

E-book:

How to create the perfect course

A Data-Driven Cheat Sheet for
Creating Perfect E-Learning Courses

Learning objective
Maecenas volutpat tristique sollicitudin. Orci varius natoque
penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes nascetur.

Next

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Methodology

This cheat sheet for creating the perfect e-learning course is based on data from a recent Easygenerator research with over 200 participants extended with market research.

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

The study showed that optimizing courses in the following ways led to a greater improvement in learner performance between the pre-test and post-test. Plus, the tweaks appeared to increase learner engagement, because the learners were more likely to spend time on the course.

Increase learning impact significantly using the following parameters



1. Don't use more than 1,000 words per course, 20 words per sentence.

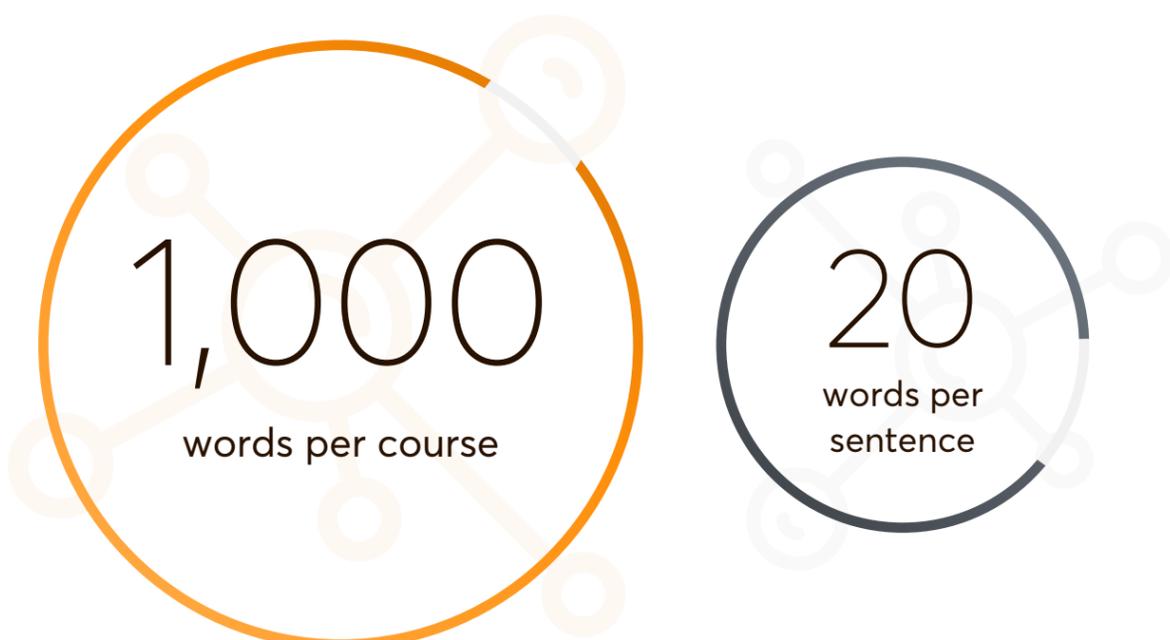
When writing a course, be mindful of the length of each module and of the course as a whole. The ideal length of a course is no longer than 1,000 words.

Use short paragraphs and sentences and get straight to the point. Ideally, no more than 25% of your sentences should exceed 20 words.*

Use a varied structure when combining different pieces of content. Try alternating between text blocks and more digestible, entertaining content (like pictures and videos) to keep the learner's attention.

If it's impossible to cut the content to under 1,000 words, turn the course into a learning path instead, for example, by breaking up the learning objectives into multiple courses.

* More on this topic: [Content analysis: methodological choices explained](#)



2. Use 300 words per sub-section, 150 words per paragraph and use headings and subheadings.

It takes more than just good quality content to make a course a success. Choose the course layout and design carefully to attract and hold the learner's attention. The structure must be clear and easily understandable.

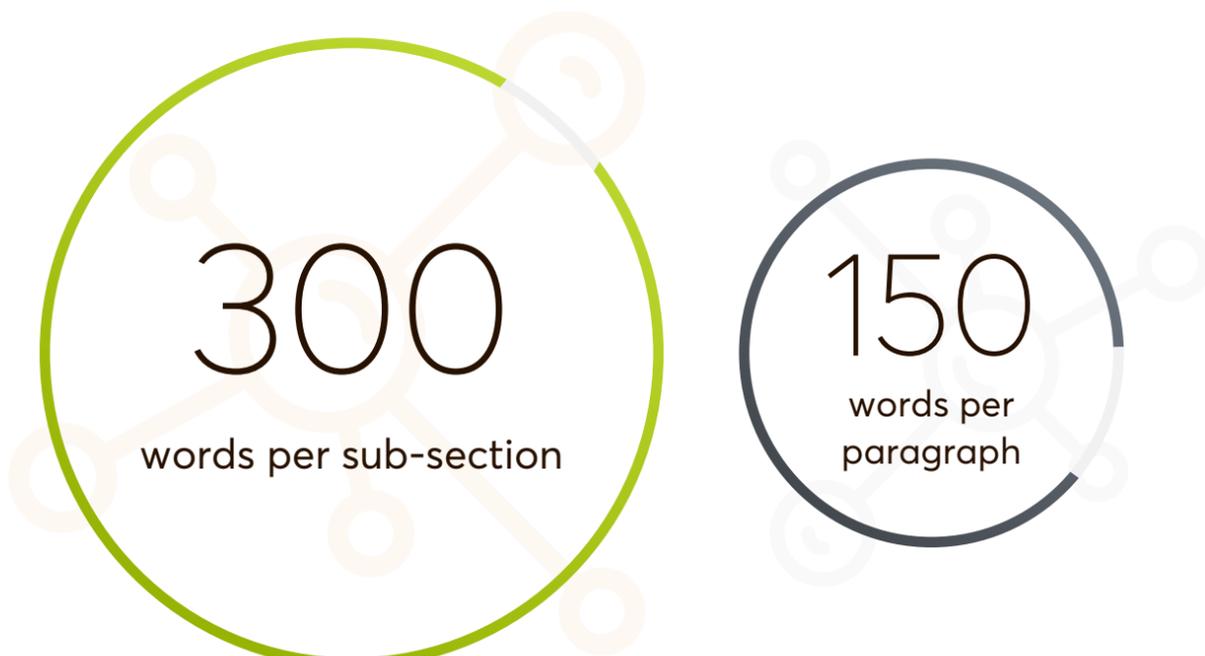
Use headings and subheadings to break up the information into smaller portions. Remember, readers tend to skim through headlines, focussing mainly on the first and last three words.* For maximum impact, try keeping your headlines under six words.

Each sub-section should contain no more than 300 words,* and the individual paragraphs should be 150 words max.**

Keep the sections focused on the main learning goals or topics. Always clearly state the expected learning outcomes at the start of each section. Be sure to emphasize the most important terms or figures by strategically using colours and different fonts/sizes.

* More on this topic: [The Ideal Length of Everything Online, Backed by Research](#),

** : [Content analysis: methodological choices explained](#)



3. Use learning objectives

Always start a new section in Easygenerator with a learning objectives. Using learning objectives you enable the learner to identify and focus on the main goal and the most relevant information.

If you want to know more about how to create the perfect learning objectives, we have a in depth article about how to create learning objectives.

4. Don't use more than two visuals per page

According to the Visual Teaching Alliance, people mentally process visuals 60,000 times faster than text. That means you definitely want to include visuals in your courses.

The ideal number of images varies depending on the course. However, there are some general rules. For example, to avoid distraction and confusion, you should add no more than two visuals per page.

Most importantly, the visuals you use should always be relevant. This ensures that learners will store the information in their long-term memory.

People tend to scan text, read around 25% of the words on a page.* This makes it even more important to get information across quickly. Visuals make it easier to quickly grasp important concepts and increase the learner's attention.

At the same time, excessive or incorrect use of the visuals can deter learners, so be careful not to overdo it.

* More on this topic: [Sentence length: why 25 words is our limit](#)

5. Keep videos under 6 minutes each

Videos make your course more dynamic and interactive. They capture the learner's attention and make it easier to digest complex topics.

To maximize the impact, choose only videos that are on-topic, well-focused and no longer than 6 minutes. Beyond 6 minutes, learners are less likely to keep watching, or their focus decreases significantly,* which means they are less likely to retain information.

Videos are particularly effective when they take a "how-to" or "how-not-to" approach.* Try also incorporating immersive scenarios and high-impact storylines to make educational videos more realistic for the viewers.**

* More on this topic: [Optimal Video Length for Student Engagement, 10 tips to effectively use videos in elearning](#)



6. Answering a question should take no longer than 45 seconds

Each test question should ideally take around 30-45 seconds for the learner to answer. That's how long it should take for the learner to process the question, filter out distractors, consider their answer and digest the feedback.

Response times can vary depending on the complexity of the question and feedback. A question that involves a scenario, for example, may take up to 90 seconds to answer. In any case, it's important to write and structure the question clearly and simply.

Test questions should not only test the learner's ability to recall what they have learned, but also focus on their comprehension and critical thinking.

Always include feedback, especially when the learner answers incorrectly. This enables the learner to adjust his or her comprehension and helps them retain correct knowledge.

For multiple-choice responses, each choice should be roughly equal in length. For best results, offer 3 to 5 possible answers for the learner to choose from.

Implementing these six simple tips is an efficient, yet, easy way to improve your e-learning content. Taking these tips into account will not only increase the learning impact but also improve learner engagement significantly!

