



9 cornerstones of effective course creation



Table of contents

Section 1

Use learning objectives02

Section 2

Create courses following the right order03

Section 3

Use repetition to beat the forgetting curve04

Section 4

E-learning design: bite-size is the right size05

Section 5

Follow these basic writing rules06

Section 6

Build a feedback culture07

Section 7

Gather learner input with Easygenerator's NPS feature08

Section 8

First curate, then create09

Section 9

Share your knowledge and experience10

Section 1

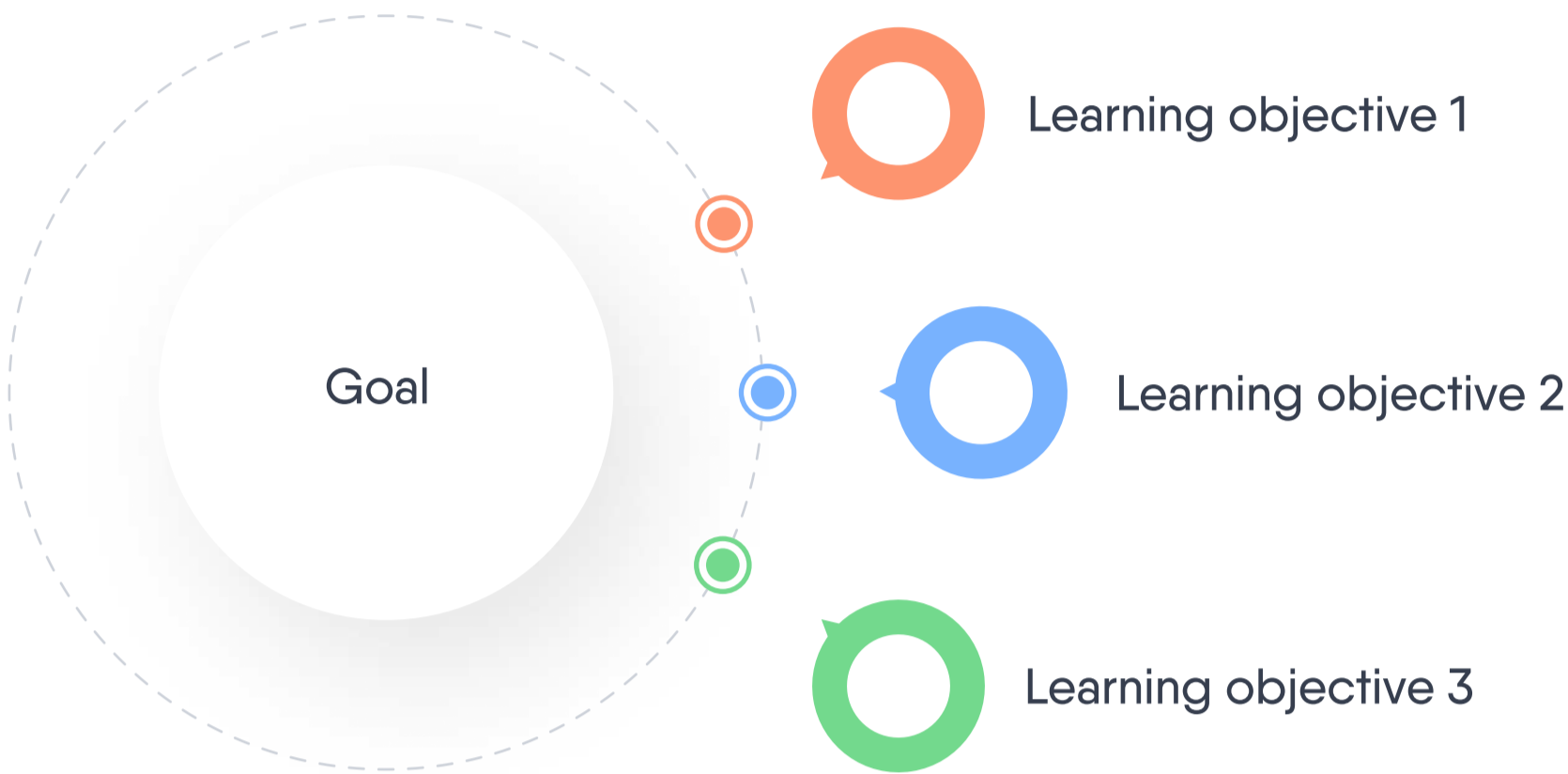
Use learning objectives

Using learning objectives is the first and probably most important cornerstone for e-learning course creation. What should your learners know or be able to do after taking your course?

To answer this question, you'll need to set a SMART goal for your course or assessment. This step is a must-have. Make things easy by breaking down your goal into a set of specific, measurable objectives.

Goal versus learning objectives

Goals aren't the same thing as learning objectives. A goal describes what your learners will be able to do after completing the course. To reach that goal, learners usually need to complete multiple learning objectives. These objectives are specific and measurable.



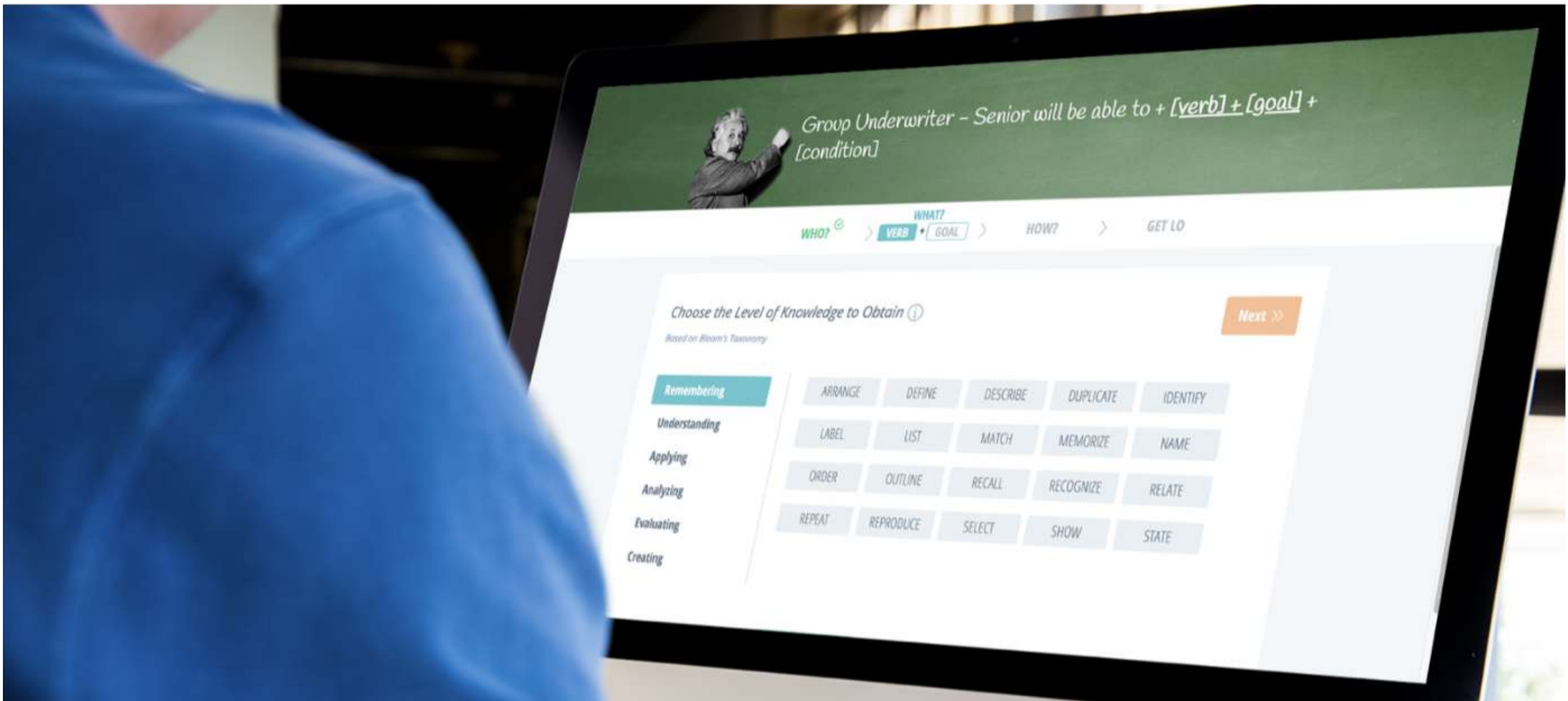
Let's look at an example of running a 10k. Imagine setting the following goal:

- To finish a 10k run in under one hour

As you work toward reaching this goal, you'll focus on the specific, measurable learning objectives:

- Prepare by building up your weekly mileage. Start small so you can field out your limits, figure out where you need help, and get help without interrupting other runners, for example.
- Learn the ideal foods to eat (and not to eat) to enhance muscle strength, improve hydration, and boost energy during your run.

As you can see, these learning objectives stem from the overall learning goal. To make this easier, use Easygenerator's free, built-in Learning Objective Maker.



Action-mapping: take learning objectives a step further

We're big advocates for Cathy Moore's Action Mapping technique. According to Moore, it's not enough to simply create learning objectives. Moore argues that learning objectives should describe actions – not just knowledge.

Let's use the same 10k run example as above and see how we can define actionable learning objectives:

Knowledge-driven learning objectives	Action-driven learning objectives
Remember your basic preparations, like building up your weekly mileage, starting small so you can field out your limits, figuring out where you need help and asking for help without interrupting other runners.	Schedule running time in your daily routine and build up mileage using mileage charts. Undergo fitness testing and compare the results with required fitness levels.
Understand what to eat and what not to eat to build your core muscle strength for running.	Consciously distinguishing which foods to eat and not to eat to prep your body for the marathon. Which foods are necessary for building the desired levels of weight and muscle strength?

Section 2

Create courses following the right order

When authors create courses, most people start by writing content and maybe adding a few types of questions at the end. The problem with this approach is that you wind up with "PowerPoint-like" courses that are neither engaging nor effective

Easygenerator understands the difference between being an expert in your own field and being a trained teaching or e-learning designer. That's why we propose a practical alternative. Create courses with the following steps:



- Define your goals and objectives
- Determine how to assess whether these objectives are reached
- Add content that's relevant to your questions

Follow this procedure to make your courses shorter and more effective. This helps you as an author to focus only on sharing content that is truly relevant to the course or resource. This three-step model sets boundaries and defines what is truly necessary.

Define your goals and objectives

Always start with the end in mind. Ask yourself what you want your learners to be able to do and know after taking your course. Then, define your goal and its underlying learning objectives.

To clarify the differences between a goal and a learning objective, let's look at an example of how you would set them when creating training content for technicians:

- Goal:**
- To train technicians so they can restore disrupted services on telecommunication towers and ensure business continuity after a natural disaster, such as a storm or earthquake.

- Learning objectives:** After the course, technicians must be proficient in:
- Evaluating affected zones and estimating the damage.
 - Identifying which equipment is impacted.
 - Replacing broken and damaged parts to ensure continuity of service.

Determine how to assess whether these objectives are reached

Many assessments ask learners to choose a correct answer from a limited number of choices (i.e. multiple choice question), answer true-or-false questions, or fill in the blanks of incomplete sentences. However, this approach isn't entirely effective for adult learners, who are looking for practical skills they can apply in real-life situations.

That's why we recommend creating authentic assessment questions that simulate real work situations. This allows learners to reflect on and apply the knowledge they've gained. Think of all the tasks you expect your learners to be able to do after completing your course. This way, you ensure that your course provides valuable learning experience that's relevant to your learners' needs.

Here's an example of a question you could ask:

Following a major hurricane, most of the company's Wi-Fi cables are damaged, requiring technicians to fix everything from signaling to cabling to setup. Which of the following measures must be taken immediately?

- Option 1
- Option 2
- Option 3

The question above presents a situation that's likely to happen on the job. It then challenges learners to respond by drawing from their newly acquired skills. This type of assessment not only checks to see if learners are aware that they've learned new skills but also gives them the chance to practice them.

Section 3

Use repetition to beat the forgetting curve

The forgetting curve

Humans forget 90% of what we have learned within hours of learning it. It's simply the way our brains are wired – a concept known as the forgetting curve.

Because of this, it's hard for us to achieve long-term retention through one-off learning events or courses.

In today's world of digital learning, however, people may wonder why they still need to remember information when they can easily retrieve almost anything online anytime. But there are still many roles that rely on memory retention.

For instance, imagine being flown by a pilot who continuously referred to a manual on how to fly throughout your flight. You likely wouldn't feel as safe as you would be flown by a well-experienced pilot.

So, beating the forgetting curve to achieve long-term retention still matters, and there's only one way to do that: repetition.

That means providing opportunities for your learners to repeat information to ensure a lasting cognitive effect. But repetition alone isn't enough. Providing opportunities for repetition in different formats can keep the brain active.

For example, introducing a topic through a course first and then through a video next will be more effective than simply repeating the same course multiple times.

Start with blended learning

Say you conduct a day-long classroom training session on the core mechanics of a complex product. How can you ensure that your learners will remember the fundamentals after the training session?

Assessments are a good way of measuring knowledge or proficiency in a subject. However, learners remember even more when they also get to take part in follow-up practice sessions where they can apply their knowledge directly.

Combining different learning events in this way is known as blended learning.

Using e-learning authoring tools to create practice sessions allows learners to complete them at their convenience. This creates the ideal blended learning experience, where learners have the flexibility to move at their own pace.

How do you space learning?

Repetition promotes quicker memory recollection and helps with short-term retention. To achieve long-term memory, however, the solution is to apply *spaced repetition*: the act of allowing some time to pass between learning episodes.

Usually, spaced repetition follows a one-off course or program. You create a course and then create spaced, follow-up learning events to reinforce the original information over time.

E-learning design: bite-size is the right size

Performance support

Not every work situation requires in-depth training. There are many instances where an employee may find themselves stuck on the job and in need of a quick solution that allows them to return to their task as soon as possible. This type of learning need is best met with performance support resources.

Performance support resources are informative guides that enable on-the-job learning. Unlike a course packed with context and assessments, a resource provides focused information and is both easy to scan and consume. Some examples include checklists, step-by-step guides, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Their bite-size nature makes them ideal for walking employees through procedures or to perform specific tasks.

Findings from our e-learning design study

When it comes to e-learning, less is more. Authors should avoid creating overly lengthy courses or assessments that aren't compatible with the fast-paced needs of a digital audience. To determine the right size, duration, and medium for an effective e-learning design, Easygenerator conducted a study with over 200 participants, which we then enhanced with existing market research.

For the study, learners completed an online course consisting of a pre-test, a lesson, and a post-test identical to the pre-test. After that, they gave the course a net promoter score (NPS), meaning they rated how likely they were to recommend the course to others. Two versions of the same course were distributed randomly to the participants to assess how factors like structure, design or pictures influence learning outcomes and NPS.

The study found that optimizing courses in the following ways improved learner performance between the pre-test and post-test. Additionally, these tweaks appeared to increase learner engagement because learners were more likely to spend time on the course.

Here’s a visual primer of the key points revealed by our study:



For more details on these pointers, download our free research paper titled “Data-driven cheat sheet for creating perfect e-learning courses.”

When content is broken up into shorter modules, learners don’t have to work through the entire course at once. Instead, they can focus on consuming specific bits of information, one at a time, simplifying the learning process.

To make things even more flexible, Easygenerator features cross-device progress saving which allows learners to take a break from their content and then return later from any internet-connected device.

Section 5

Follow these basic writing rules

Good writing

Good writing paves the way for good learning. By communicating your lesson clearly, you make it easier for your learners to keep up.

Here are some basic writing rules to follow:

1.

Know your audience

Considering your learners' experience and needs beforehand helps ensure you create relevant content.

2.

Have a clear learning goal

Knowing why you're creating learning content to begin with will streamline your vision and content creation process.

3.

Prioritize key points

Since you can't guarantee that learners will read every single word, ensuring the most important points appears first will make your content more effective.

4.

Write in short, simple sentences

Attention spans online are short. Breaking complex ideas down into multiple simple sentences makes it easier for learners to keep up. We recommend keeping sentences at a maximum of 20 words.

5.

Make your content easy to find

Include relevant keywords that match your learners' needs and interests. This makes it easier for them to find your content and identify its relevance.

6.

Use an active tone of voice

An active voice emphasizes a subject taking action. A passive voice, on the other hand, presents the subject as a recipient of an action. The former allows you to come off as more confident about your subject matter. It's also easier to read.

7.

Use images and video if possible

Visual content enhances text and creates a more engaging online learning experience. Videos are especially engaging with their ability to create both an audio and visual experience at the same time. Though images are static by nature, you can also make them interactive using hotspot question features.

8.

Have your course reviewed before publishing

Even the most thorough proofreaders can unintentionally overlook spelling mistakes or missing content. Having someone else review your work offers a fresh, objective perspective to help spot any errors.

Section 6

Build a feedback culture

When learners make a mistake, they become curious about the reason why. Take advantage of this curiosity when designing your e-learning courses. The questions in your course are more than a chance to assess your learners. They're also an opportunity to provide them with meaningful feedback that helps them make sense of the content.

Providing meaningful feedback

Effective feedback directs the learner's attention to the lesson behind the content. It points out their strengths and offers specific and practical information to improve their performance.

Here are some proven best practices for giving useful feedback

1.

Rationalize the feedback.

Explain why each answer was wrong or right.

2.

Give immediate feedback

We recommend offering feedback throughout the entire course instead of waiting until the end. This allows learners to draw connections between the feedback and the lesson while it's still fresh on their mind.

3.

Refer them to relevant resources

If learners respond incorrectly to test questions or activities, you can use feedback as a chance to redirect them to relevant parts of the e-learning module.

4.

Provide real-life implications

Creating learning activities that simulate real-life situations helps learners develop practical takeaways from your course. If they make mistakes, you can use feedback as a chance to explain what the real-life consequences would have been like

5.

Ask learners for their feedback

Feedback is a two-way street. Allowing learners to voice their own thoughts and questions allows you to evaluate the effectiveness of your content and determine how you can make improvements.

6.

Make positive feedback meaningful

Positive feedback should indicate the learner's progress, reinforce key concepts, and help them make sense of the overall learning goal. Simply saying "good job" may feel encouraging. But going one step further to tell them they're on the right track will provide more reassurance in their development.

Section 7

Gather learner input with Easygenerator's NPS feature

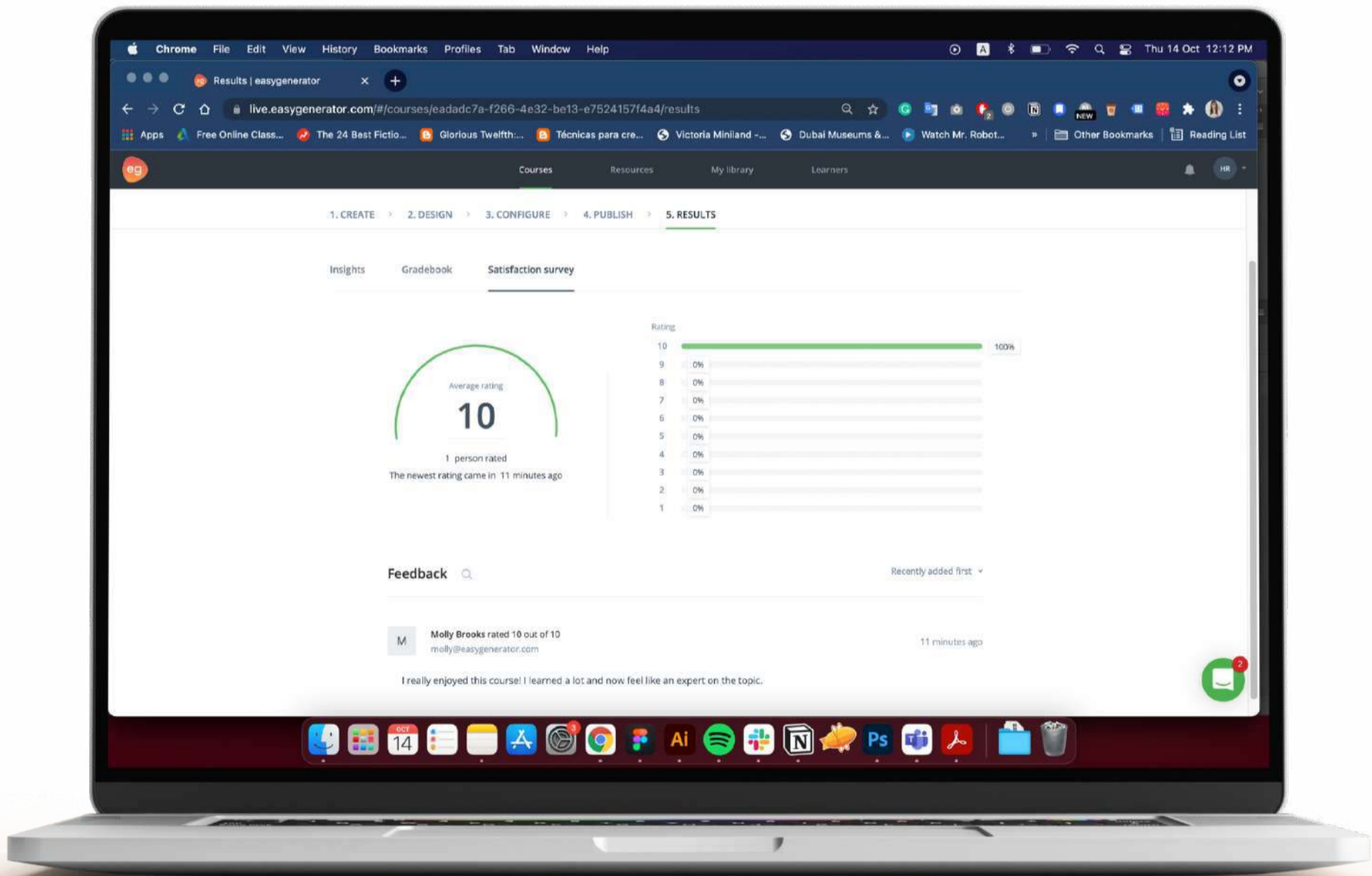
Measure the success of your training

How satisfied are your learners with your content? The only way to find out is to get their feedback.

It's important to adopt a data-informed approach when measuring the success of your learning content. A simple solution is to use a net promoter score (NPS).

Net promoter scoring can help identify how learners are responding to content created by their colleagues. Easygenerator's Learner Satisfaction Survey is a built-in NPS feature. This survey is a one-point questionnaire for your users to rate their learning experience and help you measure whether they're happy with the course.

Besides NPS, we also advocate following up with short, open-ended questions to gather feedback from learners immediately after each module. This helps you capture input on the usefulness of each topic and identify gaps in your content. Here's an example:



Feedback options like these stimulate learner interaction, which is proven to be one of the key ingredients of successful learning programs.

First curate, then create

What is curation?

Sharing your knowledge through an e-learning course is a great initiative, but it only adds value if you have something new to say about a subject. So, before creating a whole new course, check if any existing resources already cover the topic.

As an expert in your field, you likely read a lot about your area of expertise. Providing links to what you’ve read can be a valuable knowledge-sharing activity for your colleagues.

However, you'll need to help your learners make sense of the links you're sharing by adding your own context. This is called “curation.”

What's in it for you?

Content curation involves finding, grouping, organizing, and sharing the best content on a specific subject. By curating and sharing the most relevant and thought-provoking content, you establish yourself as an authority or thought leader in your area of expertise.

Curation: resources in context

Curators are considered experts in their fields, so learners (your colleagues) are very likely to value content that's been specially picked out for them.

Selecting resources based on clear criteria and adding your own context to the chosen links enriches the quality of your course. It also saves you time from having to create all-new content from scratch.

Putting curation into practice

Here are some basic rules for putting curation into practice:

1.

Continually collect links

Staying on the lookout for resources within your area of expertise will help you develop a database you can draw from anytime.
2.

Identify your purpose and define your criteria.

Having criteria for evaluating your resources helps you refine your collection and share the most useful information
3.

Write an introduction to your curation

Explaining why you've chosen the resources you're sharing helps learners determine whether the collection is useful to them.
4.

Explain every link you've chosen

For each link you share, explain why you added it to your collection and how your learners stand to benefit. This helps them determine whether they want to read the article.
5.

Enhance your collection

Add another dimension to your curation by organizing them along a suggested timeline or even into a collage.

Share your knowledge and experience

What's in it for you?

Here are some proven benefits of sharing your knowledge with your peers:

- You gain recognition as an expert**
If you want to be perceived as an expert in your own field, it's vital to be vocal about your professional expertise. That said, you should demonstrate it in a way that benefits your colleagues and enhances their expertise too.
- You'd leverage the ultimate form of learning**
According to the educational theory, Bloom's taxonomy, knowledge is acquired in six stages: remembering (the lowest form of learning), understanding, applying knowledge, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (highest form of learning). Based on this theory, knowledge sharing is the ultimate form of learning.

01	CREATING	Create, invent, compose, plan, imagine, construct, design
02	EVALUATING	Judge, select, decide, justify, debate, discuss, recommend, rate
03	ANALYSING	Analyse, explain, investigate, distinguish, compare, separate
04	APPLYING	Solve, show, use, illustrate, complete, classify, compare, design
05	UNDERSTANDING	Explain, interpret, compare, discuss, predict, describe, give an example
06	REMEMBERING	State, name, list, describe, label, relate, find

- You learn from your co-experts**
By connecting with co-experts, a community of experts gradually emerges, giving you a chance to discuss your subject, exchange perspectives, and deepen your knowledge.
- Save time**
Creating a course or curated document takes time. But in the long run, it will be more efficient than answering your colleagues' questions on the go or repeatedly giving short presentations.

Sharing your knowledge

Besides courses and assessments, there are other simple ways to share your professional expertise, including:

- Write blog posts**
Blogs are an easy way to summarize and share your opinions with online readers.
- Create educational videos**
As mentioned before, videos are engaging because of their ability to appeal to both hearing and visual senses. They're a great way to keep online learners engaged.
- Use a course template**
Whether you're new to e-learning or simply not sure where to start, there are plenty of ready-to-use course templates you can leverage. Easygenerator, for example, has a library of templates designed for various types of training programs. All you need to do is select the most relevant one and begin customizing it.
- Convert PowerPoint training to e-learning**
You don't always need to create a course from scratch. If you have existing training material in the form of PowerPoint slides, all you need to do is import them into Easygenerator's PowerPoint converter. Then, continue editing them as interactive e-learning content within the tool. This not only saves time but also optimizes what you already have.

With so many ways to reach an audience, it's ultimately important to identify your learners' needs. Taking this step beforehand will ensure you provide a tailored and relevant learning experience.

About the authors



Kasper Spiro is the CEO of Easygenerator and a recognized thought leader in the world of e-Learning. With over 30 years of experience, he is a frequently requested keynote speaker and well renowned blogger within the e-learning community.

Email: k.spiro@easygenerator.com

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kasperspiro/>

Blog: <https://kasperspiro.com/>



Videhi Bhamidi is a Learning Product consultant at Easygenerator and works at the intersection of didactics, UX research, product strategy, and thought leadership. With over 10 years of experience in e-learning, user-centered design, and communications, she is passionate about multi-disciplinary solutions and is a regular contributor to L&D and design magazines.

Email: videhi@easygenerator.com

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/videhibhamidi/>