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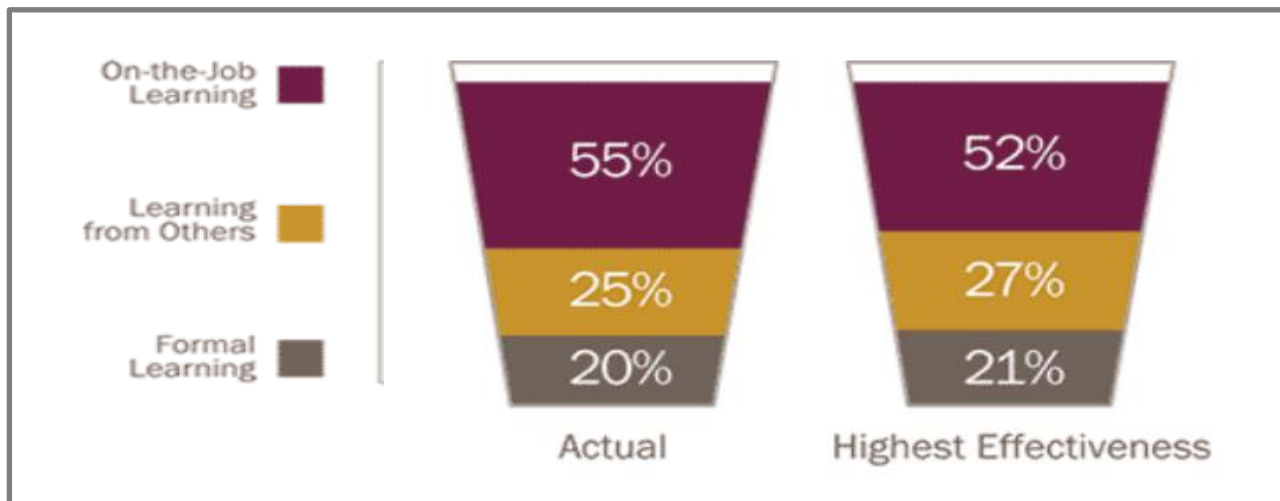
**A Guide For Determining Learning  
Methods And Matching With Learning  
Goals**

# Learning Methods Guide

## Introduction

Learning is defined as knowledge or skill acquired by instruction or study or modification of a behavioral tendency by experience ([Merriam-Webster](#)). In the workplace, learning provides a foundation for the acquisition, enhancement, and evolution of knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to achieve organizational and individual goals. Collectively, learning ensures the ability of organizations to meet their mission, deliver on strategies, and to support the achievement of organizational vision.

Learning occurs in many different ways with no single method serving as a one-size-fits-all approach. Research of learning approaches identifies that across learners and organizations, effective learning approaches are divided across categories including on-the-job learning, social learning, and formal learning.



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This guide provides context for these categories with definitions of learning approaches, examples, advantages and considerations, and implementation considerations. When identifying learning approaches, consider the learning objectives, learning provider capabilities, and audience needs for identifying the best methods for providing needed or desired learning.

# Learning Methods Guide

## Learning Methods Matrix

|                     |   | Grow Knowledge | Grow Technical Skills & Abilities | Grow Behavioral Skills & Abilities |
|---------------------|---|----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| On-the-Job Learning | <b>Job Aids</b><br>Written job aids<br>Video job aids (microlearning)   | ✓              |                                   |                                    |
|                     | <b>OJT (On-the-Job Training)</b><br>Demonstration<br>Practice with oversight                                      | ✓              | ✓                                 |                                    |
|                     | <b>Special Assignments &amp; Projects</b><br>Assignment to roles or projects beyond typical role responsibilities | ✓              | ✓                                 | ✓                                  |
| Social Learning     | <b>Mentoring</b><br>Provide guidance based on experience 1:1 or in groups   | ✓              |                                   | ✓                                  |
|                     | <b>Shadowing</b><br>Observation of others' performing work  | ✓              | ✓                                 |                                    |
|                     | <b>Coaching</b><br>Partnership in exploration, identification, and achievement of goals 1:1 or in teams           |                |                                   | ✓                                  |
|                     | <b>Learning Groups</b><br>Topic focused discussion groups   | ✓              |                                   | ✓                                  |
| Formal Learning     | <b>Instructional Learning</b><br>Provided by an instructor<br>Live or virtual classroom                           | ✓              | ✓                                 | ✓                                  |
|                     | <b>E-Learning</b><br>Self-paced learning<br>Video based   | ✓              | ✓                                 |                                    |
| Hybrid              | Combination of learning approaches  | ✓              | ✓                                 | ✓                                  |

## On-the-Job Learning

### Job Aids

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Devices or tools to provide specific information required to perform a task or activity.  |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>Written job aids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charts.</li> <li>• Checklists.</li> <li>• Diagrams.</li> <li>• Instruction Cards.</li> </ul> <p>Video job aids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How-to videos.</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted delivery of information.</li> <li>• Often incorporated into the job itself.</li> <li>• Less complex and often does not require significant resources to develop.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development may require content expertise.</li> <li>• Requires periodic review to ensure content is current and accurate.</li> <li>• Videos will require technology for recording, a portal for containing and viewing content.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <p><a href="#">Tips for Developing Job Aids</a></p> <p>Example Job Aid: <a href="#">Editing Postings (RMS)</a></p>  |



To be effective, job aids should be concise, easy to understand and easy to use.



## Learning Methods Guide

### On-the-Job Training (OJT)

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Training that occurs during the course of performing the work using the machinery, tools, and equipment used to perform the work tasks.   |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>Perform work task with instruction and guidance from an experienced coworker or supervisor.</p> <p>Trainer demonstrates work task and then the trainee performs the work task with feedback from the trainer.</p>  |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful for practical tasks.</li> <li>• Does not require significant resources to develop and implement.</li> <li>• Learn while producing or performing the work.</li> <li>• Ability to easily transfer knowledge to on-the-job experience.</li> <li>• Cost-effective.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During training, trainer and trainee's productivity may decrease.</li> <li>• Trainer must have significant and accurate knowledge of work process.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <a href="#">The Learning Initiative: Creating the Value in On-the-Job Training</a>  |



OJT requires the “trainer” to be skilled and knowledgeable about the work task or process.



## Learning Methods Guide

### Special Assignments and Projects

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Assignment to special assignments and projects designed to broaden experience, networks, skills, and knowledge.  |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>Lead or participate in a special project outside of normal job responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary full-time basis.</li> <li>• In addition to other job responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p>Perform an assignment outside of normal job responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary full-time basis.</li> <li>• In addition to other job responsibilities.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn new skills and gain new knowledge.</li> <li>• Make new connections with colleagues.</li> <li>• Increase job satisfaction.</li> <li>• Expand knowledge of the organization.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May require the need to supply full or partial temporary resources for reassigned employees.</li> <li>• Determine base skills and capabilities when identifying employees for special assignments or projects.</li> <li>• Ensure special assignment or project goals and expected deliverables are clear.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <a href="#">How Working on Special Projects Can Significantly Boost Employee Engagement</a>  |



Ensure employees who are asked to work on special assignments and projects have the capacity to do so. If special assignments or projects are added to an already full workload, they may create overwhelm and be ineffective.




## Social Learning

### Mentoring

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Reciprocal and collaborative relationship most often between an experienced and less experienced employee in which knowledge, experience, and expertise is shared to support professional development and growth.  |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>Informal mentoring.</p> <p>Formal organizational mentoring program.</p> <p>One-on-one mentoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience based mentoring.</li> <li>• Knowledge based mentoring.</li> <li>• Peer to peer mentoring.</li> <li>• New hire onboarding mentoring.</li> </ul> <p>Group mentoring.</p> |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted and individualized approach to development.</li> <li>• Low cost approach to learning and growth.</li> <li>• Expands employee networks.</li> <li>• Create opportunity to experience new ideas and insights.</li> <li>• Expands engagement and satisfaction.</li> </ul>            |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine an effective pairing process for mentor relationships.</li> <li>• Provide basic guidelines and support as a foundation for successful mentoring.</li> <li>• Ensure the organization supports time commitments for mentoring.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <p><a href="#">DHRM Mentoring Toolkit</a></p> <p><a href="#">How to Start a Mentoring Program</a></p>  |



  
 Mentoring is flexible and can be formal or informal and individually or group based.

## Shadowing

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Opportunity in which an employee follows and observes a trained and experienced employee to learn about how a job is performed including job deliverables, interactions, and nuances of a job or job actions.   |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>New employee onboarding.</p> <p>Internships.</p> <p>Lateral or promotional transitions.</p> <p>Career exploration opportunities.</p> <p>Leadership development.</p>  |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience the actual performance of the job including the nuances of how the job is performed.</li> <li>• Opportunity to observe all components of job performance including those that may not be mentioned in job descriptions or in process documents.</li> <li>• Opportunity to directly observe and learn from institutional knowledge. Supports knowledge management.</li> <li>• Ability to actively begin a transition to a new role.</li> <li>• Supports cross-training.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires scheduling the time and opportunity for job shadowing to occur.</li> <li>• Requires the shadowed employee to openly participate by including the shadowee in meetings, work interactions, and other work activities.</li> <li>• Requires the shadowed employee to openly share information about their work processes.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <a href="#">Job Shadowing Is Effective On-the-Job Training</a>  |



The opportunity for observation is key to effective job shadowing.



## Learning Methods Guide

### Coaching

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Opportunity for a coach to partner with employees to support development, goal achievement, and maximize performance and potential. Coaching supports learning and growth through a co-created partnership focused on specific goals.  |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>Individual Coaching.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Effectiveness.</li> <li>• Productivity &amp; Time Management.</li> <li>• Communication Effectiveness.</li> <li>• Work Style Effectiveness.</li> </ul> <p>Team Coaching.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Effectiveness.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized and targeted specifically to the coachee.</li> <li>• May be a limited monetary investment when using internal coaches (e.g., DHRM Workplace Effectiveness Coaching and Workplace Conflict Consultation Program).</li> <li>• Focused on specific goal achievement.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of external coaches may require monetary investment.</li> <li>• Consider coach credentials such as experience and professional certifications.</li> <li>• Diagnostic processes such as assessments may require additional monetary investment.</li> </ul>                               |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <p><a href="#">Workplace Effectiveness Coaching - DHRM</a></p> <p><a href="#">Workplace Conflict Consultation Program</a></p> <p><a href="#">International Coach Federation</a></p>  |



Coaching focuses on helping someone learn vs. providing direction.



## Learning Groups

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Small group of employees meet regularly to learn about and discuss identified topics. Often, a group facilitator is identified and may change on a rotating basis who focuses on facilitating discussion.   |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>Leadership Development Learning Group.</p> <p>Book Club Learning Group.</p> <p>Study Learning Group.</p> <p>Quality Circles.</p>   |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages involvement from all participants.</li> <li>• Creates a sense of community.</li> <li>• Can reinforce the transfer of learning.</li> <li>• Support peer learning.</li> <li>• Support application and learning from real world experiences.</li> <li>• Minimal monetary investment.</li> <li>• Improved understanding and retention of content than when the same content is presented in other instructional practices.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be effective, learning groups should be limited in the number of participants.</li> <li>• Participants must contribute and participate to support effective learning.</li> <li>• Effective facilitation to ensure group stays on topic and all participants contribute.</li> <li>• Can be conducted in person or virtually.</li> <li>• Establish norms for the learning group to best support participants and group goals.</li> </ul>    |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <p><a href="#">Tapping Into the Power of Learning Circles</a></p> <p><a href="#">The Learning Circle in Culture Change: Why Use It?</a></p>   |



Learning groups rely on the power of the social learning experience for acquiring and integrating knowledge.

## Formal Learning

### Instructional Learning

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Learning approach that is facilitated by an instructor in a physical or virtual classroom setting. This approach allows for interaction and discussion in real time by the instructor and participants.   |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>In person training class.</p> <p>Virtual training class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class conducted via an online collaboration tool (e.g., GoToTraining/Webinar, Adobe Connect, WebEx, etc.).</li> </ul> <p>Webinars.</p>   |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can provide for verbal and non-verbal communication.</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for student networking and collaboration.</li> <li>• Provides setting for hands-on learning.</li> <li>• Can provide a structure for learning.</li> <li>• Provides opportunity to ask questions.</li> <li>• Can create breakout groups with exercises to facilitate and reinforce learning.</li> <li>• Ability for instructor to adapt content based on class assessment and interaction.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires training facilities for in-person classes.</li> <li>• Requires appropriate online tools and capabilities to facilitate effective virtual classes.</li> <li>• Coordinate schedules of instructors and learners.</li> <li>• Requires time away from work for instructors and learners.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <p><a href="#">Instructor-Led Training vs. eLearning</a></p> <p><a href="#">The 4 Active Ingredients for Long-Term Learning</a></p>   |



Be sure to modify classroom techniques to address more limited attention spans in virtual learning environments.

## Learning Methods Guide

### E-Learning

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Learning that occurs online usually in an asynchronous manner where the instructor and students may be connected online but separated by time.  |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>Videos.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recorded videos.</li> <li>Micro-learning.</li> </ul> <p>Recorded training modules (e.g., modules within a Learning Management System where students can view them on their own schedules).</p> <p>Augmented reality or virtual reality simulations.</p> <p>Gamification.</p>  |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often requires a lower monetary investment than in-person training.</li> <li>Can reduce employee time away from work.</li> <li>Improved flexibility for creating, accessing and completing training.</li> <li>Supports employees who are remote or who are traveling.</li> <li>Allows employees to pause training and re-visit training content.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Best when focused on single, concise topics.</li> <li>Too many graphics and animations can be distracting.</li> <li>Can become outdated quickly for rapidly evolving topics.</li> <li>Appropriate tools and technology are important to support creation of effective E-Learning.</li> <li>Students must be comfortable and knowledgeable in accessing and using E-Learning methods.</li> <li>Potential for distractibility for some students with E-Learning approaches.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <p><a href="#">Instructor-Led Training vs. eLearning</a></p> <p><a href="#">Commonwealth of Virginia Learning Center (COVLC)</a></p>  |




Consider attention spans and distractibility when creating E-Learning content. Shorter is better than longer content.

## Hybrid Learning

### Hybrid Approach

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Definition</b>                    | Learning approach that incorporates components of various learning methods for achieving learning goals and objectives.  |
| <b>Examples</b>                      | <p>Flipped Classroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individually, watch lectures or videos online.</li> <li>Engage in discussion, group activities and problem solving with instructor led learning in a physical or virtual classroom.</li> </ul> <p>Instructional learning supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coaching</li> <li>Learning Groups</li> <li>Mentoring</li> <li>Special Projects</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul> <p>to reinforce and transfer learning to the work environment.</p> |
| <b>Advantages</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides the opportunity to support different learning styles.</li> <li>Can minimize monetary investment by using a variety of learning approaches with different cost structures.</li> <li>Creates flexibility to target learning with the best learning approaches for the identified topics.</li> <li>Minimizes time away from work to participate in learning.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Implementation Considerations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blended approaches require the appropriate tools to create different learning content.</li> <li>Requires staff with the skills, abilities, and capabilities for creating learning content with different learning tools.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Resources</b>                     | <a href="#">What is Blended Learning?</a>  |



Hybrid approaches require learning providers to monitor and coordinate the flow of learning and activities.