

Introduction to Instructional Media

An overview of popular media and their applications

Media are the aids that implement the instructional methods. Following is an overview of the ones you are most likely to use. Most media applies to both classroom and electronic course delivery. How they are adapted for each is included in the overview.

Overview of Training Delivery Media

Bound printed matter, usually in the form of books or binders, includes instructor guides and student guides. They might also include resource manuals, such as glossaries, policies, procedures, guidelines, and other lengthy company documents. Bound printed matter is usually provided at the beginning of the course. They can be loaned or given as personal copies for each learner.

Handouts are short documents that are distributed when they are needed, such as exercises, assignments, and checklists. If there are many, and if nothing will be lost by providing them before they are needed, include them in the bound printed matter. That technique ensures that everyone will have a copy, while reducing handling and distribution time.

Overheads are paper-sized transparencies that can be run through a printer or photocopier like a piece of paper. Overheads can be used to provide an enlarged copy of what the learner sees in his material, or to illustrate a drawing, flow of activities, or computation by hand, projected onto a screen visible to the entire class. This media requires a transparency projector. Some organizations have transparency machines that use a roll of transparency film, which is scrolled over the viewing area. You can also overlay a transparency sheet over this type of projector.

Slides can be generated by camera or computer. They provide visual backup to instructor or text material. Camera-generated slides have to be manually inserted one

at a time into a slide-holding carousel, fit onto a slide projector, and shown linearly. They can be timed, but have no special effects or animation. Computer-generated slides can be changed or rearranged easily, have timing, animation, and special effects options, and can be hyperlinked with documents, spreadsheets, or any other kind of database, computer-based, or web-based file. Computer-based slide shows can be repurposed with notes as a student guide, instructor guide, and web-based training. Special equipment is required to project a computer-based slide show.

Wall charts are most appropriate to use when a concept will be revisited, should be remembered, or to provide a checklist. Use them to show learners where in the course you are, to chart milestones, or to make changes to an evolving situation. Determine whether they should be laminated to endure travel and repeated use, and the size they need to be. The font and images need to be easily visible from anywhere in a room. In a computer-based environment, this media effect can be accomplished by inserting a frame on a web page, which remains visible as the learner changes content pages.

Audio media includes tapes played with a tape recorder and streaming audio. Sounds on a computer course that provide course content, unless the audio tests sound discrimination skills, should be accompanied by text, in case the learner does not have a sound card or speakers. Sound is appropriate for material in which voice inflection, language skills, or sound recognition are important.

Video media includes tapes played in a video recorder and streaming video. Video should not be used as an integral part of content on a computer course unless all learners have access to bandwidth required for jitter-free playback. Video is appropriate for showing procedures, equipment, and behaviors that are difficult to describe.

Computer-based training (CBT) is a catchall phrase for training that occurs on a computer. It can be self-paced, programmed instruction, or a number of other formats. It is expensive, time-consuming, and complex to develop. Changes are expensive to make, and most CBT courses that I have developed and taken are little more than page-turners. The best CBT includes interactivity, lots of help, and easy navigation.

Distance learning is a term applied to training that takes place among geographically dispersed learners in real time. It includes traditional instructor-led methods that use telephone, satellite, radio, or broadband streaming technologies. A variety of technologies exist that enable the instructor to illustrate or add notations to a computer screen or communicate output from a whiteboard.

Web-based training includes print and multimedia delivery of course content. It does not include a live instructor or real-time interactions among learners. The course is constructed like a web site, and requires content design, site design, web site architecture design, and almost every other hardware and software consideration that a web site requires, including maintenance. It can be posted onto the Internet, an intranet, or a CD. One advantage of this media is that it is faster to produce: a slide

show can be converted into HTML format, editing errors are easy to correct after posting, hyperlinks can easily be changed, and updates can be quickly added.