

The G. Raymond Chang School
of Continuing Education
Digital Education Strategies

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CONTINUING EDUCATION

Where Learning Leads®

Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction

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In 1965, Robert Gagné published *The Conditions of Learning*, which identified the mental conditions for learning. These were based on the information processing model of the mental events that occur when adults are presented with various stimuli. Gagné's theory stipulates that there are several different types or levels of learning and that each specific type requires unique types of instruction.

The Nine Events

1. Gain attention

The first step is to arouse the student's interest with novelty or surprise. You may also want to appeal to the learner by asking questions, so that they will be further motivated to engage with the content.

2. Inform learner of objectives

As stated in the handout "Writing Effective Learning Objectives" it is important to inform the learner of the expectations that you have of them. This will help reduce anxiety in students who would otherwise not know what they should be studying.

3. Stimulate recall of prior learning

Students, especially adult learners, retain concepts and new information better if the concepts are related to something they already know. In this way, they can make the connection to their personal experiences and the learning will be more meaningful.

4. Present stimulus material

At this point in the learning process, the content is presented to the students. For the student to retain information it is preferable that the content be organized into meaningful chunks, and that a variety of methods appealing to all learning styles be used.

Using examples and real-life situations is also a great way to enhance the retention of information, as learners can apply the material to their own life experiences and internalize the content.

5. Provide learner guidance

Communication between the instructor and the learner is an essential means of providing guidance. Not only does communication help the learner stay on track, but it also ensures that the instructor has an idea of how the students are doing.

Other means of guidance come in the form of visual material such as graphs, videos, case studies, mnemonics, and analogies, which assist the learner in retaining and encoding the information into their long-term memory.

6. Elicit performance

Once the content is presented and hopefully understood, learners need an opportunity to practice. Often, the same examples that have previously been presented are used and new ones are

introduced to see if the learner truly understands or is just repeating what was done before. Good practice items should:

- Clearly specify the practice format and nature of the student response
- Be relevant to the objective
- Elicit the exact performance stated in the objective
- Be provided as frequently and immediately following instruction as possible

7. Provide feedback

Feedback is essentially additional guidance. If the learner has not yet grasped a concept or idea, this is the time to provide more information and different examples. Good feedback should:

- Provide comments about the student's performance
- Be immediate and frequent
- Enable students to correct their own mistakes when possible

8. Assess performance

At the end of a course, student performance is assessed in order to determine if the desired learning has occurred. Keep in mind that assessments should match the stated objectives in order to provide accurate judgment.

9. Enhance retention and transfer

Once the final exam is complete, most students assume that the course is over. However, it is important to help students apply their knowledge to areas outside of the course. To do so, it is a good idea to provide learners with meaningful context in which to use this new knowledge.

Application of Gagné's Nine Events

Gregory is an instructor for an online introductory course in child psychology. After conducting a preliminary survey of the students in his course, he finds that they all come from various backgrounds and are studying in very different fields.

Gain attention

He begins his course by showing a short video of a mentally troubled adult and then asks the students to propose ideas explaining what may have occurred in the subject's childhood to that would have shaped his adult mind. (This can also be done in the form of a case study.)

Inform learner of objectives

Gregory then provides students with the objectives of the course.

"By the end of this course, you will:

- Recognize and identify a variety of childhood mental disorders.
- Identify the prominent theories in child development.
- Apply certain childhood development theories to various real-life scenarios."

Stimulate recall of prior learning

To prepare students for the content that they will find in his modules, Gregory poses a question before each module that puts students in the right frame of mind.

Present stimulus material

Every week, Gregory presents content related to the course. In his modules, he uses learning objects such as timelines of child development, drag and drop exercises, and case studies for students to discuss in the discussion board. When presenting content, Gregory makes sure that he has provided plenty of examples that everyone in his class can benefit from.

For example, in module three, Gregory presents Piaget's stages of cognitive development. To explain the stages, he uses the fictional accounts of Anna and Pascal, two cousins who are of the same age. The students are presented with the development of the cousins from birth to age 14 and study the stages as they progress further into the story. This way of presenting the material is engaging, as students will naturally be curious to know how the story ends and will follow the events closely as they encounter Piaget's stages of cognitive development.

Provide learner guidance

To guide students in their learning, Gregory is always available to answer questions via email and phone within 48 hours. He also reads and comments on all of the discussion board posts.

The numerous tables and visual aids that Gregory uses also allow the students to remember concepts better than merely reading text explaining the concepts. Though it may not readily seem so, this is also a form of learner guidance.

Elicit performance

In addition to his case studies, Gregory ensures that each module in his course contains a self-check quiz at the very end. This allows students to see if they understood all of the material before continuing on to the next module.

Provide feedback

As mentioned previously, Gregory comments on student discussion board posts and answers questions within 48 hours. However, he never provides students with the answers. Instead, Gregory asks students guiding questions that will enable them to correct their own mistakes.

For example:

A student explains in a post that the inability to conserve means that a child in the preoperational stage is unable to keep things and loses them frequently.

Gregory asks the student to recall the narrative of Anna and Pascal playing with their mother's beaded necklace.

The student now understands that an inability to conserve means that a child in this phase will believe that a string of beads set up in a "O—O—O—O" pattern will have a larger number of beads than a string which has a "OOOO" pattern, because the latter pattern has less space in between beads (or Os).

In addition, Gregory uses polls to see how students did on their self-check quizzes and to assess how many of them need more information or practice in order to grasp certain topics or concepts.

Assess performance

To assess student performance, Gregory divides students into groups and assigns each one a case study where they must identify the mental disorder of a child and determine in which stage of development this may have happened. Students must justify their answers and post their conclusions on the discussion board.

An exam is also administered at the end of the course.

Enhance retention and transfer

Throughout the course, Gregory has made sure to provide real life examples, so that students could relate these examples to their own relationships with children. In doing so, he hopes that the knowledge gained in his course will be transferred to other courses in psychology that his students will take as well as to other areas in their lives.

Resources

Integrating Instructional Design in Distance Education. View by Theory: The Nine Events of Instruction.

<http://ide.ed.psu.edu/idde/9events.htm>

Kruse, Kevin. Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction: An introduction

http://www.e-learningguru.com/articles/art3_3.htm

Instructional Technology Master of Arts at Virginia Tech. Lesson 8, instructional Strategy

<http://www.itma.vt.edu/modules/spring03/instrdes/lesson8.htm>

If you need assistance or have any questions, please contact Digital Education Strategies Instructor Support at dehelp@ryerson.ca, or call 416-979-5000X4561