

Using the Information Mapping Method to Create Online Courses

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What Is the Information Mapping Model?

Information Mapping is a method used by Web writers to create and present Web content usable and clear to the user. However, the model can be applied for online courses due to the fact that online course courses are Web-based courses. Figure 1 outlines the flow of the information mapping model. Each phase of the model is discussed in the discussion that follows.

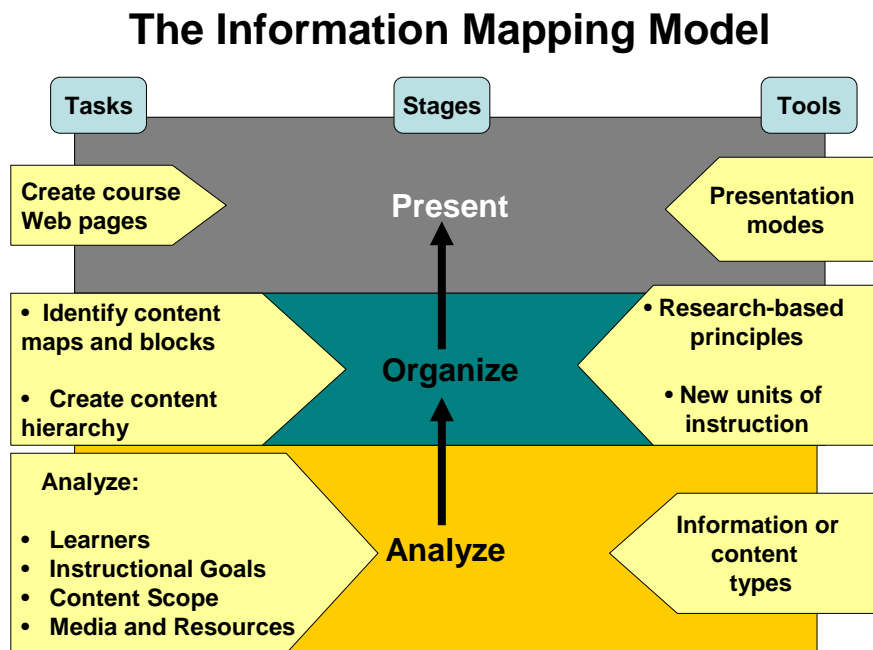


Figure 1: Flow of the Information Mapping Model

Analyzing Content Types

The world of information can be broken into six categories or types of information.

Content Type	Purpose	Clues	Example: Airplane Travel
Fact	A statement assumed to be true	Specifications Chronologies Date, times Purpose	This is a Lockheed L10-11 aircraft
Concept	What it is Why it is what it is	New terms Ideas Abstractions	What is aerodynamics?
Process	What happens How something works	Stages Phases Cause/effect	How an oxygen mask works
Procedure	How to do something How to make decisions	Steps Tasks or actions	How to fasten the seat belt
Structure	What it looks like	Drawings or diagrams Has boundaries or parts	Map of the airport terminal
Principle	What should or should not be done What is true in light of evidence	Rules Guidelines Laws Policies	You must be fifteen or older to sit in an exit row

Organizing Content

Creating Blocks and Units of Information

A **block of information** is a small piece of information. For example, a block could be a concept, a process, etc.

A **unit of information** is a collection of related blocks of information. For example a unit could be a concept or concepts, processes, procedures, etc. that pertain to the same topic students are learning. A unit of information can be taught as a stand-alone item, independently from other units.

After analyzing all types of information to be taught, instructors can group them together in units and blocks of information.

Creating units and blocks of information follows research-based principles of organizing and presenting information on the Web.

These principles are:

- **Chunking:** Break information into small, manageable pieces.
- **Labeling:** Label each unit and block of information with a descriptive and meaningful name.
- **Relevance:** Create groups of related information.
- **Consistency:** Keep the same organization and look throughout a course.
- **Hierarchy:** Create blocks and then units containing those blocks (group from small to larger pieces of related information)
- **Appropriate Use of Graphics:** Add graphics ONLY when they add value.
- **Accessibility:** Make the same information accessible from different places.

Teaching and Presenting Content Online

Strategies for enhancing comprehension and retention

If you teach:

- Concepts, provide an example and a non-example.
- Facts, provide flashcards.
- Processes, provide a picture of the stages and how they flow.
- Procedures, provide demonstration and practice of the steps.
- Principles, teach individual components, and how they relate to each other.
- Structures, provide a diagram showing how the parts fit in the whole structure.

Benefits of using the Information Mapping Method

These are a few of the benefits of using the information Mapping Method to create online courses:

- Enhanced students' retention and comprehension of complex material.
- Increased satisfaction on students' online learning experience.
- Increased students' understanding of their performance expectations.

Summary

In conclusion, Information Mapping is a systematic way of designing, developing, and implementing online courses. The time spent up front to think about the content types students will learn, and ways to organize and present the content enhances students' online learning experience and allows instructors to focus more on students' learning and less on course material modifications.