

# Nothing 'micro' about the benefits of microlearning!



## **Published by**

Write Online, Write Limited

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# Contents

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<b>Microlearning: a new way to learn</b>	<b>4</b>
Learning that is innovative and effective A microlearning solution for you	
<b>Organisations today face learning challenges</b>	<b>6</b>
Microlearning offers a solution	
<b>Six principles of microlearning</b>	<b>8</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Microlearning is short and snappy</li><li>2. It focuses on one learning objective or outcome</li><li>3. It uses different types of media</li><li>4. It is easily accessible and mobile-friendly</li><li>5. It is adaptable, and designed to be revisited</li><li>6. It is interactive, and measured with learner input</li></ol>	
<b>The advantages of microlearning</b>	<b>15</b>
On-the-job training improves Engagement increases Peer-to-peer learning is easier Learners can consume content quickly and easily Knowledge retention improves	
<b>Trying out microlearning</b>	<b>21</b>
Two key challenges for microlearning The benefits outweigh the challenges	
<b>References</b>	<b>27</b>

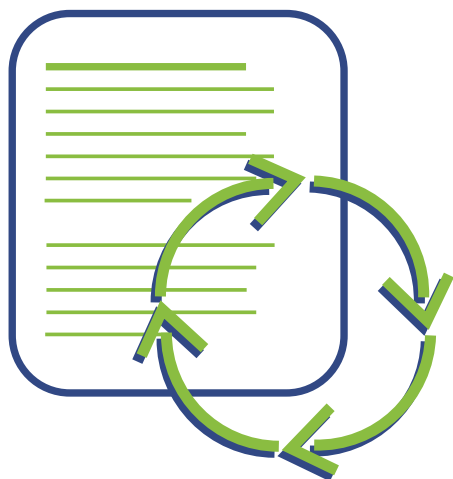
# Microlearning: a new way to learn

Microlearning is a popular and effective learning strategy for individuals and businesses. This white paper explores the benefits of microlearning and recommends integrating it into your professional development programme.

Microlearning is a form of elearning that offers information in bite-sized chunks, enabling learners to find exactly what they need to know.

The father of microlearning, Theo Hug, coined the term in 2005 to describe ‘knowledge nuggets’ delivered in a short learning time (no more than 15 minutes), accessed on demand (Thillainadesan et al., 2022, p.791).

Learners can study when they want to, often weaving small learning bites into their regular working day. Microlearning is easy to absorb and retain – and quick to revise or refresh.



# Learning that is innovative and effective

Microlearning is an important new approach to learning.

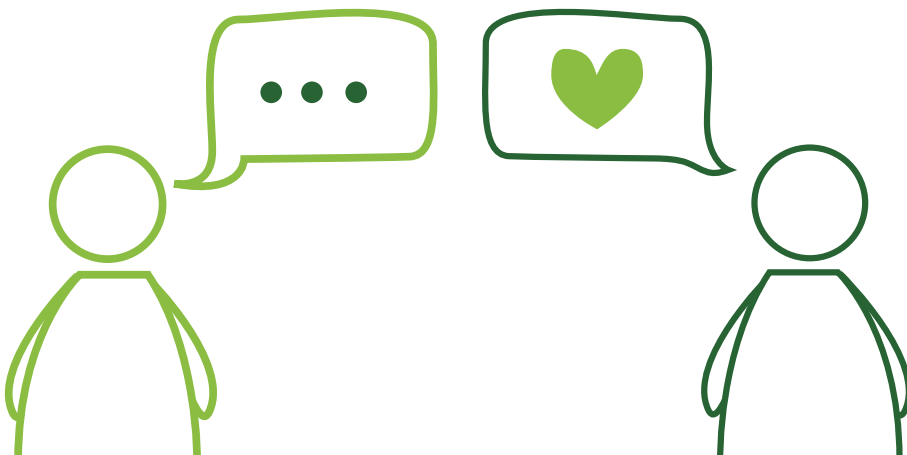
- It encourages short, focused content that is easy to understand and absorb.
- It requires low investment for maximum results.
- It caters to different learning styles and modern learning habits.
- It makes workplaces more resilient to change, with improved staff retention.

Integrating microlearning into your professional development programme will benefit your business and your people. It makes training significantly faster and easier. Its style of delivery can adapt to the diverse learning preferences found in modern workplaces.

People can remember the content and use it in their daily work, especially as it encourages peer-to-peer interaction.

## A microlearning solution for you

We have developed an extensive online learning library – Write Online. You can find out more about this microlearning solution in this paper.



# Organisations today face learning challenges

Most of us know that attention spans are under pressure as social media and internet culture flourish, but how does this affect businesses?

New technologies evolve with new information-seeking behaviour in workplaces. Our brains have become used to ‘noise’ – endless information, on demand, at our fingertips. Learning that meets people’s needs where they are is more important than ever.

**“A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention”**  
(Leong et al., 2021, p.89).

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People now expect to have information readily available in their workplaces – and to understand new knowledge within minutes (Leong et al., 2021). Research suggests people in the millennium age-group prefer to learn from sources like YouTube videos, rather than traditional textbook or lecture formats (Taylor & Hung, 2022, p.364).

Workplace learning should work with this interaction of time, attention, and knowledge. Businesses need to adapt to new approaches as younger people join the workforce, as well as arrivals from other countries bringing their ideas and experience. Effective learning and development capitalises on the best of your new talent, while also investing in your existing staff.

**Research suggests that 80 percent of employees are now learning when they need to, self-managing their own learning.**

(Leong et al., 2021, p.89).

## **Microlearning offers a solution**

Microlearning is an educational and engaging way to learn new skills and information. All microlearning training shares the same core characteristics: just enough information, at just the right time.

In microlearning, brief is better. Microlearning delivers short and memorable nuggets of content that learners can dip into as they choose. They can also revisit the content as and when they need to. The content should pack a punch without taking up hours of learning time. It is easy to access and return to.

This means microlearning can work for everyone. It suits people who love learning as well as those who struggle to study. With no detailed textbooks or long lectures, it feels achievable and so people are willing to try it.

The content can take a variety of forms, including standard text, images, videos, and audio. It can also include interactive media like quizzes, tests, and games. The interactive element is vital to unlock the many benefits of microlearning.

Regardless of the platform, modules must always be short and focused on one key topic.

# Six principles of microlearning

Like any useful learning method, microlearning is based on a few fundamental principles. These set the foundation for how to structure your microlearning approach.

- 1** Microlearning is short and snappy
- 2** It focuses on one learning objective or outcome
- 3** It uses different types of media
- 4** It is easily accessible and mobile-friendly
- 5** It is adaptable, and designed to be revisited
- 6** It is interactive, and measured with learner input



# 1

## Microlearning is short and snappy

Microlearning focuses on courses that are short and easy to access. Learners can complete a lesson or module in less than 15 minutes, and a whole course with dozens of bite-sized units only requires an hour or two.

This allows learners to manage their time efficiently while getting all the information they need. It helps employees to practise 'learning while doing'.

It encourages learners to take a more active part in their learning. Quality learning results when the learner identifies their specific needs and acquires the new knowledge.

This fast pace is good for both learners and businesses. Learners can respond quickly to changing business goals. And course designers can adapt to new training demands as the focus and needs of a business change over time.

Helping businesses adapt to change is where the short and sweet nature of microlearning really shines.



# 2

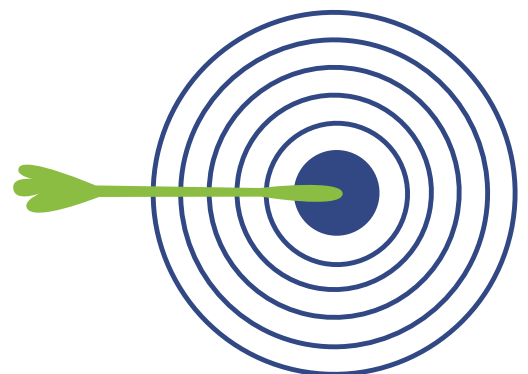
## It focuses on one learning objective or outcome

Unlike complex courses, microlearning sessions have a single important takeaway. This takeaway is always clearly identified throughout the lesson. This helps learners become aware of their personal learning pathway, and gives them a benchmark to evaluate their understanding of a topic.

Microlearning courses should always have a high point or apex. This high point will stick with learners long after they have completed their courses. It separates ideas that can be quite complex into more manageable chunks.

Focusing on a single learning outcome ensures that learners can learn as much as possible about a specific subject. This specific focus prevents learners from becoming confused or distracted by other related concepts.

In a traditional lecture-style model, several key concepts may be taught in an hour, and it's the learner's job to find and divide up the important key ideas from the large glob of new information. With just one objective per lesson, microlearning takes away this learner-heavy groundwork, leaving more space to retain information.



# 3

## It uses different types of media

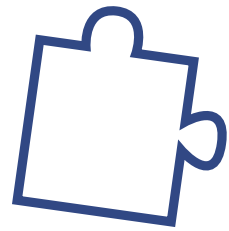
Microlearning courses use different forms of media, which makes learning more engaging. They present concepts and information in interesting, relevant, and memorable ways.

Media types include:

- images
- infographics
- text
- videos (sometimes interactive)
- animation
- games.

This variety of media types helps to make the learning experience more enjoyable, and different to traditional school or university learning. Learners can choose from multiple ways to relate to new information, making new knowledge more likely to stick.

Short-form, multisensory content that focuses on a specific goal is what categorises microlearning as a distinct approach to modern learning.



# 4

## It is easily accessible and mobile-friendly

Microlearning platforms are all digital, so they are easy to access online. Even if learners are training remotely or on the move, they can study from their smartphones and tablets. Flexibility in learning helps everyone – now more than ever.

Courses can cover any subject that regular elearning courses include. But they do so in bite-sized chunks that can be accessed anywhere and at any time. They take elearning principles and tailor them to suit the lifestyle and habits of modern learners.

The portable nature of mobile learning also gives learners more freedom to study at their own pace and in their own time. In turn, this improves completion rates, motivation, and wellbeing.

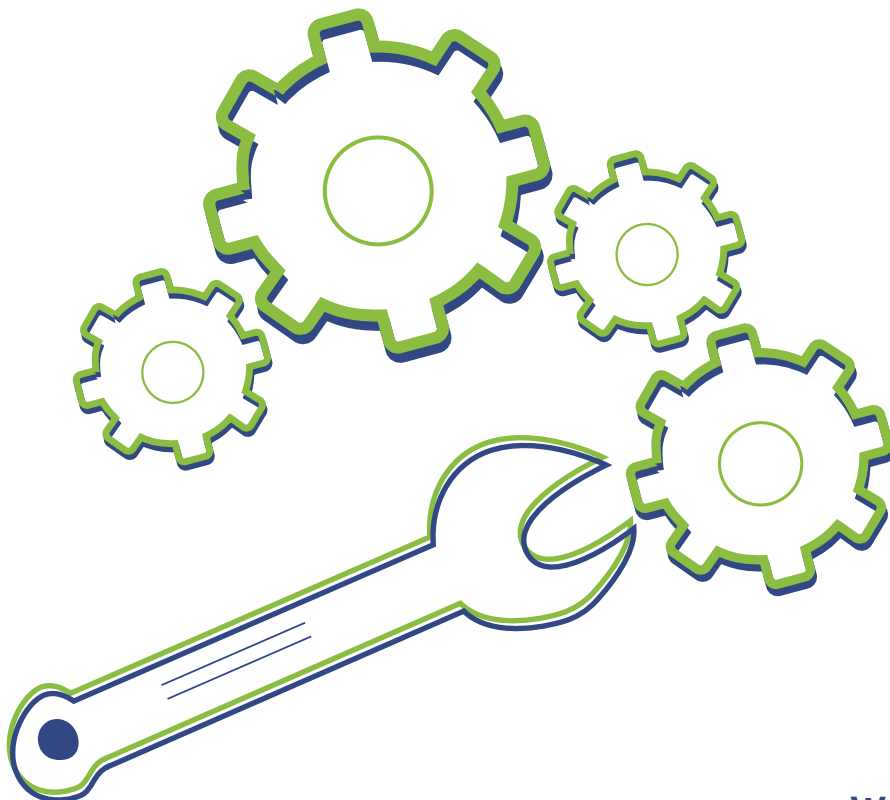


# 5

## It is adaptable, and designed to be revisited

Microlearning's short-form character is complemented by its on-demand nature. Not only is the information easily digestible the first time, but if anything is unclear, the content can be watched as many times as you need (Leong et al., 2021).

It caters to different learning styles, speeds, and schedules. This meets learner needs and caters for the messiness of life and busy schedules – learning on your terms, when you want, and how you want.



# 6

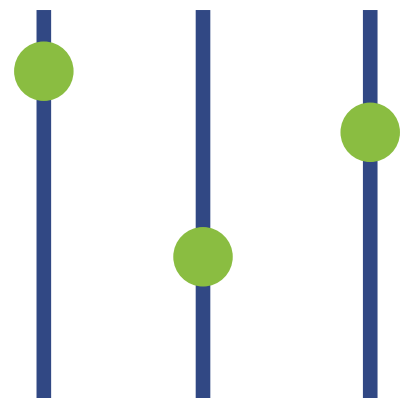
## It is interactive, and measured with learner input

Microlearning is categorised by lots of learner interaction. Interaction in microlearning courses can include:

- quizzes
- answering evaluation questions
- reflecting on learning habits
- giving feedback about the course
- connecting the new learning material with existing knowledge.

This interactive component is key for long-term retention and helps encourage active engagement. Feedback to the learner is a helpful tool to make the leap from short-term to long-term memory, but it must work in conjunction with feedback from the learner.

With microlearning, an important component is to seek out and respond to evaluations from learners (Dolasinski, 2020).



# The advantages of microlearning

What sort of improvement can you expect if you introduce microlearning in your workplace?

## On-the-job training improves

Microlearning courses improve on-the-job training by delivering the information a learner needs, right when (and where) they need it.

A classic example is the tutorial in the latest software tool you've installed. You get stuck, click on help, and a 60-second video walks you through how to address your problem.

Looking at studies where microlearning was used to teach specific skills in a variety of professions, one example is Hesse et al. (2019), which investigated microlearning for dairy farmers. They measured farmer confidence after taking three microlearning modules about specific farm responsibilities. After completing the modules, 80 percent of farmers felt they could perform the task with more confidence.

Another example is in the field of medicine, where microlearning has been introduced through sending text messages and having students reply at critical moments during training for specific skills.



## One person's microlearning course becomes someone else's social learning on the job.

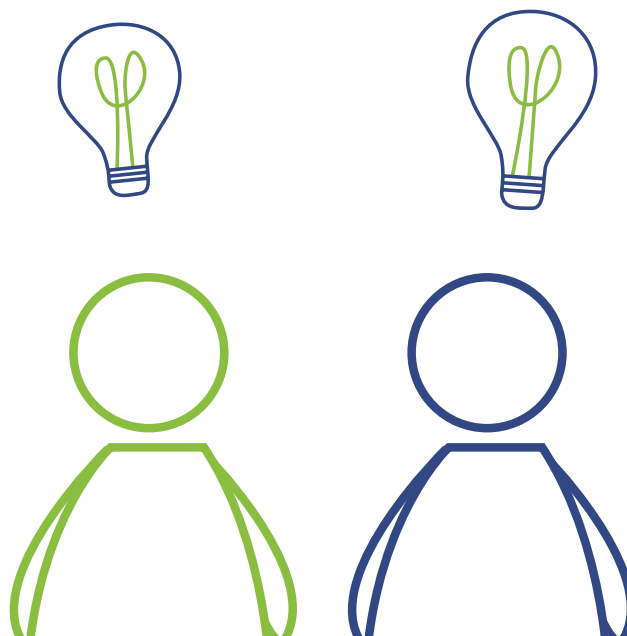
By reducing the lag and friction between running into an issue and finding an answer, microlearning can encourage innovative and collaborative thinking among learners. The more diverse the courses and delivery methods, the more pronounced these effects will be.

People in an organisation will choose different lessons. Each learner will retain information that they can later share with their peers at work.

Because the actual quantity of content to learn is much smaller, people have more room to critically think and interpret the knowledge in different ways. This sharing of information promotes employee development.

Social learning is learning through observing and imitating other people's actions. Through social learning, employees can learn from each other in ways that can benefit the wider organisation.

It also means organisations don't have to invest a lot of time, money, and human resources into training employees individually in traditional ways.





## Engagement increases

The different types of media used in microlearning attract and hold the learner's attention, so they stay engaged for longer.

Microlearning's multimedia approach also comes in small, manageable chunks. Small chunks of interesting content also help learners stay focused on one topic at a time, with no unnecessary repetition or additional explanation. This further helps employees complete each module without feeling either patronised or overwhelmed.

A real-life example is the microlearning module created by EdApp for Pandora. The module helped increase completion rates from 15 percent to nearly 90 percent, while also engaging employees with the content.

Additional studies suggest that microlearning courses generally have completion rates of 75–100 percent, comparing favourably with the significantly lower completion rates of traditional courses (Mery, 2022).

Instead of listening to a teacher lecture for an hour, learners are at the centre of their training (Sirwan Mohammed et al., 2018). This creates interaction and dialogue between the source material and the learner.

The high level of student acceptance of microlearning methods endorses its popularity among learners (Taylor & Hung, 2022). People are expressing a preference for microlearning.

## Peer-to-peer learning is easier

Information is generally much easier to share with other people when it is presented in an online format. Because of this, microlearning can promote peer-to-peer learning. It allows employees to share their courses and new knowledge with their colleagues. Different people will come away with different points that resonate for them.

### Peer-to-peer collaboration:

- deepens understanding of the content
- promotes self-managed teams that support each other
- allows people to connect with each other while deepening their knowledge base
- boosts employee morale and retention rates.



## Learners can consume content quickly and easily

Microlearning students aren't bound to traditional corporate settings. They can engage with course content anywhere and at any time they like, at their own pace. You don't need to book a meeting room for a whole day any more to make sure you get some quality training time.

Modules on different platforms make it even easier to learn. Learners can focus on the lessons they identify as most applicable to them at this point in their careers.

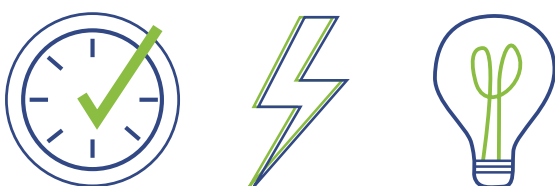
For example, on a platform with an extensive content library, the power to focus on what's most important to them helps engage the learner and motivates them to succeed.

## Knowledge retention improves

Microlearning reinforces its source material by giving learners time to absorb and understand new knowledge. Research has shown that if learning is spaced out over time, it improves retention.

Because the learning is distributed over a longer period, we experience shorter, more manageable bursts of high concentration. Sirwan Mohammed, Wakil, and Sirwan Nawroly (2018) conducted a study comparing the knowledge assessment scores between control traditional learning groups with microlearning groups.

The microlearning approach showed significantly higher rates of knowledge acquisition and better retention. The microlearning group performed learning-related tasks more successfully and with lower rates of error (Sirwan Mohammed et al., 2018).



## Ease of access and the ability for self-direction optimises returns and information retention.

Bite-sized content reduces the cognitive load on our working memory (Leong et al., 2021). When we interact with long-form content, our brains can easily feel overwhelmed by the amount of information to process. If we think of working memory as a cup, microlearning fills our cup to a comfortable level – we can retain all the information without it spilling over the rim.

Our working memory has a limit, and we forget 70 percent of what we learn within 24 hours. Consequently, what we put in our cups should be punchy and effective (Mery, 2022). This bite-size microlearning approach works with the design of our brains and makes information easier to retain.







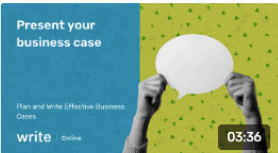


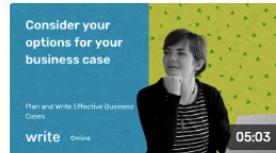
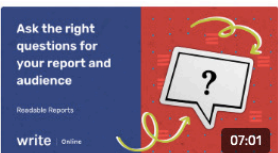

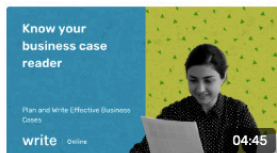
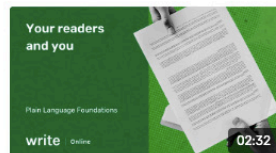
**Studies suggest bite-sized chunks of learning may increase information retention by as much as 20 percent. (Giurgiu, 2017, p.18).**

# Trying out microlearning

Write Online is our extensive online learning library. Its video collection makes the most of the microlearning method, offering learners a collection of short videos on a wide range of business writing topics with exercises, quizzes, templates, and checklists.

Video collections are arranged by writing topic or related to a role category – as well as a curated collection of favourites. Our videos teach in short bursts, with a maximum length of 15 minutes.

They focus on one topic or learning goal for each video. Our content uses multiple media sources, which keeps the ideas engaging and helps concepts to stick in the minds of learners. Write Online's content library is accessible, mobile-friendly, and designed to be revisited as many times as the learner needs.

 <p>The Complete Guide to Communications Planning</p> <p>write Online 4</p>	 <p>Know your audience and how to reach them</p> <p>The Complete Guide to Communications Planning</p> <p>write Online 07:29</p>	 <p>Creating empathy for a global audience</p> <p>Borderless Business Communication</p> <p>write Online 03:36</p>	 <p>Five more ways to write like a pro for a global audience</p> <p>Borderless Business Communication</p> <p>write Online 08:37</p>
 <p>Present your business case</p> <p>Plan and Write Effective Business Cases</p> <p>write Online 03:36</p>	 <p>Hi and Bye: Using greetings and sign-offs in emails</p> <p>Making the Most of Email</p> <p>write Online 07:49</p>	 <p>Five ways to write like a pro for a global audience</p> <p>Borderless Business Communication</p> <p>write Online 04:40</p>	 <p>Consider your options for your business case</p> <p>Plan and Write Effective Business Cases</p> <p>write Online 05:03</p>
 <p>Ask the right questions for your report and audience</p> <p>Readable Reports</p> <p>write Online 07:01</p>	 <p>Plan and Write Effective Business Cases</p> <p>write Online 8</p>	 <p>Know your business case reader</p> <p>Plan and Write Effective Business Cases</p> <p>write Online 04:45</p>	 <p>Your readers and you</p> <p>Plain Language Foundations</p> <p>write Online 02:32</p>

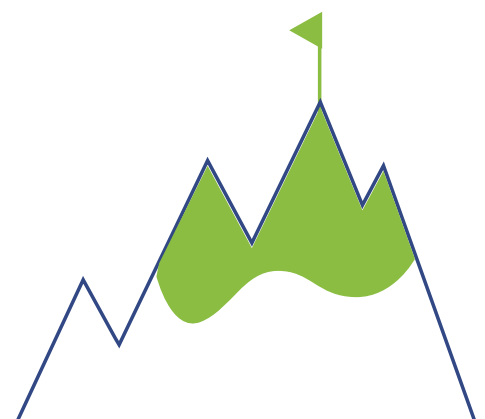
## Our content is perfect for engaging, low-maintenance training ‘on the job’.

Microlearning also fits well with Write Online at a conceptual level. The philosophy of microlearning neatly reflects Write’s philosophy. Write prioritises thinking about the reader first, which is also a key feature of plain language principles. Microlearning’s central concern is the needs of the learner (Mery, 2022).

Both approaches focus on their respective subject and work from there, making content more accessible for the intended audience. This approach ‘forces you to put the content on the back burner and the learner’s experience first’ (Mery, 2022, p.11).

Whether you seek to improve in a specific problem area of writing, learn a new writing skill, or understand effective business-writing practice, our videos can guide learners to success. We also organise our content library into relevant categories, so you can search for content that caters to a specific training purpose.

Our videos help learners to absorb critical business writing skills quickly and effectively. People can learn on the go and trust they’ll get out what they put in. Engaging videos make for engaged learners, and engaged learners retain information.



These skills benefit employees and businesses overall – you can expect to see:

- better writing across all areas
- different learning styles accommodated
- a broad range of skills acquired in a limited amount of time
- team morale boosted
- information shared more widely
- training costs reduced
- flexibility and resilience increased.

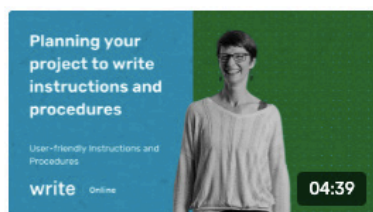


## Two key challenges for microlearning

A key challenge for microlearning is to produce short-form content without reducing complexity (Yeoh, 2023). Because bite-sized content is a core component of microlearning, oversimplification is a risk when teaching higher-level technical or theoretical skills.

### Find a balance between short bursts of core concepts, and thoughtfully explaining a complex idea or learning objective.

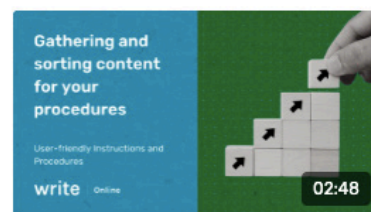
One way to find this balance could be having multiple short videos on a high-level concept that follow on from each other in a series (Dolasinski, 2020). Write Online uses this approach to cover complex topics with its video collections.



Planning your project to write instructions and procedures



Gathering and sorting content for your instructions



Gathering and sorting content for your procedures



Using graphics in instructions and procedures



Combining graphics and text in your instructions and procedures



User-testing instructions and procedures



The other challenge for microlearning is its status as a relatively new approach to learning. Because it's so new, microlearning is still an emerging field of study in academia. Less research has been published about microlearning than traditional learning methods, which means microlearning can be overlooked.

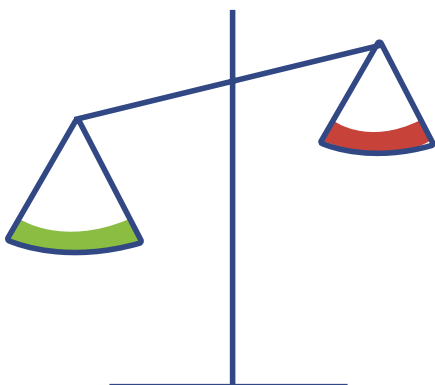
People take time to adopt innovative approaches to training and learning. Microlearning faces a significant challenge in the current lack of studies on its approach, particularly measuring its effectiveness.

## The benefits outweigh the challenges

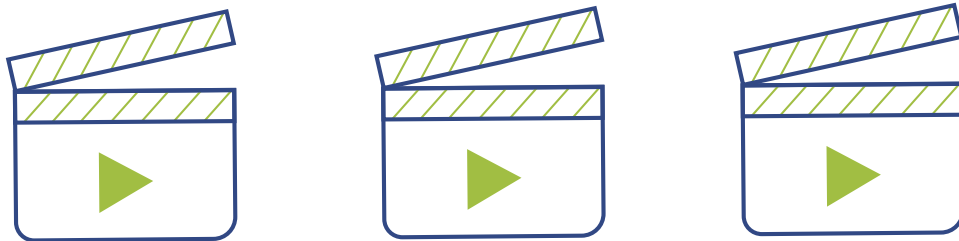
Microlearning offers an important new approach to learning, using short, focused content to achieve impressive results. It optimises low investment for maximum reward. It caters to different learning styles, suits 21st century learning habits, makes workplaces more resilient to turnover and change, and leads to better rates of retention.

Integrating microlearning into your professional development programme benefits businesses and individuals alike. It simplifies the often expensive and time-consuming task of training.

Its style of delivery adapts to diverse kinds of learners and learning. They are more likely to remember the content and use it in their daily work, especially because it encourages peer-to-peer interaction.



Microlearning caters to overwhelmed brains, addressing the contemporary need for a shift in how we deliver learning.



From each of these key angles, microlearning offers new opportunities. Though microlearning faces some challenges, current research and data support microlearning as an emerging educational practice.

One option is Write Online, which has adopted these principles and offers a high-quality microlearning experience for learners everywhere.

We face macro challenges in our working lives everywhere we look – macro amounts of information, macro turnover, macro socio-political change, and so on. Against this backdrop, microlearning is emerging as a smart choice for businesses.

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