

Lessons My Cat Taught Me About Instructional Design

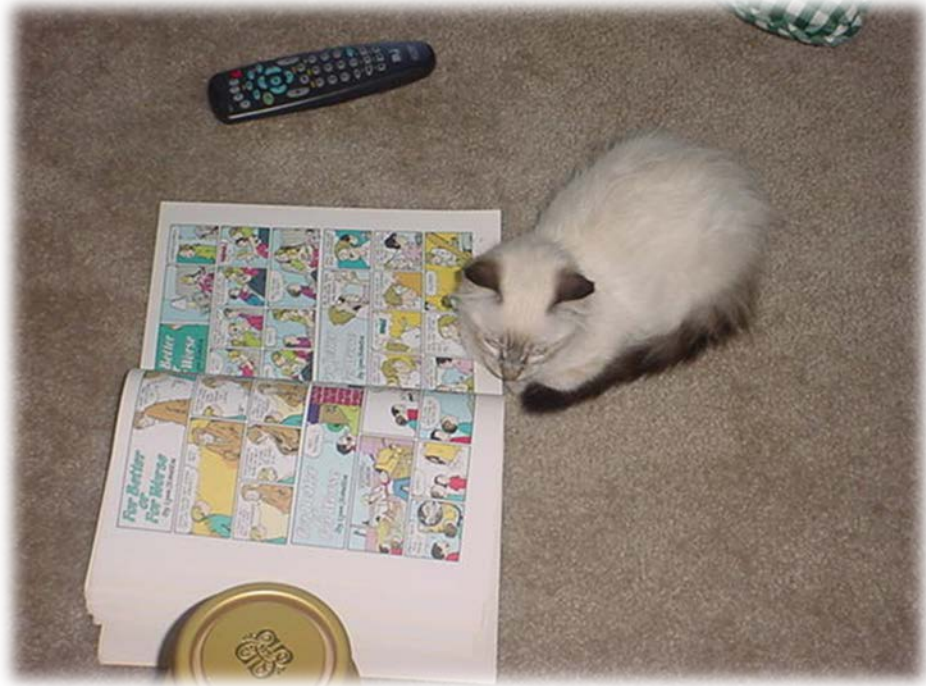
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Jamye Sagan
H-E-B Pharmacy

Lessons

1. Keep your eye on the goal.
2. Cats don't like to dress up.
3. Take small bites; don't gulp down all your food at once.
4. Offer praise, but don't be afraid to use the squirt gun when needed.
5. Practice, practice, practice!!



1. Keep your eye on the goal – have clear objectives.

- ▶ What do your learners need to know?
- ▶ Learning Objectives must be:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Tangible
- ▶ **🐾 Kitty Treats: Tips 🐾**
 - Consider the 80/20 rule: what will your learners spend 80% of their time with?
 - Refer to Bloom's Taxonomy for measurable verbs
(<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html>)



2. Cats don't like to dress up – keep content simple.

- ▶ Cover only what your learners need to know.
 - Refer back to your learning objectives.
- ▶ Provide non-essential info as reference material.
- ▶ **☛ Kitty Treats: Tips ☛**
 - Build your own reference library (such as intranet site) to house your reference materials.
 - Refer to this library throughout your training.
 - Reference materials can include web links, documents, & cheat sheets.



3. Take small bites; don't gulp down all your food at once – divide your content into chunks.

- ▶ Break up training into smaller chunks (generally 15-20 minutes)
- ▶ Why chunk?
 - Easier for learners to retain knowledge
 - Easier for trainers to update training materials
- ▶ How to Chunk
 - When figuring out how to chunk content, see if content is already grouped logically, such as in steps or by topic.
 - Covering multiple topics? Group related ones together.
 - Break down larger objectives into smaller ones
- ▶ **☛ Kitty Treats: Tips ☛**
 - E-Learning: Either separate content into several smaller modules within one course and enable bookmarking capabilities, or create several standalone courses.
 - Instructor-led courses: Mix up lecture with demos and other student activities.



4. Praise, but don't be afraid to use the squirt gun – give feedback.

- ▶ Feedback needs to be:
 - Immediate (or as immediate as possible)
 - Specific
- ▶ Why feedback?
 - Reinforce desired behavior
 - Reduce unwanted behavior
- ▶ **🐾 Kitty Treats: Tips 🐾**
 - Build in “Test Your Knowledge” questions and offer specific feedback on correct/incorrect answers
 - When observing learner, don't just say what they did right or wrong. Tell why – or even ask why.



5. Practice, Practice, Practice!

Let your learners practice what they learned.

- ▶ Incorporate opportunities for practice
 - Software simulations
 - Branching scenarios
 - Test environment with pre-defined exercises and test cases
 - Hands-on exercises
- ▶ Encourage practice outside of the classroom environment
 - Assessment checklists
 - Reference materials (e.g. cheat sheets)
- ▶ **🐾 Kitty Treats: Tips 🐾**
 - Allow more time for in-class practice than you think is needed
 - Focus on most complex and most commonly-used procedures



Interested in Instructional Design – Next Steps

- ▶ Join the Instructional Design & Learning SIG
 - <http://www.stcidlsig.org/>
- ▶ View articles and other resources
 - Twitter: #elearning, #training, (and follow @stc_idl_sig for even more resources)
 - STC resources: *Intercom*, TCBoK
 - Other organizations: ATD, eLearning Guild
- ▶ Talk with other instructional designers
 - IDL SIG discussion list
 - Conferences – like this one! ☺
 - LinkedIn groups

Contact Info – Jamye Sagan

- ▶ Email
 - jamye.sagan@gmail.com
 - sagan.jamye@heb.com
- ▶ Twitter:
@gimli_the_kitty

