

PowerPoint vs. e-learning: The ultimate comparison guide

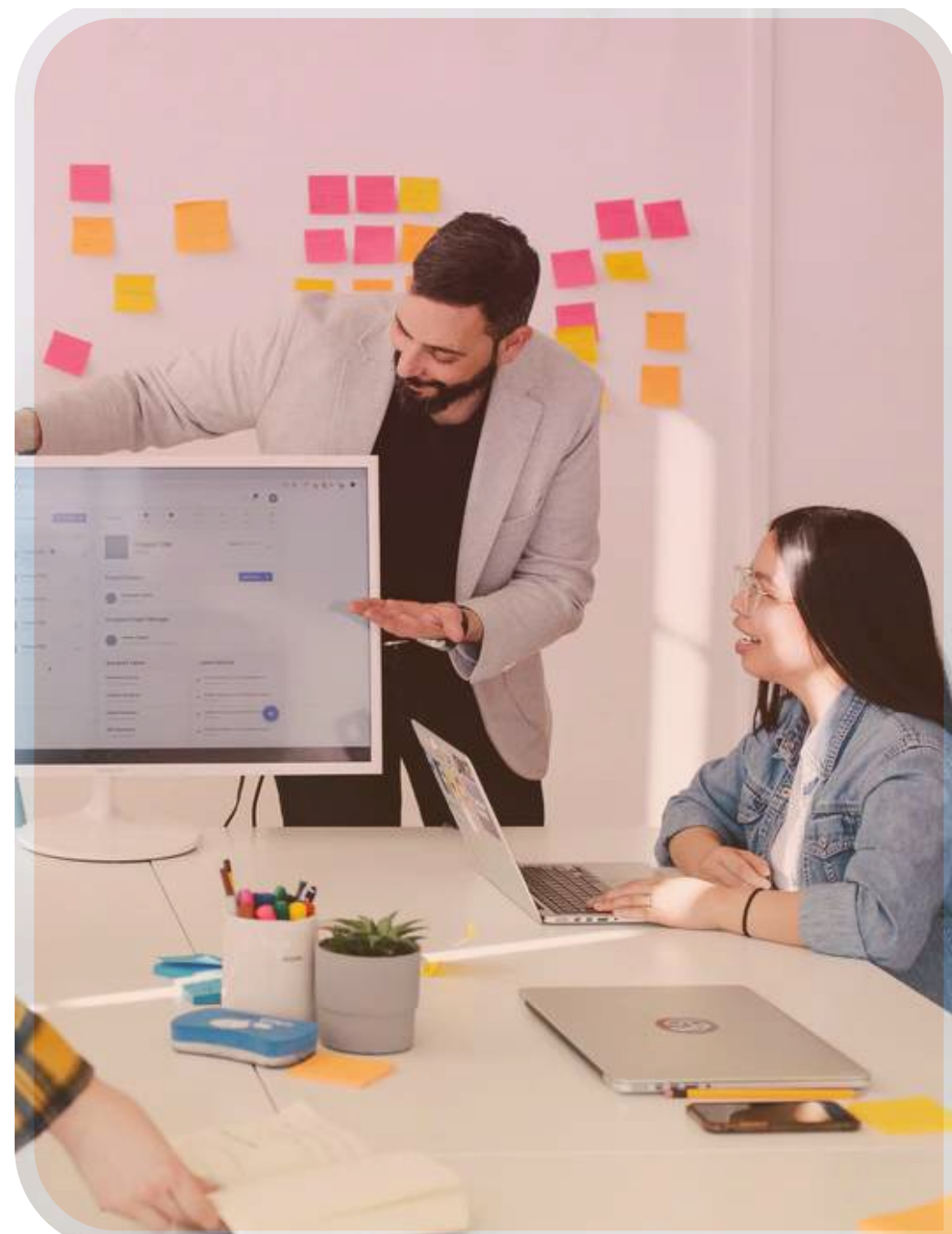


Table of contents

Introduction	02
Chapter 1 PowerPoint Presentations	03
Chapter 2 E-learning	06
Chapter 3 Make The Right Choice	10
Chapter 4 Making The Transition	11
Chapter 5 Converting PowerPoint trainings into e-Learning	13
Conclusion	15

Introduction

Nearly universal access to Wi-Fi and internet in the modern world has changed the way businesses operate. Regardless of location or time zone, it is easier than ever to collaborate with teammates and co-workers in today's world. This technological evolution has touched every facet of organizations from start-ups to large corporations. As a result, Learning & Development (L&D) teams around the world have had to reshape their strategy to align with these changes to keep their employees up to date. Readily accessible training has become even more important as information in today's world is typically available at our fingertips. To stay in tune with the times, this training has moved from more traditional methods to a digital format so employees can have the relevant information at the exact time of need.



While there have been numerous arguments made about the value of providing e-learning for a global workforce over instructor-led training, it is important to also distinguish the method through which e-learning is given. Therefore, we ask you this question: **As an L&D Manager, have you been relying heavily on standalone PowerPoint presentations to create your training modules? If your answer is yes, then you are not alone.**

Microsoft PowerPoint, for good reason, is commonly used in working environments. With a low learning curve, easy accessibility, and multiple plugins available, it is a great tool to use to create captivating presentations. Its popularity is evident, as there are surely millions of presentations being made on PowerPoint across the world at this very instant. Many of these presentations will be used by L&D teams across the globe for training purposes. But here lies the catch: Is the purpose of these presentations to provide information or make a statement, or is to deliver effective training with positive learning outcomes? If it is merely for providing information, presenting data, or a project plan then yes, PowerPoint is a good tool for this. But, if it is a training module to engage learners, increase their knowledge retention, and meet learning objectives, then perhaps it would be good to reconsider this method of delivery.

Let us investigate the advantages and disadvantages of PowerPoint.

Chapter 1

PowerPoint Presentations

To better understand the situations in which PowerPoint is an effective tool, and the times it may not be best, we will dive into the advantages and disadvantages of the tool as a whole.

Advantages

User-friendly

This is one of the most common reasons why PowerPoint is used. It is easy to use and easy to navigate, which is why so many subject-matter experts (SMEs) and L&D professional love to use it.

Accessibility and availability

Almost all computers have this software installed. Hence, it is easy to access from anywhere at any time and transfer files to another computer to continue working on later.

Curate and repurpose

There are millions of PowerPoint decks created by trainers and SMEs which have a huge amount of knowledge in them. These can be curated and repurposed without much effort to suit other needs.

Visual appeal

PowerPoint offers a great deal of flexibility to make attractive and standardized content with predefined design parameters. There are a variety of icons, images, and smart graphics to enhance the engagement of the audience.

Basic level of interactivity

There are a few simple interactive elements that can be incorporated into PowerPoint presentations. This can include hyperlinks or even basic animations that will contribute to the engagement of the learner.

Printing of hand-outs

PowerPoint offers the option to print out PDFs of the slide deck for participants to use to follow along in a face-to-face session. Additional notes can also be easily added by the presenter to assist others in following along.

Updating

It is easy to change and update the content of a slide. This can be done quickly to suit the needs of the learner. Leveraging existing knowledge and being able to update it quickly in-house is also a cost-effective process.

With these points in mind, let us look at the disadvantages of PowerPoint. We will review these while considering the goal of helping learners retain knowledge and improving learning outcomes.

Disadvantages

Too simplified/complicated

The default style of using bullets or phrases can make the content either too simplified and linear (boring) or too complex to be comprehended. It requires a presenter to piece it together to become meaningful.

User management

As a desktop tool, PowerPoint cannot afford to have multiple authors and admins working simultaneously on the application. Additionally, the absence of access rights can make it tedious for admins to identify and manage the users.

Absence of version control:

PowerPoint does not provide any way through which versions can be maintained and tracked. This limitation can snowball into confusion when there are updates to be made and it is unclear what needs to be changed and what is the original content.

Tech glitches

Authors, trainers, and learners alike can face difficulties with the display or hyperlinking. Sometimes, embedded video or audio might not play as expected. Moreover, the option to incorporate hyperlinks remains a clumsy option, especially when learners must repeatedly switch back and forth.

Size challenges

Incorporation of images, animations, hyperlinks, and transitions makes the whole file much heavier. One must convert it, compress it, zip it, or break it into parts to be transferred and distributed on the internet or publish.

Trainer's role

How and what message is being received by the learner is completely dependent on the way the trainer delivers the presentation. Because each trainer may have their own style, it is difficult to standardize the content.

Too many features

The number of styles, colours, images, and animations that can be incorporated in the PowerPoints can become distractors for learning. This is great for presentations but, for training, it can have a negative impact.

Absence of tracking and reporting

Similarly, L&D managers have no concrete method to track the learner and their engagement as they progress through a PowerPoint. Timely feedback, either qualitative or quantitative, also cannot be provided to the learner.

Lack of assessment

PowerPoint training modules begin with the first slide and end with the last slide. As a result, there is nothing to show how the learner was engaged. It is important to ensure that learners have properly completed training through an assessment or evaluation.

Lack of elementary interactivity

PowerPoint has limited interactive elements that can help keep the learner engaged with the content. Merely clicking the mouse to navigate through the slides does not engage higher centres of learning in the brain. There is no meaningful retention or true learning experience taking place.

Having weighed the pros and cons of PowerPoint, it is evident why it remains a popular choice for face-to-face sessions. While some of these disadvantages can be offset by the presenter, it is important to consider the way in which learning and training has shifted to a digital environment. We then ask the question, does this tool meet the requirement for an e-learning environment where training is not only remote and asynchronous, but also takes place in the absence of an instructor?

When considering e-learning as an alternative to PowerPoint, let us dive into how e-learning can offset some of the disadvantages of PowerPoint and how these disadvantages can truly be a deal breaker when trying to set up an effective digital learning environment.

Chapter 2

E-learning

First and foremost, let us make something clear. **PowerPoint is not e-learning**. E-learning broadly means **learning** conducted through electronic media, typically on the internet or intranet.

This concept or technology has been **specifically designed to enable and empower learners**. It embraces engaging learning and not presentations. To have a better understanding of the common challenges in e-learning, it is important to understand the context of some key points to consider with e-learning:

1. Those who require the training may have varied learning needs. From different motivation levels to availability, L&D teams need to be able to cater to all kinds of learners and meet them (virtually) where they learn best.
2. Each learner will be taking the course individually. Therefore, it is important for the training to be individualized to ensure that it is engaging. This will prevent the learner from losing steam as they will not be motivated by other colleagues around them such as in a group setting.
3. It is important to provide learners with regular feedback, both qualitative and quantitative, as they complete tasks. This is very essential to keep them motivated and inform them of their progress.

With these key points in mind, let us look at the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning.

Advantages

E-learning has a large repertoire of functionalities, tools, options, and modes that can be used to meet the specific demands of remote training. The cognitive theory of multimedia learning, proposed by Richard Mayer, highlights the design of the e-learning landscape. The goal is not only to deliver training, but also achieve better learning outcomes. How is all of this achieved? Let us take a closer look.

High level of cognitive Interactivity

A high level of cognitive engagement is easily achieved with the incorporation of interactive content. A high degree of interactivity in e-learning is primarily achieved in two ways:

- Interaction through onscreen elements such as click, hotlinks, mouseovers, and drag and drop.
- Interaction with the content such as gamified elements, branching scenarios, storytelling, simulations, fill-ups, quizzes, and case studies.

Combining both these methods in a didactic way makes learning both fun and engaging.

Continuity in learning

E-learning tools will typically track the point at which a learner stops. Therefore, when they go to continue learning, they do not have to backtrack to figure out where they finished. This gives a sense of continuity in the learning experience.

Scalability

Most importantly, e-learning content is scalable. It is easy to add new authors and learners, distribute the courses, and change the content as needed. The process is made to be simple and seamless, so new courses can be made available quickly.

Functionality to Localize Content

With the use of built-in tools or the ability to import and export files in the authoring tool, content can be quickly localized to suit the training requirements in different locations for a geographically diverse workforce.

Ability to give feedback

Continuous qualitative feedback is provided by using artificial intelligence and personalised messages that can be provided within the modules. This will help to keep the learner on track and prevent them from going off task.

Flexibility in learning paths

Learners can choose their own path with the ability to move around freely within the course. Giving learners flexibility in such a way can often help their learning and knowledge retention.

Promote collaborative learning

The various functionalities and tools available for e-learning facilitate and make collaborative learning an integral part of the learning ecosystem. It can increase engagement throughout their experiences.

Enable personal learning experiences

Every learner has a unique way of learning and retaining information. Being able to customize the journey of each learner can make the information more meaningful and provide better learning outcomes.

Easy accessibility

In today's world, learners need to access the modules on the go. E-learning courses can be made available on responsive screens which are device-agnostic and quick to load.

Easy version control

E-learning offers a quick and smooth way to ensure that the updated content reaches the learner with minimum turn-around time. With e-learning, version control can be easily achieved. Not only is it possible to automatically update content, but it also shows the exact areas that the content was changed.

Control over the design

The design of e-learning modules is often backed by sound technological designs which are digital manifestations of developmental psychology and cognitive neurosciences. This is unlike the PowerPoint presentation decks, which are created to transmit bits of information by the presenter.

Useful insights

It is crucial to collect insights as to how a particular course is performing. Is it engaging enough? Are the learners completing the course in optimal time? Which areas of content are learners are staying in longer and which areas are they skipping? This collection and analysis of data helps to keep the course relevant to learners and make future improvements.

Assessment functionalities

Through the various levels of interactivity incorporated in the course, is it easy to assess the progress of learners. These reports are often presented at the end of the course by consolidating data points to generate a grade or certification. This data can also be used for the administrators to assess the learner.

Broadly speaking, e-learning checks most of the same boxes as PowerPoint when discussing the advantages. It is important to note, however, that there are quite a few areas where e-learning outshines PowerPoint and provides a solution to its disadvantages.

Disadvantages

Like any system, e-learning can also come with some downsides. As opposed to PowerPoint, however, this list is quite limited:

Internet connectivity constraints

One of the few apparent downsides to e-learning is the limitation of network speed while creating or accessing a course.

Inadequate testing

If the modules are not tested for every user case, then it can lead to a lot of navigation, tracking, reporting, and access issues.

Improper selection of content pieces

A badly planned instructional design of the module can have huge repercussions on the learning experience. It can demotivate learners and prevent them from completing the module in the desired manner.

Weak instructional design

A badly planned instructional design of the module can have huge repercussions on the learning experience. It can demotivate learners and prevent them from completing the module in the desired manner.

It is amply clear, after comparing the features of PowerPoint and e-learning for remote and asynchronous learning, that PowerPoint falls on the wayside. With employees across geographies, time zones, or even different floors of the same building, it is important to provide training that employees can do online and in their own time, pace, and place.

Chapter 3

Make The Right Choice

Many organizations took their first step in shifting to digital learning by simply sharing PowerPoint presentations with employees that were intended to be instructor led. In the rush for an online presence, it was forgotten that PowerPoint is not the right tool for training and will not provide the desired results and return. As a result, e-learning emerges as the obvious choice to achieve the best learning outcomes.

There are many authoring tools available that can be used to create e-learning. They all include several features that can be used to develop highly engaging and interactive e-learning course content. While it is most likely the right decision to use an e-learning authoring tool to create your content, it is important to choose the right one for your organization.

Software as a Service (SaaS) based authoring tools are the top contender in today's market because of the co-authoring and collaborative manner of content creation. They are typically not only cost-efficient and low maintenance, but also have a very short turnaround time for course creation. Easygenerator is one such SaaS based authoring tool that is an easy to use and cost-effective solution. It leverages the concept of **Employee-generated Learning (EGL)** to allow anyone to create high-quality training course content with interactive elements such as quizzes, templates, and hot-spots that contribute to the overall learning experience as well as tracking and report-generation.

If you are looking to leverage EGL, you might find that your department needs a new tool to support the effort. While there are many options available, it can be difficult to select the right one. Here are three things to consider:

- Focus on usability and have a low learning curve as your main criteria when selecting tools for EGL. Ideally, you'll find something that can be seamlessly embedded into your organization's existing infrastructure, such as your company LMS, rather than a complex tool made for instructional designers.
- Ensure that you choose an authoring tool with adequate resources for onboarding new users. Ideally, the tool should offer support and instructional material to new users whenever needed.
- Choose a tool that allows you to capture your brand identity in a template. That way, SMEs can easily create courses and focus on the content without having the worry about the brand elements. Additionally, if brand elements change, courses can be updated at mass rather than individually.

Chapter 4

Making The Transition

As an L&D Manager, if you are using PowerPoint presentations for your online training and want to transition to an online learning environment, it can be a daunting task to create suitable e-learning content from scratch. The good news is that it does not have to be this way. There are a few methods in which you can leverage already created PowerPoint training modules and transition them smoothly into highly appropriate online training. There are a few basics, however, that will have to be worked out first. Below we have outlined a few steps to take when converting existing PowerPoint presentations into e-learning.

How to convert PowerPoint to e-learning



1. Create a high-level plan

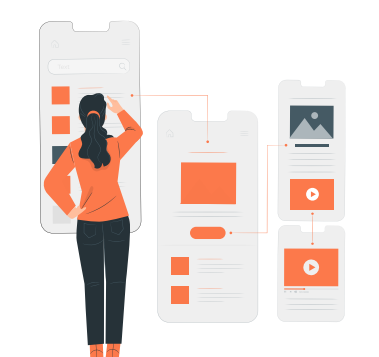
Think about your learners' training needs and changing work environments. For instance, consider whether the training is meant to onboard new employees, train sales and marketing teams, or even be used for compliance. Be sure to take into account the limitations of a virtual learner before repurposing a PowerPoint for digital learning needs.



2. Identify the relevant pre-existing content

Select the slides that most closely support your learners' needs. Learners' attention span in an online session is quite limited. They will be able to effectively concentrate for an average of about 30 seconds or less at a time. Results from research indicate that matching training to adult attention span does improve learner reaction, learning score, and retention. This requires authors to carefully plan short and snappy content by chunking it, rather than mimicking a 60-minute face-to-face session. Hence, it is vital for trainers to:

- Pick the right segments of knowledge to meet the needs
- Present these bits in consumable bites in accordance with the principles of [microlearning](#)



3. Think about engagement

It is important to incorporate appropriately placed interactivity to break the monotony of the course. By creating logical breaks, you can increase the level of learner engagement. It can also be in idea to convert a few related slides into a video, incorporate hot links, or anchor the learning with questions before proceeding to the next block of course content.



4. Unlearn your PowerPoint habits

Time to shed your old habits of working with PowerPoint. The key is to create courses with the right didactical elements and design. The correct order for writing any e-learning course should be as follows:

- Define your learning objectives
- Formulate assessments
- Create content aligned to the objective and assessments

With so many aspects to consider, quality content creation for e-learning may appear to be a tall order. You may be worrying, is there any easy way to create e-learning content to get your team started with e-learning content creation? Worry not! For there is a simple and easy method to put your content team on a strong footing to create fantastic e-learning modules from your existing slide deck.

By adopting a user-friendly authoring tool, like Easygenerator, you and your SMEs will be leveraging the existing content and PowerPoints to create high-quality and engaging e-learning modules in no time.

Let's investigate the various methods in which you can use Easygenerator to seamlessly convert your existing PowerPoint content into interactive e-learning.

Chapter 5

Converting PowerPoint trainings into e-Learning

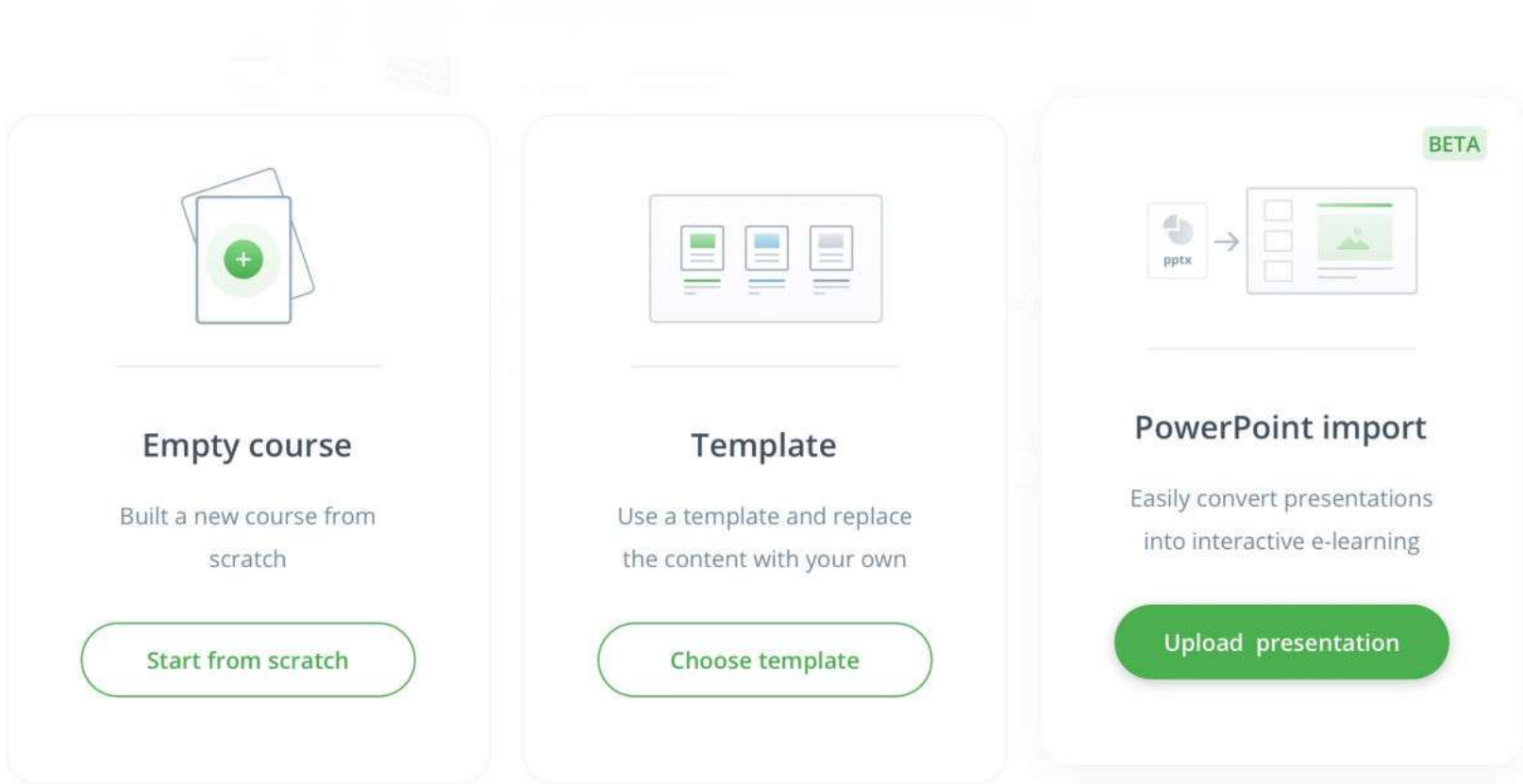
Easygenerator offers three different ways in which you can smoothly transition from PowerPoint training to an e-learning environment without the loss of any previously created content. These methods, outlined below, are ordered from fastest to the one which requires the most time. Each method, however, has a unique set of benefits that should be considered alongside your goals and desired learning outcomes.

Method 1: Easygenerator’s PowerPoint Converter (NEW!)

Easygenerator’s PowerPoint import feature allows you to quickly convert your PowerPoint presentation into a fully functional e-learning course. This option gives great results, as it creates a course from your PowerPoint that is easy to edit.

For this method, like the others outlined below, it’s important to add additional elements to your content to create an engaging e-learning course. That’s why we’ve made it easy to use our intuitive editor to enrich your course with interactive elements and assessments.

To use this method, simply start a new course by selecting PowerPoint import. You can then choose the PowerPoint you would like to use, and within seconds it will be converted into an e-learning course. All media elements will be imported and stored in your library to utilize for future courses. Once you add interactive elements, you can easily share the course with your learners and enjoy results-tracking features as well.



Method 2: Importing the slides individually as images

All the relevant slides, once identified, can be easily imported into the authoring tool as separate images. The learning objectives can be placed at the start of the content. Hot spots with additional information can be added as a layer over the image of the imported slide to add even more interactivity to the image. Other elements, such as quiz questions, can also be placed throughout the course. The order of slides, which are now considered individual learning objects, can be changed as required. This method is worth the investment if you have a little more time available.

Method 3: Copy and paste content from the slides

This final method, though it may take longer, is the most recommended and effective way to convert PowerPoints into e-learning with Easygenerator. Use the content of the PowerPoint slides to copy and paste the text into the authoring tool, then modify it accordingly. All other steps, such as adding

learning objectives, assessments, and interactive elements, can be incorporated as mentioned in the previous methods. This will take more time and effort as the copy, paste, and modify step will be completely manual. The scope, however, to restructure your content and make it tailor-made to suit your remote learner and update the content is worth the effort. It is a great trade-off to create a high impact and scalable e-learning course.

As an L&D manager, it is important to be cognizant of the efforts involved in relation to the desired result when selecting any of the above options of transforming your existing PowerPoints into an e-learning module. Be sure to avoid merely taking the slides and embedding them in Easygenerator without making the modifications mentioned above. Otherwise, as opposed to creating a high potential training module for e-learning, you will end up underutilizing the authoring tool that makes it easy to add interactive elements to keep your learners engaged.

If you are worried about the design of your course, Easygenerator gives numerous [examples and templates](#) to help you get started. Simply select the example that suits your learning need best and make it your starting point. You can add your own content from the PowerPoint into the pre-existing sections, change the questions as desired, and share in just a few clicks. Now, your e-learning course is ready to go, and no one will ever know that it was once merely a few slides with bullet points.

Conclusion

We all learn in similar ways whether information is presented to us in an online environment or face-to-face. The principles of learning do not change just because the medium is different. All learning theorists agree that active involvement with the course content trumps passive viewing. This level of active involvement cannot be provided by PowerPoint in its unaltered form, especially in an online or remote learning scenario.

Given the nature of modern workers, learner autonomy along with short and highly interactive content with strong didactics are vital with any training content. This combination will allow for quality online learning and return the best results. Hence, PowerPoint trainers must seriously weigh their options to create future content. It is recommended to seek blended options (authoring tools that support smart and smooth integration of PowerPoint into the e-learning courses without too much effort). This allows for a quick and seamless switch to an interactive and engaging e-learning environment, and further paves the way for a more robust online strategy in the future.