

***Making Your Course
More User-Friendly
for Students***



Session Facilitators



Amy Ort, Ph.D.
Instructional Designer
Center for Transformative Teaching
aort@unl.edu



Eric French, Ph.D.
Instructional Designer
Center for Transformative Teaching
efrench6@unl.edu



Agenda

- ✓ Welcome
- ✓ Setting the Table
- ✓ Principles: How Cognitive Overload Impairs Learning
- ✓ Practices: How to Make Your Course More User-Friendly
- ✓ Workshop: Identifying Cognitive Bottlenecks

If you have any questions before the Q&A at the end, feel free to place them in the chat. We will address them or try to return to them at the end.





Is anyone willing to volunteer for a
demonstration?



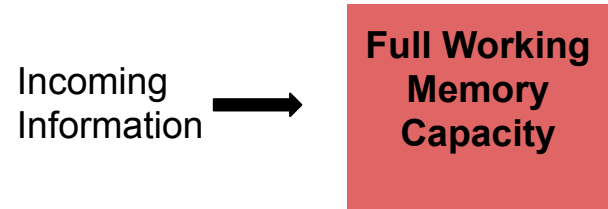
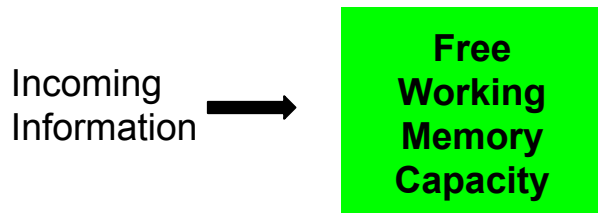
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Principles: How Cognitive Overload Impairs Learning

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Cognitive Load

- The brain has limited working memory capacity
- When working at or near capacity, even easy tasks become hard



Cognitive Load

- You want to measure student learning, but other factors affect how well students can demonstrate their learning
- This leads to anxiety and frustration, both of which interfere with learning and memory



Incoming
Information



Full Working
Memory
Capacity



Long Term
Remembering

Cognitive Load

- Goal: Minimize aspects of your course that unnecessarily contribute to increased cognitive load.
- Some possible culprits:
 - Canvas course navigation, confusing instructions, inconsistency between and within courses, lack of scaffolding, illness / other personal factors, etc.
- **Hint: If students email about it, it's probably impacting cognitive load!**





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Practices: How to Make Your Course More User-Friendly



Reducing Cognitive Load

- Course navigation
- File management
- Consistency
- Scaffolding, practice, and frequent, low-stakes assessments
- Minimize barriers to getting help
- Explicit instructions
- Pretest!
- Alignment



Example: File Management

Exam #1 Study Guide

Study Guide for Second Exam

Test 3 Study Guide



Example: File Management

~~Exam #1 Study Guide~~

~~Study Guide for Second Exam~~

~~Test 3 Study Guide~~

Exam #1 Study Guide

Exam #2 Study Guide

Exam #3 Study Guide



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Example: Explicit Instructions

All assignments will be available in Modules.

vs.

Within each weekly module, you will find a “Weekly Activities” page. On that page, you will find links that take you directly to each of the assignments you need to complete that week. The “Weekly Activities” page for a given week will become available on or before Friday of the previous week.



Reducing Cognitive Load

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Workshop: Identifying Cognitive Bottlenecks

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Part 1: A scavenger hunt

- In this section, we want you to complete a scavenger hunt of a Canvas course. Pretend you're a new first year student and need this information!
 - Canvas course link:
<https://lor.instructure.com/resources/bc893738fa3642859e077a809e745f74?shared>
 - Google doc link:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gt6iO4JyRqYQyb6_EojvESZpM6lQljKiEgbrHm8EGN4/copy?usp=sharing



Part 2: Evaluating your own course

- In this section, we want you to look at your own course, and talk about your challenges & strengths. We built a worksheet to help you through this process.
 - Google doc link:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/116C1a7mV7FITnJZQGqIRsbpjPobOxmNfC3nkSNbMp1w/copy?usp=sharing>





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Questions or Comments?

