



HOW TO ACCELERATE LEARNING

50 Tried-and-True Methods



EARTHLY

FOREWORD

We've all heard the saying “**work smarter, not harder**”. It makes sense, but what does it really mean to work smarter?

We all want to learn faster, better, smarter (or, at the very least, we want it for our employees), and we're always in search simple tricks for faster learning and better information retention. A simple Google search will show you countless articles and videos on “brain hacks” and other tips for smarter learning.

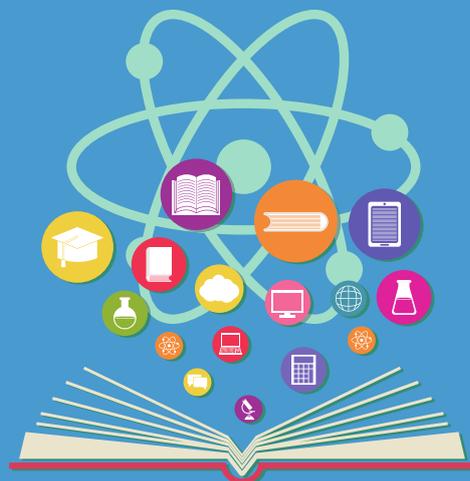
The reality is, however, that there's no one-size-fits-all method for accelerated learning. The method you use will depend heavily on the situation, the number of people involved and even the topic at hand.

To make things a little easier, we've cultivated an ultimate list of **50** ways to accelerate learning. We hope this guide will help you better identify ways to encourage accelerated learning in your organisation.

Anjan Nimmana

CEO

Earthly Systems



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Annual Sales



Hi

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ICEBREAKERS

What better way to start than with an icebreaker? Icebreakers are great for getting a training session or other learning activity moving, helping you to avoid awkward moments and easing a potentially tense atmosphere.

Make sure that you create or use an icebreaker that has something to do with what you want the participants to learn. This helps you set the tone... and enables you to squeeze in as much learning as you possibly can.

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LECTURES

Attending a lecture can be a great way to absorb someone else's knowledge. Look for lectures that are specific to what you want to learn. Be sure to research the speaker, his/her background and the topic beforehand so you're as prepared as possible.

When listening to the lecturer, try taking notes by putting what you hear into your own words. This exercise can help you better remember what you're learning.



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CONFERENCES

Conferences are another great way to learn from speakers and prominent figures in your industry. Research the conference beforehand to figure out which sessions are most relevant to what you want to learn.

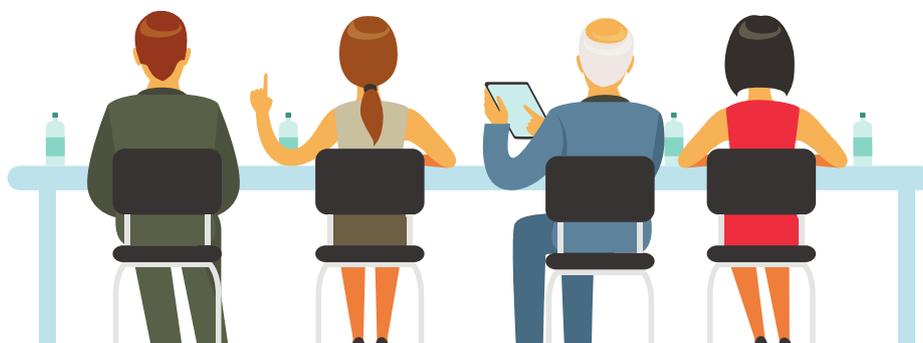
You want to get the most out of these events as conferences can sometimes be expensive. Get your whole team involved and send different people to different sessions. Then, in the office, you can get together and share notes.

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WORKSHOPS

Just by nature of their name, workshops imply ‘work’. Learners who attend workshops know that there is going to be some degree of work involved. The idea is that a workshop is a lot more about applying what you’re learning, rather than just learning something entirely new.

Make sure that any workshops you organise or attend have distinct outputs and takeaways.

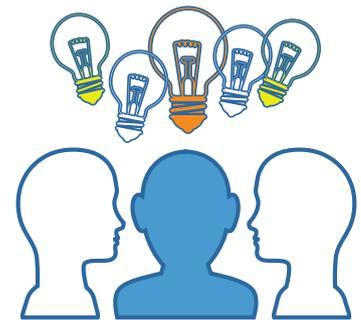


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ANALOGIES

Sometimes tricky concepts that are hard to grasp are best communicated via an analogy. An analogy involves taking something that's familiar to the learner and comparing it to something they're learning about.

As an example, in a training session for your customer service team, you could ask: "how is working in customer service like being part of a sports team?". These examples can help learners break out of their shells and give more concrete answers.

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MOBILE PHONE APPS

You don't have to look much further than your mobile phone to find some excellent learning options. There are many new apps that can help you deepen your learning - from quizzes to reflective exercises.

Some popular learning apps include **Duolingo**, **Lynda** and **Coursera**.



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BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming sessions are quite simple and are an underestimated form of learning. You don't need much equipment for a good brainstorm - just a handful of people and something to record your ideas with.

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CHARADES



Charades is a great, energising learning activity. It can really lift the mood and energy of the room, particularly in a training session. Be sure to link the activity to the topic at hand so that learners can recognise the connection and not see it merely as a fun, random activity.

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ASKING FOR FEEDBACK

One of the best ways to learn can be to ask for feedback. When asking someone for feedback, be as specific as you can about what area you want feedback on. The more specific you are, the more likely you are to get relevant, useful feedback.

Don't just look to supervisors for feedback; peer feedback can also be a handy tool when given in the right way at the right time. Have a system in place that allows for simple, honest feedback can offer excellent in-the-moment learning.

APPRAISAL REVIEWS

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Appraisal reviews are more formal, more specific forms of feedback. They're often performed in organisations once a year or once every six months as a way to encourage employee progression.

Appraisal reviews are great opportunities for reflecting on learning that's already taken place and to identify what future training can be done. Be sure to plan for these reviews, ask searching questions, and set objectives for the coming year that you can then reflect on in the next review.



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ASKING AN EXPERT

Bringing an expert or panel of experts into your organisation can offer a great learning opportunity to your employees. Sometimes you don't even have to look externally, as there may be an expert on your chosen topic within your organisation already.

Prepare questions for your expert(s) beforehand, but encourage learners to put forth their own. These expert sessions can be held in-person during a live event, or could even be hosted online.

BREAK OUT SESSIONS

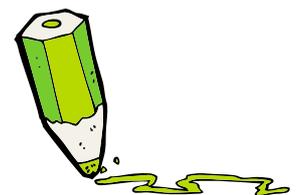
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Break out sessions are often held in conferences, workshops or seminars. They involve breaking the group of learners into much smaller groups so they can discuss what they're learning face-to-face.

These sessions are a great way for learners to share ideas and formulate opinions. Learners often say this is the most enjoyable part of a workshop!

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DRAWING



Ask learners to draw what they're learning, rather than merely making notes. Remind them you're not looking for something fantastic- you simply want to encourage them to think outside the box and connect with what they're learning.

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BUDDYING

A buddying system is particularly useful for new employees. This involves pairing a new learner with someone who is more familiar with the organisation or the topic at hand.

By buddying an employee up with a peer, they may feel more comfortable in asking questions they would not otherwise ask, progressing their learning.

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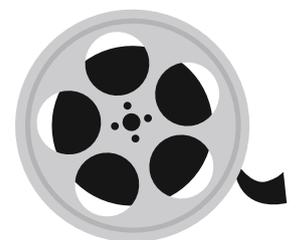
FLASHCARDS

Flashcards are commonly used when learning a new language, but they can be incredibly useful when learning any new skill - particularly one that involves new terminology. They are great tools for reviewing what's been learned or for introducing new topics.

You don't even need a big budget - all you need is a good colour printer and a laminator.

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VIDEO



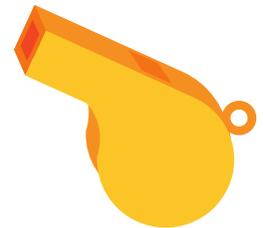
Videos can offer a great way to learn visually. YouTube offers videos that allow you to learn on nearly any topic imaginable. Also consider **DVDs** and look for **TV programmes** that are relevant to your topic or industry.

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COACHING

Good coaches can help learners reach their full potential. If you don't have time to become a qualified coach, consider looking for online resources and easy tools to use with your learners. Coaching doesn't always have to be one-on-one. Team coaching is a simple technique that doesn't necessarily have to involve a trained coach.

For example, the clinic format encourages a group of learners (typically five) to take two minutes each to state an issue they have that needs resolving and then going around the group to ask questions and give advice. In the end, the learner is encouraged to review the process and reflect on what he/she learned.



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CASE STUDIES

Learners typically enjoy being able to apply what they've learned to a practical workplace setting. You can take the risk out of this activity with a case study.

Try to make your case study as close to reality as possible. Consider taking a real-life workplace scenario and disguising it. Small groups of four to five learners are best for case study activities.

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WHITEBOARDS

Using a flipchart or whiteboard in a learning environment can offer a much-needed respite from PowerPoint slides or any other form of presentation.

Prepare your flipchart or whiteboard beforehand, but be sure to leave space so learners can engage with them. Ask learners to come up and write on them: getting people moving can stimulate the mind, encourage retention and waken up a room.

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COLLABORATION

Encouraging the right group of learners to work together on the right piece of work can be a great learning opportunity. These situations allow learners to learn not only from the work itself but from each other. Encourage them to reflect on their learnings at the end of the collaboration, including thinking of ways they can work together in the future.

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DRAMA



Watching a drama unfold can breathe life into commonplace scenarios. Consider hiring actors (or finding some willing ones within your organisation) to act out a situation that is relevant to what you're teaching. Give them the chance to improvise as they go along, particularly if they have experience in that area.

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PHOTOS & IMAGES

Carefully chosen visuals can bring a learning subject to life and can make the learning more accessible and more relatable. Include pictures and images in your presentation slides, workbooks and other activities to make them more visually appealing.

Consider using professionally-printed posters in your training, or include them around the office as an everyday reminder of what your employees have learned.

DELEGATION

Letting go and delegating work isn't always easy, but it can have massive learning benefits - both to the person being delegated to and the person doing the delegating. It allows these individuals to learn from each other and the way they approach the task.

Be sure to allow some time for reflection at the end: learners might be amazed at how much they can learn from someone else.



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PODCASTS

Podcasts can turn an employee's commute into a learning experience. There are many fantastic free podcasts out there, and you can encourage learners to subscribe to their favourites so they'll never miss a new episode.

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GAMES



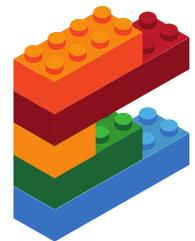
Games can also give your learning a fun, slightly competitive edge. They are shown to release higher levels of dopamine, which can lead to higher engagement and retention.

Find some random, simple props (like a deck of cards or box of straws) and challenge yourself to come up with as many games as you can with them. Alternatively, stick to classics like a simple game of Pictionary.

If there's a system or a process that you train for regularly, consider creating a board game to help convey the concept in a fun way. Board games are a great way to get learners engaged, share what they know and collaborate with one another. This doesn't have to be expensive - simply print it out on cardstock or a vinyl banner. Make your game a little bit competitive to get everyone involved.

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MIND MAPS



Brains don't learn linearly, and so taking notes in a linear way doesn't always work. Using a mind map allows you to take notes in the same way your brain actually thinks. They can be great reminders of what you've learned, and creating something yourself can help with retention.

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DISCUSSIONS

Whether informal or formal, discussions are a great way to promote debate and challenge static thinking. They encourage learners to see things from a fresh perspective and really listen to what other people have to say.

Facilitated discussions can make this process a little easier, particularly if the subject-matter is complex or there are difficult individuals in the group.

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JOB SHARE

Consider getting two people to share a role - either full-time or part-time. By having two individuals working in the same position, you allow for different perspectives. Both employees can learn from each other when it comes to different ways of approaching a task and can give each other feedback on their performance.

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MENTORING

Mentoring is similar to coaching but involves pairing two individuals who have similar skills. By matching the right mentor with the right mentee, establishing ground rules and creating a guiding roadmap, you can enable a learner to progress and develop at a much quicker rate.



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E-LEARNING



There are so many great options for eLearning out there at the moment. There are countless providers of free and paid eLearning content, like **Skillsoft**, **Udemy**, **The Open University** or **Skillshare**.

Alternatively, if there's something in particular you want your employees to learn, you can create your own eCourses. This allows you to get as specific as possible and even allows you to measure learner success rates. (If this is something you're interested in, give us a call - we'd love to help)

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RESEARCH

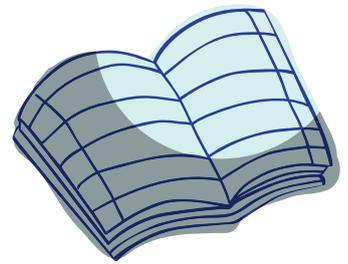
There is so much information available right at our fingertips on the internet today. Encourage learners to explore what's out there.

Consider refining your search to academic articles using tools like **Google Scholar**. Professional journals contain hundreds and thousands of academic, peer-reviewed research and can offer some great insights into a full range of topics. Many of them can be accessed online.





HANDOUTS & WORKBOOKS



Giving learners something to take away with them after a workshop or training session helps them review the learning they've gone through. Handouts can be simple, one-sided laminated pieces of paper, whereas workbooks should be more personalised, allowing learners to take notes and record exercises.

Make sure your takeaways are colourful and interesting, and concise enough that learners will actually read them.



PHYSICAL WALK-THROUGHS

Sometimes an employee will be required to learn something high risk, with no room for mistakes (such as in medical professions). In these instances, you want the learner to become as comfortable as possible with the situation at hand before applying it in the workplace.

Be creative and develop a physical representation of the problem. Walk through it with your learner and encourage them to pay attention to every little detail.

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ROLE ENLARGEMENT

By stretching a learner's role - either horizontally by expanding the areas he/she covers or vertically by giving him/her more responsibility - you are encouraging them to learn something they didn't know before.

When doing this, be clear about what you want them to achieve and always ask them to reflect on what they learned afterwards.

JOB ROTATION

In addition to expanding a learner's role, consider giving them the chance to try on someone else's job. This is a great way to ensure training for cover, but it also establishes greater teamwide empathy and respect through a better understanding of how roles interact.

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ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

Of course, this is an incredibly broad learning method and can be approached in many ways. Learners may not even realise they are learning on the job. To make them more aware, set clear targets and give them the feedback they need to improve their performance.

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BOOKS

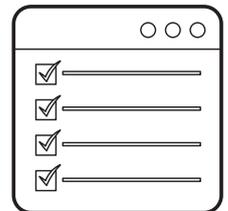


Perhaps this is an obvious one, but you can never underestimate the power of books! Many are now available online, and you can carry several at once using an e-reader.

While reading, it's essential to stop and reflect. Consider making your own notes if you really want the learning to stick.

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QUIZZES



Quizzes encourage healthy competition and can get the team spirit flowing. These kinds of activities produce dopamine and can help learners be more engaged with the content. Try not to limit their use to reviews, as guessing is still a great way to learn!

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PROJECT WORK

When an employee is new to a role, they often want to get involved in a real project as quickly as possible. While you may hesitate, this is a great learning opportunity. Accept that the learner will make mistakes and encourage him/her to learn from them.

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MICROLEARNING

Sometimes the best way to learn is in short bursts. Expose your learners to little bursts of information periodically, such as short videos or even pop-ups on their computer screens. This can be a useful tool for trying to modify performance or behaviour.

NETWORKING

Meeting new people is one of the best ways to learn, as it exposes you to new ideas and skills. Every city has networking events. Browse through them and examine their program of events to see if they have something to offer that suits your learning needs.

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PRACTICE

Role-playing or practice situations allow learners to apply their knowledge in a realistic way. They can make mistakes safely and learn from them in a risk-free environment where feedback is encouraged.

PROPS

Consider using props or physical models in your learning activities to provide more context. These visual cues create associations and can aid with memory.

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PRESENTATIONS

The right presenter can make even the dullest of subjects come to life. Be sure to use short bursts of presentations in training sessions; otherwise, you run the risk of boring your learners.

Encourage learners to take notes using their own words, not the presenter's. This makes the learning more memorable and allows for the maximum benefit.

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QUALIFICATIONS



Professional qualifications can ensure your employees are recognised within their industry for having reached a certain level of competency. Look for public courses where your learners can exchange their ideas with others in the industry, or consider university and college courses.

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TEACH BACKS

If you know you have to teach back what you have learnt to a group of peers rather than just memorising it for yourself, learning can be entirely different. Encourage learners to share what they learn by putting it into their own words.

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DEMONSTRATIONS

Have learners observe someone completing a task, and prompt them to think carefully about what's going on. Ask the questions about the task's key attributes, and encourage them to take notes.

You can further the learning by then asking the learner to complete the task themselves.

MISTAKES

We know that we're meant to learn from our mistakes, but sadly our natural reaction is to try and forget them. Pause and reflect on your performance and consider what went wrong. Feel your way through the process, and don't be afraid of a little trial and error. See mistakes as an opportunity for growth and development.

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REFLECTION

Reflection doesn't come easy to everyone, and it can be an uncomfortable process - but it is so, so necessary. At least once a week, try to look back on what you've learned and how it has helped. Once you get into the habit of reflecting, you'll quickly see what an eye-opening and necessary exercise it is.

ABOUT EARTHLY

Earthly Systems is a global SumTotal post-production services provider.

We are a team of passionate people who promise to change your world for the better by combining SumTotal with our world-class services to train and elevate your workforce. We are the only global SumTotal-exclusive post production services provider.

We help organizations around the world gain maximum value from SumTotal investment— by optimizing SumTotal within their organizations. We are here to help you take advantage of the power of SumTotal, with specialized services that are catered to your current— and future—business needs.



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