional design. Each principle directly shapes how you structure content, activities, and learner choice within your programs.

# 8. Cognitive Load — Keep It Simple

## Three Types of Cognitive Load

### Intrinsic Load

The complexity of the content itself

### Extraneous Load

Distraction caused by poor design

### Germane Load

The effort needed to actually learn and retain

## How to Reduce Cognitive Load in Your Design

- Break content into small chunks
- Use one idea per screen
- Avoid walls of text
- Align visuals directly to the narration or text
- Remove decorative elements that add nothing
- Use plain, familiar language
- Provide worked examples before asking learners to practise

# 10. Rapid Design Decisions

## Choosing the Right Format

If...	Then consider...
Audience is large and spread across locations	eLearning or video
Skills need to be practised in real time	Instructor-led or simulation
Topic changes frequently	Short video series or job aids
Learners need ongoing reference	Job aid, infographic, or microlearning
Topic involves sensitive conversations	Facilitated live session
Timeline is short and budget is limited	Rapid eLearning or recorded walkthrough
Compliance or certification required	Blended with formal assessment

## Choosing Assessment Type

Objective Level	Best Assessment Type
Remember	Multiple choice, true or false
Understand	Short answer, matching, classification
Apply	Scenario, simulation, role play
Analyse	Case study, problem-solving task
Evaluate	Reflection, recommendation exercise
Create	Project, design task, portfolio

# 11. The WIIFM Check

Before every module, ask: **"Does the learner know why this matters to them?"**

Every piece of content should answer at least one of these questions:

Problem

What problem does this solve for me?

Ease

How will this make my job easier?

Risk

What happens if I do not know this?

Action

How can I use this today or this week?

⊗ If your content cannot answer any of these, rethink whether it needs to be there.

# 12. Common ID Mistakes to Avoid

<b>Mistake</b>	<b>Better Approach</b>
Designing before analysing	Always do a needs analysis first
Writing objectives after the content	Write objectives first, build content around them
Too much content, too little practice	Follow the rule: learn, then do
Using jargon and heavy text	Write at a Grade 8 level or lower
No feedback on practice questions	Every answer option needs meaningful feedback
Treating all learners the same	Use personas to guide design decisions
Ignoring evaluation	Plan how you will measure success before you build
Building a course when a job aid would do	Match the solution to the actual need
No on-the-job application	Always include a post-learning action step
Designing for the SME, not the learner	Simplify, contextualise, and focus on the job task

# 13. ID Terminology Quick Reference

<b>Term</b>	<b>Plain Meaning</b>
ADDIE	Plan, design, build, deliver, measure – the core ID process
SME	Subject matter expert – the person who knows the content
ILT	Instructor-led training – live, in-person or virtual
VILT	Virtual instructor-led training – live online sessions
eLearning	Self-paced digital learning
Microlearning	Short learning content, usually under 10 minutes
Blended learning	Mix of online and live learning
Storyboard	Screen-by-screen plan for an eLearning course
Branching scenario	Interactive story where choices lead to different outcomes
LMS	Learning management system – platform to host and track courses
SCORM	Technical standard for eLearning packages to communicate with an LMS
Knowledge check	Quick informal question to test recall during a course
Formative assessment	Ongoing checks during learning
Summative assessment	Final assessment at the end of a course
Cognitive load	How much mental effort a learner has to use at once
Learning path	Sequence of courses or resources for a specific role or goal
Spaced learning	Spreading content over time to improve retention



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