

LE@D

Subject Matter Expert Resource Center



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Discover the power of ideas

Lifelong Education @ Desktop (LE@D)
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Welcome to the Subject Matter Expert Resource Center

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to work with us as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in authoring an online course for LE@D.

We've prepared this Resource Center as a comprehensive site to help you understand the process, find detailed info on how we'll work together, and give you clear examples of each step of the process. If everything you need isn't here, we want to hear from you and make it right.

Our goal is to make your process of authoring a course as simple and enjoyable for you as possible. How can we help you?

Contact Info:

Project Coordinator:

[Kevin Haney](#)

Instructional designers:

[Alese Smith](#)
[Tami Sutcliffe](#)

How to Use this Resource Center

We've designed these pages to provide instructions and aids to help you understand and navigate the course authoring process. We're continuously adding resources to provide an overview of all parts of the process, provide an understanding of what happens when, explain the details of how you'll work with your Instructional Designer (ID), and answer all the questions you have as you begin this process.

We've outlined the process into five distinct phases, outlined your involvement in each, and provided additional tools, samples, and descriptions of the writing and development processes.

How Students Experience LE@D Courses

- Most courses are self-paced. Students complete the course anytime during an open enrollment period.
- Courses are designed to require approximately three hours for students to complete.
- Students log into the course in one or multiple sessions that fit their personal schedules.
- Some courses are collaborative, with students progressing and interacting according to a schedule. These are led by a discussion facilitator, typically the course author.

Five Phases of LE@D Course Development

I. Pre-development Phase

You'll be **actively involved** in this phase, and will likely have already begun or completed it.

Steps in this Phase

- Discuss and agree on the course topic and opening date with Kevin Haney, Program Coordinator.
- Learn the identity and contact information of your Instructional Designer — either Tami or Alese.
- Review and familiarize yourself with all areas of this SME Resource Center site in detail.

II. Outline Development Phase

You'll be **very actively involved** in this phase.

Steps in this Phase

- You'll meet your Instructional Designer and agree on the methods and process that works for you both:
 - You'll discuss and agree how and when you'll communicate and work together (for example: email, phone calls, online collaborative workspaces, face-to-face meetings).
 - You'll review:
 - Sample course development timelines and agree on the milestones of each phase by working backwards from the course due date
 - Sample courses for an understanding of the necessary components, layout, and flow of the desired product
 - Resources of guidelines, standards, course ingredients, word-limits, and other details of course pages
 - Samples of outlines from other authors/courses as an aid in understanding the process of writing the content and designing the course
 - Other materials of this Resource Center
 - You'll compose a first draft your course outline — and with feedback from your instructional designer — edit it one or multiple times, eventually finalizing it.
 - Your instructional designer will help keep track of meeting the milestones from the timeline.

III. Content Development Phase

You'll be **very actively involved** in this phase.

Steps in this Phase

- You'll expand your outline, fully developing it into multiple final pages.
- You'll compose and edit one to several drafts — and with feedback from your instructional designer — eventually finalizing it.
- Your instructional designer will help keep track of meeting the milestones from the timeline.

IV. Content Production Phase

You may **not be actively working** during this phase.

Steps in this Phase

- Your instructional designer:
 - Develops your course
 - May ask for your feedback or reactions
 - Will keep track of meeting milestones from the timeline

V: Testing and Rollout Phase

You may **not be actively working** during this phase.

Steps in this Phase

- Your instructional designer:
 - Directs quality assurance staff to test and evaluate your course, edits it based on their feedback, and finalizes it
 - Optional: May ask for your feedback on the final version of the course
 - Releases the final course
 - Keeps track of meeting milestones and the opening due date

New Course Development — Sample Timeline

SME = Subject Matter Expert
ID = LE@D Instructional Designer

Phase I: Pre-Development

Typical duration range: 1 day to 1 month

SME secures formal agreement with Kevin Haney, Project Coordinator
Get-acquainted teleconference between SME and ID
SME and ID agree on timeline, milestones, and communication methods

Phase II: Outline Development

Typical duration range: 1 day to 1 month

SME provides 1st draft of outline to ID
ID critiques and assists SME in multiple expanding drafts of outline
SME and ID agree on final course outline and multimedia components

Phase III: Content Development

Typical duration range: 1 week to 2 months

SME provides 1st draft of content to ID
ID critiques and assists SME in multiple expanding drafts of content
SME provides final content to ID

Phase IV: Course Production

Typical duration range: 1-2 months

ID designs and begins multimedia production or requests from technical staff
ID designs course layout
ID designs page layout and loads content
ID chooses and adds images
Multimedia production complete
ID completes assembly of course elements
Optional: ID makes course visible to SME, who may review and make suggestions

Phase V: Testing and Marketing

Typical duration range: 1-2 weeks

Marketing of course for national distribution begins
Registration opens for course ±four weeks in advance
Beta testing occurs
ID completes revisions and finalizes course
Course opens on a national basis

Details in the Process of Writing Your Course

From Concept to Final Outline

- Compose your outline in Word or other word processor.
- Name your file with a shortened course name followed by the version number, for example, volunteer_recruitment_ver_1.doc.
- It isn't necessary to use the outline feature to create your outline.
- Begin with the main concepts and topics you wish the course to cover. Each topic will eventually become a section.
- Enter a title and number for each section (somewhere between two and twenty sections, but often closer to ten), including an *Introduction* and *Conclusion* section.
- Under each section, begin entering bulleted tentative titles for topics and activities, one line for each topic/page. Begin to think in terms of the "chunks" of text that will make up each page and will appear as a title in each section's table of contents.
- Expand the outline until each title represents a course page within each section.
- Periodically email drafts of your outline according to the timeline agreement with your ID.
- Rename each version of your draft outline with a new version number.
- Make a backup of your file.

Expanding Your Outline to Final Section Pages

Once your outline is complete and is ready to evolve into fuller content, you can choose to use whichever writing style you prefer.

All in one

- You may prefer to begin adding content into the same outline file, gradually fleshing out the text of all the sections concurrently, completing all sections of the course together.
- This file becomes one evolving, enlarging document of all the content, with numbering and page breaks for each new section and page/screen.

One at a time

- You may prefer to complete and submit a section before beginning work on the next section, creating a new document for each section.

Typical Course Components

Topics to Include in Your Course

1. Your expert experience from your career and life
2. What the research on your topic says
3. What others in the field say or are doing
4. Resources for course participants to print and take
5. Products participants will build themselves
6. Case studies (optional)
7. Interactions and self-assessments to help participants learn and retain info

Layout of a LE@D Course: Three Categories of Sections and their Characteristics

Your course will be contain three types of sections:

1. An *Introduction* section at the beginning
2. A *Conclusion* section at the end
3. A number of content sections in between (somewhere between two and twenty)

The *Introduction* section: Section 1

This first section is where you introduce yourself, provide overviews of the topics, and prepare students to begin. Titles and topics vary from this typical example:

- Welcome
- Meet the author
- Introductory material
 - Course overview and topic description
 - Learning objectives
- Lead-in to first lessons
- Possible introduction posting
- Pre-test

The Course Content: Sections ± 2 through ± 20

These sections are the meat of the course, where you cover your topics, assign activities, and students learn. You'll work with your ID to decide which of these you'll include in your sections and pages.

- Each section may include all or some of the following:
 - An average of six-to-twelve individual pages/screens
 - Section overview document that briefly describes the section concepts, purpose, and learning objectives
 - Presentation of the subject(s)
 - Handouts, samples/examples, forms
 - One (or possibly more) discussion posting, where students research, reflect, and/or share opinions and experiences, read others' postings and possibly comment
 - One interactive task
 - An end-of-section summary or conclusion
 - A section self-assessment

- Each page may include the following:
 - Page/screen layouts vary greatly, but generally include 225-250 words of text.
 - Each page typically contains a single topic.
 - For screens with additional text above 250 words, IDs can include links to popup windows to display the supplemental information.
 - You may include links to supporting resources or extra reading
 - ID will add unique graphics on every page.
 - ID will add uniquely branded headers and footers on all screens publicizing the course name and logos of sponsoring organizations.

The Ending Section: *Conclusion*

This final section doesn't have to contain additional content. At a minimum, you say thank you and goodbye, and your ID provides required assessments.

- Summary or conclusions
- A personal thank you and goodbye
- Optional final Assignment
- Optional final Posting
- A course resource center, which compiles links, downloads, and handouts from the course lessons, plus offer possible additional links, resources, and downloads for continued study
- Post-test
- End-of-course evaluation (provided by ID)
- Print Your Certificate (provided by ID)

Writing Tips and Techniques

Tone, Format, Style

Make it personable

- Use a writing style that's casual, informal, and as you'd speak in a conversation.
 - Use contractions.
 - Begin an occasional sentence with And, But, Because, or However, if that's how you'd say it in person.
- We encourage you to write from a first-person perspective, which means writing with an "I" perspective, and referring to your readers as "you."
- Feel free to talk about your personal experiences, such as "I've always found that. . ." or "Let me tell you about the time. . . ."

Make your text easily readable and skimable

- Use multiple headers and sub-headers to describe the topic in paragraphs beneath.
- Keep sentences short: 15-20 words.
- Use active instead of passive verbs, for example: "Create a policy," versus "A policy should be created."
- Avoid jargon it's possible your audience may not know, or define it the first time you use it.
- Use lists instead of paragraphs:
 - For paragraphs of more than three sentences describing a topic, consider using bullets.
 - When mentioning a series of related items greater than two in a sentence, use bullets or numbering.

Guidelines for Writing Pre-Test/Post-Test Questions

→ For the *Introduction* section of our courses, we include a set of pre-test questions on the topics that will be covered in the course. This provides participants with an overview of the topics they'll learn and how much they may already know.

→ In the *Conclusion* sections at the end of our courses, we repeat the same question in a post-test. This gives participants a chance to compare their results from the pre-test and gauge how well they achieved the learning goals.

Overview of Question Types and Number

- Compose your questions around the course learning objectives.
- Ideally, create at least one question for each learning objective or desired learning outcome.
- For most courses, approximately ten questions might be considered the ideal (with four questions being too few, and more than twelve might be too many).
- For overview courses that don't delve deeply into subjects, it may feel almost impossible to come up with 10, while some courses may legitimately require more than 15 questions.
- Participants submissions are auto-graded, so ideal types of questions include true/false, multiple choice, matching, and fill-in-the-blank.
- A range of question types within a test are ideal, but it's fine to make them all of the same type.
- Any type of paragraph answers can't be auto-graded and so can't be used.

Writing and Submitting Pre-/Post-Test Questions

- You have freedom in the order you create your pre-/post-test questions, course learning objectives, and course content:
 - Some SMEs prefer to write the objectives and questions first, and then write their course content to match the objectives.
 - Others prefer to write the content first, and then write objectives and questions that match it.
- Create your questions in a wordprocessing file (usually a doc file created in Word, but any text-only format is file).
- Write each question followed by its choices for answers, and be sure to indicate which answer(s) is/are correct.
- There's no reason to use any type of text enhancements, which will be removed when your ID enters them in the course.