



onTrain

Online Training, the treasure within

A. Online Training

3. New role of the **trainer**

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Let's start



The role of trainers changes in online learning environments: they give up their position as omniscient knowledge mediators and take on moderation and counselling activities instead¹. This change has been brought about, by digitalisation and thus by the use of new technological tools and related methods. Due to these technological innovations, training must be rethought and also trainers' role.

What am I learning here and why?

You get to know more about the different roles of an online trainer and the tasks associated with teaching online. An online trainer have to keep the different requirements of the learners in mind when designing, creating and implementing online courses.

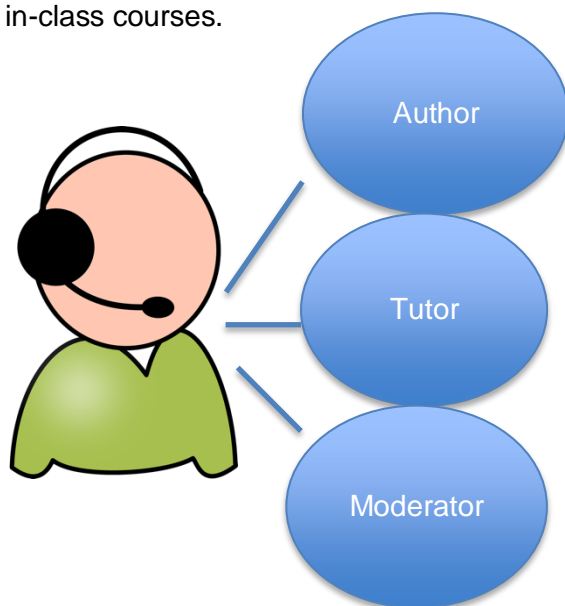
What content will I find here?

Learners are able to understand that online knowledge transfer is different from that in a normal classroom. As an online trainer, it is the job to fulfil various roles in order to provide optimal guidance and support for online learners: as an author, as a tutor, as a moderator. At the end you will know about all of these roles and also the tasks, which must be fulfilled.

New role of the trainer

Different roles/people make the whole E-Learning experience possible, so we would like to talk about them on the next few pages. These people have different tasks to fulfill than they do in in-class courses.

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¹ Cf. Graf, P./Motamedi, S. (2001): Formen der Weiterbildung, IN: Seminare 2001, pp. 137-164.; hier: S.154 quoted from Lindecke, Ch.; Beer, D. (2003): Vom dozieren zum beraten – veränderte Rollen im Lernprozess der betrieblichen Weiterbildung.

² **support, help, avatar, speakers (Person with headset)** | OpenClipart-Vectors | CC0-License;
<https://www.needpix.com/photo/89006/support-help-avatar-headset-speakers-mic-microphone-broadcast-radio> (free picture);
 pixabay.com.

The author

Coming up with ideas, planning learning processes, thinking of concepts, writing scripts, producing multimedia content, pondering on exercises, making evaluations ... E-authors have many and varied tasks. Their job is to convey knowledge. To be able to do that, they need to know their way around the topic, have a good understanding of the technical aspects and be didactically adept. At the same time, their job ends once the course starts. They are the background crew in an E-learning scenario – not directly visible to the learner. Fulfilling all of these tasks is a lot for one person. That's why there is often more than one author, especially in bigger companies. One person has the knowledge, the other is in charge of graphics and a third one takes care of animation and video. In the end everything is combined, some finishing touches and everything coordinates. You as online-trainer are responsible for everything. You'll require creativity, feeling for language, an eye for graphics and, of course, knowledge of didactics. You'll know how to plan and execute all these components accordingly. In addition all decisions are yours to make, for example which elements you want to use and which not, how extensive your learning module is going to be or if interactivity is important to you.



Tip: Share your thoughts and ideas on your learning module with the other participants. The feedback from the others could be vital and helpful in improving the quality.

Furthermore, it might be interesting to see what the others do with the task at hand. Maybe you'll gain some inspiration³.

The tutor

Tutors can be a big help in E-learning scenarios, improve the results (this is scientifically proven!) and heighten the acceptance of the offer. The happiness of the learner depends on him- or herself, as well as the assistance. The reason is logical: in an E-learning course the participant on his own and needs discipline, motivation and the ability to learn by themselves. Simply providing learning materials is not enough. Being a competent and pleasant assistance can be like magic.

³ Cf. GrandExpertS Learning Unit 1 (author: Anne-Marie Lipphardt, ILI-FAU: trainer as author).

The benefits of a tutor are:	The participants have a better understanding of the contents and can therefore improve their results.
	The participants feel included and are motivated to pose questions and tips of their own in the forum.
	The dynamic of the group and the motivation of everyone is improved.
	The learning environment improves.

What is tutoring all about and what is the job of a tutor? Are there limits to tutoring online?

Tutors are at the interface between author and participant. They are like training consultants, that don't convey information or meddle with the individual learning process. Their job is to aid the learner with organisational problems, ones concerning social interaction too. They help with doubts and problems concerning the learning process as well as finding solutions for those problems. Contrary to tutoring in an in-class situation, online tutors communicate with their subjects via text messages.

The most important quality of a tutor is empathy. Good tutors can empathize with the participants situation and take time for them. They react in a friendly and timely manner on questions on (for example) a forum. In addition to empathy, they should have an expertise in the subject that is taught, so they can answer on the topics correctly. Sometimes participants ask them about organizational things (e.g. how long they can access the course and how to log into the learning platform), too.



Tips: The Australian educationalist Gilly Salmon, who has written a lot on E-learning, considers the following three tasks as especially important in E-tutoring:

- **Motivation and Activation:**
 - Once the course begins, introduce yourself in the forum and ask the other participants to introduce themselves too and write about why they are taking part in your course. Reply frequently and welcome everyone to the course.
 - Inform the participant before an activity and write what the aim of the exercise is.
 - Motivate the participants to take actively part in the forum discussion. This primarily concerns people who are a bit introverted and passive. Motivation could liven them up a lot!
 - If you as a tutor decide not to navigate discussions in the forum, still keep an eye on the entries and step in when it is misused in any way (name-calling etc.).
- **Summaries and feedback:**
 - Regularly summarize the most important aspects of thread (a topic discussed in a forum) and maybe add further points. Further information on the topics, links and correlating the information is appreciated.

- To highlight certain opinions you can cite them. This way you can really go into detail on a certain point. Talk directly to the person, name them and strengthen their opinion.
- **Conclusion:**
 - Thank everyone for their participation at the end of every discussion/activity and for their interesting entries and examples. You may personally reflect and link to further information.

Example



A participant of your course is annoyed and complains to you in the forum. Such a situation is not unusual in E-learning, because many participants are overwhelmed by the task of organizing their time to learn and study.

“Dear tutor,

this course is not at all like I expected. I've been having problems from the get go. First I had problems reading my mails, because my password was not accepted. Then, after I resolved this issue, I wanted to log into the learning platform and then all hell broke loose. Where to click? How to actually log in? In addition I can't find any of the information I was promised. Everything is so confusing and I feel like there is no help at all. Next time you offer a course think about preparing possible participants better. I could have invested the time I spent on this on something more fun.

Kind regards”.

How would you react to this mail? How to respond? Write your idea down and send it via email to your tutor or write it in the course forum, so that the trainer or all learners can read your response and discuss this issue with you.

As you can probably tell by now, the role of a tutor is complex and very important. Every year the Institute of Innovation in Learning at the FAU offers training for tutors. If you are interested in taking part in the training, write to info@lernhaus.net⁴.

The moderator



E-moderation is the target- or curriculum-oriented control and management of communication and the exchange of learning and working groups.

The already high complexity of group-based learning is often further reinforced by the special features of computer-mediated communication. To structure the common learning process the use of E-Moderators is therefore an obvious option – and another new role, which the online-trainer has to fulfill.

⁴ Cf. GrandExpertS Learning Unit 1 (author: Anne-Marie Lipphardt, ILI-FAU): trainer as tutor.

These fulfil a number of tasks which can be assigned to the ideal-typical care areas of content, organisation, technology and learning climate, but which, depending on the learning scenario, must of course be completed context-specifically. Especially the learning climate, i.e. the psychosocial support and motivation of the learners, is important for the success of online group-based learning scenarios.

Many moderation models, including proposals for e-moderation processes, deliberately refer to group-dynamic process models (see Tuckman's stages of group development, 1965): In the forming phase the group members get to know each other, the storming phase is characterized by subliminal conflicts due to the self-portrayal of the (new) team members and the formation of cliques. In the following phase, rules and norms are clarified (norming), so that finally performing becomes possible and the cooperation and goal-oriented action of the community is in the foreground. Finally, a community dissolves again (adjourning). E-moderation should now consciously support and optimize these group processes⁵.

How can I find my role and organise myself?

Before you complete this Learning chapter, we want to give you some notes on how to act in an online-training and for your own learning module. Add your own thoughts down below:

- What is the topic of your course? How is it different from other materials on this topic?
- For whom are you writing? What do you want to help you target audience to achieve?
- What is the basic knowledge the participants ought to have?
- How much time and resources are you going to spend in realizing it?
- Is there anybody who can help you or are you going to create the contents on your own?
- Are there any materials you can use?
- What do you want to do with the finished course?
- Do you want to tutor the course or be a contact person in any other way?
- Are there people in your environment who you can ask for help? Who could that be? Of course, it is always great to have somebody who tells you his or her honest but fair opinion.



The need of a trainer that facilitates learning, rather than just lectures, that gives participants the set of tools they require to make their own individual learning outside of the classroom, requires the teacher to master digital tools and skills.

Exercises



As in face-to-face courses, online learning arrangements can also involve learners having different learning speeds or their own way of learning. This is often obvious relatively quickly when individual learners are either unable to keep up with the

⁵ Cf. Kommunikation und Moderation – Internetgestützte Kommunikation zur Lernunterstützung; Ebner, M.; Schön, S.; Bäuml-Westebbe, G.; Buchem, I.; Lehr, Ch.; Egloffstein, M.; CC BY-SA L3T; <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/de/>; <http://l3t.eu>; Verändert von T. Suttner

pace of the course or are already ahead of the group due to their good previous knowledge.

Your role as a trainer and also as a future online trainer is to talk to these individuals and propose a solution so that the learning group itself does not suffer. Below are two scenarios you may encounter during an (online) training session. Read the examples and consider how you would react and act in each situation. Always keep in mind to remain objective and constructive and above all to maintain netiquette!

Exercise 1: Dealing with tricky situations (feedback) I



⁶ - **Scenario 1:**

After five lessons you can clearly see that Ms. Smith, one of your participants, is not able to keep up with the rest of the group. Moreover, the intense attention that you need to dedicate her slows down the learning progress of the others. In your organization, there exists another course with the same topic for beginners. The instructor is willing to take Ms. Smith. Now your task as a tutor is to discuss this situation with Ms. Smith. It is important to you that Ms. Smith doesn't give up the computer subject, but at the same time sees the benefits of switching to the beginners course as an opportunity. How do you make this conversation?

Read this example and think about how you can explain to Ms. Smith why it would be better for you and the learning group to change course. Think about it:

1. Have you ever had a similar situation in classroom sessions?
2. How did you deal with it?
3. How did your counterpart react?

Exercise 2: Dealing with tricky situations (feedback) II



⁷ - **Scenario 2:**

Mr. Meyer already knows the computer and Internet quite well, but he has decided to attend another course in your organization on computer topics. This is a well-based decision, as his knowledge is huge but unstructured. During the lessons, Mr. Meyer shows to the others his knowledge, uses computer terminology which the others are not familiar with, and dominates the discussions within the group. Within the group, disquiet rises. Think about it:

1. How do you deal with the situation?

⁶ cf. EHLSSA Learning Unit 3: Communication (author: Anne-Marie Lipphardt, ILI-FAU): feedback

⁷ (cf. EHLSSA Learning Unit 3: Communication (author: Anne-Marie Lipphardt, ILI-FAU): feedback

2. How would you formulate feedback so that Mr. Meyer does not feel embarrassed but clearly perceives the message?

Please discuss in the forum this example formulation a possible answer and share with the other learners how you would deal with this scenario. This helps you to exercise the formulation of feedback.



This chapter is related to learning theories and types of learning. Please read for this chapter 4 "**New role of the learner**".

Summary



Until now the teacher was always the head of the frontal teaching and gave all instructions, he becomes more and more the learning process companion. He is purely there to support the learning processes, which he triggers with his impulse lectures, approaches and discussions and steers the learner in a certain direction. In this chapter you have learnt that the role of the trainer has changed through the digitalization and usage of digital devices and tools in the education. You know about the different specifics of the different roles of the trainer: author, tutor, moderator. Furthermore you know about the importance of the development of digital skills as a teacher and are able to use it in an online learning environment.

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Further

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E-Book

Trainer as a moderator

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Exercises

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