# Visual Design for Online Learning

Davis, Torria
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Book Review

Tags: online course design   |   online education   |   online learning   |   online teaching

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Anyone who has developed an online course knows how important the design of the course is. Poorly designed courses make the course navigation difficult, causing unnecessary frustration and limiting the ability of students to achieve learning outcomes. The author of this book understands these difficulties. Drawing upon her own negative experiences with initial online offerings, she provides readers with important lessons on designing effective online experiences for both teachers and students.

Davis suggests, rightly, that the reader should use the text like a workbook, drawing from the ideas presented in the text as the reader creates her/his own course in the platform the reader uses. She encourages readers to draw upon the backward course design model: begin with learning objectives, discern appropriate ways to assess those objectives, and then generate online learning activities that will enable success in the course. Such alignment will promote student success.

The author provides an acronym, L.I.T.E., for the design framework she encourages. Readers should be sure to create clickable links to external content (L), integrate well the multimedia included (I), use typography and white space to enhance the legibility of the course (T), and embed the content at the point of need (E). She identifies four types of content pages that should be part of the design: landing page, navigation page, instructional page, and assignment submission page. Of course, most learning platforms will provide these. The key, she contends, is to create them in a way that achieves the course objectives and is user-friendly for the student.

The remainder of the chapters illustrate how readers can develop the various components of a

good online course, including images and videos, integrating multimedia, facilitating instruction and interaction, and the all-important assessment. Davis provides helpful hints regarding the tools included in software such as PowerPoint, like using it to download and edit images or to incorporate online media. She also points to a number of free online tools one can use to develop a course, such as the presentation tool Brainshark, and the interaction tool VoiceThread. At the same time, she cautions users not to incorporate too many technologies into the course. The focus should be on learning the content of the course, not on overwhelming students with too many technologies.

As with any text, there are some limitations. Parts of the book require knowledge of html language. Many faculty do not know html language because they use software to develop their courses that does this automatically. In addition, for a book that emphasizes visual design, many of the illustrations are difficult to read, leaving the reader to wonder how well the text follows its own advice on legibility. Yet over all, the text is a useful step-by-step guide for developing an online course or for improving the visual design of existing courses.

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