

**PINPOINT**

If you were asked to sum up the psychology of learning in three words, it would be 'less is more'.

Donald Clark

Transferable Principles

You may not be interested in the design of elearning materials, I grant you. But you'll find that what's been discovered about elearning, also covers teachers' everyday practice. The principles are the same. Don't believe it? Just check out these pointers against your own teaching.

This material was taken from Donald Clark's brilliant blog (details below).



When the learning goal requires a deep understanding, explanatory visuals that show relationships work best.

Ruth Colvin Clark

Less Is More

Mayer found the more precise the communication, the better the learning. The more words are added to the explanation, the worse the learning. Why? Working memory is overloaded by the extra words to process. The advice is "cut it 'till it bleeds!" So, write simply, chunk up more paragraphs, use bullets— you know all the usual strategies. Sure, simple, but very effective.



Design learning environments that allow learners to control their own rate of progress.

Ruth Colvin Clark

Text And Graphics Good

We process information in two channels: verbal and visual. So use both. But not all visuals are equal. Of little value —and often detrimental— are decorative visuals, mainly in the form of clip art. Better are representational visuals and best are explanatory visuals.

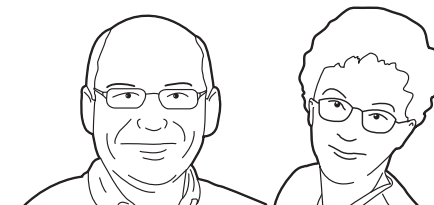


When teaching how things work...still visuals [are] better than animations...because animation overloads our brains.

Ruth Colvin Clark

Richard Mayer and Ruth Clark

If you want to know what the research says about elearning, these two are your best bet for comprehensive evidence. Their studies and books are legendary and are a constant reference to designers of learning around the globe. This PinPoint summarises their discoveries and extracts the principles you should heed.



Avoid Eye Candy

The gratuitous use of graphics used just to fill the space, overloads working memory and slows up learning. Clip art and entertaining movie clips are the major culprits.

Redundancy

Here's an example. Students reading text about lightning accompanied by colour photos showed 73% less retention than other students who only had simple line graphics with the text. Less is more.

Personalise

When writing, use a style that's more conversational. No, don't try to talk like a teenager, or be over-friendly but make it seem like you are talking not simply lecturing.

Avoid Ear Candy

Yes, I know your students love music. And you may even believe it makes them more intelligent. But... it's cognitive overload again, slowing down the learning process.

Keep It Close

When text is used alongside images, they should be close together. Why? Because the act of moving your eyes to find the image that goes with the text overloads the students' working memory.

Conclusions

Many common elearning practices are wrong — they harm rather than help learning. It helps to stick to the core learning pointers and explain them simply. And repeat.

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