Checklist for strong learning design

Version 2
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This tool will help you evaluate a training project and identify ways to make it more powerful.

The checklist is designed to evaluate materials created for **adults at work**, such as self-paced short courses or activities used in face-to-face training. If you're in academia or teach children, this checklist isn't intended for you.

If you use action mapping as your design approach, you could refer to this checklist to make sure you stay on track.

How to use the checklist:
1.   For each item, judge the current state of your material and mark the corresponding spot on the spectrum.
2.   When you've rated all the items, look down the spectrum column and identify marks that you'd like to move to the left, toward a more action-focused approach.
3.   Rework your materials and evaluate them again.

Action-oriented materials	Spectrum	Information dump
The goal of the project is to change performance in a visible, measurable way.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	The goal of the project is to transfer information into people's brains.
Objectives used to design the materials describe visible, on-the-job behaviors that are necessary to reach the project goal ("sell," "lead," "encrypt," "schedule," "design").	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Objectives describe knowledge ("understand"). If behaviors are described, they're behaviors that happen during a test ("identify," "explain," "define").
The format of the materials (webinar, PDF, etc.) is determined by the type of activities and users' needs.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	The format of the materials is determined by tradition, the LMS, or what's most convenient for the client.
The materials feel like one immersive, challenging activity or a series of activities with little interruption.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	The materials feel like a presentation that's occasionally interrupted by a quiz.
The authors appear to respect the learners' intelligence and previous experience.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	The authors appear to doubt the learners' ability to draw conclusions and assume they have no experience.

Action-oriented materials	Spectrum	Information dump
Activities make people practice making decisions like the ones they make on the job.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Activities are quizzes, trivia games, or other knowledge checks that don't happen on the job.
Activity feedback **shows** people what happens as a result of their choice; they draw conclusions from the result.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Activity feedback explicitly **tells** people "correct" or "incorrect"; they aren't allowed to draw conclusions.
People can prove that they already know material and skip it.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Everyone is required to view every bit of information regardless of their existing knowledge or performance on activities.
Reference information is supplied outside the activity in job aids; people practice using the job aids in activities.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Reference information is delivered through the course or training; people are expected to memorize it or come back to the course for review.
Characters are believable; they face complex, realistic challenges with emotionally compelling consequences.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Characters seem fake (e.g., preachy or clueless); their challenges are minor and are presented as intellectual exercises.
Visuals are used to convey meaning.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Visuals are used as "spice."
Photos of people show humans with realistic expressions. Illustrations appear intended for grownups.	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Visuals of people are stock photo models who are over-acting or childish cartoons.
In elearning, audio narration is used only for: • Dramatic realism (e.g. characters' voices in a scenario) • Explanations of complex or rapidly-changing graphics • Motivational messages and explanations from people who really exist (e.g. CEO, subject matter expert)	| - - - - - - - - - - |	Audio narration is used to: • Deliver information while displaying simple, static screens • Redundantly read text on the screen • Lecture people about what they should or shouldn't do
The writing is concise, uses contractions, and sounds like a magazine (Flesch Reading Ease score of 50 or higher in Word).	| - - - - - - - - - - |	The writing is wordy and stiff; it sounds like a textbook or insurance policy (Flesch Reading Ease score of 49 or lower in Word).