

# Introduction

Jason K. McDonald & Richard E. West

Our purpose in this book is twofold. First, we introduce the basic skill set and knowledge base used by practicing instructional designers. We do this through chapters contributed by experts in the field who have either academic, research-based backgrounds, or practical, on-the-job experience (or both). Our goal is that students in introductory instructional design courses will be able to use this book as a guide for completing a basic instructional design project. We also hope the book is useful as a ready resource for more advanced students or others seeking to develop their instructional design knowledge and skills.

Our second purpose complements the first: to introduce instructional designers to some of the most current views on how the practices of design thinking contribute towards the development of effective and engaging learning environments. While some previous books have incorporated elements of design thinking (for example, processes like prototyping), to date no instructional design textbook focuses on design-oriented thinking as the dominant approach for creating innovative learning systems. Our aim is to provide resources to faculty and students for learning instructional design in a manner consistent with a design-oriented worldview. But because the classic approaches to instructional design are still important for many professionals, we also include chapters that introduce some of the traditional, systematic processes for designing instructional environments. We hope this blend of traditional and innovative views provides readers with a competitive advantage in their own work, providing them with a larger set of conceptual tools to draw on as they address the professional challenges they face.

This book is divided into two major sections. The first, ***Instructional Design Practice***, covers how instructional designers ***understand, explore, create, and evaluate*** situations requiring educational interventions and the products or systems used to support them. In this section, chapters address how we understand diverse learners and their needs; how to explore and frame the educational problems one is solving; how to analyze the context and tasks associated with the problems; how to iteratively generate decisions, prototypes, and solutions; and how to evaluate and understand the effectiveness of an instructional design.

The second part, ***Instructional Design Knowledge***, covers the sources of ***design knowledge***, a variety of ***instructional design processes***, approaches for designing ***instructional activities***, and the ***relationships important for instructional design practice***. This section includes chapters addressing learning/instructional theory, design precedent, both systematic and agile design processes, and practical strategies for using technology wisely, managing projects, and creating instructional activities.

This book was developed as part of the [EdTechBooks.org](https://edtechbooks.org) library of open textbooks. Thus, this book is openly licensed (CC-BY-NC) and free to use, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute, with proper citation. This platform provides many innovative features for students and faculty, including the following:

- Openly Licensed for Continuous Improvement—Because the book is openly licensed, it can be updated continuously as needed. If you notice errors in the book or content that is out of date, please inform us or the author of the chapter.
- Chapter Surveys—At the end of each chapter is a survey to provide feedback on the chapter’s content and writing. Please fill out these surveys as they will help us to improve future versions of the book.
- Available for Customization—Because of its open license, each department can customize the book to meet their needs, including customization to support both graduate and undergraduate education. The following is potential wording you could use in your remixed version of the book: “This textbook is a revision of *Design for Learning: Principles, Processes, and Praxis*, available at <https://edtechbooks.org/id> edited by [Dr. Jason K. McDonald](#) and [Dr. Richard E. West](#) of [Brigham Young University](#).”
- Different Versions To Improve Accessibility—Each chapter can be read online or downloaded as a PDF for offline reading, in addition to audio versions of some chapters. You can also share the book or any chapter through the QR codes available in the top right of the window, or the social media icons.
- Online/Social Annotation—Online and social annotation of the chapters is possible through Hypothes.is integration (free Hypothes.is accounts available at <https://web.hypothes.is/>), through a menu available in the upper right of the window.
- Analytics—Powerful chapter/book analytics provide authors with data about the significance of their work.

To cite a chapter from this book in APA, please use the suggested citation found at the chapter's end.

If you are an instructor who has adopted this book for a course, or modified/remixed the book for a course, please complete the following survey so that we can know about your use of the book and update you when we push out new versions of any chapters.

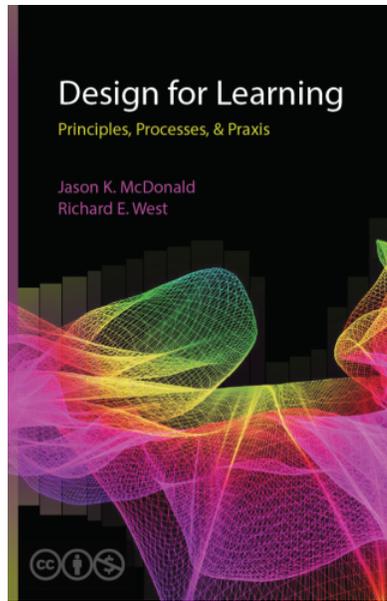
### [Survey to Receive Updates](#)

If you are willing, we would appreciate your feedback on the quality of this textbook, along with a short review paragraph that we can use in promoting this book. To contribute your review [Go to this survey](#).

To contribute a resource to a chapter (e.g. multimedia element, quiz question, application exercise), [fill out this survey](#).

One of the exciting things about the field of instructional design and learning technology is how quickly it evolves. As soon as new technologies are introduced we see instructional designers experimenting with how they might be put to use for learning purposes. The same is true regarding new scientific findings from psychology, sociology, communications, or other human sciences, with professionals in our field scrutinizing them to understand what relevance they might have for improving the learning or teaching process. We hope this book becomes a similar, cutting-edge resource that helps readers implement our growing understanding regarding how to design effective and engaging learning environments.

Good luck!



McDonald, J. K. & West, R. E. (2021). Introduction. In J. K. McDonald & R. E. West (Eds.), *Design for Learning: Principles, Processes, and Praxis*. EdTech Books. <https://edtechbooks.org/id/introduction>



**CC BY-NC:** This work is released under a CC BY-NC license, which means that you are free to do with it as you please as long as you (1) properly attribute it and (2) do not use it for commercial gain.