

# Rapid Insight

## How to Design Rapid E-learning

---

### Rapid E-learning: different by design

#### Is there room for design in Rapid E-learning?

Several commentators have written that Rapid E-learning means you can skip the design step. That's shorthand for two things: 'that's good, because design takes time and is expensive', and also, 'don't have high expectations of Rapid E-learning outputs because they're not really designed.'

Wrong, wrong. We've all been on the receiving end of badly designed training and we know that bypassing design is a fast-track to bored and disengaged learners.

Rapid E-learning requires thoughtful design, with the learner in mind, with objectives clearly defined, with engagement at the fore, and with impact on learner performance as its guiding purpose.

But it can be done faster, at lower cost, and with no compromise of quality than traditional models. This Guide shares three ways in which Kineo, the Rapid E-learning leader, has achieved these aims for our clients with examples and practical tips.

You'll find many more tools and resources for Rapid E-learning at [www.rapidelearningstore.com](http://www.rapidelearningstore.com).

Kineo is the leader in Rapid E-learning. We partner with clients including BP, Google, Cable & Wireless and Marks & Spencer to deliver high quality, cost-effective e-learning at the speed of business requirements.

Find out how we can help you by contacting us:

[www.kineo.co.uk](http://www.kineo.co.uk)

[info@kineo.co.uk](mailto:info@kineo.co.uk)

+44 (0) 870 383 0003

# Three ways in which Rapid E-learning Design is different

We think there are three key differences that make the role of design, and the steps within it, different from traditional e-learning:

1. Where you start from: **use structures and patterns to accelerate design**
2. How you get to release: **get to first version quickly, then iterate to release**
3. How you keep it relevant: **wide range of tools, many of them free**

## Rapid design difference 1: Use structures and patterns to accelerate design

Rapid E-learning design is different from traditional e-learning design from the very outset.

Traditional e-learning	Rapid E-learning
Design is preceded with a protracted scoping and needs analysis process which may take several weeks	Scoping and needs analysis are kept focused and structured using tools and templates
Design usually starts with a blank page and it's difficult to define what's in/out of scope	Design starts with a set of structures and patterns, and is grounded in what's possible to avoid open-ended iterations
Design discussions are vague as it's hard to describe in the abstract; clients often don't know what they're getting until they get it	Design discussions are very specific, based on the interactions tools will handle

The essential difference between the start of the design process in Rapid E-learning and traditional bespoke is the use of design structures and patterns.



## Rapid angle: Start with patterns, you'll get there faster

There's a time for hand-crafting. It's not in Rapid E-learning. To meet critical deadlines cost effectively, the best option is to work from structures and patterns.

At Kineo we employ re-usable patterns and structures at three levels in Rapid E-learning Design:

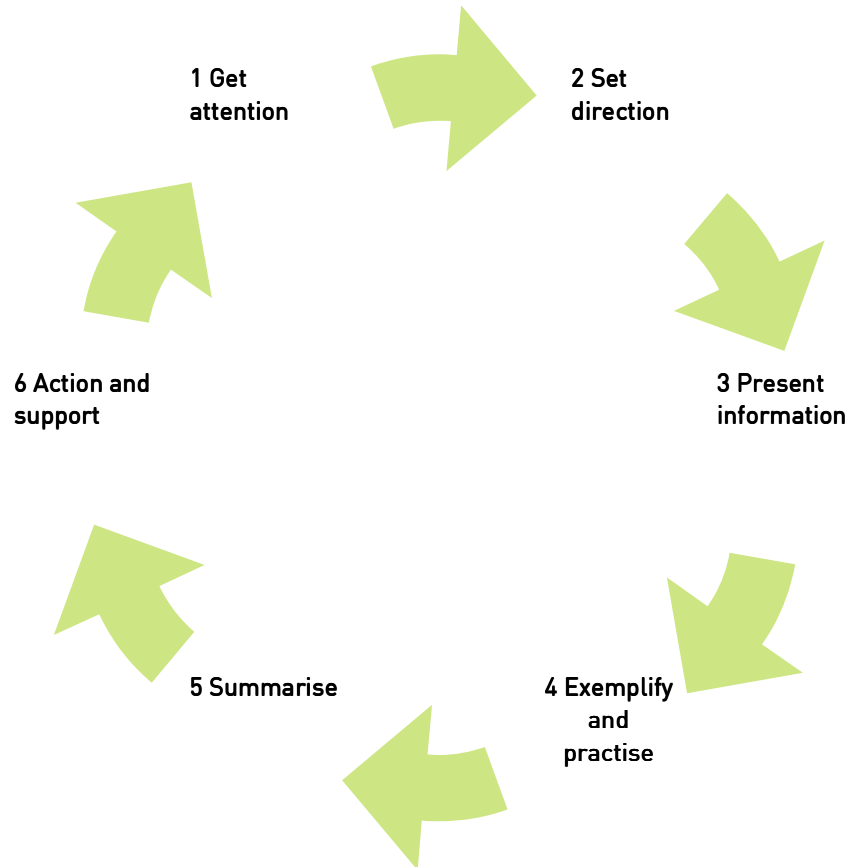
- **Design process:** We consider the tasks of scoping, working with Subject Matter Experts, structuring content and screen layout all to be part of the rapid learning design. We've created re-usable structures and templates to ensure this process is done consistently and to a high standard. Think of it as 'Rapid E-learning Design in a box.'
- **Learning model:** Once the overarching aim of a learning initiative is clear (through Rapid Scoping), we determine which learning model to apply to it. This does not have to be unique to every learning initiative. It won't surprise you that what works for product knowledge in one situation is usually 80% right for the next one. We've developed structured sequences for common learning aims, for example product knowledge, soft skills, compliance, systems training and so on. These models provide a clear structure for the overall module, while enabling flexibility at the specific screen interaction level.
- **Interactions:** Most authoring tools contain a series of interaction types, for example multiple choice, interactive graphics, tabbed screens and so on. Depending on the tool we're using, we apply the interaction types in the learning model, often adding to them with our own re-usable interaction types. We've got very clear views on how to use these; what an effective multiple choice question entails, how you write feedback, how you structure a question, how you design plausible options and so on. What we're doing is not limiting choice, but providing guidance at each process step and creating a shared language and flow to modules.

This is really the crux of Rapid E-learning: being resourceful and flexible with proven structures and patterns to achieve a learning aim in an engaging and efficient way, and knowing how, where and when to extend the pattern set.

In our view, it's the only way to get started and to accelerate quickly to a first version that you can iterate to release.

## Example of a Rapid E-learning model: Rapid Step

We use our Rapid Step model in a wide range of situations as a baseline approach, with variations for product knowledge, compliance and a range of other learning initiatives.



Rapid Step	Goal
Step 1: <b>Get attention</b>	Ask a question on the subject or prior experience; share a key fact or shock statement
Step 2: <b>Set direction</b>	Be clear about what you are going to cover and how it will benefit the learner
Step 3: <b>Present</b>	Put over all the relevant content concisely In Rapid E-learning think about providing only the top layer of detail in the presentation. Additional or in-depth information should be handled or linked in as supplementary documents or web pages
Step 4: <b>Exemplify and practise</b>	Demonstrate through example or case study how the knowledge is to be used. Ask questions to check comprehension In Rapid E-learning, think about linking in case studies or examples as supplementary documents or links to web pages
Step 5: <b>Summarise</b>	Give a clear wrap of the key information. In Rapid E-learning you could consider including a closing message from your sponsor if they were used at introduction
Step 6: <b>Action and support</b>	Show what to do next in terms of the job role and where to get more support In Rapid E-learning, you could embed links to online resources such as FAQs, intranet pages or create links to subject matter experts or online events such as webinars

We have developed variations on this baseline model for a wide variety of common content areas, e.g. product knowledge, coaching, compliance, sales skills and so on.

We call these our ID templates, in essence structured models based on years of experience designing e-learning for these common content areas. These accelerate design efforts in these topics (of course allowing for variations where required).

Going one step further, we have developed a series of 'flatpacks' which include the design structure and ready to use content for a variety of these topics with script, graphics, and interactions pre-constructed, to further help clients hit the ground running.



## Case study: Rapid Step model implementation for compliance e-learning

Kineo recently developed a compliance e-learning solution for a large financial services firm using this model. The basic design structure was:

- Step 1: Series of building headlines and examples of consequences of non-compliance, benefits of compliance, ending with message from sponsor
- Step 2: Interactive graphic with key outcomes and how they're addressed in the module
- Step 3: Key process steps broken down with tabbed screens to explain process and MCQs to apply them
- Step 4: Putting it all together: final case study with learner in the role of team member looking for compliance issues
- Step 5: Summarise the key points and provide a checklist for future use
- Step 6: Final call to action from sponsor and link to live site where learner can get more information and updates on the process

Starting the design process with this model, and the potential interaction types to hand vastly accelerates the process and enables us to get to the point quicker – that point being to build something.



## Rapid angle: Rapid E-learning is adult learning

Rapid E-learning is fast, focused, and pragmatic. It's very closely aligned to the principles of adult learning. When you select a learning model and begin to design your Rapid E-learning, you should be guided by the principles of adult learning.

- **Goal-oriented:** Be clear that the learning will enable them to achieve a specific goal or objective
- **Relevancy-oriented:** To engage, be relevant. The task at hand is the most important. One of the major advantages of the tools available for Rapid E-learning is that it's possible to easily maintain and update materials to ensure modules remain relevant
- **Practical:** Focused on what is most useful to them in their work
- **Uses stories:** Stories are excellent for taking others' experience and packaging it to root itself in the memory more deeply than facts and procedures.

## Rapid design difference 2: Get to first version in days, then iterate to release

Getting to a first working version is the first real test of a learning design. Until you can touch it, it's just a bunch of documents. Here, Rapid E-learning design is very different.

Traditional e-learning	Rapid E-learning
Linear, document-driven development process based on traditional software engineering models	Accelerated development process based on iterative and collaborative development approaches
Sign-off (in blood, preferably) on design at document stage as production is expensive	Production's not expensive, so do more versioning and iteration and sign-off something you can actually use – within days
Most design changes usually met with fear, loathing and change control – even if they're good ideas	More flexibility, easy to take onboard design changes, often on the fly
Development is distributed between designer, writer, developer, tester, graphics team, adding cost and communication effort, usually with some barriers between client and 'backroom'	First version build is concentrated to a designer/writer and graphic artist (sometimes just one person) who's working directly with the client, fully accountable

The essential difference at this stage is speed and flexibility. Rapid E-learning means get to a live, working version of the design within days of project start. At Kineo we're generally presenting a first working version of a Rapid E-learning module **within 5 days of project start**. This may be a prototype of a large programme of modules, or in the case of a single module delivery it's often a working version of the whole thing.

From there, the goal is to iterate the first version and amend until it's ready for release. This process has been called 'perpetual beta' or 'successive approximation' which are both good descriptions. The idea is that is like a website or an open source application, e-learning's never really finished – it's iterated to a stable release, then we get it out there for feedback.



## Rapid angle: Want to see the future? Prototype now

E-learning has picked up a lot of habits from traditional software development – mainly bad ones. In our view, the document-driven model is just too heavy for what should be a light process. Rapid prototyping has several advantages and full credit to Michael Allen, for drawing them out in his recent book '*Creating Successful E-learning – A rapid approach for getting it right first time, every time.*' To echo his views and add some of our own:

- **They're fun!** Really. Who'd rather describe and document something when you can just build it and play with it? It's so much more rewarding.
- **They shorten the process.** The sooner you get to a working version, the sooner everyone can see the finish line. The development process is very simple after this: you refine until it's ready for release with flexible working.
- **They improve information sharing.** Prototypes help people talk more constructively than documentation, flat screenshots. Lots of people won't read the documents - everyone has an opinion on prototyping.
- **They enable collaboration.** When you get quickly to a first version, it's much easier to say to the SME 'you can see that there's too much text on screen 14. Can you propose an edit?' or for the SME to say 'I don't like that graphic now that I see it in situ, can we change it?.' Feedback is a lot more focused and specific, and there's a real sense of working together to refine to get to release – everyone's head is in the game.
- **They lead to more creative designs.** The feedback loop and the ability for peer and client review is greater, and it's very easy to change things for the better (within the parameters of the tool and the templates).
- **They engage learners.** They're a great way to involve learners early in the process through user group testing – no learner is going to read design documentation and get engaged.
- **They promote responsiveness and flexibility.** Because rapid tools make it very easy to change most things, the old vendor vs. client 'scope/time/cost/I'll have to get back to you on that one' discussions are just not as big a deal. It encourages flexibility on both sides, as what's possible is clear, and most changes can be done on the fly. Flexible working is a must have if you're going to live up to this process.



## Case study: 4 days from first call to release

Kineo recently collaborated with a telecommunications company to develop a series of e-learning modules for managers. The typical development cycle for a 20 minute module was four days from first phone call to release. Let's break it down:

- Day 1 am: Client provides brief and some source PowerPoint materials
  - Day 2 pm: Kineo designer reviews, calls client with some (templated) clarifying questions.  
Designer proposes design model and interaction decisions and confirms with client and peers
  - Day 2 am: Designer builds first version into tool without graphics (note – no script, straight to build).
  - Day 2 pm: Designer has review call with client to look at first version online  
Designer makes changes while on call, mainly editing, changing template types
  - Day 3 am: Graphic artist provides graphics, designer integrates them
  - Day 3 pm: Designer has second call with client to review graphics in build.  
Some more edits to templates.
  - Day 4 am: Testing of client release version for final proofing, edits, links
  - Day 4 pm: Released (with more iterations planned based on user feedback)
- 

Authoring tools obviously play a huge role in being able to respond at this speed. You can't do it without one. There's not room in this Guide to get into the specifics of which tool does what best. They're all different, though we'll say the ones we've been using the most recently are Articulate, Captivate and Mohive. We review these and many other authoring tools here a wide range of authoring tools here:

<http://www.kineo.co.uk/rapid-e-learning/rapid-e-learning-authoring-tools.html>

Of course, the other key to this model is dedicated and highly skilled designers, who are comfortable in scoping, design decision making, scripting, and building and are highly responsive and flexible. We have a broad definition of Rapid E-learning designers' role, and we're proud to have a hugely talented and highly trained team, who are skilled in all these areas.

We provide training and support to help you develop those skills in your team in the way we've done in ours: [www.kineo.co.uk/services](http://www.kineo.co.uk/services)

## Rapid design difference 3: Get it out there and keep it live

One of the key challenges trainers face is the fact that most e-learning is useless within a matter of months. There may be big ticket induction programmes that hang around for a few years, but most training needs are based on immediate business requirements. They change all the time. Traditional e-learning is not great with change. Here, rapid design approaches are different.

Rapid authoring tools truly accelerate the design process, but the benefits do not end there. The range of web 2.0 tools now available to the rapid designer means that a whole new set of design options are open. Maintenance and updates are a key part of the rapid design process.

Traditional e-learning	Rapid E-learning
All eyes on the final release and sign-off (after that the meter's back on)	The 'final release' is just a step on the way to making learning happen; new information and simple changes are just not a big deal
Maintenance is difficult for clients to do even if they've got the source files	Maintenance really is in the hands of the client if they've got the will
Maintenance means a periodic centralised update to remove errors and out of date information – more like a traditional book publishing model	Maintenance should be dynamic and a daily occurrence; often involving lots of people, more like the wikipedia model
The self-contained course is the main event	The 'course' is just the hub, dynamic content surrounds it

The main difference here is that new tools and techniques can be used to iterate the prototype through to release and then keep it relevant once it's out there.



## Rapid angle: Five tools you can use for rapid updates

These are dynamic times. The days of publish and be damned are long over. If your e-learning hasn't been updated in the past three months, what does that say about its relevance to your business? How many people are looking at it and using it?

There are loads of rapid tools that make it very easy to ensure your e-learning is kept up to date rapidly and dynamically. Here are just five:

- **Deploy it in an open source LMS like Moodle:** Open source LMSs are gaining dominance in the LMS market. They're particularly useful as a platform for Rapid E-learning as they're license cost free, quick to set up, and easy to extend and enrich with a wide range of content. You can add blogs, wikis, audio, video, discussion forums, chat rooms, RSS feeds to engage and provoke continued learning and debate. Kineo has designed and deployed over 20 branded Moodle installations for clients including Marks & Spencer and Bupa. More at <http://www.kineo.co.uk/moodle-services/moodle-lms.html>
- **Keep the conversation going with podcasts and vodcasts:** Podcasts and vodcasts are a very low cost means of engaging learners and keeping content current. For one corporate client we've developed over 15 vodcasts and podcasts to help them quickly communicate key messages to their employees. Find out more in our co-authored report with Ufi at <http://www.kineo.co.uk/kineo-briefings/good-practice-guides-with-ufi-learndirect-2.html>
- **Give it a tone of voice with a blog:** E-learning's often accused of lacking in tone of voice. One way of giving it personality and extending its relevance is to get an author (or ghost-author) to blog alongside the e-learning itself. One of our major corporate clients uses a CEO's blog to this effect and it lends a huge amount of personality and credibility to their Rapid E-learning.
- **Use RSS feeds to keep it bang up to date:** RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication and it allows specified content from websites to be taken and displayed for learners on their own sites. RSS feed can search across Google news for example, and display for the learner all current news stories on a subject of interest, such as compliance legislation. You can drop it right into a Rapid E-learning module to ensure your module home page is up to speed, even if you're not.
- **Get users to collaborate through a wiki:** Wikis are a great method for user generated content to flourish, and they provide an excellent feedback loop for future module development. More at <http://www.kineo.co.uk/learning-communities/wikis.html>

# Key points

---



## How to Design Rapid E-learning: It's different by design

- Design matters in Rapid E-learning, more than ever
- Rapid E-learning design is different in three ways:
  1. Structures and patterns help you hit the ground running
  2. Rapid tools and flexible working gets you to a first version faster that you iterate to release
  3. A range of tools help you keep it live once its released

---

## Take it further

---

What do you want to do?	Help is at:
<b>Get Rapid E-learning built</b> <b>Skill your team in Rapid E-learning</b>	<a href="http://www.kineo.co.uk">www.kineo.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:info@kineo.co.uk">info@kineo.co.uk</a> +44 (0) 870 383 0003
<b>Use rapid templates to accelerate your approach</b>	ID templates and flatpacks at <a href="http://www.rapidelearningstore.com">www.rapidelearningstore.com</a>
<b>Get an authoring tool</b>	E-learning authoring tools at <a href="http://www.rapidelearningstore.com">www.rapidelearningstore.com</a>

For more information on Kineo's Rapid E-learning services:  
email [info@kineo.co.uk](mailto:info@kineo.co.uk), or call +44 (0) 870 383 0003.