WINNING STRATEGIES

for Setting Up a
Blended Training Program

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INTRODUCTION

Blended training is an approach that combines distance training with classroom training. This approach is becoming increasingly popular and makes it possible to balance out learning by dividing it in two, so that the distance component makes learners more independent and the classroom component allows learners to strengthen their knowledge base by putting it into practice.

The e-channels have adapted this resource in order to support the English-speaking adult education centres in setting up and managing a blended training program, and in developing strategies to support those learners who take the training.

This resource combines a self-assessment and checklists with recommendations. It covers a variety of subjects, including:

> Registration protocol,

> Technological equipment, software and skills needed to access the training,

> Recommended layout for computer rooms,

> Learner support,

> Learner commitment,

> Trainer responsibilities,

> etc.

We sincerely hope this resource will support you in establishing a blended training program.

SOME ADVANTAGES OF BLENDED TRAINING

Blended training combines "face-to-face learning at an on-site program and online learning through an e-Channel program. The online portion may be done independently by the learner at an off-site location such as their home or a library, or it may be done at the on-site program, either independently or with support from an on-site practitioner."[1]

- ✓ Requires little or no course preparation for the centre's practitioner.
- ✓ Increases targets.
- ✓ Decreases administrative work (marking work, certificates to be produced, etc.).
- ✓ Enhances (for free) the course offerings available to clients.
- ✓ Frees up the trainer to spend time with a learner, safe in the knowledge that the others are busy following their online courses (independent courses).
- ✓ Provides access to a wider range of resources.
- ✓ Give learners the chance to work with other trainers and thereby discover new teaching styles.
- ✓ Proposes timeslots that might better correspond to learners' needs.
- ✓ Allows learners and trainers to develop their computer skills and be more comfortable working in an increasingly digital world.
- ✓ Offers a more diverse learning experience.

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[1] Cindy Davidson et al., *An Information and Referral Guide for Ontario's Online e-Channel Program*, p. 33, [online]. [**https://www.learninghub.ca/sites/default/files/I%26R%20Guide%20English%20Revised%20Nov%2C%202016.pdf**] (Consulted September 19, 2018).

IS THE LEARNER EQUIPPED TO TAKE ONLINE TRAINING COURSES?

This section has been developed as a self-assessment and is divided into five categories. It's a guide for you and the learner and trainer to see whether the learner has in hand all the elements needed to ensure their training is successful.

If the answer to the question is "no," read the proposed solutions in the right-hand column. If the answer is "yes," move on to the next question.

QUESTION	ANSWER	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
Commitment		
1. Has the learner taken online classes in the past?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Determine whether the learner is suited to online training based on their past learning experience, motivation and current needs. **OR** Present the advantages of distance learning. As required, motivate the person to register using testimonials from other learners at your centre, or from other centres, who have taken online courses.
2. Is the learner ready to commit between one and three hours each week, depending on the desired course?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Clarify the importance of regular attendance at courses to ensure that learning progresses.

QUESTION	ANSWER	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
Technological Equipment		
3. Does the learner have a computer (not just a smart phone or a tablet)?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Suggest that the learner follow the online training course on-site from your centre or from an access point, such as a Contact Nord centre or a library. **OR** Provide a list of stores where the person can purchase a computer. **OR** Check with RCT (www.rcto.ca) to see whether the learner is eligible for a free computer. **OR** Check with the Ministry to see whether the learner can obtain a grant to pay for the computer. **OR** Lend the learner a computer from the Centre for the duration of their training. (Consult the "Model Loan Agreement" sheet for an example of a contract.)
4. Is the computer equipped with speakers and a built-in microphone, or does the learner own a headset with a built-in microphone?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Suggest that the learner follow the online training course on-site at your centre or from an access point, such as a Contact Nord centre or a library. **OR** Provide a list of stores where the person could purchase a headset or speakers. **OR** Lend the learner a headset or speakers from the Centre for the duration of their training. (Consult the "Model Loan Agreement" sheet for an example of a contract.)

QUESTION	ANSWER	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
5. Does the learner have access to high-speed Internet?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Provide a list of Internet service providers, such as: Bell, Rogers, Shaw, Vidéotron, Explornet, Eastlink, etc. **OR** Suggest that the learner follow the training course on-site at the centre or elsewhere (e.g. library, Contact Nord centre) using their portable computer. **OR** Check with the Ministry to see whether the learner could obtain a grant to pay for Internet (e.g. grant for low-income individuals).
Software		
6. Does the learner's computer have at least two of the following browsers installed: Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari?	☐ Yes ☐ No	If possible, help the learner install a browser on their computer or provide a printed instruction sheet from the Internet.
7. If the learner wants to take a course that requires certain software, is that software already installed on their computer? For example, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.	☐ Yes ☐ No	Suggest that the learner follow the online training course on-site at your centre or from an access point, such as a Contact Nord centre or a library. **OR** Provide a list of both physical and virtual stores where the person could purchase the software. If possible, provide a cost estimate. **OR** If the Centre has any extra licences, provide the learner with one. **OR** Suggest that the learner hire a technician, as required, to install any software.

QUESTION	ANSWER	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
8. Does the learner's computer have up-to-date virus protection?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Present the advantages of having antivirus software. Distribute the "List of Antivirus Software" sheet. If possible, help the learner install antivirus software on their computer.
Computer Skills		
9. Does the learner have the following computer skills: • **Turning the computer on and off;** • **Effectively manipulating the mouse;** • **Using the keyboard?**	☐ Yes ☐ No	Recommend that the learner take a basic computer course at your centre.
10. Does the learner know how to work with two or more software programs at a time?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Recommend that the learner take a basic computer course at your centre.
11. Does the learner have an email address?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Help the learner create a Gmail (or other system) account.
12. Does the learner know how to: • **Open an email message and respond;** • **Add an attachment to an email message;** • **Download an attachment from an email message?**	☐ Yes ☐ No	Recommend that the learner take an email course at your centre.
13. Does the learner know how to access their email account in the training room, if that is where they will take the course?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Teach the learner how to access emails elsewhere than at home.
14. Does the learner know how to create, delete and save a file?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Recommend that the learner take a basic computer course at your centre.

QUESTION	ANSWER	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
Using Learning Platforms		
15. Has the learner installed the learning platform before the first course? e.g., Adobe Connect	☐ Yes ☐ No	Provide the learner with step-by-step instructions for accessing the course. **OR** If possible, help the learner install the learning platform.
16. Does the learner know how to properly use the course learning platform?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Provide the learner with step-by-step instructions for the learning platform.
17. Has the learner stored the connection information and resources provided in a safe place to help with the training?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Keep the learner's connection information on hand so that it can be provided as needed. Make photocopies of any resources that might help the learner with their training.
18. Does the learner know how to view a recorded course?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Provide the learner with step-by-step instructions for viewing a recorded course.

PREPARING FOR BLENDED TRAINING

As an example, the following checklist sets out the basic equipment needed for blended training and presents the F@D program's blended training protocol. The following section includes a list of best practices for your consultation.

Before Establishing a Partnership

☐ Obtain the following obligatory computer equipment:
- » computers
- » mouse
- » keyboards
- » speakers
- » headsets
- » Internet
- » Learning platform, e.g. Adobe Connect
- » Browsers (two from the following list: Chrome, Firefox, Edge, Safari)
- » Microsoft Office (most updated version, if possible)

☐ Obtain the following optional computer equipment:
- » Smart TV
- » Interactive white board (IWB)
- » USB stick (for saving documents, as needed)
- » projector
- » Web camera

Before Training Starts

☐ Contact the learner to check on their computer equipment. Register learners in the program.

☐ Choose the milestone task together with the partner.

☐ Register learners in the Employment Ontario Information System - Case Management System (EOIS-CaMS).

☐ Add online training to the learner's learning plan.

- [ ] Prepare the following documents:
    - » Connection information for learners
    - » Step-by-step instructions
    - » Other resources that might help the learner
- [ ] Verify that the learning platform for online courses is properly installed on the workstations.
- [ ] Make sure any barriers that might block access to platforms, such as firewalls and antivirus software, have been eliminated. Test the learning platform.
- [ ] Confirm the course with the person responsible or the trainer, as required.
- [ ] **Before each online course**, test the platform and adjust the volume.
- [ ] Read the course content.
- [ ] As required, inform a staff member if a course needs to be cancelled (e.g. bad weather conditions).

During the Training

- [ ] Offer continuous support during the online courses.
- [ ] Communicate any concerns (technical, pacing of instruction, pace of learning, etc.) to the trainer as they arise.
- [ ] Encourage learners to ask their trainer any questions they may have.
- [ ] Ensure that learners do the homework and the assignments.
- [ ] Ensure that any learners who are absent view the recorded course (online courses).
- [ ] Provide the trainer with feedback.
- [ ] Administer the milestone task, according to the agreement with the trainer.
    - » As required, send the milestone task results to the trainer.
- [ ] Encourage learners to complete the satisfaction survey.
- [ ] Talk about any follow-up with the learners.

After the Training

- [ ] Ensure that learners complete the satisfaction survey.
- [ ] Provide the trainer with feedback.
- [ ] Recommend other courses to the learners.
- [ ] Carry out the necessary data entry in the EOIS-CaMS.

BEST PRACTICES FOR ONLINE COURSES

Preparation

> Establish break periods beforehand with the trainer, if the learners are used to taking breaks at specific times.

> Read the course content before the first session to ensure you know the material, and to be able to help the learners as required.

> Connect to the learning platform 30 minutes before the session to ensure there are no Internet connection issues.

> Encourage learners to arrive 15 minutes early to the course, to ensure they have enough time to connect and that the course starts at the scheduled time.

> Conduct a few test sessions beforehand to ensure that any technical problems are resolved.

> Obtain access to a high-speed Internet connection with the highest bandwidth possible for both downloading and uploading speeds.

>> ***It's bandwidth that impacts most on the quality of online courses.***
It represents the quantity of information being received or sent each second. We recommend that you call your Internet service provider to verify the receive/send rate of your plan in megabits per second (Mb/s), and then follow the recommendations above as required.

File Management

> Provide the learner with a step-by-step procedure for accessing email from a public computer, so that they can gain access to the documents being sent by the trainer.

> Keep a list of passwords and support documents that can be made available to learners at all times.

Animation

> Stay calm in the face of technical difficulties.

> Develop a contingency lesson in case there are major technological issues that lead to a session being cancelled.

> Cooperate with the trainer to form an effective team.

> Remind learners that they should present their questions to the course trainer, and not the centre trainer.

> Provide the tools and support that learners need to develop their independence.

Classroom Setup

> Some centres accept the practice of projecting the course on an interactive white board.
  » If you choose to use this method, it's imperative that each learner be connected to the course on a computer or laptop in order to do the exercises and interact with the trainer.

> Use a webcamera pointed outwards towards the classroom so that the trainer of the online session can see the learners. The learners' cameras can be turned off to save bandwidth, especially if there are technical difficulties with the training.

> Turn on one microphone (that of the centre's trainer, for example) during the sessions to allow the trainer of the online course to hear what is happening in the classroom. This will make the trainer aware of any potential challenges (conversations between learners while he or she is teaching, technical issues, etc.). This also avoids background noise issues caused by having several microphones turned on at the same time.
  » Verify that the activated microphone is not part of the device projecting the sound (IWB or laptop used without a headset), because this will create interference or an echo.

FORM I

Model Loan Agreement[2]

Learner's copy

First and last name: _____

Laptop Computer Loan
ID: _____
Equipment Description: > Lenovo laptop with 15.6 inch HD screen   > Power supply (removable 6-cell lithium battery)
I accept responsibility for the borrowed equipment, and I acknowledge having read and accepted the loan conditions identified on the back of this form.   I also acknowledge that my signature, affixed at the time of my first loan, will be valid for all subsequent loans that I make in one of the Centre's libraries.   Signed in _____ on the _____ day of _____.

Loan clerk	**Learner borrowing the equipment**
X _____ Printed first and last name	X _____ Printed first and last name
X _____ Signature	X _____ Signature

POLICY FOR LENDING LAPTOP COMPUTERS

ARTICLE 1: USER DEFINITION
1.1   Any learner registered at the _____ Centre. This person is referred to as the *user* in this document.

ARTICLE 2: LOAN CONDITIONS
2.1   The user accepts to use the loaned laptop computer in accordance with the centre's policies and regulations.

2.2   The laptop computer and accessories are loaned subject to management approval.

2.3   The user must read the loan conditions and sign the loan form.

2.4   The length of the loan period is _____ .

       The computer and accessories must be returned on _____ .

2.5   The user must keep the equipment in their possession for the entire loan period.

2.6   The loan does not renew automatically. However, a second consecutive loan can be arranged once the computer and accessories have been returned, based on device availability.

2.7   Laptop computers cannot be reserved. First come; first served.

2.8   The computer and accessories must be returned to same location from which they were loaned. Whether it be during or after office hours, it is strictly forbidden to leave the equipment in a training classroom, at the Centre's door, in a trainer's office, etc. In addition to paying a fine (as defined in article 3.1), the learner's borrowing privileges may be suspended for an undetermined period if the equipment is deposited in any location other than that indicated by management (see article 3.2).

2.9   The Centre is not responsible for any data lost after that data has been saved on a laptop computer. When the device is returned, any data saved by the user is erased and cannot be recuperated. The user must save their data on a USB stick or send it to their own email address before returning the computer.

2.10   The user must return the loaned laptop computer and accessories in the same state (cleanliness) that they were received and in working order, failing which, the user may be refused a loan for the entire session, or even permanently, based on management's decision.

ARTICLE 3: RESPONSIBILITY IN CASE OF LOSS, THEFT, DISAPPEARANCE, DAMAGE OR DELAY

3.1   The user must advise centre staff if the equipment is lost, stolen or damaged.

3.2   Any user who neglects to inform centre staff quickly about any incident listed in article 3.1 above will have to bear the consequences of that negligence.

3.3   Any user who returns the laptop computer and accessories late will face a fine based on set rates. The fine is calculated on an hourly basis, starting with the base rate of $_____ for the first day overdue. An amount of $_____ for every extra day is then added. The fine continues to accumulate when the centre is closed. The maximum fine is $ _____. After _____ days, any unreturned equipment will be considered lost, and recovery procedures (see article 4) will be initiated

3.4   Any user in possession of a laptop computer and accessories beyond the lending period, and who has not paid the associated fines, will lose their borrowing privileges. The loss of borrowing privileges may also be applied if equipment is returned to any location other than the one from which it was loaned.

ARTICLE 4: RECOVERY OF AMOUNTS DUE

4.1.   In signing the loan form, the user agrees to reimburse the centre for any equipment lost or stolen, based on its replacement value, or to pay repair costs if the equipment has been damaged beyond what is otherwise considered normal use.

4.2   Any amount due (fine, replacement value or repair costs) is payable to the centre in cash, by debit or credit card (Visa and MasterCard), or by money order.

4.3   Any user who neglects or refuses to pay any amount due to the centre cannot request any other loans for as long as the debt goes unpaid.

4.4   Despite the above measures, the centre is free to initiate legal proceedings against any user who refuses to reimburse an amount due to the centre.

ARTICLE 5: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 The centre does not accept any responsibility for inconveniences caused by the loss or damage of a device or for a user's delay in returning the equipment, or for any interruption of the service for whatever reason.

List of Antivirus Software

The following is a non-exhaustive list of antivirus software that offer a free, limited version, or a more comprehensive, paid version.

PRODUCT:	**Norton**
FREE:	Not applicable
PAID - INDIVIDUALS:	https://ca.norton.com/products
PAID - COMMERCIAL:	https://ca.norton.com/small-business

PRODUCT:	**Avast**
FREE:	https://www.avast.com/en-ca/free-antivirus-download#pc
PAID - INDIVIDUALS:	https://www.avast.com/en-ca/premier
PAID - COMMERCIAL:	https://www.avast.com/en-ca/business-antivirus-pro

PRODUCT:	**McAfee**
FREE:	Not applicable
PAID - INDIVIDUALS:	https://www.mcafee.com/consumer/en-ca/store/m0/catalog.html
PAID - COMMERCIAL:	https://www.mcafee.com/consumer/en-ca/store/m0/catalog/msbs_480/mcafee-small-business-security.html

PRODUCT:	**AVG**
FREE:	https://www.avg.com/en-ca/free-antivirus-download#pc
PAID - INDIVIDUALS:	https://www.avg.com/en-ca/ultimate
PAID - COMMERCIAL:	https://www.avg.com/en-ca/business-security

PRODUCT:	**Bitdefender**
FREE:	Not applicable
PAID - INDIVIDUALS:	https://www.bitdefender.com
PAID - COMMERCIAL:	Not applicable

PRODUCT:	**Kaspersky**
FREE:	Not applicable
PAID - INDIVIDUALS:	https://www.kaspersky.ca/antivirus
PAID - COMMERCIAL:	https://www.kaspersky.ca/small-business-security