Workplace course outline template

A course outline template sets out who a course is for, what learners will be able to do afterwards, which modules it has and how long each one takes. This one is for trainers of adults at work, not for a school or university syllabus: it links every objective to a practice activity and a module, and shows any module that serves no objective. You get a blank version, a filled example for a fictional half-day course and a 60-minute design session to fill it in.

60 minutes | 1–4 participants | Online and adaptable in person

Updated 2026-09-30

The outcome

In 60 minutes, one to four people complete a course outline in which every objective is an action a learner does, has a practice activity, a way to see that it was met and a module; every module serves at least one objective; and the planned minutes fit the agreed course length.

Before the session

- For trainers, course designers and subject experts who design a short course for adults at work, such as a half-day with four modules, before anyone writes slides or handouts. It is not a syllabus for students and has no grading or credit section.
- Bring what is already agreed: the audience, the problem the course should answer, the evidence for it and the limits, such as hours, date and group size. If nobody can name the problem, complete a training needs analysis first.
- Invite one person who knows the job the learners do. Open the workbook or the Word file on a shared screen, or print the four blank sheets, and keep the filled example to hand.
- Send the blank sheets as a file the day before for people who use a screen reader or prefer to prepare in writing. Start each step with silent writing, accept typed or spoken input, keep cameras optional and let anyone pass.

Included in this kit

A facilitator run of show, participant worksheets with real tables, reference tables, debrief questions, adaptation notes and a follow-up plan. Use the editable Word copy to tailor examples and prompts before delivery.

Original material by Superglue. Timings are suggestions; adjust them to your participants. This resource has not been independently evaluated.

What is inside

- Course summary
- Objective-to-practice map
- Module outline
- Outline check
- Filled example: course summary
- Filled example: outline check
- Filled example: objective-to-practice map
- Filled example: module outline
- Facilitator section: run of show, reference tables, debrief and adaptations

Course summary

One page for the whole course. Keep each answer to one or two lines. Write the agreed course minutes as a number, without breaks.

Item	Your course
Course title and outline version	
Who it is for, and the group size	
The problem the course answers, and how we know	
What learners can already do	
After the course, learners can…	
Agreed course minutes, without breaks	
Limits: date, place or platform, breaks, budget	
Access: what learners need to take part	
Out of scope	
Who signs off the outline, and the dates	

Objective-to-practice map

One row per objective. Write each objective as something a learner does. Then name the practice that lets them do it in the course, what you will see or collect, and the module where it happens.

The practice fits when learners do in the course what the objective says. For “write a handover note in four lines”, discussing good notes does not fit; writing three notes that a partner then acts on does.

Code	Objective: the learner will…	Practice in the course	How we will see it was met	Module
O1				
O2				
O3				
O4				
O5				
O6				

Module outline

One row per module, in the order of the course. Practice min is the part of the module in which learners do the task. Write the objective codes from the map.

#	Module	Min	Practice min	Objectives	Content in brief	Practice	Materials
M1							
M2							
M3							
M4							
M5							
M6							

Total minutes planned / agreed course minutes / practice minutes

Outline check

Run the six checks when the map and the module outline are full. Write what you found and what you will change. The check is a design aid, not a quality mark.

Check	How to check	What we found, and what we will change
1. Every objective has a practice activity	Read down the practice column of the map. Talking about the task does not count: learners must do the task.	
2. Every objective has a module	Look for each objective code in the Objectives column of the module outline.	
3. Every module serves an objective	A module with no objective code is cut, shortened or turned into a handout.	
4. The minutes fit	Add the Min column and compare the total with the agreed course minutes.	
5. Share of minutes spent on practice	Add the Practice min column and divide by the total minutes. Decide whether the share suits these objectives.	
6. Each objective can be seen	Read the “How we will see it was met” column of the map. Someone must be able to watch it or collect it, in the course or at a follow-up.	

Who writes the materials for each module, and by when

_____

_____

Filled example: course summary

A fictional half-day course for shift team leaders. The site, the figures and the dates are invented.

Item	Example
Course title and outline version	Handovers that hold, outline version 0.2
Who it is for, and the group size	Shift team leaders at a fictional distribution centre. 12 people from all three shifts, in one group.
The problem the course answers, and how we know	Open issues are not passed on at shift change: 14 of 40 logs sampled in September listed none although the incident list showed one.
What learners can already do	All 12 run a shift and fill in the handover log every day. Nobody has shown them what a complete note looks like.
After the course, learners can…	Hand over and receive a shift's open issues, in writing and aloud, so that the next team leader can act without a question.
Agreed course minutes, without breaks	225
Limits: date, place or platform, breaks, budget	Thursday 12 November, 09:00 to 13:00, in the training room. One 15-minute break. Paid time. No external cost.
Access: what learners need to take part	Cards and briefs also as a plain-text list, sent two days before. Notes typed or by hand. Spoken handover seated, or in writing.
Out of scope	The log software and incident investigation. Each has its own procedure.
Who signs off the outline, and the dates	Operations manager signs off on Friday 16 October. Materials drafted by Friday 30 October.

Filled example: outline check

What the six checks found in the first draft, and what the team changed. The final outline follows.

Check	In the first draft	What the team changed
1. Every objective has a practice activity	O4 had only a discussion of "good questions".	Each speaker brief in M3 now leaves out one fact for the receiver to find.
2. Every objective has a module	O5 was in no module. The plan was left for "after the course".	O5 moved into M4, with 10 minutes to fill in the first-use plan.
3. Every module serves an objective	A 30-minute module on the procedure's history had no objective.	Cut. The three tests, which were one slide in it, moved into M1.
4. The minutes fit	255 minutes planned against 225 agreed: 30 over.	225 minutes planned against 225 agreed.
5. Share of minutes spent on practice	105 of 255 minutes: 41%.	130 of 225 minutes: 58%. The team had set itself an aim of at least half.
6. Each objective can be seen	Evidence for O2: "learners understand the four lines".	Now: a partner states the next action and the owner from the note alone.

Filled example: objective-to-practice map

Five objectives for the fictional course, each written as an action, with its practice, its evidence and its module.

Code	Objective: the learner will…	Practice in the course	How we will see it was met	Module
O1	Sort the events of a shift into “hand over”, “log only” and “leave out”, using the site’s three tests.	Pairs sort 12 event cards from one fictional shift	At least 10 of 12 cards match the answer key, and the pair names the test for each “hand over” card	M1
O2	Write a handover note for an open issue in four lines: what happened, the state now, the next action and its owner, and the deadline.	Write three notes for fictional issues; rewrite one real log entry	A partner states the next action and the owner from the note alone, without asking a question	M2, M4
O3	Give a spoken handover of three open issues in under three minutes, most urgent first.	Speaker role in a trio, one round each	Observer sheet: the order, the time taken, and an owner named for all three issues	M3
O4	When receiving a handover, ask about anything that is missing and read back the next actions before accepting it.	Receiver role in a trio; each speaker brief leaves out one fact	Observer sheet: the receiver asked for the missing fact and read back the actions	M3
O5	Choose one change to their own shift’s handover and use it within seven days.	Fill in the first-use plan and tell a partner	The plan names a shift and a date; the note from that shift comes to the follow-up on Thursday 26 November	M4

Filled example: module outline

Four modules: 225 minutes planned against 225 agreed, with 130 minutes of practice (58%). The materials named here are what the team will write next; they are not part of this kit.

#	Module	Min	Practice min	Objectives	Content in brief	Practice	Materials
M1	What must be handed over	45	25	O1	The three tests for an open issue: safety, a promise to a customer, equipment out of use. Two short fictional cases of a missed handover.	Pairs sort 12 event cards into hand over, log only or leave out, then compare with the answer key (25 min).	12 event cards, also as a numbered list; answer key
M2	The four-line handover note	60	35	O2	The four lines: what happened, the state now, the next action and its owner, the deadline. A weak note and a strong note side by side.	Each person writes notes for three fictional issues. A partner reads each note and says the next action and the owner (35 min).	Three issue briefs; note template; four-line checklist
M3	Give and receive a spoken handover	75	45	O3, O4	Most urgent first. The read-back. A two-minute demonstration by the trainer and a volunteer.	Trios: speaker, receiver and observer, three rounds of 15 minutes. Each speaker brief leaves out one fact for the receiver to find (45 min).	Three speaker briefs; observer sheet; timer
M4	Plan the first real handover	45	25	O2, O5	What gets in the way at a real shift change. How the follow-up on 26 November works.	Each person rewrites one real log entry in four lines (15 min), then fills in the first-use plan and tells a partner (10 min).	One real log entry each, without names; first-use plan

Facilitator run of show

1 Agree the course summary | 8 minutes

Read the problem aloud in one sentence (1 minute). Say: “We are designing for this problem and this group. Anything else goes on the out-of-scope line.” Take four minutes to fill in the audience, what they can already do, the agreed course minutes without breaks, the other limits and the access needs you know about. Take three minutes to write one sentence that starts “After the course, learners can…”.

2 Write the objectives as actions | 12 minutes

Four minutes of silent writing: each person writes what a learner will do after the course, one action per line, each starting with a verb. Five minutes to compare, merge duplicates and choose three to five. Three minutes to test each one with the question: “Could I watch someone do this, or hold the result in my hand?” Rewrite any objective that starts with understand, know or be aware of. Give each objective a code, O1 to O5. Knowledge that supports an action stays inside that action’s module; it does not need an objective of its own.

3 Match each objective to practice and evidence | 12 minutes

Take about two minutes per objective, ten minutes for five. Ask: “Where in the course does the learner do exactly this?” and “What will we see or collect that shows they did it?” Write both in the map. Use the last two minutes to read down the practice column and mark any activity in which learners only talk about the task.

4 Build the module outline | 15 minutes

Five minutes: group the objectives into modules and put the modules in the order a learner needs them. Seven minutes: for each module, write the minutes, the minutes of practice inside it, the objective codes, the content in one or two lines, the practice and the materials. Three minutes: add up the minutes and compare the total with the agreed course minutes. Write the module codes back into the last column of the map. A module is a block of the course with its own practice, often 30 to 90 minutes. A break is not a module.

5 Run the check | 8 minutes

Three minutes: read down the map. Does every objective have practice, a module and evidence that someone can see? Three minutes: read down the outline. Say for each module: “This module is here because of objective…”. A module that nobody can finish the sentence for has no objective. Two minutes: divide the practice minutes by the total minutes and ask whether that share suits these objectives. Record what you found on the outline check sheet.

6 Decide what to change and who writes what | 5 minutes

Three minutes: decide what to cut, shorten or move so that the check passes and the minutes fit. Cut content before you cut practice. Two minutes: name who writes the materials for each module and by when, and who signs off the outline. Set the date of the first delivery or pilot, and book 15 minutes after it to compare the real minutes with the plan. Read the outline back once in module order.

Reference tables

Does the practice fit the objective? Six fictional examples

The objective says the learner will…	Practice that does not fit	Practice that fits
Write a handover note in four lines	Discuss what makes a good note	Write three notes; a partner acts on each one
Choose the right refund route for a customer case	Watch the trainer work through two cases	Sort ten fictional cases and give the reason for each
Give a colleague feedback on a missed deadline	List the features of good feedback in groups	Hold the conversation in a trio with an observer
Enter a purchase request in the finance system	Follow a recorded screen demonstration	Enter three requests in a test system from written briefs
Run a ten-minute daily team meeting	Read a checklist for short meetings	Run a timed meeting with four colleagues and a fixed agenda
Carry out the pre-use check on a pallet truck	Answer a quiz about the check	Do the check on a real truck while a colleague follows the checklist

Debrief and next steps

Questions for reflection

- Which objective was hardest to write as something we could watch, and what does that tell us about the course?
- Which module did we keep although it serves only one objective, and is it worth its minutes?
- Where do learners first do something, and how many minutes into the course is that?
- If the sponsor cut the course by a quarter, which objective would we drop, not squeeze?

Adapt the session

- Working alone, fill in all four sheets in 45 minutes, leave them for a day, then ask a colleague who knows the job to run the six checks with you in 15 minutes.
- For a 45-minute version, fill in the course summary before the meeting and send it round. Then run steps 2 to 6 in 10, 10, 13, 7 and 5 minutes.
- Online, share the workbook or the Word file and let everyone type in it. Use silent writing in the document before each discussion, paste each step’s question in the chat, and keep cameras optional.
- For people who prefer not to speak in a group, or who work in a second language, collect objectives and practice ideas in writing first and read them out without names. Anyone can pass. Send the sheets as a file the day before for people who use a screen reader.
- For a course that already exists, fill in the map and the outline from the current materials and run the six checks. The check often shows a module with no objective, which is time you can give to practice.

After the session

Send the outline to the person who signs it off within one working day, with the outline check attached. Write the materials module by module, and start with the practice, because it shows what content learners need first. When the materials for a module are drafted, read its row again and correct the minutes. After the first

delivery, note the real minutes next to the planned ones and update the outline and its version number before the next group.

Questions people ask

What should a course outline template include?

A summary of who the course is for and the problem it answers, three to five objectives written as actions, the practice and the evidence for each objective, and a module outline with minutes, objective codes, content in brief, practice and materials. This template adds a check that every objective has practice and every module serves an objective.

Is a course outline the same as a syllabus?

Not here. Many course outline templates are syllabi for school or university students, with grading, reading lists and policies. This one is for trainers of adults at work, who design a short course around what people must do in their job. It has no grading or credit section.

How do I write objectives for a course outline?

Write what a learner will do after the course, starting with a verb that someone could watch, such as sort, write, give or choose. Then ask whether you could see it happen or hold the result. Many designers use Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956; revised by Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001) to choose verbs. This kit does not reproduce it; the test here is only whether the action can be observed.

How is this different from the training plan template and the facilitator guide template?

The training needs analysis template helps you decide what to train. This course outline designs one course: its objectives, practice and modules. The training plan template schedules a team’s sessions and hours over several weeks, and the facilitator guide template scripts one session step by step. Use them in that order.

What does the Excel version calculate?

It counts the modules that cover each objective and flags an objective with no practice or no module, and a module with no objective. It adds up the planned minutes, compares them with the agreed course minutes and shows the share of minutes spent on practice. That share is a prompt for discussion; the kit sets no standard for it.

What is included in the free and editable files?

The open PDF has the blank course summary, objective-to-practice map, module outline and outline check, a filled example of all four and the 60-minute design session. Subscribers also receive the editable Word file, an Excel workbook with blank, filled and first-draft sheets that run the checks, and a CSV of the example module outline.

Use and sharing

Free to use and adapt in your own training sessions, including paid client work. Do not resell or redistribute the unmodified download as a standalone product. Share the resource page instead.