

How to...

Choose the right authoring tools



There's a huge array of authoring tools out there and, when it comes to finding the right one for you, it can be hard to know where to start. If you choose the wrong one, it won't live up to the promise of delivering rapid e-learning – so here are our five top tips for sourcing the right tool for your needs.

1 Consider the output first

Ask yourself what type of online training components you need to deliver: for instance, will it predominately consist of text or will it be complex, adaptive e-learning; does it require captures, simulations or assessments? Note down the ideal features you need from your authoring tool as this will come in handy when you start your research.

2 Decide between ease of use and creative flexibility

You've got two broad options: a highly formatted tool that offers limited flexibility but requires little or no training time at all for the author, or a tool that offers more creative latitude but requires more time investment for learning how to use the various features and functionalities.

3 Do your research

Before making any decisions, research the vast range of authoring tools on the market. Consider the key features and limitations against your requirements and constraints. Viewing any online demonstrations that are available is a great way to get a feel for what can be achieved with the various tools.

4 Select complementary combinations

One tool won't necessarily provide a best fit solution for the needs of all your training components. So once you've done your research on the features and limitations of the various tools, think about selecting a combination of tools that perform complementary functions. This way you'll equip yourself with a suite of tools tailored to your requirements.

5 Don't forget about accessibility

Most of the tools available on the market use Flash, and often don't conform to W3C accessibility standards. Make sure that you know right from the outset whether accessibility is one of your requirements. If it is, you need to consider how far the various tools meet this requirement and how you might overcome their limitations in this area.