

6: CONTENT

Establish the content of the lesson and organize the ideas in a way that can be effectively taught.

THE
LESSON
DESIGN
TOOLKIT

What are the most important concepts and skills?

What ideas take multiple days to cover?

What might the title of the lesson be?

What's the main point/ takeaway of this session?

EXPLORE & DEFINE

When completing a large task, designers often describe *what* will be done before determining *how* it will be done. By focusing on one part at a time, more alternatives can be explored and the connections between the parts better understood.

Explore the concepts and ideas that may be included in this lesson. Do not organize the content yet, as this distracts from deciding what content should be included.

- What's the most conventional set of content used to teach this lesson? What might the opposite be?
- What's not included in the lesson? What belongs in a different lesson?
- What content might help students achieve the learning objectives? What content is not relevant to those objectives?
- What are some sources to draw from? Do they suggest a set of content for this lesson? What's missing?

What are the main ideas to be covered? Write each one on a sticky note and set aside in no particular order.



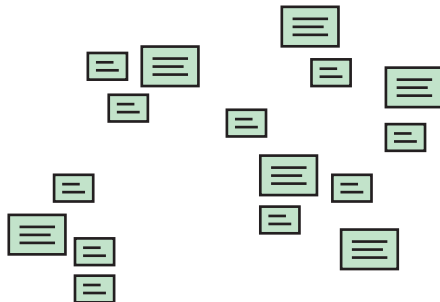
PROTOTYPE

With the main ideas identified, explore different ways that these concepts can relate to each other. Develop one viable plan that can be learned from and reacted to, informing future improvements.

Take the main points and group them based on topic, with no particular attention to their presentation order.

- Is there a natural grouping to your content? Chronological order? Logical relationships? Sequential skill development?
- Do some elements need to come before others? Do some ideas build upon each other?
- What might these groups be called? Give them titles.

Add smaller parts of the content on more sticky notes and arrange them next to the main points.



ALTERNATIVE GENERATION

There's usually an alternative way of organizing content that can better express some aspect of the concepts within. The most powerful aspect of working on sticky notes is that they can be moved to form new conceptual connections. By creating concept maps, we may discover other ways of explaining the concept.

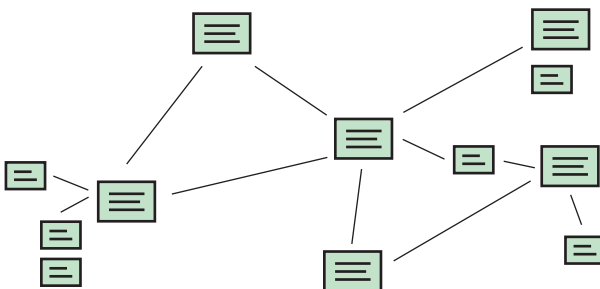
- Can groups be formed? Are there ideas that can go in more than one group? What might those groups be named?
- How do the groups connect conceptually?
- Are there other dimensions by which these ideas can be organized?
For example, instead of grouping ideas by the task they support, try grouping them by complexity or by the idea that connects

Remove all of the notes and find another way to organize the content.

The maps are not precious and should be altered or erased on a whim.

Exploring alternatives is more important than the artifacts generated. If a connection is important, it will reemerge again in a subsequent version.

Beginning with the most central idea, make a concept map that connects the ideas. Using blank paper or a whiteboard, draw lines connecting the groups and rearrange the notes.



ASSESS & CONVERGE

Patterns in organization should begin to emerge. There is likely too much content to effectively cover, and some should be removed.

- What's clear about the content's organization? What's not?
- Why is this content important? What's the most/least important?
- What's an unresolved sticking point?
- What material should be removed? What should be added?
- How will the content engage students and help them meet the learning objectives?

Reduce the notes to a focused set of content, each part having a clear reason for inclusion and a relationship to the lesson goals.



INTEGRATE

Assess the content plan as it relates to the other core components.

- How does covering this material serve the objectives? Does it serve all of the objectives? Are there parts that don't address the objectives?
- How does this content prepare students for the assessment activities?
- How does the content inform the activities? Is this content possible to teach in the given time?
- What's the lesson about? Why does it matter? How has its purpose changed as your understanding has grown?

Revisit the previous workbooks before continuing.

ITERATE

Add, remove, and rearrange the sticky notes until the content serves the other three core components. Erase the current content and start over to find more alternatives.

Resist the urge to organize the content on a timeline—This step comes in the next workbook.

Prototype an informal introduction and conclusion. Without planning for activities or getting into details, write a few points that explain what content will be covered in the lesson.

In this lesson, we will cover the following ideas and concepts:

1.

2.

3.

4.

