

C2 - Concepts: What Learners Need to Know and How They Learn It Best

Think about how you would finish that sentence:

When I introduce new content, I usually...

When we plan a lesson, we often start with what we need to explain. We think about the information we want learners to know, the examples we'll use, and how we'll present it. But how learners experience that content matters just as much as the content itself.

Concepts are the key ideas, information, and skills learners need to be successful. This is the "need-to-know" content of your lesson. The challenge isn't just deciding what to include. It's deciding how learners will work with that content as they learn it.

One important shift is focusing on what matters most. It's easy to include more than learners really need. But more content rarely leads to more learning. When concepts are focused, learners have a better chance of understanding and using them.

Take a moment to think about this:

When you introduce new content, what are learners doing?

Another shift is involving learners earlier than we might expect. Learners don't need to wait until they fully understand something before they interact with it or try it out. They can explore ideas, talk about them, and work with them as they are learning. The more involved they are, the more likely they are to remember what they are learning.

It also helps to keep content in shorter segments. Long explanations are hard to follow, even when the information is important. Breaking content into smaller parts creates natural pauses where learners can think, respond, or apply what they're hearing.

You're about to introduce a new concept. Which of these would you try?

- A. Explain the idea fully, then move into an activity
- B. Share part of the idea, pause, and ask learners to respond
- C. Break the idea into smaller parts and have learners do something with each part

Encouraging the learner to make the content visible can also make a big difference. When learners can see how ideas are organized, whether through diagram, mind map or graphic organizer, it becomes easier to follow and remember.

Concepts are not just about delivering information. They are about helping learners make sense of that information as they go.

A few simple approaches can make this easier to put into practice. After a short explanation, pause and ask a question learners can respond to or discuss. Give learners a prompt, have them write a sentence or two, and then share with someone nearby. Use a simple visual, list, or organizer so learners can follow along or add to it as they learn.

Take a minute to do something with this.

Think back to how you finished that sentence at the beginning. How do you usually introduce new content? Where are learners involved, and where are they mostly listening? Where could you break things into smaller parts? How could you make the content easier to see or organize?

A few easy ways to start

- **Graphic organizer:** Give learners a simple structure (list, diagram, or outline) and have them add key ideas as they learn.
- **Myth or fact:** Share a few statements related to the content and have learners decide which are true or not, then discuss.
- **Fill in the blank:** Provide a partially completed statement or example and have learners complete it as you introduce the concept.

Based on this, would you change anything about how you introduce new content?

Answers

B and C