

Motivating techniques

This chapter dives into motivational theories and techniques used in face-to-face and online educational settings. After exploring this chapter, you should be able to:

- ✓ Explain the importance and benefits of motivation in education,
- ✓ Identify your participants' learning styles and motivation,
- ✓ Select appropriate online tools to engage and motivate all types of learners in your educational courses.

The chapter includes the following sections:

1. *What is motivation and why does our life depend on it?*
2. *Motivational theories and how to apply them – the role of the educator*
3. *Practical advice and tips – how to involve and motivate learners with different learning styles*
4. *Motivation in face-to-face, online synchronous, and asynchronous learning*
5. *Challenges: what if your learners are not motivated?*
6. *Questions for reflection*
7. *References and resources*



Designed by vectorjuice / Freepik

1. What is motivation and why does our life depend on it?

Motivation, as the name suggests, is what 'moves' us. It is the reason we do anything at all. No surprise that an entire body of literature has sprung up around it – different theories, different understanding, different approaches.

Why do we do the things we do? What drives our behaviour? What motivates us and what does it mean?

Simply stated, motivation is what people **WANT** to do, **CHOOSE** to do, and **COMMIT** to do. Motivation is “*the WHY*” that makes people do what they do. It is “*the WHY*” that makes people choose an object or a goal over another and forego something pleasurable to pursue their object of desire.

Motivation is not only important on its own: it is also an important predictor of learning and achievement. Learners who are more motivated to learn persist longer, produce higher quality effort, learn more deeply, and perform better in the learning environment and generally in life.

We as educators, of course, would like to have learners who immediately become interested in what we teach, and be excited, enthusiastic and curious throughout the whole program. However, if you already have any experience in digital education, you will agree that motivating learners is one of the biggest challenges in online teaching.

Before we move to the practical tips on how to motivate digital learners, let's look into the science behind the concept.



Designed by upklyak / Freepik

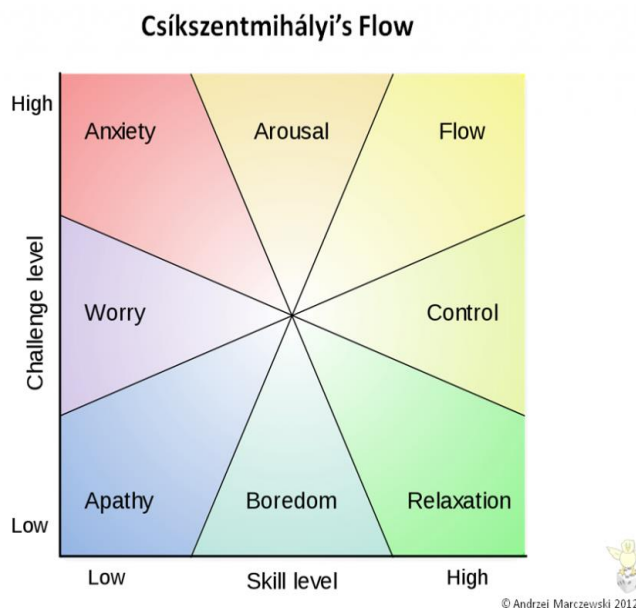
2. Motivational theories and how to apply them – the role of the educator

For creating interesting, highly engaging digital educational programs, you have to know what drives, what motivates people. Psychologists and scientists have developed several theories to help explain the way the human mind works. Here we will present three of the most relevant ones and hope that you will apply them in creating courses that inspire and motivate people.

1. [Flow Theory](#)

Take a moment and try to remember a situation when you felt completely absorbed in something, so absorbed that you lost sense of time. Psychologists would say that you might have been experiencing a mental state called flow. When we are in the state of flow we feel a burst of energy, enjoyment, and engagement.

Being in the flow is the proven sign of [intrinsic motivation](#), according to **Mihály Csíkszentmihályi**. In this moment you are totally absorbed in whatever you are doing, and all your attention is directed to the action. Time stops. You forget to sleep, eat, do everyday usual things. Creative personalities who experience this state call it “being in the zone”.



In digital education you are in flow if you are fully engaged with the course and move through the program with ease and pleasure. You know and can control the pace and flow of the learning process. Our goal is to bring learners to the state of flow – it will maximize the effectiveness of educational programs. When learners are motivated, engaged, it increases level of comprehension, retention,

students will recall and transfer knowledge with ease. When the process is pleasant, learners can lose themselves in the learning process and overcome challenges effortlessly.

Tips to help learners experience a state of a flow:

- **Make the task crystal clear.** Try to explain what needs to be done in detail without leaving room for doubts. Learners will be able to be efficient and enjoy the process.
- **Make sure to provide feedback.** When feedback is timely and well structured, it helps learners to learn from possible mistakes right on the spot and boosts their self-esteem and confidence.
- **Show the big picture.** Help learners to see the big picture – how different parts of the course are connected to each other.
- **Make sure that the challenge and the learner's ability is well balanced.** The flow theory states that we learn best when there is a balance between the level of difficulty of the given task and our ability level to perform this task. This is a vital point. If you get the task that is too easy for you, if it doesn't challenge you and it happens constantly, you can easily get bored and lose interest in the course all together. On the contrary, if the task is too challenging and you are not fully equipped to overcome it, your skill level is too low for this challenge, here too you can lose motivation and just give up.
- **Delegate control over the environment.** Try to create an environment where learners feel that they can influence the flow and pace of the course. It can be done by asking, consulting, involving learners in choosing the content, skipping some parts, or moving back and forth between modules.
- **Keep the content clutter free.** Try to minimize distractions, so students will not lose concentration. If a program includes too much content, too many visuals, it can interrupt the flow and cause feeling overwhelmed.



2. Self-Determination Theory

According to the self-determination theory people are motivated to grow and change by three universal needs – need for **competence, connection, and autonomy**. If these three needs are fulfilled, people feel motivated – they are self-determined.

If you want your learners to be motivated and engaged in the learning process, keep in mind these three psychological needs while designing your course.

Autonomy: Learners have a need to make their own choices, feel in control and act according to their own values.

“I CHOOSE THIS”

AUTONOMY

Competence: Learners have a need to gain mastery, learn different skills and feel effective. When learners feel that they have necessary skills that are needed for success, they will be more motivated to participate in the educational process.

“I CAN DO THIS”

COMPETENCE

Connection or relatedness: Learners have a need to feel socially connected, valued, respected, feel that they belong.

“I BELONG”

RELATEDNESS

Guidelines for using self-determination theory for motivating online learners

- ❖ To address the need for **Autonomy** digital education, keep in mind that you should provide learners with opportunities to feel that they have some control over the learning process. For this you can use following tips:
 - **Format** – provide a choice on the format of assignment – it can be essay, presentation in various ways (Power Point, Canva, Prezi) or interactive platform (Kahoot, Menti, Mural, Padlet). When learners feel that they can make a choice, they get more motivated.
 - **Content** – allow learners to choose which content from the program they want to present.
 - **Grading** – you can involve learners in discussion about how it would be better to evaluate and grade their progress.
 - **Freedom to choose the lesson** – design your program in the way that learners could choose what to learn and explore different ways of reaching learning objectives.
 - **Variety of options** – on top of the mandatory part of the program, prepare and offer optional learning modules. It gives students freedom of choice to take it or not.
 - **Open Modules** – make sure that modules you offer to your students are open and available 24/7, so they can visit and use them any time they wish.
 - **Personalized Adventure** – if you are using gamification methods, set it up in the way that learners could choose their own strategy and build their own virtual identity.

❖ **Competence**

We strongly believe that it doesn't matter what we teach, one main goal is to help learners develop their competencies, because like chain reaction, it leads to confidence. When learners believe in their abilities, they start using gained knowledge for solving real-life problems. Keep in mind these few tips when designing your educational program, whether it be synchronous or asynchronous learning.

- **Selective release.** One complaint from long-term online course learners is that they get overwhelmed by the information, content of the course. If this is a case of low motivation, you could use the selective-release option that many learning management systems have in common; it enables the educator to release content of the course not at once, but as needed.

- **Checklists.** Another proven way to help learners not to feel overwhelmed by the course material is to provide checklists so they can know what and when will be coming in the program and be ready for it.
- **Metacognitive reflection.** Using this method, you can help learners to reflect on lessons learned from previous experiences and plan ways of improvement. This method helps learners to see the bigger picture and be in control of their learning process.
- **Celebrating success.** To help learners feel more competent, and motivated, give them relatively easy assignments in the beginning of the program and gradually make them more difficult.
- **Using Feedback.** To stay motivated, learners need constant and professionally given feedback on their work. Provide learners with detailed feedback to help them overcome their shortcomings and enhance their skills. Provide feedback which will make them feel confident and encourage them to strive for excellence. Check out our blog about [giving feedback in digital setting](#).
- **Challenging.** Keep in mind the skill level and abilities of your learners and challenge them appropriately.
- **Scaffolding (learning pattern).** This instructional method ensures that learners slowly and gradually develop their skills building on existing knowledge.
- **Show-Do model.** Simulations and guided practices are great ways to let learners practice their newly acquired skills in the safe virtual environment.

❖ **Connection and Relatedness**

The idea of relatedness is rooted in our basic need to feel connected. As eLearning designers, we should design courses that connect learners to other participants. Here are some ideas how to make your course feel more "social":

- **Use the word "we"** as often as possible. It will help learners to feel confidence that they belong and are on the same journey as others.
- **Use avatars** to create a sense of personal touch. [Personal and course Avatars](#) help people emotionally connect with the content and each other.
- **Include social media presence** where course participants can communicate, find like-minded learners, and develop bonds based on shared interests and experiences. For example, a FB group.
- **Use interactive tools.** Here [you can find 15 interactive tools](#) for your course that will help learners interact with people with similar goals and aspirations.

3. Learning Styles – our preferred way to learn and teach

As an educator, you probably heard about the theory of learning styles. Even though it is useful information, and we believe you could use it for designing your educational material and delivering the program, as a disclaimer, we want to mention that research shows nobody is strictly one type – we learn in different ways and in different situations. Check out an article in *The Atlantic* ([“The Myth of Learning Styles”](#)) which describes the theory, but also explores how learners rarely display one learning style.

Despite the different views, we decided to share information about learning styles, because experience shows that presenting material in a variety of ways motivates and engages learners better than using just one style of teaching.

One of the complaints from online learners is that most **courses are** heavy on text or lecture, and that there is a scarcity of different instructional methods. This sort of "flat" classroom may work well with verbal learners, but for students with other learning styles this approach would be very challenging. So, let's look at what we can do to make our digital programs, online education and learning process more responsive to learning styles.



Take the [test to find out your personal Learning Style](#) from Carolina University

Here are some learning styles that we, as educators, could take in consideration when designing the course and delivering the program to be able to motivate and engage our learners ([Taken from Marian University](#)):

- **Visual:** Learners who prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- **Aural:** Learners who prefer using sound and music.
- **Verbal:** Learners who prefer using words, both in speech and writing.
- **Physical:** Learners who prefer using their body, hands, and sense of touch.
- **Logical:** Learners who prefer using logic, reasoning, and systems.
- **Social:** Learners who prefer to learn in groups or with other people.
- **Solitary:** Learners who prefer to work alone and use self-study.

As digital educators, we can use different teaching tools within a single course so that our courses are adjusted to the various learning styles. Here are just a few examples:

- **Verbal learners** appreciate any written format,
- Recorded lectures are welcomed by **Auditory learners**,
- **Visual learners** are looking for videos or diagrams,
- **Physical learners** will strive with anything they can touch, try, experience,
- Games, quizzes, and activities are great for **logic and reasoning**,
- **Social learners** enjoy discussion boards and group projects,
- Self-reflection through journaling is enjoyed by **solitary learners**.

Every learner has personal preferences. Some people love theoretical inputs, others need real-life examples to understand a concept better, some are action-driven, and some prefer a space to sit and think about the material.

These preferences don't mean that this is the only way a person learns. Our suggestion is to make your program as diverse as possible with content and methods chosen to accommodate learners with different learning preferences.



3. Practical advice and tips – how to involve and motivate learners with different learning styles

Let's focus on three major learning styles and see what kind of tools you can use for motivating visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners.

Educational tools for visual learners

Visual learners tend to learn best through seeing. Pictures, diagrams, concept maps, symbolism, videos, and other visual presentations are just a few of the things that work well in a visual learner's education toolbox.

- [MindMapping](#) – A mind map is a learning tool that allows users to create and share visual representations of things like lectures, notes, and research. You can find a variety of commercial and free mind mapping software tools available. However, [WiseMapping.com](#) is a free website that allows for the creation of visually appealing mind maps directly through a web-based interface. You can use mind maps for collaboration projects – they can be shared and used by different learners simultaneously.
- [MindMesiter](#) – This mind mapping tool is great for people who want to be able to visualize what they're learning. *MindMeister* allows users to create, share and manage mind maps online and offline.
- [Screencasting](#) – Screencasting is the process of recording your computer screen while you are working on a task. Usually there will be an audio narration or on-screen text-based narration, as a short video. In online education, for visual learners, screencasting can be an excellent tool, as well as for the auditory learners if you will provide narration too. It is especially useful when you want to explain “how-to” concepts in using computer software, performing tasks on the internet, or other visually oriented tasks that can be displayed on-screen.
- [Bubbl.us](#) – This is a flash-based brainstorming tool that allows users to chart out thoughts, story ideas and homework. The images that can be created through this free web app will help visual learners learn productively and efficiently.
- [Visuwords](#) – This online graphically based dictionary is great for visual learners who want to look up the meanings of various words and concepts. *Visuwords* connects concepts and words to encourage retention.
- [TeacherTube](#) – *TeacherTube* works like YouTube but is dedicated to hosting instructional videos. This free site hosts videos for visual learners on nearly every topic imaginable.
- [Pics4Learning](#) – This free image library was designed specifically for teachers and students. It hosts thousands of images on a wide variety of topics.

Educational tools for auditory learners

The best way for auditory learners to learn is through listening. Lectures, oral presentations, music, and background sounds are just a few of the things that help auditory learners understand and retain more info. Here are some digital tools you could use to make your course adjusted to the needs of auditory learners.

- [Voki](#) – *Voki* is an excellent way to add audio to your program. *Voki* is a tool that allows you to create your own talking character which can then be imported into the classroom, blog, website, email or profile. It enables you to add audio to an announcement, assignment, or discussion. Adding sound will help the auditory learner in understanding short instructions for assignments, announcements, and discussions.
- [WavePad](#) – This free software can be used for sound editing (for Windows or Mac) and allows you to record and edit audio within minutes.
- [Audacity](#) – This easy-to-use audio editing software lets you record and edit audio. It is free to use and works across multiple platforms (Mac OS X, Windows, and GNU/LINUX.)
- [Free Audio Books](#) – Audio books can help auditory learners enjoy books and get through their assigned reading. You can get a list of 25 places to find free audio books right here on this site.
- [ReadPlease](#) – This award-winning text-to-speech software can read web pages, translate copied and pasted text to speech and perform other helpful tasks. *ReadPlease* isn't free, but it is reasonably priced.
- [NaturalReader](#) – Like *ReadPlease*, *NaturalReader* is designed to read text that is stored in your computer. You can get a free version of *NaturalReader* or upgrade to paid versions that have additional tools.
- [PodOmatic](#) – By using this site, auditory learners can create, find and share podcasts. *PodOmatic* hosts the world's largest selection of commercial-free podcasts.
- [Midomi](#) – This unique search engine is powered by sound, not text. You can find the music you're looking for by singing, humming, or whistling ten seconds of the tune.
- [PodcastDirectory](#) – This website is a great place to search for free podcasts by subject. Users can also search by country, region, city, language, and popularity level.
- [ProfCast](#) – *ProfCast* isn't free, but it is low-priced and incredibly valuable. Auditory learners can use this simple tool to transform PowerPoint presentations and other slides into podcasts.

Educational tools for kinesthetic learners

Best way for kinesthetic learners to learn is by doing things. Any projects, lab experiments, note-taking and other activities that allow participation and a hands-on approach are the best tools for kinesthetic learners.

- [Flashcard Exchange](#) – Flashcard Exchange is the world's largest flashcard library. By making flashcards, kinesthetic learners can improve their retention ability.
- [Google SketchUp](#) – Using this free drawing software from Google allows kinesthetic users to create, modify and share 3D models.
- [ClassMarker](#) – Here you can create free online quizzes (with time limits) to test knowledge of any subject.
- [SparkNotes](#) – The site offers free study guides, quizzes, and other interactive aids for readers.
- [Quia](#) – Here you can create your own educational surveys, quizzes, games, and activities. There is a subscription fee, but you are eligible for a free 30-day trial.
- [Quizlet](#) – Quizlet is a unique platform for helping learners get involved in the learning process. Here you can create your own flashcards and quizzes or study materials that have been made by other students.
- [Kahoot](#) – Kahoot! is a great quiz-based learning platform that works for hybrid learning and flipped classroom situations by making learning fun and engaging.

4. Motivation in face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous learning

Face-to-Face	Synchronous	Asynchronous
<p>Face-to-face interaction offers different ways to effectively motivate learners. Being in the same physical environment provides plenty of opportunities for using appropriate methods for different learning styles, a variety of verbal and nonverbal communication tools, motivating gestures, and group dynamic techniques. It's especially relevant when we talk about the tools used for Kinesthetic learners.</p>	<p>In synchronous education the main challenge in motivating learners is that you are not in the same physical environment and communication channels are limited. But at the same time, it opens up new possibilities - using a huge variety of digital tools and techniques.</p> <p>The main thing to remember is to design a program taking into consideration the needs of all learning styles. In this case you will have something for everybody, and it will be easier to motivate and keep them engaged. So, use a variety of instructional methods – including visual, auidial, and textual formats to give all learners an equal opportunity for comprehension.</p> <p>Give timely and sensitive feedback – when feedback is delayed, it can result in the learners' sense of isolation and may even cause some serious deviations from the course.</p> <p>Show your motivation and enthusiasm – only inspired people can inspire others. Even the most motivated and inspired learners lose interest in education in case they don't see the same interest in their teacher.</p>	<p>Because your interaction with learners is limited when you design and run an asynchronous educational course, instead of facilitating the process where you can motivate learners directly, your role here is to design the environment and include motivational tips. For example, Facebook groups where everybody can meet.</p> <p>This kind of education requires individual responsibility of the learner, puts the most emphasis on an individual's drive, and the task of the educator is to set up an environment that drives self-motivation.</p> <p>While designing the program, pay attention to the learning styles – make sure that you include a variety of methods, tools, techniques so everybody will have something for their personal taste.</p>

5. Challenges: what if your learners are not motivated?

When discussing the challenges for the motivation of learners to be fully engaged in the learning process, there are a lot of things that can go sideways. According to the research [Motivation of online learners](#), there are three major categories that can influence your learners motivation:

- **Internal factors** are related to the content of the educational program.
- **External factors** are related to the learning environment.
- **Personal factors** are related to the learner's personal characteristics, such as learning style or media preferences.

To overcome some of these challenges, you can try to:

- **Get your learners attention.** Learners are more motivated and focused when they are interested in a topic. Catch their interest with the elements of uncertainty and/or surprise. Use humour, storytelling and game-based learning elements, try unconventional methods of presenting text on the slide by secret code or upside down.
Instead of using quiz or worksheet, invite learners to create something that could demonstrate their level of comprehension, like a flipbook, or a game, or screenshot of their work and then share their creation through the whiteboard space like [Explain Everything](#) or [Google Jamboard](#).
One of the best ways to keep learners' attention is to have variability in your program. Try to use an all-in-one digital tool [Genially](#) that enables users to create animated infographics, interactive presentations, different games and more.
- **Boost your learners' confidence.** When learners feel positive about their potential and achievements and believe that they can succeed, they become more confident and more motivated to try something new and learn. Help learners find a balance between effort and results by challenging experiences. One of the ways to challenge learners to think outside of the box is by various gamified experiences. Use [Digital escape rooms](#) website or [Breakout EDU](#).
One other way to boost confidence is to create an environment where learners can feel that their success is generally based on their own abilities and efforts, rather than on such external factors such as decisions of others. For this purpose, you can use a Digital [choice board](#).
- **Increase learners' satisfaction.** The learners' positive feelings about their educational environment, learning experiences and personal accomplishments is directly connected with the motivation and engagement in the learning process. Increasing intrinsic satisfaction provides opportunities for learners to share their accomplishments. One of the proven ways for this is to create a [digital portfolio](#), which they can update from time to time. Portfolio creation is a fun and creative process and a great way for personal reflection, collecting and saving projects and papers and sharing them with others.

6. Questions for reflection

1. *What is the best way for you to learn? How could you enrich your learning style?*
2. *What motivates you as a learner? What are the challenges and distractions that cause you to lose motivation?*
3. *What do you do to stay motivated and enthusiastic when teaching others? What techniques do you use for self-motivation?*

7. References and resources

Lehman, R. M., & Conceição, S. C. (2013). *Motivating and retaining online students: Research-based strategies that work*. John Wiley & Sons

Selvi, K. (2010). Motivating factors in online courses. *Procedia-social and behavioral sciences*, 2(2), 819-824..

Timmis, S., & Cook, M. (2004). *Motivating Students towards Online Learning: Institutional Strategies and Imperatives* (No. NEB; 10).

Lehman, R. M., & Conceição, S. C. (2013). *Motivating and retaining online students: Research-based strategies that work*. John Wiley & Sons.

Curless, T. A. (2004). Motivating students in distance education. *Distance Learning*, 1(5), 19.

Webpages:

1. [Designing for Motivation: three theories eLearning designers can use](#)
2. [The role of motivation in learning](#)
3. [How to Motivate Learners Before, During and After an eLearning Course](#)
4. [E-learning industry - how to motivate elearners](#)
5. [Motivation and Online learning](#)
6. [10 Learning Styles for Online Education: Adaptive Learning](#)
7. [Developing Online courses for all learning styles](#)
8. [The Visual Learning style](#)
9. [30 of the Best Educational Tools for Auditory, Visual and Kinesthetic Learners](#)
10. [Best 7 strategies to increase student motivation online](#)
11. [5 tips to enhance motivation in eLearning](#)
12. [4 Ways to Motivate Students in the Online Learning Environment](#)
13. [17 Tips to Motivate Adult Learners](#)
14. [Infographic - 5 musts for motivation in online learning](#)