

Online Course Essentials | Learning Activities

Required learning activities, materials, readings, media, etc. support the learning aims and are present in each module.

The Absorb-Do-Connect Framework (Horton, 2006) guides the design of engaging learning experiences by organizing activities into three key types:

- **Absorb** activities build foundational knowledge and are ideal when learners need concise updates or background information. These activities orient students, introduce key terms and concepts, and prepare them for deeper engagement.
- **Do** activities turn information into skills through active engagement—exploring, analyzing, discussing, and applying knowledge. They offer safe practice and spark curiosity, making abstract content meaningful.
- **Connect** activities help learners link new knowledge to prior experience, supporting long-term retention and transfer. Use them when real-world application is essential or when learners need support to see relevance.

This resource includes ready-to-use examples, activity ideas, and tools to support immediate implementation in your online or blended course.



Absorb

Activity Ideas WHAT IS IT, AND WHY USE IT?	Examples	Associated Tools
<p>Presentations/Recorded Lectures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentations refer to conveying information and demonstrating procedures and behavior in a straightforward flow of experiences.• Use Presentations to explain and demonstrate things to learners in a clear, well-organized, and logical sequence (including an introduction, the body section, and a summary.)• Recorded lectures allows students to access course materials outside of the classroom. Students can learn content while studying at home and are able to come to class with prepared questions and discussion topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical demonstrations• Instructional videos• Guest Speakers• Discussion Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UICapture/Panopto• Zoom• Voice Over PPT
<p>Storytelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Story-telling activities refer to individual human experiences and making the information real and personal.• The learner listens to a story told by the instructor. Then, the learner may be given	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Love stories• Discovery stories• Hero stories• Tragedies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panopto• ZOOM• Voice-Over PPT

<p>the opportunity to tell a comparable story. The whole activity then ends with a brief recap of the points made in the story.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Story-telling activities to directly relate what you are teaching to a human being. 		
<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading activities direct learners to electronic or paper documents. By reading these documents, learners gain important information and inspiration. • Use Readings to present complex and difficult information in a stable form for careful study by the learner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online journals • Newspapers • Documents • Diaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>University of Iowa Libraries</u>
<p>Online Field Trips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Field Trips refer to online educational excursions where learners can observe concrete examples of what they are learning. • Use Field Trips to show how concepts taught in the course are applied in the real world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided tours • Virtual Museums • Travel journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Discovery Education</u>

Adapted from E-Learning by Design (Horton, 2006)

Do

Activity Ideas WHAT IS IT, AND WHY USE IT?	Examples	Associated Tools
Practice Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice Activities refer to providing learners an opportunity to exercise newly acquired abilities. Use Practice Activities to prepare learners to apply skills, knowledge, and attitudes in real situations and build their confidence in the ability to apply learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hands-on Activities Guided analysis activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP4 recordings Google Docs OneDrive SharePoint ICON
Discovery Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discovery Activities refer to providing learners opportunities to discover ideas on their own. Use Discovery Activities to stimulate curiosity about a subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual field trips Mini-case studies Reaction (reflection) papers Group work Outline items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP4 recordings Google Docs OneDrive SharePoint ICON Padlet
Games and Simulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Games and Simulations refer to activities that provide learners opportunities: learning by playing. Use Games and Simulations for skills that are subtle and complex or when tasks are complex and time is short. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz-show games Word puzzles Jigsaw puzzles Personal-response simulations Scavenger hunts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quizlet Puzzlemaker Zoom Scavenger Hunt

Adapted from E-Learning by Design (Horton, 2006)

Connect

Activity Ideas WHAT IS IT, AND WHY USE IT?	Examples	Associated Tools
<p>Questioning Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning Activities refer to activities that provoke thoughts from learners. They are sometimes called 'stop-and-think' questions. • Use Questioning Activities to get learners to think about a subject (e.g., triggering thought about when, where, how, and why to apply learning). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let students ask GOOD questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ZOOM • Quiz tools on UICapture/Panopto
<p>Stories Created by Learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This activity requires learners to recall events/stories from their own lives. • Use Story-telling activities to connect the subject students are learning with their own experiences and to come up with a relevant story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture Stories • Written stories • Oral stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom • Microsoft PowerPoint • Microsoft Sway (see the storytelling template in action)
<p>Job Ads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Ads refer to applying knowledge and skills to real-world tasks that learners encounter on the job in life. • Use Job Ads as the topic is too complex for learners to recall all important details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklists • Study guide • Glossaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wix.com • Facebook • X (formerly Twitter)

<p>Research Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Activities refer to activities that teach learners to gather, analyze, and report on information. • Use Research Activities to connect learners with the universe of knowledge on which they must draw to lead successful lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scavenger hunts • Guided research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Zoom Scavenger Hunt</u> • Google Docs • SharePoint
<p>Final Works (Final Exams)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers to applying students' learning to their own work. • Use final works to verify if learners can apply what they have just achieved from the teaching activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal activities • Projects • Exams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICON • Google Docs • OneDrive • SharePoint

Adapted from E-Learning by Design (Horton, 2006)