



# Writing Elearning Scenarios

Storytelling and scenarios are a great way to bring content to life and make it feel relevant to learners.

Scenarios can be used in many ways in elearning and this may include:

- An opportunity for the learner to practice what they have learnt in the elearning in a realistic situation that is relevant to them and their role. In this instance the scenario would come after the delivery of learning content.
- A scenario may form the basis of the whole module. In this instance the whole module centres around the use of stories, decisions, consequences and feedback. For example, instead of presenting the key elements of a set of policies, you can present a situation and ask the learner to review the policies to identify which one has been infringed. In reality we rarely ask learners to memorise these types of documents, but it is important for learners to be able to quickly identify the key principles/practice so that they are able to consult it in real life. This type of solution can be applied to a number of resources, documents, guidance and processes. Unlike the real world, these types of scenarios provide learners with constructive feedback on their actions and, potentially, gives the opportunity to experience failure in a safe environment.
- Using a story at the start of a module can be a great way to get the learner 'to lean forward' and bring to life the consequences of something before a learner explores the topic in detail. For example, showing the consequences of a supporter's data not being securely and legally processed at the start of a GDPR module helps learners to emotionally engage with the topic.

## Writing elearning scenarios

If you are working with us on a project, we will work with you to develop authentic and effective scenarios that are grounded in the right context. Here are some things to consider if you are writing these on your own.

### 1. Using a real life setting

Scenarios can be based in any setting, both real and abstract. Using unexpected settings can be a great way to grab a learner's attention. However, they need to understand quickly why this setting has been used or you run the risk of them being disengaged, confused and/or frustrated. The use of this type of scenarios will need to be an internal decision based on the culture and type of learners you are creating content for.

If you are using context specific scenarios, it's important that they are **grounded in real life and deal with problems that a learner would encounter**. This allows the learner to gather knowledge and/or develop skills that they will need in the real world. You should also ensure you use commonly understood terms, document names, building names etc to add authenticity. The more the learners feels like the scenario is authentic and relevant to them and their role the better.

That said, when it comes to writing scenarios it's important to try to avoid **irrelevant details just for the sake of entertainment**. Although it is nice to make your scenarios interesting, try to avoid using so



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much detail that it overwhelms your learners. This is really important as it can distract the learner from the actual subject matter that they need to absorb. Only include just enough detail to make it engaging and realistic. For example, you don't need to give a background story of each character or include dialogues that go off on a tangent. Keep things simple and straightforward so that you showcase the main points, rather than overshadow them for the sake of entertainment.

## 2. Acquire new knowledge

Try to **encourage learners to put newly acquired knowledge to use**. This might include opportunities to make decisions that guide the story, or to give them feedback on a decision before continuing the story.

When giving **feedback**, if possible, provide this as part of the story. For example, give the feedback within the story, not as a separate feedback screen. Also consider whether it is appropriate to ask the learner to make an additional selection if they get an answer wrong as this can be an opportunity to retest their understanding or reframe the information they need to know.

Note in our example below it would not be authentic here for the learner to make a second choice as in this instance, if the learner got the answer incorrect it was more important that they saw instant consequences of their decision.

## 3. Safe place to fail

One of the most effective ways to embed new knowledge is to learn from your mistakes. Scenarios in elearning **allow learners to make mistakes in a safe environment and see plausible consequences**. For example, if they answer a scenario question incorrectly, you can show them the impact that this had on the character, or which other answers would have been more appropriate to the situation. By making these consequences as realistic as possible, you can help your learners to become more aware of the potential impact of their decisions without any real-world concerns, such as safety issues, embarrassment or criticism.

### Tips for success

1. Identify objectives for the scenarios (what do you want them to learn or practice).
2. Use a short introduction to the story/situation.
3. Include authentic and challenging decisions that need to be made (this might be as simple as deciding whether something constitutes a breach or forms part of the story). If appropriate, include supporting information or materials (to support the learner in making decisions).
4. Provide feedback and if appropriate move onto the next part of the scenario.

## Our example

In the following example, a learner was given an authentic and realistic situation based on information provided by the client's subject matter expert and their learners. This was supported through the background graphics used which reflected their work environment. During the initial part of the course the learner had progressed through a tour of the building and learnt key facts about dealing with a fire within their residential property.

Our objective was to allow learners to test their understanding how to deal with a typical fire within their working environment. We started with a short introduction to explain to the learner what they were about to do.

There were two scenarios that branched from this point and we allowed the learner to make a choice on which scenario to attempt first.

To give additional authenticity to the module, the sound of a fire alarm was also played throughout the scenario. This also gave the learner a heightened sense of the type of conditions they would be experiencing in a real incident.



A short explanation was then given to the learner about what they were seeing. They were then presented with a question to answer with two possible options to choose from about what to do next. Both of these options were plausible answers and their choice dictated what they saw next.

Making the wrong choice provided the learner with instant feedback and a visual representation of the result.



If the learner made the correct choice, they were offered a second decision.

As before both decisions that the learner could make were plausible, particularly as the learner had learnt earlier about the impact of oxygen on a fire.



The learner is then shown the results of their actions and this result is echoed in the feedback.



When the learner has finished the first scenario they are taken straight back to start the second one.

After completing both scenarios, the learner was given detailed feedback that summarised the key learning points.

