

Online Learning Glossary of Terms

Asynchronous Communication - Non-synchronous, two-way communication in which there is a delay between when a message is sent and when it is actually received. In distance learning, asynchronous communication most often take the form of email (e.g. your professor emails you with feedback on an assignment), voicemail (e.g. you leave a message for your professor on his/her office phone), and discussion boards (e.g. you post a reply to a classmate's question in a threaded class discussion.)

Asynchronous Learning - Any learning event where interaction is delayed over time. This allows learners to participate according to their schedule, and be geographically separate from the instructor. Could be in the form of a correspondence course or e-learning. Interaction can take use various technologies like threaded discussion.

Audio Conferencing - Voice communication delivered through standard telephone lines or Internet-based software sometimes used in distance learning.

Bandwidth - Refers the capacity of a connection to transport digital content. It is usually measured in transfer speed (bits-per-second). Generally speaking, text transfers more quickly and requires less bandwidth than audio or video. Very effective compression can change that somewhat.

Blog - Short for "web log." A blog is an updatable website that is chronologically arranged, and updated at the user's discretion. What makes a blog different than a regular website is the fact that it can be syndicated so that others can subscribe and have the content delivered to a certain place automatically. Weblogs started out as journals and chronologically arranged websites. However, it is common now for blogs to include audio, video, graphics, and text. It is common for blogs to be available as RSS or Atom feeds.

Brick-and-Mortar - An organization, school, or business operating from a physical building or campus.

Broadband - As opposed to the connection speeds and capacity that one can obtain over a phone line with a modem, a broadband connection can accommodate the rapid transfer of large amounts or packets of information. Generally, Internet connections provided by cable or DSL are broadband. Most distance learning courses will recommend that you have a broadband connection.

Browser - Software that allows you to access view Web sites on the Internet from your PC, laptop, or handheld PDA. Examples of browsers include Firefox, Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Opera, and Safari.

Computer Based Training (CBT) - Training or instruction where a computer program provides motivation and feedback in place on a live instructor. CBT can be delivered via CD-ROM, LAN or

Internet. Creation is done by teams of people including instructional designers, and often has high development costs.

Cookies - These are not programs, even though many people think that they have viruses or spyware in them. Instead, cookies consist of information that is sent by the browser to a web-server and back. They are very useful because they store information about the website one has visited and make it easier and faster to load the website the next time one visits. Some learning management systems require cookies in order for the user to log in or have access to certain sites. Other applications, such as shopping carts used in e-commerce also use cookies. Cookies are used to track web-browsing patterns and behaviors. They are also used to monitor a person's activities. For that reason, cookies have been held out as examples of how one's privacy can be violated in the Internet.

DHTML - Acronym for "Dynamic HyperText Markup Language." Dynamic web pages are written in a combination of languages that add interactivity. They allow users to enter data, send it to the server, and to move items. Dynamic web pages often establish two-way communication and allow for customized portal pages where the user behavior is recorded and "remembered" to give the user a customized experience.

Ebook - A book that can be read in a digital format, such as a PDF, using a computer, tablet, or ebook reader.

e-Learning - Any learning that utilizes a network (LAN, WAN or Internet) for delivery, interaction, or facilitation. This would include distributed learning, distance learning (other than pure correspondence), CBT delivered over a network, and WBT. Can be synchronous, asynchronous, instructor-led or computer-based or a combination.

Face-to-Face - Also shortened to "F2F." A term used to describe a "traditional" classroom environment where the instructor and students are not separated by geographic distance or time.

HTML - Abbreviation for "HyperText Markup Language." The programming language used to create web pages in hypertext, which refers to the code used to arrange the text on the page and to create formatting so that the pages appear a certain way on the World Wide Web.

HTTP - Abbreviation for "HyperText Transfer Protocol." An Internet protocol that is used by a web server and a web browser to transfer data (such as text, images, sound, video, and other multimedia files) between them. When you enter a URL in your web browser, this actually sends an HTTP command to the Web server directing it to fetch and transmit the requested web page.

Internet Service Provider - Also shortened to "ISP." A company that provides Internet access to consumers and businesses, usually for a monthly fee. Services include e-mail, the World Wide Web, FTP, newsgroups, etc. Popular ISPs include America Online, Earthlink, CompuServe.

Keyboard Shortcut - Computer keystrokes that, when triggered, complete an action or series of actions within a software program.

Offline - Not having access to the Internet or other computer network.

Online Learning - e-Learning delivered over the Internet (as opposed to a local or wide area network).

Section 508 - The section of the 1998 Rehabilitation Act is a U.S. law that requires that all electronic and information technology procured, used, or developed by the federal government after June 25, 2001, to be accessible to people with disabilities. Affected technology includes hardware such as copiers, fax machines, telephones, and other electronic devices as well as application software and websites.

Streaming Video - Video sent in compressed form over the Internet that you view as it is being received, rather than waiting until for the entire file to be downloaded first. There may be two versions available: a dial-up version is usually a smaller file, with a smaller video screen and a slower frame rate, for 56k dial-up users and a high-speed version, a larger file with higher quality image, is designed for users with faster broadband Internet connections.

Surge Protector - A device designed to maintain a safe voltage level during voltage spikes, such as a lightning strike.

Synchronous Communication - Live, real-time communication. Examples include a conversation at the grocery store, phoning your children to say hello when you're traveling on business, instant messaging or chatting in an AOL chat room.

Synchronous Learning - Any learning event where interaction happens simultaneously in real-time. This requires that learners attend class at its scheduled time. Could be held in a traditional classroom, or delivered via distributed or e-Learning technologies.

System Requirements - The technological conditions required to run a software application. Includes the operating system, programming language, database, hardware configuration, bandwidth, processing power, and so forth.

Threaded Discussion - A common feature of distance learning that allows students to interact with their classmates and instructor. A threaded discussion is a series of messages on a particular topic posted in a discussion forum. A threaded discussion is asynchronous, not fixed in time or space, so students can log on at any time from any Internet-enabled computer to seek clarification for issues they encounter in their coursework, to discuss topics raised in class,

or to initiate new discussions on related topics. A good online discussion has the same effect of group or in-class discussion, in which students build on one another's perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of the materials.

Time Management - Exercising judgment about how to accomplish specific goals and tasks within a specified period

USB Flash Drive - A device designed to store data and information, much in the same way floppy disks were used. The device is also referred to as a "jump drive," or a "thumb drive."

Video Conferencing - Real-time visual and audio communication using a computer, video camera or web camera, and a network, such as the Internet. Examples of video conferencing include an instructor delivering a live lecture from one central point to many different students, all geographically separated, or a meeting between two students collaborating on a group project.

Virtual - Simulated or conceptual, not physical in nature. In distance learning, the term "virtual classroom" refers to the online environment in which students and instructors interact.

Web Based Training (WBT) - Training which is delivered over a network (LAN, WAN or Internet). Can be either Instructor-led or Computer Based. Very similar to e-Learning, but usually implies that the learning is in the professional or corporate level.

Wi-Fi - An abbreviation for "Wireless Fidelity," trademarked by the Wi-Fi Alliance, indicating the presence of a local network to connect to the Internet and other devices.

Whiteboard - The electronic equivalent of a blackboard and chalk on a computer screen that allows multiple, remote users to add text, create drawings or diagrams in a shared electronic workspace that is visible to all participants. Whiteboards are a common feature of distance learning course management software systems because it can be used for online instruction the same way a blackboard is used in a traditional classroom.