Instructional Design & AI Tools Cheat Sheet

A practical guide to the essential authoring, LMS, AI, video, and collaboration tools instructional designers should know in 2026.

1. Authoring Tools

Authoring tools are used to design and build digital learning content such as e-learning modules, simulations, quizzes, scenario-based activities, microlearning lessons, and interactive videos. They help instructional designers turn source material—such as policies, PowerPoint decks, SME notes, process documents, and scripts—into structured learning experiences.

1.1 Articulate 360

Articulate 360 is a widely used e-learning authoring suite for workplace learning. It brings together tools such as Storyline 360, Rise 360, Review 360, templates, assets, and AI-assisted content creation features. It is especially useful when teams need to create polished e-learning quickly while still supporting interactivity, accessibility, collaboration, and LMS publishing.

1.2 Adobe Captivate

Adobe Captivate is an e-learning authoring tool used to create responsive courses, software simulations, interactive videos, branching scenarios, quizzes, and hands-on digital learning experiences. It is particularly valuable when learners need to practice a process, interact with software-like environments, or complete scenario-based activities instead of only reading static content.

- **Best use case:** Technical training, software simulations, system walkthroughs, process training, compliance training, and interactive product education.

- **Strength:** Captivate is strong for simulation-based and responsive learning. Designers can record screen actions, create guided practice activities, add interactions, and publish courses for LMS tracking.
- **Example:** A training team rolling out a new procurement system can create a Captivate module that shows learners how to raise a purchase requisition, lets them practice clicking through a simulated workflow, and then assesses whether they can complete the process correctly.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can accelerate storyboarding, generate slide text, create practice scenarios, draft quiz items, suggest feedback messages, and help convert procedural documents into step-by-step learning flows.

Use Adobe Captivate when the learning goal is not just awareness, but performance. For example, if employees must learn how to use a finance, HR, CRM, ERP, or ticketing platform, Captivate can help turn the process into a realistic practice experience. Instead of telling learners what to do, the course can show the task, let them try it, and provide feedback when they make mistakes.

1.3 Rise 360

Rise 360 is a web-based authoring tool within the Articulate ecosystem that helps designers create clean, responsive e-learning courses quickly. It uses a block-based design approach, where the creator stacks text, media, interactions, process blocks, timelines, accordions, quizzes, and knowledge checks to build a course that automatically adapts across desktop, tablet, and mobile devices.

- **Best use case:** Rapid course development, onboarding, policy training, leadership lessons, microlearning, performance-support modules, and mobile-friendly learning guides.
- **Strength:** Rise 360 is easy to learn and fast to use. It is ideal when instructional designers need professional-looking courses without complex custom programming or heavily customized interactions.
- **Example:** An HR team can build a new-manager onboarding course with sections on company values, performance conversations, leave approval, inclusive leadership, and escalation procedures. Each section can include short explanations, reflection questions, scenario blocks, and a final quiz.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can help transform SME notes into lesson outlines, draft microlearning scripts, generate quiz questions, rewrite content for clarity, and suggest interaction types that fit each learning objective.

Rise 360 is especially useful when speed, consistency, and mobile responsiveness matter. For example, if a compliance policy changes, an L&D team can quickly update a Rise 360 course and republish it to the LMS. It is less suited for highly customized simulations, but excellent for structured lessons, knowledge checks, curated resources, and visually clean learning pathways.

2. LMS / LXP Platforms

LMS and LXP platforms are used to deliver, assign, manage, and track learning after the content has been created. An LMS is usually focused on administration, compliance, completion tracking, reports, and structured learning paths. An LXP is typically more learner-centered, emphasizing discovery, recommendations, personalization, skills, and continuous development. In many organizations, modern platforms combine both LMS and LXP capabilities.

2.1 Moodle

Moodle is an open-source learning management system used by schools, universities, training providers, nonprofits, and organizations that want a flexible platform for online learning. Because Moodle can be customized with plugins, themes, integrations, and hosting options, it is useful when an institution wants control over course structure, learner experience, data, and system configuration.

- **Best use case:** Academic programs, blended learning, continuing education, nonprofit training, internal academies, and organizations needing a customizable LMS.
- **Strength:** Moodle is flexible, highly configurable, and supported by a large ecosystem of plugins and community resources. It works well when learning teams need structured courses, assignments, quizzes, forums, grading, and learner progress tracking.

- **Example:** A professional certification body can use Moodle to host module-based learning, weekly assignments, discussion forums, practice quizzes, final assessments, and downloadable resources for candidates preparing for an exam.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can help generate course descriptions, summarize forum discussions, draft quiz banks, recommend remediation content, and assist instructors with feedback templates.

2.2 Canvas

Canvas is a web-based learning management system commonly used in higher education, K–12 education, and professional learning environments. It helps instructors and instructional designers organize learning content into modules, create assignments and quizzes, manage communication, grade submissions, and track learner progress through integrated analytics and reporting features.

- **Best use case:** Academic course delivery, instructor-led online learning, blended classrooms, higher education programs, and professional certificate courses.
- **Strength:** Canvas is known for course organization, communication tools, grading workflows, student engagement features, and integrations with external education technologies.
- **Example:** A university can use Canvas to run a semester-long instructional design course with weekly modules, readings, discussion prompts, assignment submissions, rubrics, feedback, grades, and announcements.

- **AI opportunity:** AI can support course planning, generate discussion prompts, draft rubrics, create formative assessment questions, summarize learner analytics, and help instructors identify where learners may need additional support.

2.3 Docebo

Docebo is an enterprise learning platform designed for organizations that need to train multiple audiences, such as employees, customers, partners, sales teams, and external learners. It combines LMS, LXP, content, analytics, automation, integrations, and AI-powered learning features to help organizations deliver personalized learning at scale.

- **Best use case:** Enterprise learning, customer education, partner enablement, sales training, skills academies, and global workforce development.
- **Strength:** Docebo is strong when learning must be personalized, automated, integrated with business systems, and measured against organizational outcomes.
- **Example:** A SaaS company can use Docebo to train internal sales teams, onboard customers, certify partners, recommend role-based content, track completion, and measure the impact of learning on product adoption.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can recommend content, surface skill gaps, personalize learning paths, automate admin tasks, assist with content creation, and provide learning analytics insights for decision-makers.

2.4 Cornerstone

Cornerstone is an enterprise learning and talent development platform commonly used by large organizations to manage employee learning, compliance training, skills development, certifications, onboarding, and workforce readiness. It is especially useful in organizations with complex role structures, regulatory requirements, multiple locations, and a need for robust reporting.

- **Best use case:** Enterprise compliance training, regulated industry learning, role-based onboarding, certification management, performance-linked development, and global workforce upskilling.
- **Strength:** Cornerstone is strong for compliance automation, learning assignments, certification renewals, skills-based learning, centralized reporting, and enterprise-scale administration.
- **Example:** A healthcare organization can use Cornerstone to assign mandatory compliance courses by job role, track completion before audit deadlines, manage certification renewals, and provide managers with dashboards showing readiness across departments.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can support skill mapping, recommend learning paths, identify compliance gaps, personalize development plans, and help administrators analyze learning data more quickly.

2.5 Best for: Hosting, Assigning, and Tracking Learning

LMS and LXP platforms are best used after learning content has been designed and packaged. They provide the operational backbone for learning delivery: enrolling learners, assigning training, controlling access, tracking completions, generating reports, supporting compliance evidence, and giving learners a place to find relevant development resources.

- **Use an LMS when:** You need structured course delivery, mandatory training, certification tracking, completion reports, compliance records, manager dashboards, and audit evidence.
- **Use an LXP when:** You want learner-driven discovery, personalized recommendations, skills-based development, social learning, curated playlists, and continuous learning journeys.
- **Use both when:** Your organization needs strict tracking for required learning and engaging, personalized pathways for professional growth.
- **Practical example:** A company may create a cybersecurity course in Articulate 360, publish it to an LMS such as Moodle or Cornerstone, assign it to all employees, track completion rates, and then use AI-supported recommendations to suggest follow-up learning for high-risk roles.

3. AI Tools for Instructional Designers

AI tools help instructional designers speed up research, analysis, writing, ideation, course planning, assessment design, and content transformation. They are most useful when treated as design assistants rather than final authorities. A strong instructional designer still validates accuracy, aligns content to learning objectives, applies adult-learning principles, reviews accessibility, and ensures the final material fits the audience and business context.

3.1 ChatGPT

ChatGPT is a conversational AI assistant that instructional designers can use for brainstorming, content drafting, summarization, rewriting, scenario creation, quiz generation, and rapid prototyping of learning materials. It is especially useful when a designer needs to move from a blank page to a workable first draft quickly.

- **Best use case:** Drafting learning objectives, course outlines, scripts, facilitator guides, learner handouts, reflection questions, assessments, and communications.
- **Strength:** ChatGPT is flexible and conversational, making it useful for iterative design work. Designers can ask follow-up questions, request rewrites for different audiences, or generate multiple versions of the same learning asset.
- **Example:** An instructional designer can paste notes from an SME interview and ask ChatGPT to convert them into a lesson outline, a storyboard, five scenario-based questions, and a short facilitator script.

- **Important caution:** AI-generated content should be reviewed for accuracy, bias, tone, copyright risk, and alignment with organizational policies before it is used in a course.

3.2 Claude

Claude is an AI assistant often used for long-form writing, document analysis, summarization, brainstorming, and content refinement. For instructional design work, it can be helpful when reviewing lengthy source materials, creating structured learning guides, rewriting dense technical content, or developing scenario-based learning activities.

- **Best use case:** Summarizing long documents, turning policies into plain-language learning content, drafting detailed facilitator guides, and refining complex explanations.
- **Strength:** Claude is useful for thoughtful drafting and restructuring. It can help make content more coherent, learner-friendly, and easier to navigate.
- **Example:** A compliance training designer can provide a long regulatory guidance document and ask Claude to produce a high-level learning summary, a glossary, a scenario activity, and a manager discussion guide.
- **AI opportunity:** Claude can support content chunking, tone adjustment, reflective questions, case-study design, and learner-centered rewriting.

3.3 Gemini

Gemini is Google's AI assistant and is useful for writing, planning, brainstorming, research support, and working across Google-connected productivity workflows. Instructional designers may use it to explore topics, generate draft learning activities, summarize content, create practice questions, and develop outlines for lessons or workshops.

- **Best use case:** Research support, brainstorming, lesson planning, content summarization, Google Workspace-based drafting, and multimodal learning ideas.
- **Strength:** Gemini can be useful when designers want to connect learning design work with broader information workflows, such as research, document drafting, and planning.
- **Example:** A learning consultant preparing a leadership workshop can use Gemini to brainstorm session themes, draft participant reflection questions, and organize a pre-work reading list.
- **AI opportunity:** Gemini can help generate examples, simplify technical content, draft course communications, outline workshop sessions, and suggest visual or interactive learning formats.

3.4 AI Course Generators

AI course generators help create draft courses from prompts, source documents, webpages, slide decks, videos, or structured outlines. Depending on the tool, they may generate course modules, lesson text, quizzes, slide-style content, narration scripts,

images, and basic interactions. They are helpful for accelerating first drafts, but the instructional designer must still review the learning flow, accuracy, accessibility, tone, and assessment quality.

- **Best use case:** Rapid prototyping, microlearning drafts, compliance refreshers, onboarding modules, internal knowledge-base courses, and early-stage course concepts.
- **Strength:** They reduce the time required to move from raw content to a draft learning structure. This is especially useful when SMEs provide large amounts of information but little instructional structure.
- **Example:** A training manager can upload a product guide and ask an AI course generator to create a short customer-support course with three lessons, a knowledge check, and a final assessment.
- **Important caution:** AI course generators can create generic or shallow content if the input is weak. Designers should provide clear objectives, audience details, performance expectations, brand standards, and assessment requirements.

3.5 Best for: **Research**, Scripts, Quizzes, Storyboards, and First Drafts

AI tools are best used as acceleration tools during the early and middle stages of instructional design. They can help designers explore ideas, organize source material, draft reusable templates, create practice questions, and generate multiple design options.

However, AI should not replace instructional judgment, learner analysis, SME validation, compliance review, or quality assurance.

- **Research:** Summarize topic areas, compare approaches, identify common terms, and prepare questions for SMEs.
- **Scripts:** Draft narration, dialogue, facilitator notes, video scripts, role-play instructions, and learner-facing explanations.
- **Quizzes:** Generate multiple-choice questions, scenario questions, answer feedback, pre-assessments, and knowledge checks.
- **Storyboards:** Convert an outline into a slide-by-slide or screen-by-screen course plan, including visuals, narration, interactions, and assessments.
- **First drafts:** Create a starting version of course content that can then be reviewed, improved, localized, and validated by humans.

4. Video & Screen-Capture Tools

Video and screen-capture tools help instructional designers create tutorials, walkthroughs, product demos, expert explainers, performance-support clips, and microlearning videos. These tools are especially useful when learners need to see a process, hear an explanation, or follow a task step-by-step.

4.1 Camtasia

Camtasia is a screen recording and video editing tool commonly used to create polished training videos, software tutorials, demos, and instructional walkthroughs. It allows designers to record the screen, camera, microphone, and system audio, then edit the video with callouts, captions, transitions, cursor effects, zooms, annotations, and templates.

- **Best use case:** Software tutorials, step-by-step demos, training videos, process walkthroughs, and polished microlearning videos.
- **Strength:** Camtasia combines screen recording and editing in one workflow, making it useful for designers who need professional-looking instructional videos without using complex video production software.
- **Example:** An instructional designer can record how to submit an expense claim, add zooms to highlight important fields, use callouts to show tips, include captions for accessibility, and export the final video for an LMS module.

- **AI opportunity:** AI-powered features can support script generation, text-based editing, captions, translations, text-to-speech, and faster video production workflows.

4.2 Descript

Descript is an AI-powered audio and video editing tool that lets designers edit recordings by editing the transcript. This is especially helpful for instructional designers who create explainer videos, podcast-style learning assets, interview clips, and short training videos but do not want to spend a lot of time working with complex video timelines.

- **Best use case:** Editing narration-heavy videos, SME interviews, podcast-style learning clips, talking-head explainers, and repurposed webinar recordings.
- **Strength:** Descript makes editing feel like working in a document. If a speaker repeats a phrase, pauses too long, or uses filler words, the designer can edit the transcript and the video or audio changes with it.
- **Example:** An instructional designer can record a 30-minute SME interview, remove filler words, extract a five-minute lesson segment, add captions, and export the clip as a microlearning video.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can assist with transcription, filler-word removal, captions, summaries, script drafting, audio cleanup, translation, and repurposing long recordings into short learning clips.

4.3 Loom

Loom is a screen recording and video messaging tool used to create quick walkthroughs, demonstrations, explanations, and asynchronous updates. It is ideal when the purpose is to communicate clearly and quickly rather than produce a highly polished training video.

- **Best use case:** Quick tutorials, stakeholder walkthroughs, design reviews, software demos, process explanations, and feedback videos.
- **Strength:** Loom is fast and simple. Designers can record their screen, camera, and voice, then share the video through a link without needing a full production workflow.
- **Example:** A learning designer can record a three-minute walkthrough explaining how reviewers should comment on a storyboard, then send the link to SMEs before a review deadline.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can help generate video titles, summaries, chapters, captions, transcripts, and follow-up documentation from recorded walkthroughs.

4.4 Best for: Tutorials, Demos, Walkthroughs, and Microlearning

Video and screen-capture tools are best used when learners need to see, hear, or follow a process visually. They are especially valuable for software training, product demonstrations, process explanations, onboarding support, and short performance-support resources.

- **Tutorials:** Use video when learners need step-by-step guidance, such as how to complete a form, use a system, or follow a procedure.
- **Demos:** Use screen capture to show how a product, platform, or workflow functions in a realistic environment.
- **Walkthroughs:** Use narrated screen recordings to explain decisions, review designs, or guide stakeholders through learning materials.
- **Microlearning:** Use short clips to reinforce one task, one concept, or one decision point at a time.

5. Collaboration & Prototyping

Collaboration and prototyping tools help instructional designers work with SMEs, stakeholders, learners, visual designers, developers, and project sponsors. They support early thinking, rapid feedback, storyboard reviews, prototype testing, content planning, and shared decision-making before a course is fully built.

5.1 Miro

Miro is an online collaborative whiteboard that supports brainstorming, journey mapping, process mapping, storyboarding, workshop design, and visual planning. It is useful when instructional designers need stakeholders to think visually, organize ideas, and align on learning experiences before production begins.

- **Best use case:** Learning journey mapping, design-thinking workshops, content clustering, learner persona mapping, and storyboard brainstorming.
- **Strength:** Miro provides a shared visual space with sticky notes, templates, diagrams, voting, comments, and frames, making it helpful for both live and asynchronous collaboration.
- **Example:** A training team can use Miro to map a new-hire onboarding journey, identify learning moments, group content by role, and prioritize which modules should be built first.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can summarize brainstorming boards, cluster sticky notes, generate mind maps, extract themes, and turn workshop outputs into structured learning design inputs.

5.2 Figma

Figma is a collaborative design and prototyping tool often used for interface design, visual layouts, interactive mockups, and shared design systems. Instructional designers can use it to prototype learning portals, course screens, mobile learning experiences, scenario interfaces, learning games, and learner-facing resource pages.

- **Best use case:** Visual prototypes, course interface mockups, learning app concepts, clickable learner journeys, and stakeholder review of design direction.
- **Strength:** Figma allows teams to create, comment on, and test interactive prototypes in a shared workspace, which helps stakeholders see how the learner experience will work before development begins.
- **Example:** A learning experience designer can create a clickable prototype of a mobile onboarding path, showing how learners move from welcome screen to scenario activity to knowledge check.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can support design ideation, text revisions, layout exploration, image generation, design-system application, and rapid prototype concepts.

5.3 Google Workspace

Google Workspace is a cloud-based productivity and collaboration suite that includes tools such as Docs, Slides, Sheets, Drive, Meet, Chat, Forms, and Gemini. Instructional designers can use it to draft learning content, collect feedback, manage reviews, create

workshop materials, store source files, run meetings, and collaborate with stakeholders in real time.

- **Best use case:** Collaborative writing, storyboard drafts, SME reviews, version history, workshop slides, feedback forms, and shared project documents.
- **Strength:** Google Workspace makes it easy for distributed teams to co-edit documents, comment on drafts, organize files, meet virtually, and maintain a shared source of truth.
- **Example:** An instructional designer can draft a storyboard in Google Docs, ask SMEs to comment, create a learner worksheet in Slides, collect pilot feedback through Forms, and store everything in Drive.
- **AI opportunity:** AI can help draft documents, summarize comments, create first-pass slides, generate survey questions, organize notes, and support faster review cycles.

5.4 Best for: Storyboarding, Brainstorming, Feedback, and Collaboration

Collaboration and prototyping tools are best used before and during course production. They help teams align on learning goals, test ideas early, collect feedback, and reduce rework. Instead of waiting until a course is fully built, designers can show diagrams, storyboards, clickable prototypes, and draft materials for early validation.

- **Storyboarding:** Use collaborative documents, whiteboards, or prototypes to map screens, narration, interactions, and assessments.

- **Brainstorming:** Use visual tools to gather ideas from SMEs, learners, managers, and project stakeholders.
- **Feedback:** Use comments, annotations, and review links to collect clear input without losing version control.
- **Collaboration:** Use shared workspaces to keep files, decisions, feedback, and next steps visible to the project team.

6. Quick Tool Selection Guide

This guide helps instructional designers quickly choose the right tool category based on the task they need to complete. In practice, most projects use more than one tool category across the learning design lifecycle.

6.1 Build an e-learning course → Authoring tools:

Use tools such as Articulate 360, Adobe Captivate, or Rise 360 when you need to create structured modules, interactions, quizzes, simulations, and LMS-ready packages.

6.2 Manage learners → LMS/LXP:

Use platforms such as Moodle, Canvas, Docebo, or Cornerstone when you need to enroll learners, assign training, track completion, manage certifications, and generate reports.

6.3 Create content faster → AI tools:

Use ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or AI course generators when you need first drafts, outlines, scripts, quiz questions, summaries, storyboards, and content variations.

6.4 Make tutorials → Video tools:

Use Camtasia, Descript, or Loom when learners need demonstrations, walkthroughs, screen recordings, short explanations, or visual process support.

6.5 Collaborate with stakeholders → Collaboration tools:

Use Miro, Figma, or Google Workspace when you need brainstorming, shared storyboards, clickable prototypes, SME reviews, feedback cycles, and team alignment.

7. AI Best Practices

AI can significantly accelerate instructional design work, but it should be used with clear guardrails. The most effective instructional designers use AI to speed up research, drafting, review, and ideation while keeping human judgment, learning science, learner needs, compliance requirements, and organizational context at the center of the design process.

7.1 Use AI for First Drafts, Not Final Content

AI is strongest when it helps instructional designers move from a blank page to a useful starting point. It can draft outlines, scenarios, quiz questions, summaries, learner communications, job aids, and video scripts. However, AI-generated material should be treated as a draft that requires review, editing, and validation before it becomes learner-facing content.

- **Good use:** Ask AI to create three versions of a lesson introduction, then choose the strongest one and revise it for your learners.
- **Risky use:** Copying AI-generated course content directly into an LMS without SME review or instructional design quality checks.
- **Example:** For a leadership training module, AI can draft a coaching scenario, but the designer should revise it to match the company's leadership model, terminology, and real workplace situations.

7.2 Fact-Check AI-Generated Content

AI tools can produce confident-sounding but incorrect information. Instructional designers should verify facts, definitions, statistics, procedures, legal statements, technical instructions, and policy references before publishing content. This is especially important in compliance, safety, finance, healthcare, cybersecurity, and technical training.

- **Check source material:** Compare AI outputs against official policies, SME-approved documents, product manuals, regulatory guidance, or current internal procedures.
- **Verify examples:** Make sure examples reflect how work is actually performed in the organization.
- **Review assessment items:** Confirm that correct answers, distractors, and feedback explanations are accurate and aligned to the learning objective.

7.3 Protect Confidential Information

Instructional designers often work with sensitive information, such as internal processes, customer examples, employee data, business strategy, product roadmaps, security procedures, financial data, and proprietary training materials. Before using AI, designers should understand which tools are approved by the organization and what type of data can or cannot be entered.

- **Do not paste confidential data:** Avoid entering private learner records, unreleased product details, client names, personal information, or sensitive operational data into unapproved AI tools.
- **Use approved systems:** Follow enterprise AI, data protection, privacy, and information security policies.
- **Anonymize examples:** Replace real names, customer details, financial figures, and internal identifiers with realistic but fictional placeholders when creating training scenarios.

7.4 Review for Accuracy, Tone, and Accessibility

AI-generated content may need editing to match the organization's voice, learner level, accessibility standards, and inclusive language expectations. A course should be clear, respectful, easy to navigate, and usable by learners with different needs, devices, bandwidth constraints, and assistive technologies.

- **Accuracy:** Check that concepts, instructions, screenshots, workflows, examples, and terminology are correct before publishing.
- **Tone:** Revise AI-generated language so it is professional, learner-centered, culturally appropriate, and aligned with the audience.
- **Accessibility:** Add captions, transcripts, readable structure, descriptive link text, alt text for images, sufficient color contrast, and keyboard-friendly interactions where applicable.

- **Example:** If AI drafts a dense technical explanation, rewrite it using plain language, short paragraphs, definitions, and a realistic workplace example.

7.5 Keep Learning Objectives in Control

Learning objectives should guide every AI-assisted design decision. AI can suggest activities, scenarios, examples, and assessments, but the instructional designer must ensure that each output supports the intended performance outcome. If the objective is unclear, the AI output may become attractive but unfocused.

- **Start with the objective:** Define what learners must know, do, decide, or demonstrate before asking AI to generate content.
- **Align activities:** Make sure examples, practice tasks, scenarios, and discussions directly support the learning objective.
- **Align assessments:** Check that quiz questions and performance tasks measure the same behavior described in the objective.
- **Example:** If the objective is "Process a customer refund accurately," the course should include a realistic refund scenario, a step-by-step practice activity, and an assessment that asks learners to complete or analyze the refund process.

8. 2026 Instructional Design Tool Checklist

This checklist summarizes the practical tool capabilities instructional designers should build or strengthen in 2026. It is not necessary to master every platform, but designers should be able to work confidently across authoring, delivery, AI-assisted creation, video production, accessibility, analytics, and tool evaluation.

8.1 Know One Authoring Tool

Every instructional designer should know at least one e-learning authoring tool well enough to build a complete course from start to finish. This includes creating lessons, adding interactions, writing quiz questions, inserting media, checking accessibility, publishing for LMS delivery, and revising the course after feedback.

- **What to practice:** Build a short course with an introduction, three learning sections, one scenario activity, a knowledge check, and a final quiz.
- **Why it matters:** Authoring tools are where instructional strategy becomes a learner-facing experience.
- **Example:** A designer who knows Rise 360 or Storyline 360 can quickly create onboarding, compliance, or product training without waiting for a developer.

8.2 Understand One LMS

Instructional designers do not always need to administer an LMS, but they should understand how learning content is uploaded, assigned, tracked, reported, and maintained. This helps designers create courses that work reliably after launch.

- **What to practice:** Upload a course, assign it to a learner group, check completion tracking, review reporting options, and understand how learner records are stored.
- **Why it matters:** A well-designed course can fail operationally if it is not packaged, assigned, or tracked correctly.
- **Example:** Before launching a compliance module, the designer should confirm that the LMS records completion, quiz score, due date, and certificate status correctly.

8.3 Use at Least One AI Assistant

Instructional designers should be comfortable using at least one AI assistant to support research, drafting, analysis, rewriting, assessment design, and content transformation. The goal is not to let AI design the course independently, but to use it as a productivity partner that speeds up repetitive work and expands design options.

- **What to practice:** Ask an AI assistant to create a course outline, rewrite content for a beginner audience, generate quiz questions, draft a video script, and create a storyboard from SME notes.
- **Why it matters:** AI fluency is becoming a core productivity skill for instructional designers, especially when timelines are short and source content is messy.
- **Example:** A designer can use an AI assistant to turn a dense cybersecurity policy into learning objectives, scenario questions, learner-friendly explanations, and a manager discussion guide.

8.4 Create Basic Learning Videos

Basic video creation is now an essential instructional design skill. Designers should be able to record a screen, explain a process clearly, edit out mistakes, add captions, and publish short videos that support learning goals. These videos do not always need to be highly produced; they should be clear, focused, and useful.

- **What to practice:** Record a two- to five-minute tutorial, edit the opening and closing, add captions, highlight key screen areas, and export the video for LMS or knowledge-base use.
- **Why it matters:** Many workplace learners prefer quick visual guidance for system tasks, workflows, and just-in-time performance support.
- **Example:** A designer can create a short video showing how to submit a timesheet, access a dashboard, approve a request, or complete a required form.

8.5 Understand Learning Analytics

Learning analytics help instructional designers understand whether learning experiences are being completed, where learners struggle, and whether the training appears to support performance goals. Designers should understand basic metrics such as enrollments, completions, quiz scores, time spent, learner feedback, drop-off points, and assessment trends.

- **What to practice:** Review a course report, identify completion gaps, analyze quiz results, compare pre- and post-assessment scores, and summarize learner feedback.

- **Why it matters:** Analytics help designers improve learning experiences after launch instead of assuming the first version worked perfectly.
- **Example:** If many learners fail the same quiz question, the designer can review whether the lesson explanation, practice activity, or assessment wording needs improvement.

8.6 Apply Accessibility Principles

Accessibility ensures that learning content can be used by people with different abilities, devices, learning preferences, and assistive technologies. Instructional designers should apply accessibility from the beginning rather than treating it as a final compliance check.

- **What to practice:** Add captions and transcripts, structure headings clearly, use readable fonts, write descriptive links, add alt text for meaningful images, check color contrast, and avoid relying on color alone to communicate meaning.
- **Why it matters:** Accessible design improves usability for all learners and reduces the risk of excluding people who use assistive technologies.
- **Example:** A software tutorial should include captions, a transcript, clear visual callouts, keyboard-friendly navigation, and text instructions that do not depend only on what appears visually on screen.

8.7 Test and Evaluate New Tools Regularly

The instructional design tool landscape changes quickly, especially as AI features are added to authoring tools, LMS platforms, video tools, and collaboration software.

Designers should regularly test new tools and features so they can choose the right technology for the learning problem instead of relying only on familiar workflows.

- **What to practice:** Set aside time each quarter to test one new tool, AI feature, integration, or workflow improvement.
- **Why it matters:** Regular evaluation helps learning teams stay efficient, improve quality, and avoid adopting tools only because they are popular.
- **Example:** A team might test an AI course generator, compare its output against a human-created storyboard, document strengths and limitations, and decide whether it belongs in the design process.

Conclusion

The instructional design tool landscape is changing quickly, but you don't need to master every new platform. The goal is to understand **which tool fits which learning need** and use AI to make your workflow faster without replacing human judgment.

Keep this cheat sheet handy as you explore new tools, build projects, and strengthen your instructional design skills.

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