

3

The ASTD Learning System

Let's take a look inside the *ASTD Learning System*. These examples will illustrate just some of what the modules contain.

Chapter Introductions

Every chapter begins with an introduction and a list of learning objectives. Below is a typical example of a chapter introduction and list of learning objectives from Module 2: *Delivering Training*, Chapter 4, "Training Delivery Options and Media":

4

Training Delivery Options and Media

Regardless of the setting, adult educators must recognize the many different avenues of delivery. Each avenue has inherent characteristics as well as different learner demographics and motivations that all WLP professionals should be comfortable with. It's valuable for WLP professionals to understand all the different delivery options so that they have some control over the presentation. The facilitator also should be able to provide insight and make recommendations regarding the delivery of the content.

A WLP professional should be comfortable with all delivery options. E-learning promotes self-directedness, and busy professionals are pleased to have this option. Web-based learning should be applicable to all learning settings, regardless of the environment; the same should also be true of classroom, blended, and multimedia delivery. As a starting point, facilitators should be able to identify the characteristics, value, and applicability of each option and have a thorough knowledge of delivery terminology.

Learning Objectives:

- ☑ Define environmental considerations that ensure optimal classroom learning.
- ☑ Discuss the benefits of message boards and chat rooms to learning groups and online communities.
- ☑ State two benefits of web-based training (WBT) and list two requirements with regard to audio and video plug-ins.
- ☑ Discuss two examples of when classroom learning or e-learning are most appropriately used and explain why.
- ☑ Define blended learning.
- ☑ State the purpose of an electronic performance support system (EPSS) and discuss when to use or not use an EPSS.

Learning Objectives focus content

Chapter heading, or Key Knowledge area. **Note:** Pay attention to the introductions! They often contain valuable information.

Sample Page

Below is a sample page from Module 1: *Designing Learning*. Throughout the text, you will see key terms italicized in bold. These terms can also be found in the glossary, or Appendix A of the module.


Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Motivating people to achieve their potential is one of the challenges in learning and performance improvement. To explain the foundations of motivation, Abraham Maslow introduced his hierarchy of needs in *Motivation and Personality*, published in 1954. Maslow contended that people have complex needs that they strive to fulfill and that over time, their needs change and evolve.

Maslow (1954) categorized these needs into a logical hierarchy from physical to psychological (illustrated in Figure 1-1):

- **Physiological:** These needs include food, drink, sex, and sleep.
- **Safety:** These include freedom from fear and the need to be safe and stable.
- **Belongingness:** This category concerns the need for friends and family.
- **Esteem:** This includes both self-esteem and the need to be highly regarded by others.
- **Self-actualization:** This is the need to be "all that you can be."

Figure 1-1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow contended that a person can achieve the next higher level of the hierarchy only after lower-level needs have been satisfied. This means that employees and learners are motivated by a variety of factors—and that those factors may be unknown or difficult to discern.

Most jobs satisfy needs in the four lower levels of the hierarchy: wages or salaries to provide for physiological needs, a safe working environment, camaraderie for belongingness needs, and the respect of co-workers and peers for esteem. Needs related to self-actualization link to the number and types of opportunities for growth and achievement the work provides. For WLP professionals, understanding learner motivation and factors influencing motivation is one piece of the designing learning puzzle. Establishing an appropriate climate and a sense of safety in a learning environment will help to satisfy the lower-level needs of adult learners.

Malcolm Knowles's Adult Learning, or Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles, a leader in the field of adult education, was one of the first researchers to propose that adults learn differently than children. In his seminal book,

Key terms are explained.

Figures and tables show models, charts, and processes.

Section headings and content are drawn from content outline points.

Knowledge Checks

Every chapter (with the exception of Crossover chapters) of the *ASTD Learning System* contains a **Knowledge Check** section consisting of true or false and multiple-choice questions to help you study. These questions' format is similar to those found on the exam. Here is an example of a Knowledge Check from Module 4: *Measuring and Evaluating*.

✓ **Chapter 3 Knowledge Check**

1. Which of the following is controlled by the evaluator when splitting groups into treatment groups and control groups?
 - a. Dependent variable
 - b. Independent variable
 - c. Extraneous variable
 - d. Randomized variable
2. Which of the following is an undesired variable that influences the relationship between variables that an evaluator is examining?
 - a. Dependent variable
 - b. Independent variable
 - c. Extraneous variable
 - d. Randomized variable
3. Which of the following is best described as planning and organizing an experiment to ensure that the right type of data, and enough of it, is available to answer questions of interest as clearly and efficiently as possible?
 - a. One-way analysis of variance
 - b. Sampling
 - c. Experimental design
 - d. Qualitative research
4. Which of the following is a characteristic of hard data?
 - a. Anecdotal
 - b. Opinion
 - c. Attitude
 - d. Objective
5. A sample should be a cross-section of the population with all characteristics of that population represented.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Multiple-choice questions

True or false question

Terminology

The *ASTD Learning System* uses language that should be familiar to the practicing WLP professional. Each module contains a glossary (Appendix A) with terms relevant to its particular area of expertise. In addition, as you read through the chapters, you will find key terms in bold italic.

In general, the term workplace learning and performance (WLP) professional is used to refer to professionals in the field. The terms *learner* and *participant* are used interchangeably, as are the terms *facilitator* and *trainer*. Also note that in Module 7: *Coaching* the terms *employee* and *client* are often used interchangeably when referring to the person being coached.

Crossovers



You will notice a chain link icon (shown at left) used throughout the *ASTD Learning System*. This icon, called a **Crossover**, will help you “link” a key knowledge content chapter where the icon appears to another key knowledge content chapter in a different module in the *ASTD Learning System*. Crossovers are usually no more than two pages in length, include a single learning objective, and reference the “linked” learning system module and knowledge area. Here is an example of a typical Crossover reference: “To learn more about these principles, see Module 1, *Designing Learning*, Chapter 1, ‘Cognition and Adult Learning Theory.’”

There are several reasons that the crossover sections exist. Primarily, there are theories, ideas, and applications that span several AOE (for example, Measurement and Evaluation principles). It is important from a learning standpoint to explain how those ideas and theories relate to other AOE—while not repeating information unnecessarily. Lastly, although many ideas crossover several AOE, sometimes the idea or theory is applied slightly differently depending on the area of expertise.

Outline

Appendix A of this User's Guide contains an outline of the entire *ASTD Learning System*. This outline, compiled from the table of contents, will give you a general understanding of the key knowledge areas in each module.

Module Appendixes

Each module contains three appendixes:

- Appendix A: Glossary contains the bold, italicized key terms from the text.
- Appendix B: Knowledge Check answer key provides answers to all of the Knowledge Checks, by chapter.
- Appendix C: Index provides an alphabetized listing of content in the module.

In addition, Module 4, *Measuring and Evaluating*, Module 8, *Managing Organizational Change*, and Module 7, *Coaching*, each contain an Appendix D: Case Studies. These are real-world case studies pulled from ASTD Press *In Action* series books. Module 7 also contains Appendix E—the entire bibliography of references for the *ASTD Learning System*.

4 Test Preparation

No matter the study method you choose, we suggest you follow this three-step process:

Step 1: Study, Study, Study

Thoroughly review the content presented in the *ASTD Learning System* and any other reference materials you choose. Be sure to pay special attention to the Knowledge Check questions at the end of each chapter, which will ensure that you are thinking along the appropriate lines.

You should give yourself at least six to eight weeks to fully prepare for the exam. If you work full time and need to review all nine AOE's, a realistic time frame would be two weeks for each AOE—or 20 hours each. Please note that we cannot guarantee success on the exam.

Step 2: Identify Strengths, Weaknesses

Answer the Knowledge Check questions to calibrate the level of difficulty of the test questions. Use the questions to determine areas in which you excel and areas you need to reinforce. Remember: Don't limit your review to your areas of weakness—you need to sharpen all of your skills.

Step 3: Review, Review, Review

Check out the Knowledge Check questions again and make sure you are familiar with the material *and* the exam format.

Once you've completed your course of study and have sufficiently prepared for the exam, sit back and relax. Avoid the temptation to conduct a late-night cram session the night before the exam. Remember, this exam tests a broad overview of material, not minute details. Obscure names and dates of events will not be part of the test.

Preparation Methods

There are myriad ways to prepare for the exam. The method you choose will depend on your time, budget, and learning preferences. Some suggestions include

- **self-study:** study alone using a library of up-to-date learning resources, including many of, but not limited to, the resources listed in this guide
- **study buddy:** pair up with members who have different strengths by sharing your knowledge, you will broaden your area of expertise
- **group study:** join a study group to help divide the labor and build esprit de corps.

If you choose to establish an official study group, remember to appoint a coordinator for the study program. Coordinators usually

- counsel professionals who are debating whether to take the exam
- publicize the certification through articles and flyers
- act as a liaison with ASTD CI on certification issues
- coordinate the application process
- acknowledge newly certified members.

The following are some additional general preparation and confidence building tips, adapted from “Study Guides and Strategies” (2005).

Review your personal situation and skills:

- Develop good study habits and strategies.
- Manage time (dealing with procrastination, distractions, laziness).
- Organizing material to be studied and learned.
- Take a step by step approach to build a strategy and not get overwhelmed.
- Avoid outside pressures: success/failure consequences, peer pressure, or competitiveness, and so forth.
- Review your past performance on tests to improve and learn from the experience.

Test preparation to reduce anxiety:

- Approach the exam with confidence; use whatever strategies you can to personalize success: visualization, logic, talking to yourself, practice, team work, journaling, and so forth. View the exam as an opportunity to show how much you have studied and to receive a reward for the studying you have done.
- Be prepared! Learn your material thoroughly and organize the materials you will need for the test. Use a checklist.
- Allow yourself plenty of time, especially to do things you need to do before the test and still get there a little early.
- Avoid thinking you need to cram just before the test.
- Strive for a relaxed state of concentration. Avoid speaking with any fellow exam takers who have not prepared, who express negativity, who will distract your preparation.
- Sharpen the mind with a good exercise program.
- Get a good night’s sleep the night before the exam.

- Don’t go to the exam on an empty stomach. Fresh fruits and vegetables are often recommended to reduce stress. Avoid stressful foods, such as processed foods, artificial sweeteners, carbonated soft drinks, chocolate, eggs, fried foods, junk foods, pork, red meat, sugar, white flour products, chips and similar snack foods, and foods containing preservatives or heavy spices.

You are now on your way to becoming a Certified Professional in Learning and Performance! No matter which study method or methods you choose, we hope that you will find the ASTD Learning System to be a valuable tool in preparing for the exam portion of the certification process.