CYPHER Learning

THE COMPLETE ASYNCHRONOUS TRAINING GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES

DESIGNING REMOTE LEARNING THAT WORKS

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Introduction

Today's employees know that their skills and passion matter more than being tied to an office cubicle. They have higher expectations from their employers. One of them is a **flexible working environment**.

Globally, up to 70% of people **work remotely at least once a week**, while 53% work remotely for at least half the week[1]. Given the recent pandemic, these numbers have **skyrocketed**.

Online learning is flexible, whereas classroom training confines people to a rigid setting. When a learner decides when, how, and what they learn, they're more invested in their professional growth. **Asynchronous learning** makes this possible across different locations and time zones, with many other benefits to boot.

[1] The workspace revolution: reaching the tipping point
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The spectrum between synchronous and asynchronous training

Asynchronous training is the perfect solution when trainers and learners cannot physically be in the same place or find a convenient schedule. However, the biggest misconception is that online training exists in a binary setting: either **asynchronous** or **synchronous**.

In practice, there's a **spectrum** between these **two training styles**. Instructors are free to design a **training experience** that retains elements from both, to various degrees. For example, a program for remote workers that usually take self-paced, asynchronous courses can also include live Q&A sessions.

There are at least **four different types of training** on the **synchronous to asynchronous spectrum**. Depending on their unique needs, companies can choose what works best for their situation. Let's see what the most popular options are!

In-person synchronous

In-person synchronous is the classic approach to workplace learning. The instructor gets to know the people and learn enough to use anecdotes tailored to that particular audience. Frequently, it turns into a **networking opportunity**.

Simultaneously, this training type **takes up many resources**, including travel expenses. Most of all, it's a time-consuming activity that isn't **as sustainable in times of crisis**.

Synchronous remote

Synchronous remote training relies on **web conferencing technology**. During live sessions, learners go through training materials simultaneously, from their various remote locations. The most significant advantage is the **learner-instructor interaction**, through Q&A activities, for example.

On the downside, the synchronous remote style **isn't practical in many cases**, where connectivity issues, conflicting schedules, and different time zones simply make it an inconvenience for everyone.

The hybrid asynchronous

This hybrid approach is primarily **asynchronous training** with a **synchronous twist**. For instance, an instructor designs a week's worth of training modules, and learners go through all of them at their own pace. Meanwhile, learners get targeted help and support at each step, so it's not a problem if they find it hard to complete a particular module.

The hybrid asynchronous model involves synchronous **virtual meetings** that happen periodically. During these conferences, learners ask questions, share learning resources, and make sure they are on the right track.
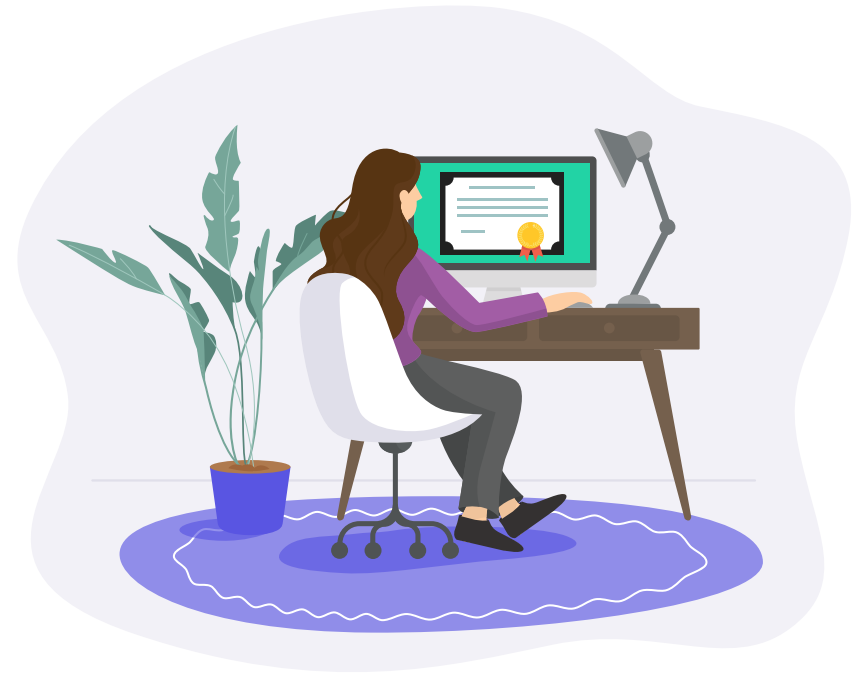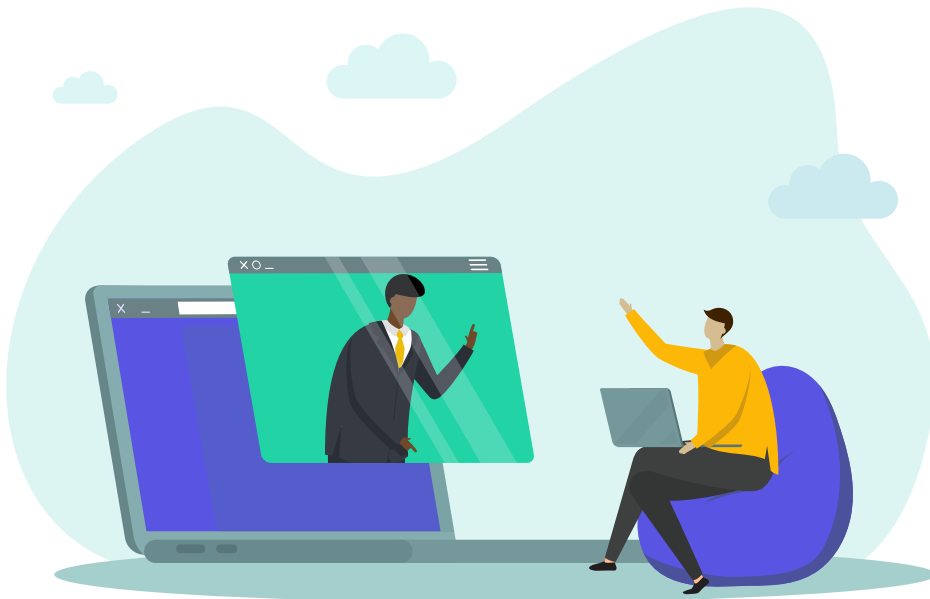
Pure asynchronous

Pure asynchronous training is on the other side of the spectrum. It's a highly **scalable model**, in which instructors put together **self-paced online courses** accessible to everyone in the company or specific employees.

Learners enroll whenever they want, proceed at their own pace, and when they finish the course, they get a certificate of completion. There are **no synchronous interactions** between the learners and the instructors but involves **asynchronous interactions** such as forum discussions.

Exploring five types of asynchronous training

Asynchronous training is the **most flexible option**, which is just what companies need right now. In this case, instructors have many choices when it comes to creating asynchronous courses. Specifically, there are five of them:

1. Linear autoplay

The most straightforward asynchronous style is linear autoplay. It's **similar to a playlist** in which you have a series of training modules in video format, connected in a sequence. Once a module ends, the platform will **automatically play** the next one. Users can hit the pause button, resume watching, and rewatch.

In many cases, linear autoplay is all you need to design asynchronous training. If the topic is straightforward, each video module builds upon the previous one, and learners can establish a few rules of their own in their learning process.
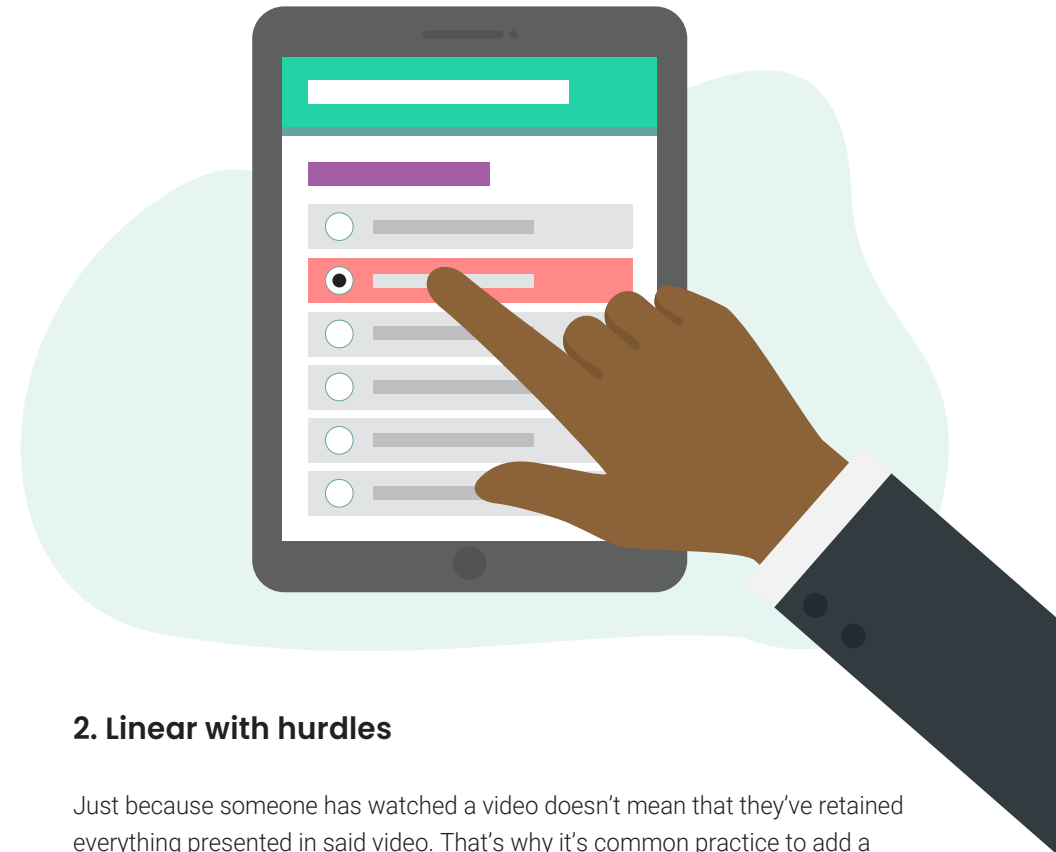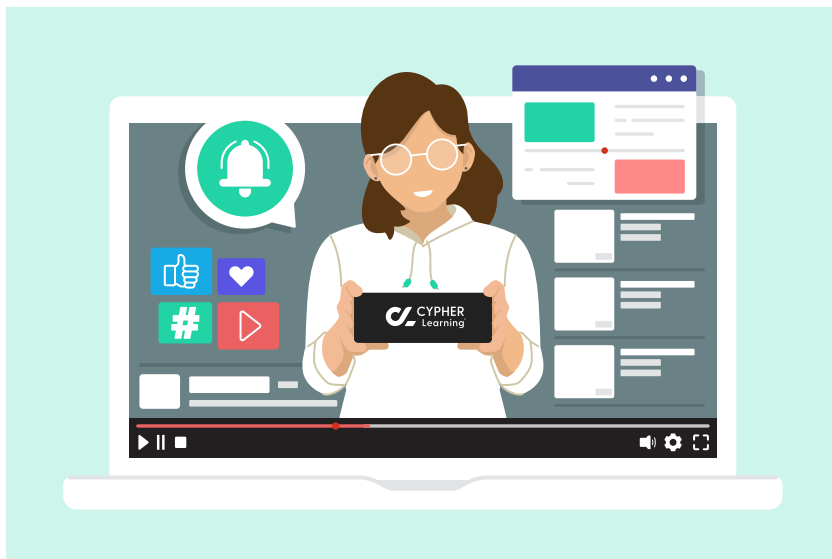
2. Linear with hurdles

Just because someone has watched a video doesn't mean that they've retained everything presented in said video. That's why it's common practice to add a "hurdle" such as a **short quiz** after every two or three video modules. Users still decide **when to learn** and take as much time as necessary to go through the training content.

Each hurdle acts as a **learning break** to help learners concentrate better, as well as a way to make sure they've mastered the concepts before moving on. If they don't understand something, they must take action if they want to progress.

3. Random access

The order in which learners take each module is irrelevant. What matters most is for them to learn and pass the final quiz. That's called random access. Sometimes people already master part of the training materials, or they simply are **more interested in some modules** over others.

A learner doesn't have to do module A followed by module B — they can do A, and then D, and then B, and then F. Each module can end with a quiz, but it doesn't affect the user's ability to **skip to another module**.

4. Static branching

The more **agency learners have** over their learning process, the more involved they become. In an online course, **branches** offer more choices. For example, it can start with an introduction and expand into three components: Branch A has three modules, Branch B has four, while Branch C only two. The learner decides which one to start with, which one they'll take on next, and so on, but they **can't jump from one branch to another** without finishing a quiz, nor can they finish the course without completing all of them.

Everyone will ultimately **take the same modules**. The only difference is that learners take a curated pathway and have the freedom to choose which route to take first.

5. Dynamic branching

Dynamic branching is the most sophisticated type as it's a more **personalized, adaptive way** of doing things. Compared to static branching, learners have **real options** for completing the course. For example, they can choose between a case study or a simulation. The course ends when they finish the chosen pathway, and they don't have to go through other paths.

If learners prove to know the material very well, then the system might show **more advanced modules**. If they're not doing well, it might display the remedial modules first. In other words, **trainees have their own circuit** through that course based on their performance and personal learning needs.
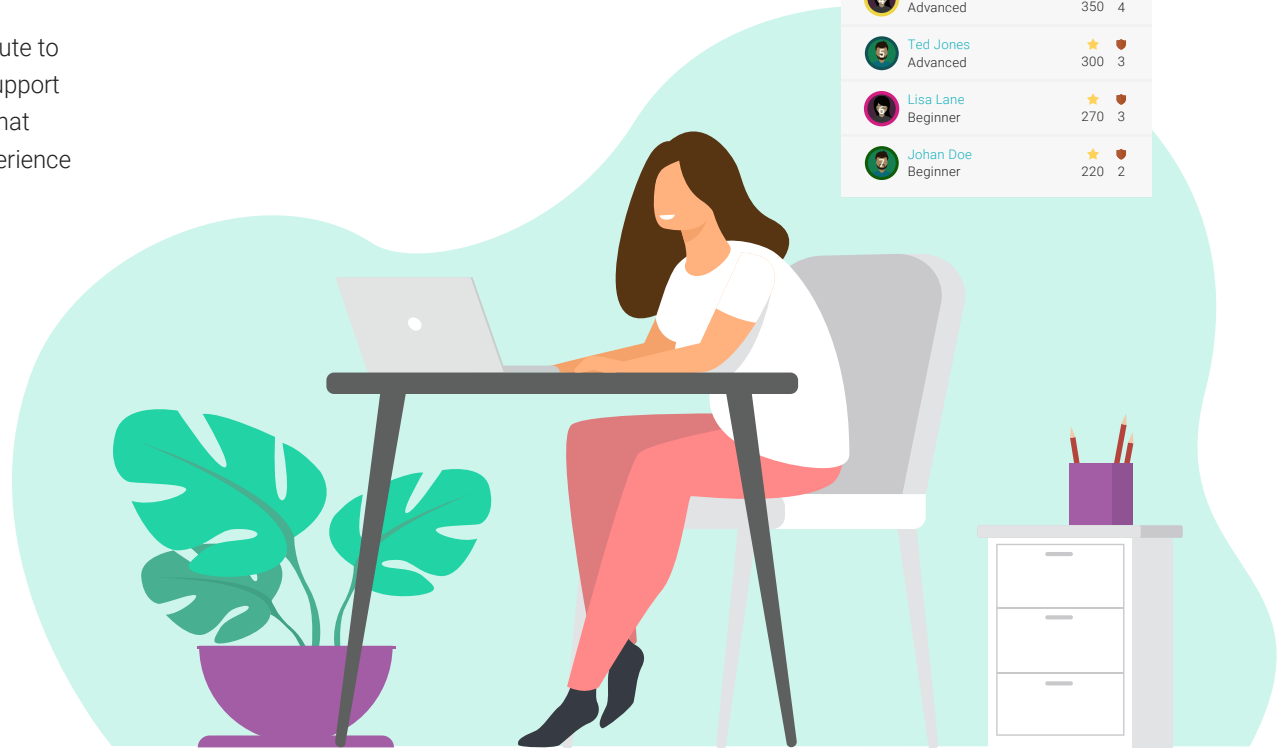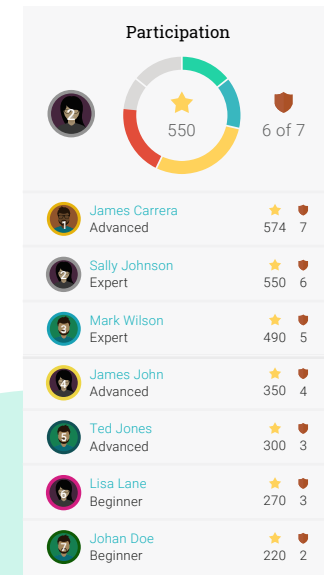
Techniques for designing asynchronous training

The basis of creating an **asynchronous learning experience** is **automation**. Automation simplifies the process by triggering rules throughout your platform as learners go through the course. Instructional designers combine it with **three other techniques** to create personalized training:

Gamification

The instructor creates **games based on learning goals** and awards points and badges for learning achievements.

What's more, leaderboards and multi-player/learner activities contribute to **forming a community**. Some learning management systems even support **team games** so that you can organize learners into different teams that compete against each other. You can create a gamified learning experience with just a couple of clicks.

Participation

	★ 550	🛡 6 of 7

		★	🛡
James Carrera	Advanced	574	7
Sally Johnson	Expert	550	6
Mark Wilson	Expert	490	5
James John	Advanced	350	4
Ted Jones	Advanced	300	3
Lisa Lane	Beginner	270	3
Johan Doe	Beginner	220	2

Adaptive learning

The adaptive learning feature makes it possible to **dynamically hide or show training modules** based on a learner's progress. Creating these dynamic pathways is easy. For example, when you build a course, you can **set automatic rules** that only show the modules they need to access to improve in a particular area.

Similarly, the system shows advanced modules to users who have specific certificates. Those who have reached a more advanced mastery level see more complex learning modules.
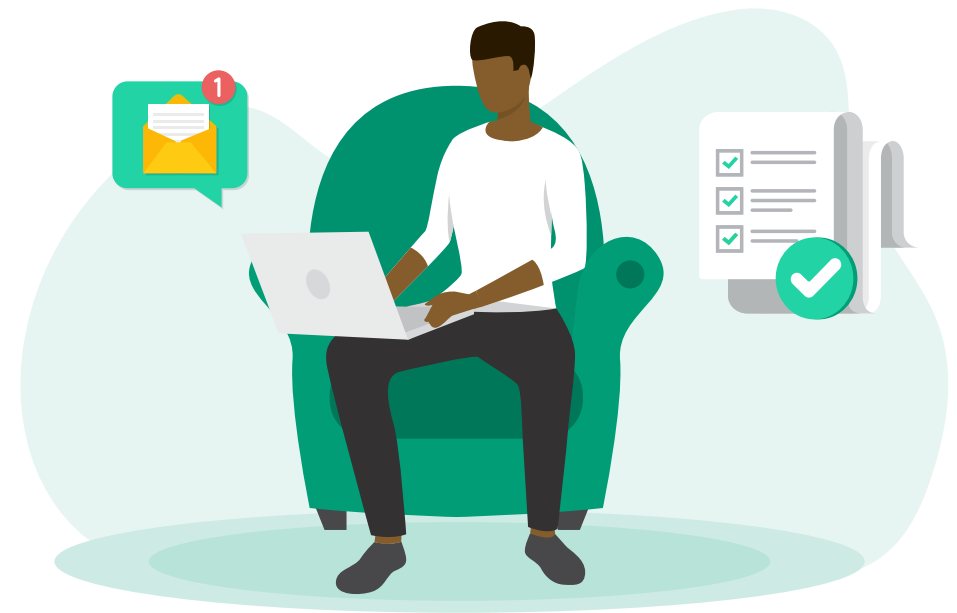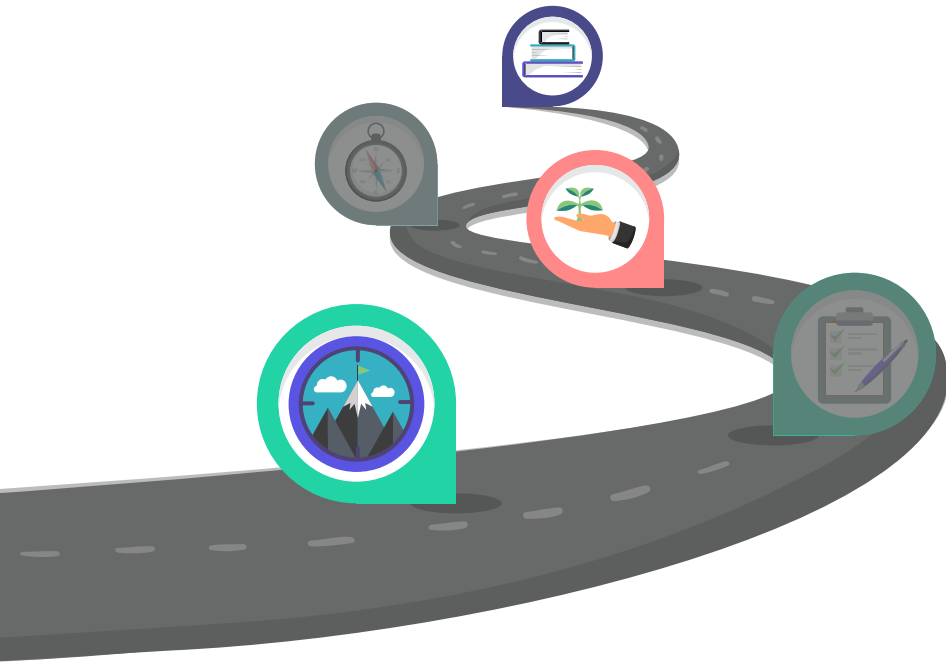
Mastery-based rules

Through competency-based learning, a learner moves on to more advanced training modules only if they've proved that they've **mastered previous modules**. Learning materials such as quizzes are associated with the competencies that they evaluate so that it's easy for an instructor to have a **learning performance overview**.

For instance, if somebody falls behind for more than X number of days on a particular competency, the system **sends them a suggestion** to help them get back on track. If you want to have a one-on-one discussion with learners that progress more slowly, you can set up an **automated notification** that alerts you when a conversation is needed.

Conclusion

Remote workforces could very well become the new normal. But there's one thing that will never change: employees will always **need to learn and become better at what they do**. Business success depends on it.

Trainers and instructional designers can step up their game and create the best learning experiences through **asynchronous training**. Tools such as **learning management systems** make it possible to develop and deliver asynchronous courses, just the way you need them.

CYPHER Learning is a world-class, award-winning learning management system (LMS) for businesses. The platform is known for delivering a great user experience while incorporating all the essential tools companies need to support efficient training and learning.

CYPHER Learning helps companies around the world manage all training activities, such as creating and delivering training content, evaluating employee performance, training clients and partners, and selling online courses on a large scale.

www.cypherlearning.com