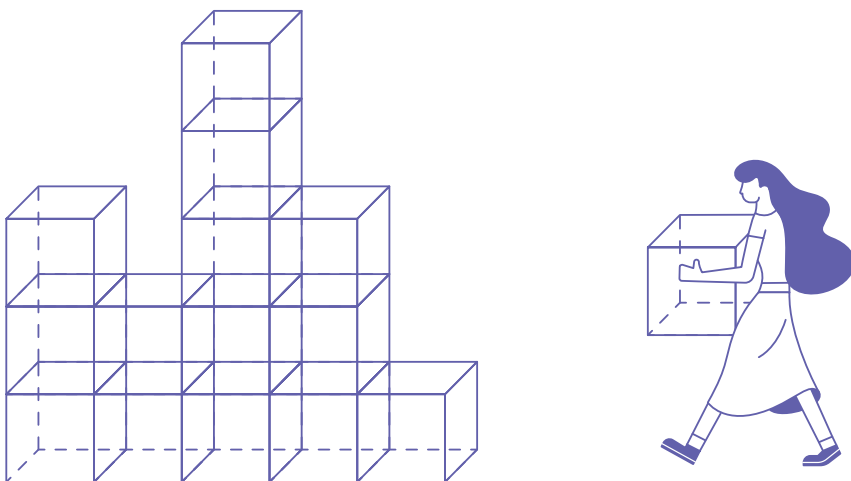


How To Structure Your Online Course Guide

Once you have an outline of your curriculum, you'll need to make sure it checks all the boxes when it comes to best practices of the learning experience. An online course needs to have the right balance of both high level and hands-on learning to ensure you're engaging your students.

Use the guide below to help you understand what your online course should look like structurally.



The Introduction

Every online course, in some way, shape, or form, has an introduction. This is your chance as the instructor to ease your student into the learning experience. An introduction needs to be short, sweet, and get your student excited to learn.

Suggested Length:
> 12 minutes total

✓ The Welcome Message

Suggested Length: > 2 minutes

Your first lesson needs to make a good impression and allude to how your course is going to work. Keep it high level and light here.

Cover the following:

- A warm welcome and quick overview of the course
- The course schedule or intended learning pace
- Any prerequisites students need to continue on

✓ Student Onboarding

Suggested Length: > 5 minutes

Your onboarding lesson is where you can dive into the specifics of how your course works. You can show students how to use Thinkific, or how to use your course content with demos. Also, show students how they can get their questions answered.

Cover the following:

- How your students can access content/resources
- How students access your community
- How your students can reach you for support

✓ The Entrance Survey

Suggested Length: > 5 minutes

The entrance survey is a tool for you to determine if your course content is having an impact. By establishing where the student is before teaching them, you can measure any changes after completion by surveying again.

Ask the following:

- Your student's current status with the material
- About your student's expectations for the course

For example, if you're teaching someone how to sell lemonade, ask them how many cups of lemonade they sell on average right now. Later, ask them again to determine if your course has had an impact.

The Chapter

The next parts of your online course will consist of chapters, sections, modules, etc. filled with your lessons, steps, parts, etc. Remember, that a chapter should only contain the steps necessary to achieve a major milestone in the journey towards the transformation your online course promises.

Below, you can see how a typical chapter is organized.

Suggested Length:
> 12 minutes total

The High Level Lesson

Suggested Length: 2 – 7 minutes total

In the high level lesson, you'll want to cover anything a student needs to know BEFORE jumping in to get their hands dirty. This part of the chapter should focus on the WHAT and WHY before you get into the HOW.

Cover the following:

- Any required concepts the students need to understand
- Definitions and other need-to-know details
- Anything you can't show or talk about during a demo

The Hands-on Lesson(s)

Suggested Length: 2 – 7 minutes total

In the hands-on lesson, you should be covering how you can put your high level knowledge into action. This stage isn't necessary in every course, but dedicating a whole lesson to it is usually required for courses where it is necessary.

Cover the following:

- Demonstrate the how-to portion of your course
- Try and show how you can get one task done
- Nothing that is overwhelming for first timers

The Chapter

The Formative Assessment (Quiz)

Suggested Length: 2 – 7 minutes

At the end of your teaching comes the testing. We're not going to test our students with a final exam here. Make quizzes short and easy for your students to confirm their learning. This is an important step for long-term learning.

Ask the following:

- One to three questions about the preceding lessons
 - Questions that are easy to recall the answer to
 - Make assessments non-graded and explain answers
-

The Learning Aid(s)/Resource(s)

Suggested Length: > 30 mins

After the high level and hands on teaching, you should include a learning aid or resource that helps them put their knowledge into action. A cheat sheet, worksheet, workbook or swipe copy works well here.

Include the following:

- A reference guide for relevant information
- A place for the student to work on learned skills
- Resources that make the student's work easier

The Conclusion

The conclusion of your course should occur after the very last major milestone is accomplished by the student. At this point your students will feel that they need to know what the next steps are and the conclusion should provide that.

Suggested Length:
> 10 total

✓ The Review

Suggested Length: > 7 minutes

This is where you congratulate the student for finishing the course, and review what has been learned. In addition, you should cover what the student can do now to continue learning.

Cover the following:

- A warm congratulations for the student
- A quick review of the journey so far
- What the student should do now that they've finished

✓ The Exit Survey

Suggested Length: 2 mins

The very last aspect of your curriculum is a quick exit survey. This is a good opportunity to gather data to compare against your entrance survey results to determine the amount of change in your student. This data helps you improve.

Ask about the following:

- Your student's achievements resulting from their learning
- Your student's satisfaction with the course material

✓ The Completion Page

One of the most underutilized parts of an online course is the completion page. As a student finished the course, they should be introduced to their next steps via linking or suggestion in text or a video. This is a great place for upsells.

Cover about the following:

- Congratulate the student on their completion
- A social media sharing opportunity for completing the course
- Connect the student to another product of yours