

Cognitive Load Audit

Ready to design training that works with the brain, not against it? Use this practical checklist to identify where your training system or learning experience creates unnecessary cognitive load:

I. EXTRANEOUS LOAD CHECK

Reducing unnecessary cognitive friction

- Can learners find what they need within two clicks from a single, predictable starting point?
- Is the visual design free of decorative elements that don't support learning?
- Are instructions positioned exactly where learners need them, not buried in a separate document?
- Is the path forward always obvious without requiring learners to guess?

II. INTRINSIC LOAD MANAGEMENT

Calibrating content complexity

- Do you know what learners already understand before introducing new concepts?
- Is complex content sequenced to build foundational understanding first?
- Are you teaching at the right level for this specific audience (not too easy, not too hard)?

III. GERMANE LOAD OPTIMIZATION

Supporting active knowledge-building

- Does the design include time and space for learners to process and connect information?
- Are learners required to recall and apply knowledge, not just recognize it?
- Is there a clear, explicit connection between new information and how learners will use it?

IV. SUSTAINABLE ATTENTION DESIGN

Maintaining cognitive capacity over time

- For virtual sessions longer than 45 minutes, are there structured processing breaks built in?
- Does the experience balance visual and auditory information thoughtfully?
- Have you eliminated competing stimuli and navigation friction that fragment attention?

If you're answering "no" to more than two items in any section, you're likely creating cognitive overload that's preventing learning from taking hold.