



In the face of COVID-19, we are hearing every day from many of our constituents and partners that their planned in-person trainings, meetings, and conferences are being rescheduled and/or will be shifted to a virtual format.

While there is evidence that virtual learning can be effective, designing a powerful learning experience requires much more than just transferring a set of existing PowerPoint slides to a virtual platform. Here is what we know about how people learn:



The brain's capacity for learning requires attention and focus



The brain responds to images and novelty



The brain needs ample time to process new content



Learning requires a process over time – priming, content engagement and follow-up support

## Maintaining Virtual Vitality!

At ETR, we care about the quality of the learning process. We want every participant to take action in order to impact health and education equity. Below you will find a set of tips for translating in-person training to a virtual format. We have included the critical steps for preparation, delivery and follow up. As you will see, the magic happens if the preparation is solid.

### Preparation

- + **Be super familiar with your virtual training platform!** Learn and practice all aspects, engagement tools and features of the platform prior to using.
- + **Elicit the help of a "producer."** This is the person who handles tech and logistics while others facilitate the event.
- + **Transform your in-person design (agenda) to a virtual format. It will help to consider these questions:**
  - Are the current learning objectives feasible in a virtual setting? If not, adapt the objectives considering the platform tools available to you and the delivery time you have.

- Is there content that is non-essential (for meeting objectives)? If yes, get rid of it!
- How can the content be “chunked” into small, digestible segments?
- How will we engage learners in order to meet the learning objectives (intent) in a virtual setting? [Check out this blog to learn more.](#)
- What virtual tools can be used to meaningfully engage learners and check for understanding for each content chunk?
- Do the visuals directly relate to and support understanding of the content?
- Are there worksheets, learning guides or other support documents that can be designed/redesigned to support engagement?
- Are we following best practices for in-person learning events? (Those practices apply to virtual as well!) [Check out this resource from Design 4 Learning.](#)

**+ Stay very connected to your learners.**

- Reach out to your learners at intervals to keep them tethered to the upcoming event.
- Share logistical information: date, time, virtual platform to be used, instructions for joining and participating.
- Use “priming” practices to prepare participants for the learning event. This can be accomplished by sharing a brief agenda and learning objectives and providing prep work.

**+ Practice again before the big event!** Record the practice session and check audio, voice, tone, smoothness of transitions.

**+ Consider recording the event and take appropriate prep steps for this to happen.**

## Delivery

**+ Arrive early!** Allow time to log in and test everything prior to the event.

**+ Engage learners from the get-go!** Post a lively greeting and thought-provoking activity or question as the first glimpse of what is to come when learners log on.

**+ Use webcam.** This is dependent on bandwidth and connection speed, but it increases engagement, so use if possible.

**+ Set the stage (Openers).** Provide a brief overview of intent and agenda, a quick practice for using the training platform tools, alert if the session is being recorded. Provide a brief inclusion activity so all learners are primed and feel included and valued.

**+ Provide each content “chunk” and include:**

- Process time every 3-5 minutes! Use the virtual tools (chat, audio, polling, whiteboard, annotation, etc.) to engage.
- Ample “wait” time when a question is posed, so participants have time to think and formulate an answer.

**+ Watch the chat!** React and respond as appropriate (producers are super helpful here).

- + **Infuse movement!** Especially for longer events, add something as simple as an arm and neck stretch or “get up and walk once around your chair,” at intervals. Insert break time for sessions 60 minutes or longer.
- + **Move to action!** Ask participants to consider how they will apply their learning and ask that they identify at least one action – use chat or another tool to make actions public.
- + **Provide closure.** Provide a brief summary of the content covered, share the follow-up support plan, ask for final questions, share contact information for questions or issues that may arise. Thank participants for their engagement.
- + **Share an online feedback form with a deadline for completion**

## Follow-Up

- + **Follow through!** Reach out to participants to implement your follow-up support plan.
  - Provide a “take-away” resource that summarizes key points of the training and ideas generated by participants.
  - Provide any additional resources that directly relate to the learning objectives.
  - Provide contact information should participants have questions.
- + **Provide a summary of the feedback results.** Include event planners, funders and participants, as applicable.
- + **Use feedback results to inform future events.**
- + **CELEBRATE** this amazing accomplishment!!



### We hope these tips are helpful! Let us know if you have questions

ETR will be continuing the Virtual Vitality series to provide support for best practices in designing and delivering virtual learning processes. In addition, we are offering consultation services to assist constituents in learning best practices for virtual design, delivery and follow-up.

If you have questions, suggestions, or just want us to have your contact information for future tips and resources on virtual learning, you can contact Debra Christopher at [D4L@etr.org](mailto:D4L@etr.org) and share your request, your name, and your contact information. We look forward to connecting with you.