

Glossary of Online Learning Terms

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING: When learners participate in an online learning course at different times, it is known as asynchronous learning. This might also be called eLearning or web-based training (WBT). Asynchronous learning allows learners to go through a course at their own pace and on their own schedule.

AUDIO CONFERENCING: Audio conferencing refers to a connection between three or more locations that involves a voice-only connection. This can be done via telephone or via the computer. When the audio conference is done between computers over the Internet, it uses a technology known as VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol).

BLENDED LEARNING: Blended learning is an instructional approach that includes a combination of online and in-person learning activities. For example, students can complete online self-paced assignments by a certain date and then meet on-site or online for additional learning activities.

COMPUTER-BASED TRAINING (CBT): CBT refers to any type of course that runs on a computer, either on a CD, on a person's hard drive or on the Internet. The distinguishing point is that computer-based training does not involve an instructor or facilitator who is physically present. Now that most computer-based training occurs via the Internet, the term is used infrequently. More common terms are *online learning*, *eLearning* and *Web-based Training (WBT)*.

COURSEWARE: Courseware refers to any instructional software that is delivered on a computer.

DISTANCE EDUCATION or DISTANCE LEARNING: Distance Education/Learning occurs when students and their instructors are in different geographical locations and the instruction occurs on an electronic device, such as a computer or mobile phone. The learning can occur in a synchronous environment, in which all participants are connected at the same time or in an asynchronous environment, when participants are engaged in learning at different times.

eLEARNING: eLearning (short for electronic learning) is an umbrella term that refers to all types of training, education and instruction that occurs on a digital medium, like a computer or mobile phone.

HYBRID LEARNING: See blended learning.

INFORMAL LEARNING: Informal learning occurs when people have a need to know something. They set their own learning objectives and acquire knowledge, skills and information in their own ways. This could be through asking questions, observing experts, practicing and conversing. It's the kind of natural learning humans do outside of a structured environment.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN: Instructional design involves the identification of the performance, skill and knowledge gaps of a particular group of people and creating or selecting learning experiences that close this gap. Instructional designers base their learning decisions on cognitive psychology, instructional theory and best practices.

INSTRUCTOR LED TRAINING (ILT): ILT typically refers to providing instruction in a classroom environment where the instructor and learners are together at the same time and in the same physical location.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER: An instructional designer practices the craft and science of instructional design. This person identifies the needs of a targeted audience and determines the best approaches for meeting the audience's needs. It could involve designing and writing online learning courses as well as writing the

manuals needed for Instructor-Led Training. Some instructional designers also create graphics and use authoring systems to produce online courses.

INTERACTIVE MULTIMEDIA: Interactive multimedia allows learners to provide input to an online course and receive feedback as a result of the input. The input might consist of a mouse click or drag, gestures, voice commands, touching an input screen, text entry and live interactions with connected participants.

MOBILE LEARNING: Learning that takes place on a hand-held device, such as a mobile phone, that can take place anytime and anywhere.

MULTIMEDIA: Multimedia refers to the presentation of information and instruction through a combination of graphics, audio, text, or video. Multimedia instruction is often interactive.

ONLINE LEARNING: The term online learning is often used synonymously with eLearning. It is an umbrella term that includes any type of learning accomplished on a computer and usually over the Internet.

SELF-PACED LEARNING: Self-paced learning refers to the type of instruction that allows a person to control the flow of the courseware. It implies the learning environment is asynchronous.

SOCIAL MEDIA LEARNING: Social media learning refers to the acquisition of information and skills through social technologies that allow people to collaborate, converse, provide input, create content and share it. Examples of social media learning can occur through online social networking platforms, blogs and microblogs (like Twitter), online talk radio and wikis.

STREAMING MEDIA: Streaming media refers to video and audio that is downloaded to a computer from the Internet as a continuous stream of data and is played as it reaches the destination computer.

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING: When learners participate in an online learning course at the same time but in different locations, it is known as synchronous learning. Synchronous learning allows learners to interact with the instructor and other participants. This is done through software that creates a virtual classroom.

VIDEO CONFERENCING: Video conferencing refers to the use of video technology (both hardware and software) to create a virtual meeting between two or more people in different physical locations. Participants can see and hear each other through this technology.

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM: The virtual classroom refers to a digital classroom learning environment that takes place over the Internet rather than in a physical classroom. It is implemented through software that allows an instructor and students to interact.

WEBINAR: A webinar is a seminar or workshop in which the facilitator and participants view the same screen at the same time. Usually the webinar has an audio component that the facilitator controls and functionality that allows participants to chat by entering text, answering polls, raising their hands and asking questions.

WEB-BASED TRAINING (WBT): WBT refers to all types of digital instruction in which the learning material is presented via the Internet.