



Synchronous e-learning vs. asynchronous e-learning tools and technologies

In today's e-learning environment the type of learning that takes place is generally divided into one of two categories: **synchronous** and **asynchronous**. Both learning strategies have their own pros and cons, and the technique that is right for a student greatly depends upon their method of absorbing the information that is being provided.

What is synchronous learning?

Examples of synchronous e-learning are online chat and videoconferencing. Any learning tool that is in real-time, such as instant messaging that allows students and teachers to ask and answer questions immediately, is synchronous. Rather than learning on their own, students who participate in synchronous learning courses are able to interact with other students and their teachers during the lesson.

The main benefit of synchronous learning is that it enables students to avoid feelings of isolation since they are in communication with others throughout the learning process. However synchronous learning is not as flexible in terms of time as students would have to set aside a specific time slot in order to attend a live teaching session or online course in real-time. So it may not be ideal for those who already have busy schedules.

What is asynchronous learning?

Asynchronous learning on the other hand can be carried out even when the student or teacher is offline. Coursework and communications delivered via web, email and messages posted on community forums are perfect examples of asynchronous e-learning. In these instances, students will typically complete the lessons on their own and merely use the internet as a support tool rather than venturing online solely for interactive classes.

A student is able to follow the curriculum at their own pace without having to worry about scheduling conflicts. This may be a perfect option for users who enjoy taking their time with each lesson plan in the curriculum and would prefer to research topics on their own. However, those who lack the motivation to do the coursework on their own may find that they do not receive significant benefit from asynchronous learning. Asynchronous learning can also lead to feelings of isolation, as there is no real interactive educational environment.

Ideally, effective e-learning courses should include both asynchronous and synchronous learning activities. This allows students and teachers to benefit from the different delivery formats regardless of their schedules or preferred learning methods. This approach provides students with access to immediate help if needed, while still giving them the ability to learn at their own pace.

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