

**101**

Ways to  
Make **Learning**

» *Active*

**Beyond the  
Classroom**

Elaine Biech

WILEY

# Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Introduction: Getting the Most from This Resource](#)

[How This Book Is Organized](#)

[200 Tips to Make Training Active and Learning Successful](#)

[1. 10 Tips for Successfully Implementing a Virtual Learning Platform](#)

[2. 10 Ideas to Create a Prewebinar Checklist](#)

[3. 10 Slides to Organize Your Virtual Learning](#)

[4. 10 Tips for Opening an Interactive Online Training Session](#)

[5. 10 Webinar Warm-Ups](#)

[6. 10 Ways to Engage Virtual Learners](#)

[7. 10 Tips for Using Annotation Tools](#)

[8. 10 Tips for Using Breakout Rooms in a Virtual Classroom](#)

[9. 10 Tips for Using QR Codes in Learning](#)

[10. 10 Polling Tips for Virtual Classrooms](#)

[11. 10 Phrases to Regain Virtual Participants' Attention](#)

[12. 10 Tips for Using Twitter for Ongoing Learning](#)

[13. 10 Tips to Get Started with Games and Gamification](#)

[14. 10 Ways to Use Social Media Tools to Support Learning](#)

- [15. 10 Tips to Be Successful with m-Learning](#)
- [16. 10 Tips for Shooting a Video](#)
- [17. 10 Tips for Virtual Coaching](#)
- [18. 10 Tips for Virtual Teamwork](#)
- [19. 10 Tips for Leaders as Teachers](#)
- [20. 10 Tips and Options for Training in Virtual Reality Environments](#)

## [Online Learning](#)

### [Online Openings](#)

- [1 Picture Me](#)
- [2 You Intro Me; I Intro You](#)
- [3 Quote Me](#)
- [4 Using Prezi to Build Community in the Virtual Classroom](#)
- [5 Instagram Intros](#)

### [Online Closings](#)

- [6 Review, Remember, Relate, Recall](#)
- [7 Make Them Stick](#)
- [8 Choose and Choose Again](#)
- [9 Concept Challenge](#)

### [Online Learning Activities](#)

- [10 Using Analogies](#)
- [11 Virtual Learning by Quadrants](#)
- [12 Incorporate MOOC \(massive open online course\) Design Concepts into Your Online Design](#)
- [13 Small-Group Data Analysis](#)
- [14 Social Media Sharing about Implicit Bias](#)
- [15 Think-Pair-Share for Webinars](#)

### [Online Asynchronous Learning](#)

[16 Creating a Culture Dream Team](#)

[17 Point-Counterpoint](#)

[18 Onboarding New Employees](#)

[Unique Online Situations](#)

[19 Corporate Global Survey](#)

[20 Find It](#)

[21 Facilitating from Afar](#)

[Technology Tactics](#)

[Blended Solutions](#)

[22 Move to the Goal](#)

[23 Do-It-Yourself \(DIY\) Job Aid](#)

[24 The 411](#)

[25 Gear Up Your Brain](#)

[e-Learning Tools](#)

[26 Increase Interaction Using a Whiteboard](#)

[27 Meter Poll](#)

[28 Engaging Course Map for an e-Learning Course](#)

[29 Google Hangout Collaborations](#)

[30 Pinboard Key Learning](#)

[31 Poll for Impact!](#)

[32 Show Me](#)

[m-Learning](#)

[33 Mobile Debates](#)

[34 Survey in Hand](#)

[35 Picture This](#)

[36 Take My Speech Home](#)

[37 Tweet a Learning Needs Assessment](#)

[38 Just-in-Time Reminder](#)

## Social Learning

39 Social Learning Gone Wild Participating in a LinkedIn Group

40 Digital Round Robin

41 Blog-Based Skills Inventory

42 Social Media Opinion Polling

43 The #1 Thing

44 Office Hours

45 Quiz Challenge

## Technology in the Classroom

46 Twitter Engagement

47 QR Code Search

48 Pause and Discover

## Learning from Many

### Learning on a Team

49 I Felt Valued

50 Teamwork in History

51 Build a Trusting Team

52 Feedback for the Team

53 MVP Award

### My Mentor and Me

54 Discussion Starters

55 Take Me with You

56 Mentor Meet and Greet

57 The Magic of Mentoring

58 Find the Perfect Mentor

59 First-Time Mentor

## Put Me in Coach

[60 Ask Powerful Questions](#)

[61 Feedback Formula](#)

[62 Showing Appreciation](#)

[63 Coaching Meeting Template](#)

[Peer-to-Peer Learning](#)

[64 Peer Coaching Circle](#)

[65 I'll Coach You; You Coach Me](#)

[66 Peer Advisory Group](#)

[Learning on the Job](#)

[Help Yourself](#)

[67 Every Day Counts](#)

[68 Your Leadership Brand](#)

[69 Set Goals for Success](#)

[70 A Wiser Me](#)

[71 Volunteer for a Special Assignment](#)

[72 Notable Quotables](#)

[73 Goals for Life](#)

[74 Test Yourself](#)

[Informal Learning](#)

[75 First Things First](#)

[76 A Virtual Book Club](#)

[77 Brown Bags and Books](#)

[78 "Bugs Me" List](#)

[79 Give 'em a "10"](#)

[80 What Got You Here](#)

[81 Plan for Informal Learning](#)

[Learn from Experience](#)

[82 Experiential Learning in the Classroom](#)

[83 Experiential Learning on the Job](#)

[84 Experiential Blended Learning for High Potentials](#)

[On-the-Job Assignments](#)

[85 Assessing Learners for a Rotational Assignment](#)

[86 Department Rotation Agreements](#)

[87 Evaluating Rotational Assignments](#)

[88 Stretch Assignment: Yes or No?](#)

[Learning beyond the Workplace](#)

[Learning Outside the Organization](#)

[89 Teach a Class](#)

[90 Do You Belong?](#)

[91 The Envelope, Please](#)

[92 Google Your Company](#)

[93 Visit the City Council](#)

[94 Read a Biography](#)

[95 Visit Your Supplier](#)

[96 Office Hours II](#)

[Do Well by Doing Good](#)

[97 Volunteer Team Needs a Leader](#)

[98 Professional Association Involvement](#)

[99 Find a Match](#)

[100 Adopt a Group](#)

[101 Internal Fund-Raising](#)

[A Bonus “10 Tips” List](#)

[10 Ways to Think about Learning in the Future](#)

[Additional Reading](#)

[About the Author](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

## **List of Illustrations**

[Slide 1](#)

[Slide 2](#)

[Slide 3](#)

[Slide 4](#)

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# **101 Ways to Make Learning *Active* Beyond the Classroom**

**Elaine Biech**

**WILEY**

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# Introduction: Getting the Most from This Resource

Talent developers of the world, this book was written for you. Our job is to give learners an experience that makes them leave with increased competence, confidence, and commitment. Developing people ensures our organizations have the ability to achieve their visions in a “VUCA” world. The term “VUCA” has been around for almost 20 years. Some of you may have heard the term before. VUCA stands for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous—terms that reflect an increasingly unstable and rapidly changing business world—the world in which we all work today.

As the people who guide the development of employees, we have a critical role to play in supporting the talent that deals with the VUCA world. The ability to find rare or unique talent in many specialized occupations is becoming increasingly important for organizational success, yet fewer and fewer people possess the skills required. Once the needed talent is found, how do you attract these people to your organization and keep them there? Now, before you scream “That's not my job,” think about this: Can specialized talent be developed, and, if so, how? What developmental experiences are needed to grow such talent? It is your job. And ensuring that the development is exciting, practical, timely, and encourages talent to stay is also your job.

You are developing the capability for your organization's future—technical and professional skills. The pace of changes in technology accelerates each year, creating even more demand for highly educated people. Imagine the skills that will be needed in the future for things such as

electric cars, new sources of energy, cyber-security, changes in government regulations, mobile computing applications, or the customization of services. Few organizations have the “capability”—the skills and knowledge for any of these or a host of other science, technology, engineering, or math careers (commonly called STEM).

There is lots of chatter about new technology and delivery systems. Your job is to find the right mix of coaching, mentoring, stretch assignments, rotational assignments, and training interventions to meet the job requirements of today and of the future. Gamification, the application of game-playing elements to nongame environments like the workplace, will continue to grow as organizations think about ways to engage their employees, assess skills, and attract talent. In addition, utilizing point systems, badges, leaderboards, and other competitive tactics to encourage desirable behaviors—such as employee health and wellness, training and development, and performance—is likely to increase. Organizations are transitioning from using gamification as a tactic into using it as a strategy, for example, using it to discover underlying business problems.

There is a new emphasis on experiential learning. Most of us know that experiential learning is effective, yet few organizations get the full benefit of this learning. Research at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) and the University of North Carolina shows that companies that want to develop a bench strength within their talent pool can increase the impact of development by helping employees learn from experience.

“Less is more” is one of the themes that cycles throughout conferences and conversations. As practitioners, we need to find the least amount of content that our learners need. The Internet is filled with information. We are overwhelmed

with data. There is no shortage of information. What our learners need right now is just the right amount. Just as Goldilocks was looking for not too soft, not too hard, but just right, so we need to find not too much, not too little—but just the right amount for our learners. This book will help you do just that.

Few of us rely on only virtual or only classroom delivery. The activities in this text are written with that in mind. However, as you read the activities, you will easily see that they can all be adapted to many situations.

# How This Book Is Organized

## Top 10 Lists

You will find top tips from cover to cover. Literally! *The 101 Active Learning* book series has always started with 20 “Top 10” lists. This text does also. But it goes *beyond*—like its title. This book *ends* with a “Top 10” list. The end of this book is really the beginning of what's to come. David Powell, a futurist at CCL, shares what he believes learning will be like in the not-too-distant future with “10 Ways to Think about Learning in the Future.” It is an intriguing list and one that requires a special spot. This provocative list is a great way to end the book. You will find this bonus list located between “Active Learning Idea 101” and the “Additional Reading” list.

## 101 Ways beyond the Classroom

The 101 techniques described in this text are divided into five sections. Each is described here to help you know where to find the technique that will be most beneficial. Note that there is crossover from one topic to another. So, just because you don't find something in one area, check another area. For example, an activity using Twitter might be found under “e-Learning tools,” “Social Learning,” “Technology in the Classroom,” or “Online Learning Activities.”

## Online Learning

The section “Online Learning” delivers ideas and tools to create an exciting and practical virtual learning experience. Although the activities are designed for an online experience, each of them can be used in other settings.



- **Online Openings:** First contacts create a lasting impression. The first 10 minutes of any initial meeting between two people lays the groundwork for almost all assumptions and decisions about the ensuing relationship. This is true with the opening of your online session.
- **Online Closings:** Closings need as much attention as openings. A well-delivered closing incorporates a review, ensures that expectations have been met, confirms the transfer of learning to the workplace, and offers an appropriate send-off with a positive message.
- **Online Learning Activities:** Many trainers forget that they need to conduct online learning in the same way they do face-to-face learning. You can't throw adult learning principles out the door just because your learners are not in the room with you.
- **Online Asynchronous Learning:** Learners are able to complete asynchronous learning modules at their convenience. Interaction is still expected in these sessions; however, the interaction refers to the interface between the learner and the instructional methods.
- **Unique Online Situations:** These activities offer you a variety of ways in which learning can occur but may not be thought of as “developmental.” You will find a strategy for learning about global needs of an organization, an online orientation, and a strategy to use to facilitate a team-building session (or any other topic) as a facilitator from afar.

## **Technology Tactics**

Technology has opened exciting doors for learning and development in the past couple of years. Experiment with

technology and discover new ways to engage your learners and deliver content in creative and memorable ways.

- **Blended Solutions:** Everything can fit into this category, but that does not make it blended learning. Just because you have a video, an asynchronous activity, and a classroom module does not make it “blended.” Rather, “blended” means that you have chosen the best delivery methodologies to match specific objectives.
- **e-Learning Tools:** Breakouts, chat rooms, document sharing, polling, raised hand, whiteboards, annotation tools—these are some among many options that you have in online courses. Have you also used a meter poll, course map, Pinterest, Evernote, Poll Everywhere, or Twitter? This section presents a broad variety of tools that you can use in many situations.
- **m-Learning:** Think of m-learning as a miniature data point—perhaps a skill check, producing a quick connection with your learners. It must be concise, encouraging a response from your learners. It must be easy to understand, since the learners may be distracted. Ideally, it should offer just-in-time support.
- **Social Learning:** Social learning allows trainers to extend learning between formal training events. Using blogs, wikis, community spaces, Google Wave, Skype, YouTube, Twitter, and other social media tools for learning will maximize an organization's investment in learning.
- **Technology in the Classroom:** Learners bring their own tools in the form of smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Take advantage of these whenever you can. They provide multiple options for you to collect needs assessment information, survey participants,

communicate messages via words or pictures (or both), and follow up later.

## **Learn from Many**

Learning comes from many different directions and various people. Help your learners seek out other options by directing them toward mentors or peer learning groups. Help supervisors understand the critical job they have in coaching and teaching their employees, and help them find team experiences that lead to learning.

- **Learning on a Team:** Individuals may use cross-functional teams as an opportunity for development in large organizations. Teams are created to solve an organizational problem or to implement a process that spans the breadth of the organization and requires representation from many departments.
- **My Mentor and Me:** A mentoring partnership is an agreement between two people who share experiences and expertise to facilitate personal and professional growth. Mentoring provides an approach for less experienced employees to learn and hone skills that will make them more effective.
- **Put Me in Coach:** Most Fortune 500 companies hire coaches, both internal and external, to support their workforce. Most organizations also expect managers to coach their employees to be better at their jobs. Your job may be to help managers understand this role.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Providing personal and professional support between colleagues is often quite informal. These learning ideas may provide the impetus to encourage more options or enhance what is already occurring.

## **Learning on the Job**

Everyone learns on the job. Whether you help yourself, receive assignments from your supervisor, learn from experiences, tap into the Internet, ask a colleague, or join a professional association, every experience that you have and encourage your learners to have benefits both the individual and the organization.

- **Help Yourself:** Self-directed learning appeals to all of us because we prefer to learn on our own and because it is self-paced. The flexibility allows us to learn when and where we want. This supports most of our natural learning desires.
- **Informal Learning:** The unofficial, impromptu, unscheduled way most people learn to do their jobs is responsible for 70 to 80 percent of all learning. We need to create an organizational culture that supports informal learning.
- **Learn from Experience:** Designing experiential learning activities to fit into classroom activities ensures learners practice skills. Bringing the real world into the classroom gives learners skills that are required to solve today's problems. Finding ways to take the entire learning group to the site is even better.
- **On-the-Job Assignments:** Supervisors have many tools at their disposal: rotational assignments, stretch assignments, project-based assignments, and others. Supervisors decide which learning developmental assignments will be most beneficial for each employee. As an L&D professional, you may need to help supervisors define this important role.

## **Learning beyond the Workplace**

Learning doesn't stop when learners leave the workplace. In fact, it may just begin. As an L&D professional, you may need to help learners see the value in various opportunities outside the organization. You may also need to help them see the importance of taking responsibility for their continued learning.

- **Learning Outside the Organization:** You have teaching options, books to read, association meetings to attend, and people to meet. There are endless things you can do and learn about as long as you keep your eyes open and your options in focus.
- **Do Well by Doing Good:** Providing time and talent by volunteering is a way to learn new skills and give something back at the same time. Volunteering comes in many roles and sizes. Volunteers may have skills that they can share with others, or it may be a learning experience for them. Volunteering may occur within the same skill set and profession or may be something completely different.

## **Activity Design**

Each of the 101 strategies is arranged in a similar format, making it easy for you to go directly to the activity that you need. Five elements describe each of the 101 activities:

**Overview:** A statement about the purpose of the strategy and the setting and situation in which it is appropriate.

**Participants:** The number of participants that are appropriate for the strategy and, in some cases, a definition of the type or level of employee that benefits the most from that strategy.

**Procedure:** Step-by-step instructions about how to use the strategy and things to remember to make it successful. In many cases, the debriefing questions are built into the procedure.

**Variations:** Suggested alternatives for ways to use the strategy.

**Case Examples:** Situations in which the strategy or examples of templates are used to help you visualize how the activity can be successful.

Whether you use the 10 tips list or the 101 strategies, they serve to build a range of “active learning” methods and offer tools to design and inspire active learning beyond the classroom.

# 200 Tips to Make Training Active and Learning Successful

Active learning beyond the classroom requires that you be aware of a myriad of details. I've continued the 101 Activity Books' tradition of opening with 200 tips that address many of these details. The tips cover everything from opening to closing a virtual learning session. You'll find ideas for engaging virtual learners and using annotation tools. There are tips for using breakout rooms, QR codes, polling, and Twitter in both physical and virtual classrooms. The tips will help you get started with using gamification, social media, and shooting a video for a learning session.

Have you been asked to lead a virtual team? Conduct virtual coaching? Check into m-learning for your company? These new 20 Top 10 lists, totaling over 200 training tips, summarize best practices and ideas on how to address some of the issues and challenges that you face. We are fortunate to have tapped into some of the best trainers in the world for these tips to make your life easier. And there is a bonus. Starting on page 297 David Powell of the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) shares "10 Ways to Think About Learning in the Future." What an exciting way to end this book!

You may have heard of some of these tips and may already have used many of them. If you have others, we would love to hear from you and would post them on the book's website along with those listed here. The organized lists provide ideas in a flash for some of the questions that you may have.

## Top 10 Lists

1. 10 Tips for Successfully Implementing a Virtual Learning Platform
2. 10 Ideas to Create a Prewebinar Checklist
3. 10 Slides to Organize Your Virtual Learning
4. 10 Tips for Opening an Interactive Online Training Session
5. 10 Webinar Warm-Ups
6. 10 Ways to Engage Virtual Learners
7. 10 Tips for Using Annotation Tools
8. 10 Tips for Using Breakout Rooms in a Virtual Classroom
9. 10 Tips for Using QR Codes in Learning
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18. 10 Tips for Virtual Teamwork
19. 10 Tips for Leaders as Teachers
20. 10 Tips and Options for Training in Virtual Reality Environments



# 1. 10 Tips for Successfully Implementing a Virtual Learning Platform

Kevin Costner was told in *Field of Dreams*, “Build it, and they will come.” This mind-set may work for an Iowa corn farmer and a magical baseball team, but it does NOT work for a new learning system. To meet and exceed business objectives for a virtual learning program, it is important to deploy these tips with the virtual learning platform. The experience will be like a great baseball game with the crowd going wild. If you choose to ignore some of these essential steps, you will find yourself sitting on an empty bench looking at a corn field.

1. **Effective communication.** If the target audience does not know about the new learning system, they will not participate, and the desired results will not be realized. During communication, highlight why the new learning system is good for the target audience. Communicate about the online learning system with references on related websites, in newsletters, in email campaigns, on LinkedIn, on Twitter, and so on. Use physical media to highlight the availability of training (getting-started cards, posters, mouse pads, table tents in conference rooms, etc.).
2. **Set and measure goals.** Have obtainable and measurable goals for the online learning center (e.g., 1,000 new users by March 25; 5,000 users by April 20; and 3,000 completed courses by July 20). Measure and communicate the progress on a monthly basis.
3. **Access and ease of use.** Create easy access to the training (minimize barriers). A rule of thumb is that a

user should be able to find and access a specific learning object within two mouse clicks from logging in. Enable easy visibility for learners to see the courses they need to take as well as completed courses.

4. **Substantial and meaningful content.** The learning site needs to provide relevant and engaging content. A new course or updated content should be available on a regular basis. Take this opportunity to communicate additional material to all learners.
5. **Think multiplatform.** Learners should be able to access training from their PC, tablet, and mobile device through multiple browser types. Insure the training is tested to work across browsers on multiple platforms. Should you also consider a need for learners to be able to access via wearables (e.g., Google Glasses, the Apple watch, or others)?
6. **Leverage search engine optimization (SEO) to promote your website.** If the training is for external audiences, effective SEO helps users find and access the new training system through organic or paid searches. Optimizing a virtual classroom may require changes in content and HTML coding in order to improve search engine indexing.
7. **Use website analytics to optimize learning site performance.** Website analytics (like Google Analytics) help firms realize important updates that need to be made based on web page statistics. By using website analytics, firms can improve the performance of a virtual training platform by making changes to site navigation, organization, and content. Reviewing analytics will provide insight into usage trends around web browser usage, operating system usage, along with key data around times of access, the path of learners, and the region where training occurs.

8. **Secondary support.** Connect the online training with in-person training, national meetings, and webinars. Obtain senior leadership support and communicate results.
9. **Incentivize and promote engagement.** Highlight participation success. Think about a contest to jump-start the program. Highlight performance success based upon learning participation. Respond immediately to feedback or suggestions.
10. **Encourage feedback from learning.** Collect feedback in a systematic way via ratings and comments. Respond to feedback from learners in a timely and instructive manner.

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Ideas from Charlie Gillette, Knowledge Anywhere, Inc.

## 2. 10 Ideas to Create a Prewebinar Checklist

Many things can occur during a webinar over which you may have no control. You do, however, have control over the time prior to the session while you are engaged in setting it up. Create a checklist that will help you remember all of the things that you want to do to either prevent problems or to be prepared if a problem occurs during the session.

1. **Set up an “away-message” and log in at least 30 minutes prior to the session.** Ensure that you use your “away-message” in your email that includes the webinar link and dial-in information. Participants will automatically have the information needed to join your webinar so that you will not be distracted while you are setting up or starting your meeting.
2. **Log in on an extra computer.** Use a second computer and log in as a participant so that you can see what participants see.
3. **Create a memory stick and script backup.** Save your presentation on a memory stick in case you need to use a different computer at the last moment. Also, script what you will say/do so that you have a guide to follow. It's easy to get off track, especially if you experience technical difficulties.
4. **Plan to wear a headset and plug into a landline phone.** Wear a headset, preferably wireless, so that you can move about as you facilitate the session. This will project more energy in your voice. Use a landline phone for best audio results and be sure to have an Internet connection with a high bandwidth. Wi-Fi connections

can vary, and you may become disconnected from the meeting.

5. **Expect differences in platforms.** Recognize that some formatting, animations, or slide transitions created in your slide program may not work with your webinar platform. Also, what works in one platform may not work in another.
6. **Close your email.** Reduce your distractions and avoid an embarrassing situation by closing down your email and instant message notifications.
7. **Script your session with a partner.** Tag-team with another facilitator. Switching voices and personalities is a good way to give yourself time to handle the technological aspects of facilitating online, and you and your partner's personal banter will keep the audience engaged. Always use a script—with a partner or not—to keep you focused.
8. **Mute participants.** While you are presenting content, mute your audience to reduce background noise.
9. **Plan to record your session.** Recording your session allows participants to go back and key in on topics of interest. It also provides you a way to critique yourself and make improvements for the next go-round. Were there technical difficulties? Did you pause too frequently? In what parts of the session did the conversation lag? Did you say “umm” too many times?
10. **Insert a greeting slide.** Insert a slide at the beginning of your sessions with a picture of you as the host(s) so that the participants can relate to the person behind the voice(s). Go beyond the typical headshot and post pictures that show you in action—perhaps conducting a session in front of a group or even at your desk, replete with headset and computer screen. If you work with the

group often, change your picture and start including pictures that show what you do outside of work, too: working in your garden, riding your horse, practicing Pilates, baking a cake, taking in a ballgame, ice skating, or whatever makes you, you.

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Ideas from Tracy Tagliati, Learning and Development Consultant; Sharon Wingron, Wings of Success LLC; and Christi Gilchrist, CLG Consulting.