NHSE elearning author guide

Introduction

Good content is essential for the success of an elearning session.

Writing good content is about more than correct spelling and proper grammar. It's about engaging your learner and ensuring they can spend less time interpreting content and more time retaining knowledge.

This session is designed to guide you through the authoring process and advise on how to write content that will engage and motivate learners.

Meet the team

This session was written and developed by the NHS England Technology Enhanced Learning (NHSE TEL) Team, who will advise and support you, and your clinical or project lead, through the process of creating your elearning session.

Hook: can we have an image of each team member to click to reveal the info below

The members of the team are:

You, the author: It is your role as an author to write the initial content and then collaborate the NHSE TEL team to develop the finished session.

Programme manager (PGM) has overall responsibility for the NHSE TEL project team and works with your clinical or project lead to ensure that the project is delivered to time and budget.

Senior project manager (SPM) coordinates the other members of the team and works with your clinical or project lead and any other stakeholders (for example, editors, reviewers, working groups) to ensure your session is delivered in scope and on time.

Lead learning designer (LLD) is responsible for developing the right creative and learning design approach for your session. They will support you and other team members to apply this throughout the development process.

Learning designer (LD) will work with you collaboratively to design and build your session. They will advise on any changes that need to made to comply with NHSE editorial standards and use learning design theories enhance your learners' engagement and knowledge retention.

Publication reference:

Graphic designer (GD) works with you and the team to design how the session will look and create any images needed.

Animator may be assigned to work with you on your session(s) if there is an animation requirement.

Editorial team review each session to ensure it meets NHSE TEL editorial standards and accessibility requirements.

Learning objective 1. Discuss the essential considerations for writing elearning content

The NHSE TEL team were asked for their top tips to help you to create good content.
Hook 2: can we format this as a question?

They included:

- Understand the target learner and how they will benefit from the learning.
- Understand why the learning is needed.
- Define learning objectives and stay focussed on them.
- Concise and clear writing style.
- Include opportunities to pause and reflect.

We will discuss each point in more detail in the session.

Learning objective 2. Create a session plan

Identify aims, audience, learning objectives, assets

Certain factors need to be considered when planning an elearning session as they can influence how you write your session, how long it will take to complete, and the budget required:

Aims:
- why have you been asked to write this content
- what knowledge gaps it is intended to fill
- will it stand alone or is it part of a blended learning programme
- is formal assessment is required?

Audience:
- who you are writing your elearning for
- why they need to do this learning
- what they know already
- how and/or where they will access the learning

Learning objectives:

Identify what your learning objectives are.

Learning objectives define what learners should be able to do by the end of a learning experience.

See https://community.articulate.com/articles/how-to-write-good-e-learning-objectives-for-your-online-course for guidance on writing learning objectives.

Assets:

Will there be video, animation and/or audio assets in your session?

- If the assets are available, familiarise yourself with the scripts before you write your content.
- If the assets need to be created, write the scripts at the same time as your content

Strengths and limitations of elearning

Another aspect to consider when planning an elearning session is understanding the it's strengths and limitations:

- elearning communicates the key learning points of a topic in a way that can be easily retained.
- If you include too much detail or too much content your learner will spend more time interpreting content and less time retaining knowledge.
- 3500 to 4500 words/4 to 5 learning objectives per session. If you need more, consider a second session

Create a session plan, tips and download example

When you are clear about what you want to achieve in your session, document the details in a session plan.

Add link to download the plan for this session.

AI tools like Chat GPT and Google assist and Microsoft Copilot can help you:
- define learning objectives
- identify key topics and key points
- collate lists of further reading resources and websites which support the information in your session

Session plan should be reviewed and should be complete and signed off by CL/stakeholders and submitted to NHSE before you begin writing.

Learning objective 3. Submit structured and outcome-focused content

Three golden rules: accessibility, inclusivity, engagement.

NHSE TEL have editorial standards with which all sessions must comply. You are not expected to be familiar with these, the team will make the required changes to your content during the development process.

There are however, 3 golden rules you must follow when creating your content.

1. Be accessible

Accessible writing means making sure all users can read and understand what you write, including users with different mental and physical abilities.

To write in accessible way:
- use plain English, avoid jargon and complex sentences
- aim for clarity and simplicity
- use as few words as possible
- provide alterative text to describe important images for those who use screen readers (for example: graphs, flow diagrams, text-heavy images)

2. Be inclusive

Inclusive language respects and promotes all people as valued members of society. It uses vocabulary that avoids exclusion, stereotyping, sexism, racism any other forms of discrimination.

To be inclusive:
- write for a diverse audience and make reflect that diversity in text and images
- avoid referring to a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or age, unless those descriptors are relevant to the story
- avoid conscious and unconscious biases. For example, avoid masculine pronouns or nouns for mixed-gender groups, or defaulting to 'he/him' when a person's gender is unknown or unclear

3. Be engaging

Writing in a way which engages and motivates your leaner will result in a higher level of knowledge retention.

To engage your learners:
- be direct: get to the point quickly and keep content focused on the learning objectives
- use an active voice (where your subject performs the action) rather than a passive voice (where your subject receives the action)
- break up your content with knowledge checks and/or activities to reinforce learning providing constructive feedback
- incorporate stories and/or case studies into your content to add context and make your content relatable and memorable
- use images to support key learning points

Signpost to NHSE guidance on accessible and inclusive content, also to website with guidance on writing in an engaging way.

6 step process: Introduce, hook, structure: build, summarise, signpost.
When you created your session plan, you did most of the hard work and you can now build on this to create the content of your session by following a simple 6-step process:

1. Introduce: begin your content with an introduction outlining the purpose and aims of your session.
2. Hook: A hook is something that encourages learners to engage with your session and makes them want to read on.
3. Create a framework: list the learning objectives from your session plan session plan and create subheadings under each one using the key topics identified in your session plan.
4. Build your content: Add content beneath each learning objective subheading in your framework. Chunking your content in this way makes information clearer and easier to remember:
    - If you include facts and figures you must provide links to your sources to avoid plagiarism [reference https://www.scribbr.co.uk/category/referencing/].
    - Add any ideas for images to support the text as you go, including descriptive text if required.
    - Images taken from the internet cannot be used without the relevant permissions but the NHSE TEL team can use these as reference material to create new ones for your session.
    - If you are including video or animation add placeholders and/or transcripts within your content. (If you will be writing a script select the   drawer icon to download the NHSE TEL. Animation script writing guidance document.
    5. Summarise: When you have added all your content add a list of key learning points, you have them in your session plan. Check that all your key points are covered in your content.
    6. Signpost: Add a list of resources and websites to support the topics in your session so the learner knows where they can find more information and support. You have a list in your session plan.

    Add download to this content document as an example.

Assessment questions

Assessment questions are only required if there needs to be a formal assessment included in your session.

Consider writing your assessment questions first as this could help you focus your main content.

- Test the key learning points for each learning objective.
- Only test knowledge that has been covered in your content.
- Provide feedback for incorrect answers. This will be the last chance to correct any misunderstanding.
- Use the same language and terminology in your questions as you have in your content.
- Questions should not 'trick' or misdirect the learner.

Signpost to NHSE guidance for more info.

Content complete checklist.

When your content is complete, check:

- spelling and grammar
- your word count: 3500 to 4500 maximum
- the content covers (and is limited to) the objectives and key topics in your session plan
- you have used accessible, inclusive language and imagery throughout
- you have included descriptive text for images which communicate learning points
- you have included links to sources you have referenced
- if included, your assessment questions do not test learning points not included in the session

Content should be complete and signed off by CL/stakeholders before submission.

When your content is complete it should be shared with your CL and/or PL and any other stakeholders in your project team for review and sign off **before** it is submitted to NHSE TEL.

Learning objective 4. Describe your role within the session development process

Roles and responsibilities.

Now that your content has been submitted to the NHSE TEL team, the development process can begin.
Your input as the author does not stop here. You are now an integral part of the team collaborating to create an elearning session from your vision and hard work.
Your role in the development process involves working collaboratively with other team members to design and build your session.
Respond to requests and queries as soon as possible as delays can impact the delivery of the project.

Phases of the development process.

1. Design
In the design phase you will work with a learning designer and graphic designer to storyboard the session in a content
plan.
Please respond to any questions as soon as you can, as delays can impact the delivery of the project.
The design phase is competed when the content plan has been reviewed and signed off as complete and correct by you, your clinical or project lead and any wider stakeholder group involved.
Add download to content plan for this session.

2. Build
In the build phase you will work with a learning designer create a prototype of your session.
Please respond to any questions as soon as you can, as delays can impact the delivery of the project.

The build phase is complete when the built session has been reviewed and signed off as complete and correct by you, your clinical or project lead and any wider stakeholder group involved.

3. Final review
The NHSE editorial team will review against NHSE TEL editorial standards and accessibility requirements. The learning designer will then amend the session as necessary.
The LD may come back to you for guidance if the editorial review highlights clinical, or other content-related issues. Please respond to any questions as soon as you can as delays can impact the delivery of the project.
The final review phase is complete when the session fully complies with NHSE TEL editorial standards.

4. Release
Your session tested to ensure it works as it should before being released on the NHS Learning Hub.
At this stage, your responsibilities as the author have ended.
The release phase is complete when the session is live on the NHS Learning Hub and communication messaging is released.

Key learning points

- Consider the purpose, aims, assets and audience for your session, these factors will influence how you write your content.
- identify your learning objectives, include a maximum of 4 to 5. If you think you will need more, you will need more sessions.
- elearning should only communicate the key learning points of a topic in a way that can be retained.
- a session can include a maximum of 3500 to 4500 words. If you think you will need more, you will need more sessions.
- complete a session plan document and ensure it is signed off by your clinical or project lead and the NHSE TEL team before you write you content.
- Follow the 6-step process to help you create your content.
- Break up your content with knowledge checks and/or activities to reinforce learning providing constructive feedback.
- Incorporate stories and/or case studies into your content to add context and make your content relatable and memorable.
- Make suggestions for images to support your learning points.
- Provide placeholders, transcripts, links to any video and/or animations.
- Provide links to all sources you reference.
- If required, write assessment questions which reflect the key learning points.
- Your role in the development process involves working collaboratively with other team members to design and build your session.
- Respond to requests and queries as soon as possible as delays can impact the delivery of the project.

Signpost

Downloads
- NHSE TEL. Session plan example.
- NHSE TEL. Content document example.
- NHSE TEL. Content plan example.
- NHSE TEL. Writing questions for formal assessments.
- NHSE TEL. Animation script writing guidelines.

NHSE guidance
- NHS Content Guide. Standard for creating health content View website
- NHS Content Guide. Inclusive content. View website
- NHS Digital Service Manual. Accessibility. Guidance for content. View website
- NHSE Readability tool. View website

Websites

- Elearning heroes. All About Learning Objectives for E-Learning. [View website](#)
- Shift elearning. Writing for elearning. [View website](#)
- Elearning Industry. 5 ways to create engaging elearning content. [View website](#)
- Talk LMS. How to create elearning content learners will love. [View website](#)

References

1. Scribbr. A Quick Guide to Referencing. Cite Your Sources Correctly. [View website](#)