

# The eLearning Video and Animation Process:

*Everything You Need To Know*

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# THE LEARNING DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS CASE FOR ELEARNING VIDEO

Ninja Tropic

Video powers the world. Not only do we watch video for entertainment, but we consume video to learn about our world. It's no wonder people watch over. It's no wonder people watch over **1 billion hours of YouTube videos every day.**

From an instructional standpoint, video is an effective tool not just for blended learning, but for any learning initiative. When video is productive and useful, it enhances learning. That's why 51% of US adults use YouTube videos to learn new skills.

Learners are already turning to video for information. So why are so many learning departments refusing to do video?



You might think you're doing a good job at eLearning with online courses, but those courses are likely ineffective. Click-through PowerPoint presentations with an articulate storyline are ineffective. You're throwing money away because none of your learners want to absorb information in a bland online course.

With articulate storyline courses, learners have no reason to pay attention. They simply click through, take the quiz as many times as they need to get it right, and move on.

If the goal of eLearning is to change behavior, click-through courses aren't doing anything. That means your learning department is wasting your own resources as well as your trainees' time.

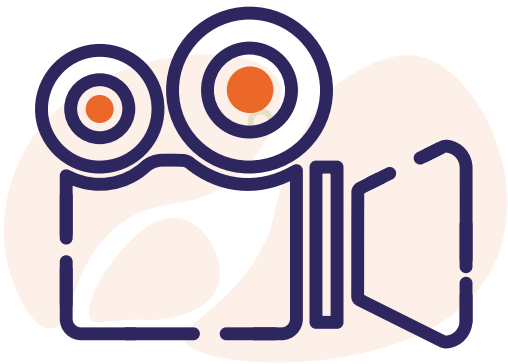
The key to effective eLearning that moves the needle is to make it short, fun, and engaging. You want to build a course that's so interesting learners want to stick around and finish it. That's powerful.

Stop holding learners captive in boring online training. If you wouldn't want to take your own training, that's a sign something needs to change.

# 3 REASONS YOU NEED ELEARNING VIDEO

Your learning department needs video content. There are 3 good reasons your department needs to invest in video training: learners' natural preference for video, industry standards moving towards video, and the incredible financial savings with video courses.

Let's dive into the three reasons your department needs to invest in video and how it benefits both your department and learners.



## *1. The Mind*

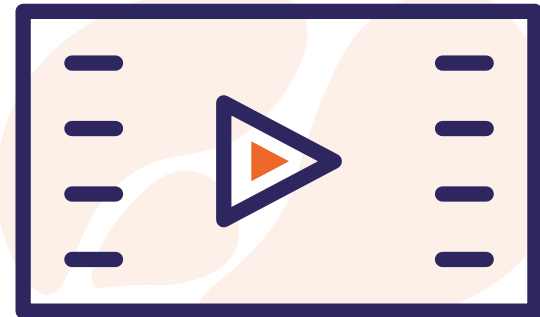
To be a better educator, you have to understand the human brain. According to the Cognitive Load Theory, learners are very selective about what information they commit to memory. If you can't appeal to their sensory memory, there's no way you'll get through to their long-term memory. Since your goal is to change learner behavior, you need to appeal to their long-term memory to see results.

Extraneous information, walls of text, and unrelated graphics distract learners. Their brains tell them, “Oh, this isn’t relevant” and their mind drifts. Traditional classroom learning gives way too many distractions, which is why learners retain very little of what they learn in person. And click-through PowerPoint courses are just too boring to capture their attention.

According to the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, humans need verbal and visual cues to commit information to memory. This facilitates connections in the brain, maximizing learners’ memory.

Video is more effective because it makes learning meaningful. It eliminates extraneous information and allows learners to tune in when their brain is most open to information. It uses verbal and visual cues to help learners commit information to memory more efficiently, too.

- In fact, video helps us retain a lot more information, which is the key to changing behavior. **Learners forget 90% of what they learn in a traditional classroom course.** But when you switch to video, **training is 83% more effective.** If that weren’t enough, learning in bite-sized formats like video is **17% more efficient at transferring skills to a learner’s job.**



## ***There are a few ways to make eLearning video more effective for skill transfer, of course. This includes:***



### ***Limiting video length:***

Humans stop paying attention after the ten-minute mark. eLearning videos should be in the 5-7 minute range to allow learners to rest in between modules.



### ***Skip the formalities:***

Nobody wants to sit through a stuffy course. Even if your organization's voice is formal, tone that down for your video. Formality is a barrier to learning. Be professional but colloquial to make information more accessible.



### ***Interactive features:***

Video is great by itself, but many LMS platforms let you add interactive features to your video. Ask questions or add polls in your course to boost learners' excitement.

Learning departments need to switch to video because our brains want video. Stop forcing a round peg into a square hole; work with your learners' natural tendencies, not against them.

## 2. The Industry

If your department hasn't switched to video for eLearning, you're behind other organizations in your industry. While companies didn't take video learning seriously 10 - 15 years ago, more and more brands are switching to video. Aside from the fact that 94% of learners expect video, there are other factors causing organizations to finally embrace video.

### **Skills transfer**

Organizations are in the business of making money. Employees are there do to the work necessary to keep the organization profitable. That's why your company invests in training the workforce, right?

eLearning courses boost employee skills. As markets become even more competitive, you need to increase your workforce's skillset.

Your organization can't be competitive if you're training employees in a bland classroom environment. There's very little retention and nearly zero translation to their actual jobs. If you want to develop technical skills, leadership, and efficiency, eLearning video is key.

## Measurability

You can't measure the effectiveness of in-person training. Sure, you can hand out quizzes and tests, but these aren't a measure of how effective your training actually was. If the goal is to change employee behavior, you need data proving that's what happened. Otherwise, you can't prove that the learning department's efforts did anything for the bottom line.

Prove your worth to leadership with video. Even if you use YouTube videos, you'll be able to see view time and engagement. Pair video with an LMS and you can get even more detailed information.

## Consistency

If you have a large organization, you likely split up your training. That means employees get different instructors, which affects every aspect of the course. No matter how well you train your instructors, employees will get different information.

Differing classroom experience means employees won't have consistent knowledge. However, video gives everyone the same experience, no matter when or where they take the training. Thanks to consistent information, you don't have to worry about employees falling out of protocol.

Isn't it time your organization became more competitive? Move away from in-person training and boring click-through eLearning. Video is the future of learning, so don't get stuck in the past.



### 3. The Money

If a piece of content is engaging, learners will take action on it. When they take action, they're improving organizational efficiency, which affects the bottom line. But if your learners are blazing through a course without paying attention, you just wasted thousands of dollars of company money.

Video boosts learner engagement and satisfaction, which translates into hard numbers.

First of all, video eLearning is three times faster to develop than other training methods. Thanks to pros like Ninja Tropic, your eLearning department can churn out videos more quickly. Because it takes less time, it costs less money.

Second, eLearning doesn't require paying for an instructor, classroom, equipment, or materials. Your company doesn't have to pay for travel, either, making this a resource-saving training method that still gets results.

Microsoft switched from classroom training to video training and saw amazing results. Their costs went from \$320 per person to just \$17/person, saving nearly \$14 million a year.

On average, eLearning videos are 50% cheaper than traditional courses. Why pay double for a training method that doesn't work? Switch to video to get more results for half the cost.

# THE BOTTOM LINE

Video sticks with us more than any other medium. By synthesizing information, it empowers your learners to make strong connections that translate into changed behavior.

Your learners want training that's quick, easy, relevant, and effective. Ditch the click-through PowerPoint slides and go for what's proven to work. Whether it's the human mind, industry changes, or the financial implications, video moves the needle for your learning department.

The key is to know how to use video for eLearning. But if you haven't done video before, you might not be sure where to start. Ninja Tropic is happy to help eLearning video first-timers.



People often ask us how they should set a budget for their eLearning video project?

# SETTING A BUDGET FOR ELEARNING VIDEO

We live in a world where video content makes up 80% of all internet traffic. Clearly, people want to consume information in video format, which is why it's so important for learning professionals to embrace video eLearning and eLearning video budgeting.

eLearning video and animation are the future. They combine the best of video with an educational component to maximize learner motivation and attention.

But this style of learning is new to many learning directors. How can you get the most results for your learners while preserving your resources? As much as we would love to give you a flat, black and white pricing structure, the reality is that these projects are complex.

## 1. Determine the general scope for the project

You always want to start with your general scope. Understanding the scope of your project will help you prioritize learner needs to build a course that's both effective and budget-friendly.

Use these five questions to determine your project scope before you do anything else.



### *What are your eLearning objectives?*

Before you do anything, you need to define what you want learners to get out of your course. This is done with a learning objective, or your goal for the eLearning course.

A learning objective isn't something simple like "learners will learn about podiatry." You know learners will have achieved a learning objective because of a specific, measurable change in their behavior.

For example, you'll know that your medical course was successful because learners who pass will be able to perform a certain test or procedure on their patients.

Aside from affecting learner performance, your eLearning objective will affect your budget. If you have a very simple learning objective, like teaching learners how to write a press release, you wouldn't need hundreds of hours of video.

But if your learning objectives are about complex, multifaceted topics like medicine or engineering, expect to roll out 200-hour+ courses.

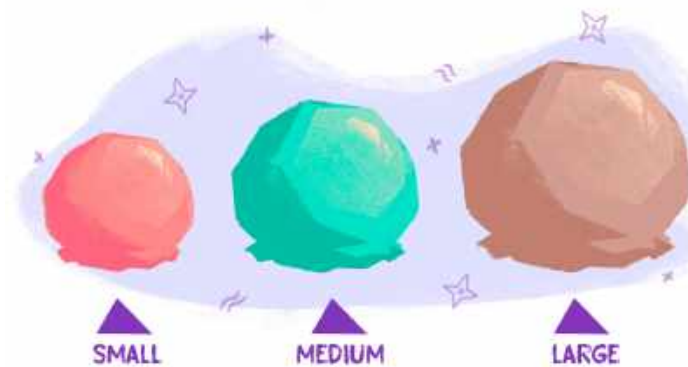
Start with your learning objective to estimate how long and complex the course needs to be. The complexity will affect the length, which in turn affects the price and turnaround time.

## *How long do you want each video?*

Average eLearning videos tend to be in the 2-5 minute range. This is because learner attention spans significantly decrease after that time.

If you want to make the most of your learners' retention, keep your videos short.

Planning your videos this way gives learners' brains a chance to breathe and synthesize information before moving on to the next section.



## How many videos do you need?

The number of videos will also affect your final price.



How many videos will you need to fulfill your eLearning objective? This is based on the complexity of the learning objective and also the fact that average videos are 2-5 minutes long.

If you think the course will take 1 hour, you would need 12 five-minute videos. You'll want to scale up depending on the complexity of your course.

## How quickly do you need your videos?

How quickly do you need your videos?

When do you need to launch this course? If you're working on a time crunch, you can generally expect to pay more in rush fees.

A reasonable timeline would be at least six months out from your course launch date (but this will depend on your video volume, of course). Six months should give you plenty of time to design, prototype, and launch your eLearning course.



## What style would resonate with your learners?

eLearning animation is like ice cream: it comes in many different flavors. It's important for learning directors to choose an eLearning animation "flavor" or style that best suits your learners.

There are plenty of different animation styles, but here are a few popular options:

**Whiteboard:** Whiteboard animations display your content as if a person is writing on a whiteboard. It's an affordable option that's good for short, quick courses.

**2D animation:** 2D animation is our most popular option. It mimics the look and feel of a cartoon and it's great for storytelling.

**3D animation:** 3D animation is perfect for realism, making it the animation of choice for complex, technical topics.

The complexity of your animation will affect your budget. For example, whiteboard-style animations tend to be more affordable, but they might not always be the most engaging option for a 60-hour course.

## 2. Choose your level of animation carefully

Video is the cherry on top of your eLearning sundae. It entices and interests learners in the course material, transforming a mediocre training program to a useful, relevant experience that changes behavior.

But you need to back eLearning video with instructional goals and an understanding of your learners' needs.

That means you have to find the right balance of video and animation for your eLearning course.

On one hand, you don't want to throw a wall of text at your learners. On the other hand, you don't want your entire course to be dramatic or overly-animated. Either approach will hurt the learner experience.

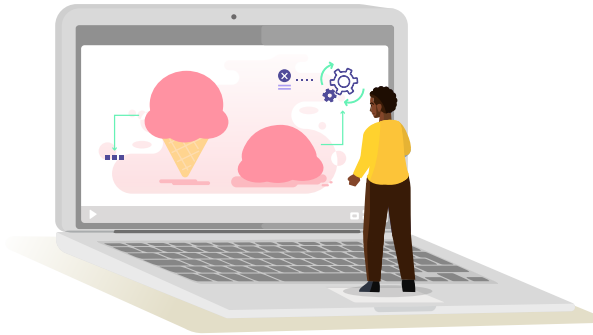
That's why effective eLearning videos strike a balance. You have to understand the level of complexity needed to get your point across without overwhelming users—or setting a wrong budget for your eLearning video.

Your cost per minute will also depend on the amount of animation used in your eLearning video.

For example, Ninja Tropic pricing starts at \$300 for 20 minutes but scales upwards to \$4,000 for 2 minutes of video. There's such a huge range because different levels of video and animation have different costs.

Whether simple or advanced, you'll get better results as long as your animation is tied to learner needs. Choose one of these four levels of animation to help learners retain more information without going over your budget.

## 1. Text and icons



The first level of animation is very simple, using text and icons to communicate your point. There's very little animation for the characters themselves. You might fade in or pop in certain elements to make the video more dynamic, but it's very static.

Text and icons are budget-friendly because they don't require complex movements or motion. This method is ideal for showing quick, simple processes like solving math problems or going through a short checklist.

## 2. Facial expressions and movements

The second level of animation breathes life into your characters.

With this level, characters can make different facial expressions. They blink and do simple motions, like waving their hands. You can also animate aspects of your background with this option.

This level of animation is more dynamic and gets more learner attention. It's also a budget-friendly way to get more engagement out of your 2D characters. This option would be good, for example, for a course on management where you use case studies.

### 3. *Dynamic, cartoon-like animation*

The third level of animation creates 2D animation that's vivid and cartoon-like. This option is smoother and more refined, which makes it perfect for high-quality storytelling.

### 4. *High-level texture*

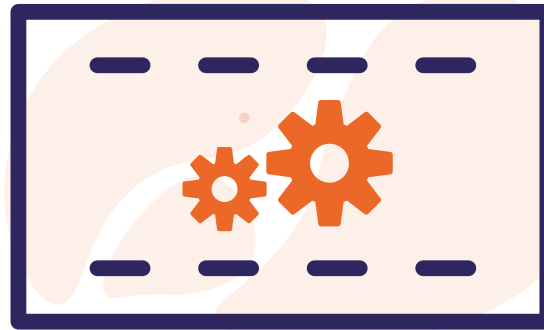
The final level of animation adds texture and smooth movements to your characters. This is the most realistic, organic option and it looks like animations you'd find on TV. This level of animation is perfect if you want to mimic real-world situations and boost your course value.

- Each level of animation will affect your eLearning budget in different ways. You can generally expect to pay more as your animation gets more complex and high-quality.

However, the higher the quality of your animation, the better your chances of learner engagement and getting real results from the course.

Choose the level of animation that serves your learners. Remember, that's your endgame with this course: to change people's behavior with knowledge. Look at your goals, learner preferences, and budget to use the right level of animation for your eLearning video.

### 3. Build a prototype



After you understand your general scope and decide on the level of animation for your project, it's time to build a prototype.

It's tempting to jump right into making all of your videos at once, but prototypes are an essential step in the process if you want to set the right budget for your eLearning project. Prototyping will help you know what it takes to get a video out in terms of skills, processes, and budget.

Prototypes are great because they cut out the ambiguities. You figure out your entire process beforehand and know exactly how much it will cost you. This keeps you from going over budget on your project.

Prototyping also helps you get a better work product in less time. You practice your process ahead of time, which means you can get work done more smoothly on a tight timeline if need be.

When you know the cost and timeline for one video, you can scale up those figures to estimate time and cost for the entire series of eLearning videos.

Preserve your resources by doing a practice run first. That will help you set an overall budget.

#### ***4. Define a fixed rate and timeline***

Now that you've done a trial run with your prototype, it's time to set the budget for your eLearning project. You know your processes and have a good idea of the cost to build one video, so now it's time to estimate your budget for the entire project.

The final step in budgeting is using the cost structure from your prototype. This helps you set a fixed rate for the rest of your videos, as well as a timeline.

# THE BOTTOM LINE

Set a budget for eLearning isn't easy. There are so many factors to consider to know what the project will ultimately cost you. Get the most results possible out of your training without draining your organization's resources. Follow this four-step process to get a better estimate of your eLearning video budget.

Need a little help? That's okay! Ninja Tropic specializes in helping learning directors set the right budget and timeline for their eLearning project.



# HOW TO CREATE MICROLEARNING ANIMATION IN 6 STEPS

## *How to create microlearning animation in 6 steps!*

Learners are already turning to video for information. Your learning department needs video content. There are 3 good reasons your department needs to invest in video training: learners' natural preference for video, industry standards moving towards video, and the incredible financial savings with video courses.

Ninjatropic has perfected the microlearning video process - especially for engaging animation.

## Let's break down the eLearning Animation Process



### 1. Instructional design

This is all about setting a learning objective and overall course goal. For example, maybe you want to teach nurses at a hospital how to determine a patient's pain threshold.

### 2. Scripting

Scripts help you save time while maximizing the value of your course. They are the bones of the eLearning animation.



### 3. Storyboarding

While most eLearning companies use visual descriptions for their storyboards, ours are visual. This prevents revisions later on in the process, saving time. Storyboarding your microlearning videos is the first and the most important step.



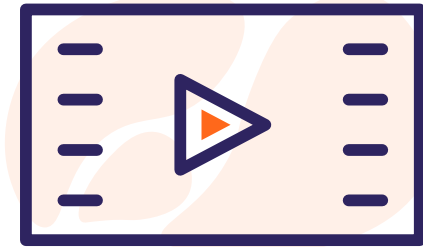


#### 4. *Voice Over*

While we're all about quality visuals, quality audio and narration is a very important component of any successful eLearning animation.

#### 5. *Asset Creation and Animation*

This is where we design the illustrations and create smooth animations that bring the animations to life, making learning more engaging and fun!



#### 6. *Revisions*

We do revisions after storyboarding and the video phase. This changes by project, but by doing revisions early enough in the process, it saves everyone time and money.

Easy stuff right? Kind of but not really. However, we hope the resources provided make the elearning video DIY journey easier. There is technically a masters degree for each of these 6 steps...But that isn't really necessary. We included a list of our top platforms to sharpen these skills to invest in your own skills cost-effectively.

Ninja Tropic makes sure that professional development happens for everyone on our team. That's why we have daily Power Hours. For one hour a day, everyone sits in silence to either develop a skill or work on a fun project. They document what they've learned, too.

Create something like Power Hour for yourself. Even with just an hour a week, you're developing your skills. We love these online video tools to boost your skills:

- Udemy
- LinkedIn Learning
- Skillshare
- Coursera
- School Of Motion
- Domestika
- YouTube

It's great to focus on your learners, but don't neglect to grow your own skills, too. Which of these platforms do you use for personal development? Ninja Tropic can help you on your next project!



## HOW TO WRITE A MICROLEARNING VIDEO SCRIPT IN 6 STEPS

Whether you need to do a live-action or animated video for your educational course, you don't need to hire a professional writer. You and your team have the talent to write a script in-house. However, scripting for educational videos is different than films you might see in Hollywood, or even the SCORM-compliant courses your team may have tried in the past.

The purpose of a script is to pre-plan all components of your eLearning video before investing significant resources into production. This ensures your information is accurate and the flow works well for your learners.

No matter how experienced your on-camera SMEs may be, or how talented your animation team, you always need a script. A script is beneficial for every microlearning video you produce because:

- *It helps you avoid expensive and time-consuming adjustments during the animation or filming process.*
  - *It prevents misunderstandings between your organization and voice actors, on-camera SMEs, or animators.*
- It boosts the effectiveness of your business's educational videos by streamlining the content.*

A script is necessary to keep your microlearning course on the right path, ensuring everything in the course fits within your learning framework. Follow this proven, 6-step formula to write a clear, effective script for your microlearning videos.

## 6 steps for writing microlearning videos

### 1. Write a brief

The best way to start microlearning scripting is with a creative brief. Think of this as your north star for all things eLearning. A brief ensures you get your learners' needs right, as well as follow your organizational framework for learning (or, the reason you're creating this course in the first place).

Start with a simple questionnaire. Ask yourself and your team these questions:

- Who is your audience?
- What keeps your audience up at night? What do they really need to know to do their jobs better?
- How does your audience like to learn?
- What are 3 key takeaways they need to get from this course?
- Where are you going to publish this course? Internally? On YouTube?

Work with your team to fill out this questionnaire. Working with others will help you write a better script, involving critical stakeholders early on in the process to avoid messy edits down the line. This also ensures you don't overlook key components that should be included in your video.

After answering your own questionnaire, create a creative brief. This should include:

- The audience
- The learning objective.
- The animation or video style.

The purpose of this brief is to give you a general idea of the video course's direction. This way, you aren't writing a script from scratch, but working off a defined framework that keeps you on-topic. Spend a good amount of time on this step; the entirety of your course revolves around the creative brief.

## 2. Interview your SME

Once you have a general idea of the course direction, sit down with a subject matter expert, or SME. This is essential for ensuring your eLearning video script is not only relevant, but that it will result in real-world change in learner behavior.

Spend at least 2 hours interviewing your SME. Use Backward Design to ensure your microlearning script will fit user's needs; the SME should be able to help you with this.

Share your brief with the SME. Ask them the following questions and use their responses to tighten up your existing brief:

### **1. What behavior do learners need to change? Why aren't they doing it now? What are the barriers?**

Ask your SME to list the most important on-the-job behaviors that learners should demonstrate as a result of this course. They should specifically focus on measurable behaviors, like doing a process correctly or achieving a mathematical benchmark. From there, ask your SME to list each behavior by its order of importance. For example, "successful performance of safety protocols" would be more important than "completes projects 100% on time."

## ***2. How can you help learners practice these behaviors?***

Now that you know which behaviors you want to encourage in your course, ask the SME how learners can best practice to master those behaviors. If you were training employees on a safety procedure, they would need to practice that safety procedure. From there, the SME can advise on what kinds of activities, like situational roleplay, would be most effective.

## ***3. What information do learners need to practice?***

Your SME has told you which activities will best prepare your learners for real-world application. Now the two of you have to decide what knowledge is essential for completing a practice activity. For example, if employees need to practice the safety procedure, you need to give them the step-by-step instructions on how to do that procedure.

Use your conversation with the SME as a starting point for your eLearning script draft. By this point, you should have a sequential list of the information and activities learners need to experience in your course.

### 3. Start writing the eLearning video script

Now that you've created a brief and an outline for your script, it's time to write the first draft. Remember, your script will go through several iterations. Don't get hung up on finding the perfect phrase; get the information out of your head and clean it up afterward.

Instead of starting with the introduction, consider writing the meat of the course first. The introduction is the hardest part of any script, so if you don't know how to start off with a strong introduction, save it for last. This ensures your introduction touches on all topics in the course, giving an accurate summary of what learners will experience.

You don't need to start with full sentences, either. Write a skeleton outline first that shows the flow of your ideas. For example, if you were training learners on safety precautions in a hospital, your outline might look something like this:

1. Introduction
2. Why hospital safety is important
3. The basics of hospital safety
  - a. Hand washing
  - b. Protective equipment

With microlearning scripting, you have to keep learners laser-focused on the content if you want to change their behavior. Remember, base this outline on your creative brief. Focus on the must-have information and eliminate anything extraneous that doesn't relate to your learning objectives.

## Writing from your outline

Stick with a casual, informative tone when you start writing the script. Even if your organization uses a more formal or conservative tone, you want to be both professional and casual in your microlearning course. Academic or cerebral writing makes it difficult for learners to understand your content. Fortunately, you can be instructional and informative without putting people to sleep. That means:

- Avoiding jargon.
- Substituting complex words for simple words. For example, instead of saying “initiate,” say “start.”
- Writing for a 7th-grade reading level. Use the Hemingway editor to check your script’s grade level.
- Using short sentences.

But simple language is just the start. If you want learners to really retain and apply the knowledge they gain in your course, add stories to your script. The human brain has a difficult time remembering hard facts, but it’s able to remember stories easily.

### How can you package your script within a story?

For animated eLearning videos, try adding characters and scenarios. You can animate a handful of engaging, lively characters that give your educational content more depth. If you don’t want to use characters, you can still package procedures or processes in a storytelling format to get more learner engagement.

## 4. Add helpful markups

Remember, this script isn't an academic paper or a story; it's a helpful document that gives direction to your actors, voiceover artists, animators, instructional designers, and more.

It's important to add comments during microlearning scripting. These markups say where narration is necessary, when to rely on visuals or animations, and which shots you'd like to include. These markups will not only help your business get more mileage out of your talent resources, but streamline your eLearning messaging early on.

Format the document in a way that's easy to understand. That might mean:

- Using a 12-point, sans serif font like Arial or Helvetica.
- Typing all headers in CAPS.
- Adding any music, voiceover, or scene direction in italics. (It should look like this.)

Although you don't need to plan out your entire storyboard at this stage, it's helpful to think of which scenes or images you'd like to include in the final video. What will you need to act out on the screen? What needs to be explained to your audience with visuals?

For example, you wouldn't need to explain what a hospital gown or gloves are in a video for healthcare workers. You can simply show these items with live-action video or with animation. If you plan out the visuals at this stage, you're able to boost the learner experience and deliver more value during the course.

## 5. Read it out loud

The key difference with writing for video is that you need to hear how the content will sound to your learners. Sentences may sound fine written on paper, but out loud, they might be difficult to understand.

Write content that sounds good, not that reads well. Read the script aloud and record yourself. Play the audio back a few times and tweak the script as you listen to it.

If you're trying to stick with a strict time limit for each video, now's your chance to check the script for length. Use these lengths as a general guideline for writing the script:

- 100 words: 45 seconds
- 150 words: 60 seconds
- 200 words: 90 seconds

When in doubt, read the script aloud to test its length. This is the time to add or cut content if you need to meet a certain time limit.

## 6. Get feedback from your team

Finally, ask your team for feedback. After all, nothing is perfect in its first iteration. Share the script draft with your team to see what elements need adjustments.

It's valuable to have an outside perspective on your script. This will help you check for flow, grammar, accuracy, and the overall quality of the content. The more improvements you make now, the fewer you'll need to make when recording audio, creating animations, or filming live-action scenes. Adjustments in the script-writing phase can save you a lot of time and money down the line!

# THE BOTTOM LINE

Whether you choose animation or live-action video, they offer an engaging, visual element that enhances microlearning. Boost your organization's educational course with a well-written script to back up your visuals and audio. You don't have to be a professional to write a great eLearning script: follow these 6 steps to give learners the information they need to succeed.



*The 5 step guide to storyboarding your microlearning videos that will save your budget and deadline.*

## HOW TO STORYBOARD MICROLEARNING VIDEOS?

Most eLearning departments write a script and pair it with a scene description. While that's quicker to put together, the issue is that most people are visual learners. If you don't visualize the course before you build it, you're missing out on easy fixes early in the process.

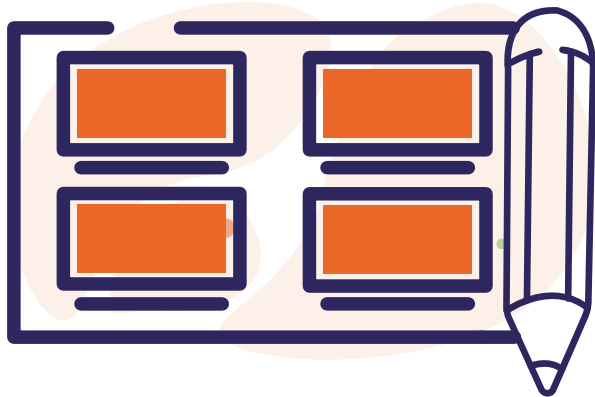
If you go with a visual storyboard, you can see the true elements for your course, like the characters and tone. By putting your energy into a visual storyboard, you can do more revisions upfront, which are faster and cheaper to do.

Visual storyboards aren't common in eLearning, but they should be. Invest in a disciplined process to save more time and money in the long run.

## Here are 5 easy steps to create your next storyboard!

- Review the learner persona and brand guidelines and choose an awesome avatar. Avatars are powerful learning agents that can transform a boring subject into an interesting one. They are relatable characters in a course that share strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats.

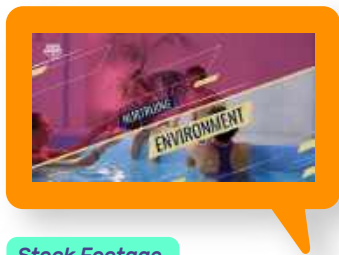
- Research, research, research! This should go without saying... Before you begin any storyboarding for elearning videos, you should conduct contextual research. You're more likely to get a clearer picture of what is actually happening the closer you get to the learner's world.



- Use our template This is an easy to use template free of charge to start drawing!
- Breakdown your script and timeline. Break your script into the scenes and perspectives that are relevant to the learning objective.
- Verify with SMEs and learners. Test your content! You will save your budget and timeline if you get bad news here. Yes, we said it - look for bad news here and then get proper sign-off!

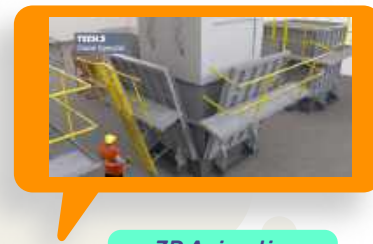
## *Having trouble with this process?*

Storyboarding is very difficult for elearning professionals and even animators. This isn't just about being able to draw. This is about interpreting your script in a creative visual way, telling a story that aligns with your content. By definition, visual storytelling might seem pretty straightforward and simple— it's the art/science of communicating a series of messages using graphics and illustrations.



Stock Footage

2D Animation



3D Animation



Post Production



Whiteboard



# ELEARNING VIDEO ANIMATION STYLES

eLearning video is an effective way to get even the most distracted learners engaged with course material. But eLearning video can feel so complex—how do you choose the right animation style for your next video course?

Instead of guessing, course creators need to think critically about their course content, learning goals, and learner needs. Only then can you design a thoughtful course that will actually change learner behavior.

Not sure where to start? Check out these 5 eLearning animation styles to choose the best option for your course. We'll dive into examples of how to use these animation styles in real-world scenarios, like the medical field, to give you a taste of how each style benefits your course content.

## *The 5 eLearning Animation Styles—And When To Use Them*



### *1. Stock Footage*

Stock footage is live-action video that you didn't film yourself. It's pre-recorded footage that you purchase, typically from stock footage sites like Adobe. Stock footage can actually be more cost-effective than doing live-action film yourself. It's a great complement to other animation styles, keeping your learners engaged. But be careful: stock footage can cross the line from "classy" to "cheesy" very easily. Use it carefully and sparingly.

Stock footage is ideal when you want to show very general, broad images. This stock footage is best reserved for a general, high-level approach. It's perfect for introductory video learning modules. We like to use stock footage to break up explainer videos. They're great for showcasing general concepts, but shouldn't be any longer than 20 seconds. Stock footage can look stale if you use it too much, so always use it with other video styles.

For example, let's say you're creating an eLearning course for hospital staff. You would use stock footage to show a general hospital environment. It would be ideal for discussing the roles of doctors and nurses in the hospital.



## 2. Screencast

Screencasts are another effective type of eLearning video that, when used correctly, can deepen learners' knowledge. Screencasts are simply a recording of your computer screen. You can either record your screen alone or with audio, depending on your screen recorder.

Screencasts are great because they show, rather than tell. They're ideal for software walk-throughs or computer tutorials. If you want learners to maneuver anything on a screen, screencasts are the way to do it.

Like stock footage, you shouldn't use screencasts by themselves. They should last no longer than six minutes, or you risk losing learners' attention. Make sure you use a high-quality screencast so your screen doesn't appear grainy. Ninja Tropic actually cleans up these screencasts in post-production to ensure they're crystal clear in the video itself.

In practice, a screencast clip would be great for teaching nurses how to navigate patient tracking software. You could complement the screencast of the actual software with complementary B-roll footage or animations to keep learners engaged with the material.

### 3. Whiteboard

It's no wonder that whiteboard animations are one of the most popular video learning styles on the market—with the right software, they're fast and easy to create.

Whiteboard animations tell a story with pictures drawn on a whiteboard. They aren't literally drawn on a whiteboard, but instead simulated with animation. Some course creators show a fake hand drawing the whiteboard animation, but most learners think this is distracting and cheesy.

You would use a whiteboard eLearning video animation style when you want to take a minimalist, brand-neutral approach. Whiteboard animation doesn't use a lot of color or character animation.



Instead, you can focus on the key aspects of a scenario or broad steps of a process. You can showcase a ton of detail or keep things very simple; it's your choice. Whiteboard is best used to show general concepts that don't require character animation.

For example, say you want to create an eLearning module that shows nurses how to ask patients about their pain threshold. A whiteboard video would show a lot of detail in the patient's face, but it wouldn't include irrelevant elements, like the hospital room, that don't add to the video. This is all about keeping the essentials to drive home a key point.

## 4. 2D Animation

2D animation is one of the most popular types of animation. It visualizes characters in a two-dimensional space, much like a cartoon. 2D animation is perfect for engaging learners of all ages, evoking emotion that motivates learners to dig into your course content.

2D animation is versatile and highly customizable. In fact, there are three common types of 2D animation course creators use for video learning.

### - 2D motion graphics

2D motion graphics are essentially graphic design with moving elements. This style is common in explainer videos, where there are some visuals and characters, but with limited movement. 2D motion graphics are relatively simple, but still deliver your message in an engaging way.



You should use 2D motion graphics when character movement isn't a key part of your story. For example, you can show the environment and overall scenario with animation, but the focus is still on the big picture, not the fine details. So, if it's sufficient to have your character sitting at a table instead of, say, running a marathon, 2D motion graphics are ideal.

For example, you might use 2D motion graphics in eLearning video course teaching nurses about sexual harassment in the workplace. You don't need to animate inappropriate behavior (we would hope). It's enough to describe inappropriate behavior with engaging animations, and then move on.



## - 2D character lecture

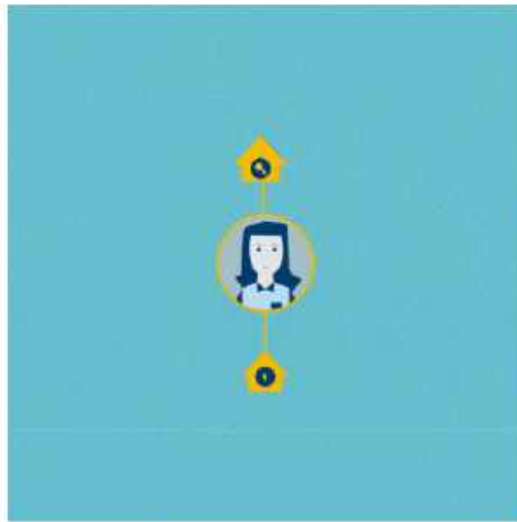
Let's say you have a subject matter expert (SME), but they're either too busy to film or they're camera-shy. You want to feature them in your course, but the logistics are too tricky. In this scenario, opt for 2D character lecture-style video. This animation style can transform a SME into an animated character. The character, in turn, acts as a lecturer in the video.

2D character lecture adds a few more components of animation than 2D motion graphics. It's ideal when you want characters to have accurate lip-sync.

For example, you can use 2D character lecture animation if you want to show the hospital CEO talking about the vision of the hospital. She may be too busy to film live, so 2D character lecture animation puts her expertise to use in a convenient, engaging way.

## - 2D story motion

The final type of 2D animation is story motion. This can showcase a character or a scenario in a two-dimensional space. There are actually two types of 2D story animation:



### *Hybrid*

This blends 2D character animation with motion graphics.



### *Advanced 2D animation*

This includes lip-sync and looks like a professional cartoon. It's very high-end and best used for one, solid video.



Storytelling is at the core of 2D story motion animation. It's better used for showing situations to your learners, or to show situations where multi-character dialogue matters. 2D story motion animation has a broad range of complexity, too. Some have simple character animations, while others use complex character rigs and facial expressions.

2D story motion animation would be ideal for a medical simulation that involves a lot of character interaction. For example, you might use it to show how a doctor explains medical news to a patient's family. The key is to make it feel like a real-world scenario, complete with engaging, emotional scenes.

## 5. 3D Animation

3D animation involves high-quality, state of the art eLearning animation. This immersive, realistic style of animation takes your course into another dimension—literally.

3D is best reserved for large, complex projects. In fact, it can be more scalable than 2D animation because 3D environments involve building the environment and moving a camera. It's more efficient than 2D animation, which requires re-drawing the scene every time a character moves.

There are various ways to implement 3D animation, but we commonly see these three eLearning animation styles.

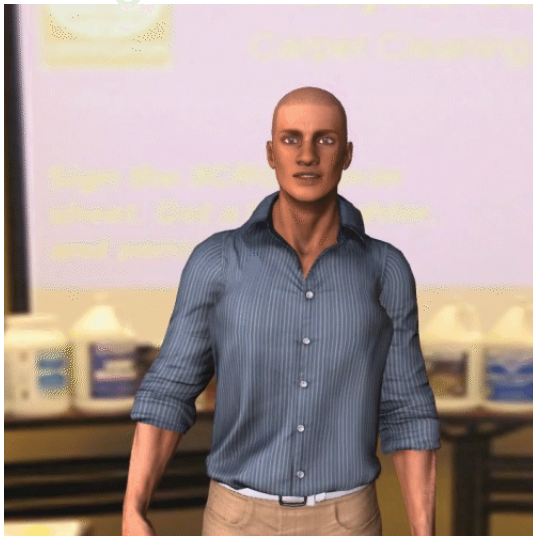
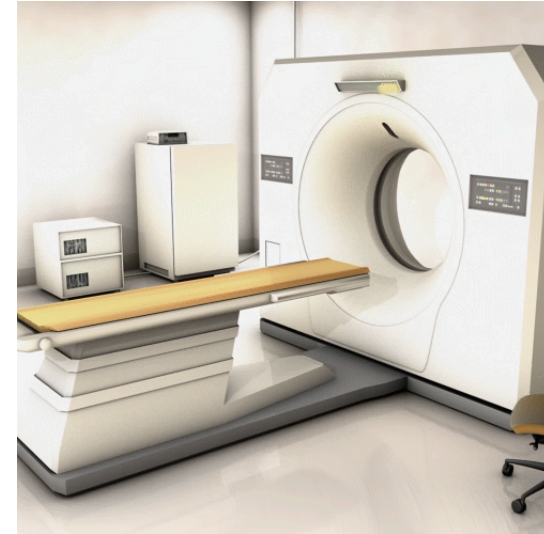
### - 3D character animation

3D character animation focuses on the characters themselves over the environment. It's perfect for showing real-world situations that can be dangerous, like safety procedures. A hospital might use 3D character simulation to show surgeons the proper technique for performing an appendectomy.



## - 3D scenario animation

The third type of 3D eLearning animation is 3D scenario animation. Instead of focusing on a character, this type of animation instead targets the situation. In a hospital setting, you would use 3D scenario animation to show technicians how to safely operate an MRI machine. This would show a room with people in it, but instead of focusing on the characters, it would emphasize the placement of objects and processes.



## - 3D character lecture animation

3D is more realistic. It has all the benefits of a 2D character animation, but feels more immersive. It also gives you the option to rotate the character.

# THE BOTTOM LINE

Video learning gets your learners excited to dive into your course content. But remember, eLearning video still needs to be strategic. Choose from these 5 animation types to find a style that's not only engaging, but effective and appropriate for your course content and learner needs.



# WANT AMAZING VIDEO CONTENT?

## *USE THIS LIVE-ACTION VIDEO PROCESS TO GET STARTED*

Whether it's a professional certification or quick how-to guide, video courses help with engagement, skill development, and even retention.

But there's a problem: many learning departments and course creators aren't sure how to get started with video. Whether you're concerned about the budget, timeline, or skills required to do video right, it's understandable to feel apprehensive.

The good news is that you don't need to spend a lot of time or money to produce amazing videos. If you already have content that you want to convert into a video course, go with live-action video. Live-action video is affordable, simple, and fast to set up.

Best of all, you can film live-action videos yourself, even if you have zero experience with filming. Dive into this step by step guide that will teach you how to take a learning concept and transform it into a live-action video for your learners—without depleting your budget.

## 1. Define your learning objectives



The first mistake learning departments make is that they dive straight into writing a script. That's a recipe for reshoots, more editing, and a poor learner experience. You owe it to your learners to prioritize their needs from the start, and that's why you always begin with a learning objective.

Put simply, a learning objective is what you want learners to get out of the course. It's a statement that says what skills, knowledge, or abilities learners will have when they walk away from your course.

### **Learning objectives are important for several reasons:**

- They help you organize your course more quickly.
- Objectives ensure that every piece of information is relevant to learner needs.
- You have a yardstick to measure learner progress, seeing if your video is actually effective at changing behavior.

**Keep these 2 things in mind when it's time to write your learning objective.**



### **Focus on behavior**

Good learning objectives are measurable; they define which behaviors are successful. After all, the goal of learning is to change behavior. When setting your learning goal, focus on what behavior changes you'll see in your learners.

For example, "Learners will understand this process and implement it in their work" should become more specific. Try something like, "Learners will process 5 files a week using this new protocol with zero errors." If the learners meet these criteria at the end of the course, you know that you were successful.

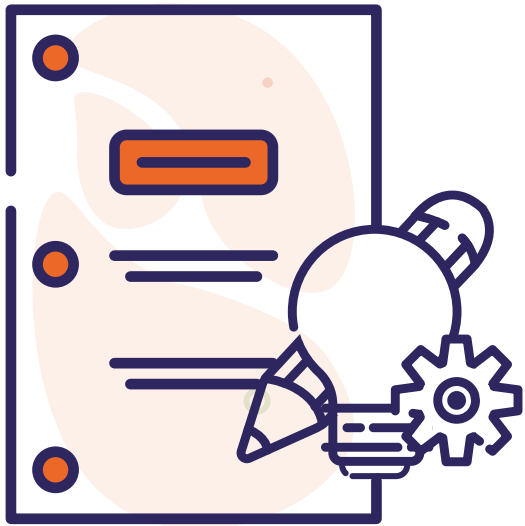
### **Be specific**

The important thing to remember is that your learning objective needs to be as specific as possible. If you created a course on manufacturing processes, the objective might start as, "Learners will understand this process and implement it in their work."

However, that's actually not specific enough. Use the SMART goal-setting framework to help you create a more specific and measurable learning objective.

## 2. Write a great script

Now that you've chosen your specific and measurable learning objective, it's time to write your script. Remember, we start with our objective because it will keep us on track while writing the script.



Even if you're filming a very short video, **you need a script**. Scripts are key to staying focused and on task. They also ensure your video material is useful. Your goal with script-writing should be to inform and entertain, but your priority should always be to write helpful content.

Don't "wing it" when you get in front of a camera. When you're trying to teach people things in an eLearning environment, you need to have a script first. A script helps you:

- *Demonstrate subject matter expertise*
- *Reduce the number of shots taken and overall filming time*
- *Slash the time needed to edit the video*
- *Add all necessary information in the course for learners.*

## *Follow these best practices to write a great live-action video script:*



### *Keep it simple and specific*

We started with a learning objective for a reason. Without a learning objective, live-action video scripts tend to go off-topic.

Learning is about going deep and narrow on a subject. If your video teaches learners how to drive a manual car, this isn't the time to bust out random facts about the car industry. Prioritize what information learners need for this course and stick to it.

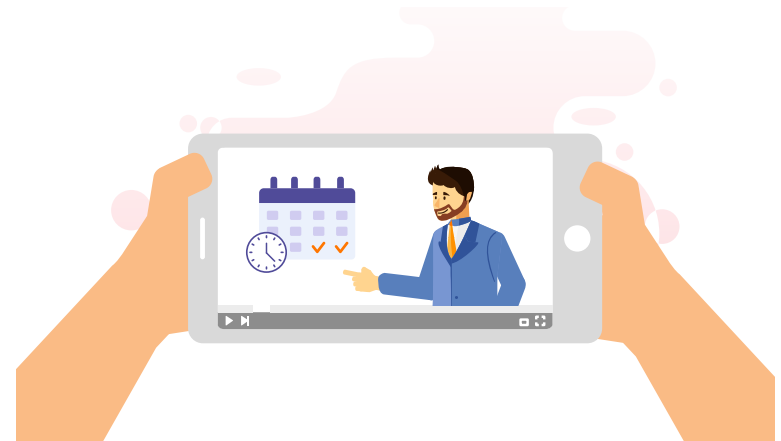
If you really want to write about car industry facts, save those for a different video. By limiting the scope of the script, you maintain learners' attention because they're getting the information they need, not a brain-dump of unwanted trivia.

## **Show instead of tell**

Scripts aren't just about writing. They also serve as a guideline for your video's visuals.

Write a draft of your script and read through it. Is there anything in the script that can be visualized? For example, if you're showing learners the steps required to drive a manual car, don't tell them about each step. Have an actor on-screen showing each step.

Sometimes learners need to see what you're talking about. This deepens understanding and helps you get more results from your video in less time.



### ***Read it out loud after writing***

We've found that people who are new to video don't always know how to adjust their language for film. That's why you should always read your script out loud and make edits before filming with a script.

After writing the script, read it aloud and record yourself. Play back the recording and adjust any language in the script that sounds off. If you really want to test the script, you can also play this recording to a group of learners to get their feedback.



### *3. Shoot like a professional*



Once you have a script in-hand, it's time to plan your video shoot. This is the part of live-action video that tends to intimidate learning departments. The cost of lighting, cameras, and editing software sounds like a big investment. While professional video companies spend a lot on this specialized equipment, you don't need to do that. Follow these tips to create a budget-friendly live-action video that your learners will love..

## Camera

Your company doesn't need to buy a \$10,000 camera for filming. For eLearning departments, we recommend two options.

First, you can invest in a DSLR camera. These cameras are somewhat expensive in the \$500+ range, but they're high-quality and work at a professional standard. With a DSLR and tripod, you can take exceptional videos on a smaller budget. It's a great investment if you want to make a series of videos over the long term.

If your budget won't account for a DSLR camera, there's nothing wrong with using your smartphone. Today's iPhones take great video and many content creators use them in lieu of a professional camera. The video quality won't look as luxurious, but it's still good enough to use.

Remember, even if you're using your phone, spend \$50 on a decent tripod. You don't want a shaky video!

## **Microphone**

Learners can be quite forgiving with video quality. However, they demand good audio. After all, they need audio to understand the content of the video! The good news is that you don't need to spend a fortune to set up quality audio for live-action video.

For a live-action video on a budget, we recommend a decent lapel microphone. This microphone attaches to the actor's shirt and picks up their audio. The mic can also be hidden on the actor if you don't want it to show.



## **Editing software**

Believe it or not, you don't need a professional editing suite to make your live-action video learner-ready. If you filmed on your phone, you can download an affordable video-editing app to adjust the video natively on your phone.

If you want something more robust, you have options. You can rent the Adobe Creative Suite for a nominal fee each month, which will give you access to video editing software like Premiere Pro. Other options, like Wondershare Filmora, are also affordable and easy to use.

## 4. Set up the right production environment

After you choose your camera, microphone, and editing software, it's time to set up the production environment where you'll film the video. We've broken this down into three essential categories: location, lighting, and helpful add-ons.

### Location

It's tempting to film from multiple locations to jazz up your video, but that needlessly complicates the filming process. Instead, choose to film at a single location. This is more budget-friendly and means you only have to set up one location, saving precious time.

In a pinch, you can film right in your office. Film against an interesting wall or set up a professional backdrop with a few fake plants. These backdrops are very affordable from sites like Oriental Trading.

When setting up your location, don't forget to dampen sound. Try to choose a room without loud appliances, running fans, children, or animals. In a pinch, you can dampen noise with thick blankets.





## Lighting

Videographers spend thousands of dollars on lighting. Fortunately, you don't need to do that. To keep your lighting costs reasonable, choose a location that has natural light. This is softer and looks more natural on-screen compared to harsh fluorescent lights.

If you need more light, opt for an affordable lighting kit from Amazon that has three lights: two in front of the actors and one behind them to eliminate shadows. If that feels like too much to set up, you can also try a ring light, which is great for talking head videos.

## ***Helpful add-ons***

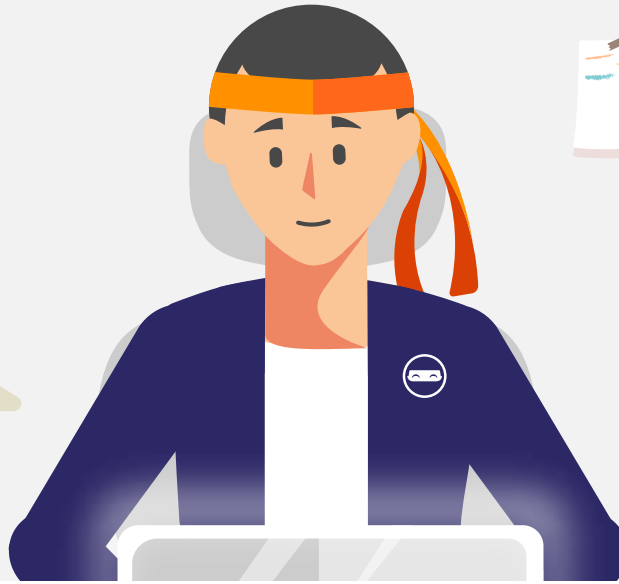
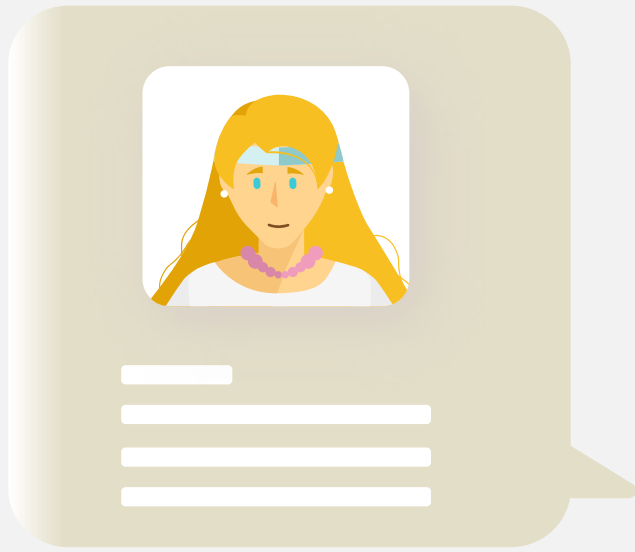
While these 2 pieces aren't mandatory to film a quality live-action video, they can help with quality.

First, consider using a green screen. This is a good option if you have a graphic designer on your team who knows how to remove video backgrounds. It's also an affordable way to do multiple locations without the fuss or expense.

Second, you can also add a teleprompter. This device attaches to the front of the camera and helps the actors remember their lines. This alone can save you hours of filming time, reducing the number of takes.

# THE BOTTOM LINE

Learning takes work, but the right video makes your course content enjoyable, engaging, and effective for your learners. Create your eLearning live-action videos without spending a lot of time or money on the wrong things. Use this 4-step process to convert your existing content into an amazing live-action video. Let's tackle your Project Now!



*Your future animator needs these 3 skills to build awesome eLearning animation, awesome microlearning videos and animation*

# 3 SKILLS YOUR ELEARNING ANIMATOR NEEDS FOR AMAZING VIDEOS

eLearning animation and awesome microlearning videos take a lot of knowledge and skills to produce. That's why it's so important to have a high-quality animator or animation team full with skills on your side when you're creating a eLearning video course.

To produce awesome eLearning video animation, an animator needs 3 technical skills and a few soft skills. Having all 3 isn't impossible – Definitely not a unicorn...It's more like a narwhal! Just something you don't see every day!

We break your perfect eLearning animator down into three skills-based components:

## 1. Pre-production

Pre-production skills translate your script into a storyboard.

This isn't just about being able to draw. This is about interpreting your script in a creative visual way, telling a story that aligns with your online learning content.

By definition, visual storytelling might seem pretty straightforward and simple— it's the art/science of communicating a series of messages using graphics and illustrations.

Most instructional designers fall short here – as they have a background in writing, education, and content.

The pre-production artist must learn the eLearning content and then conceptualize visual metaphors and scenes aligned to a graphic story arc! Technical skills required:



- Ability to analyze complex content and create storyboards based on interpretation of the story arc or prompts.
- Develop characters through the storyboard process.
- And of course...Sketching



## 2. Assets and branding

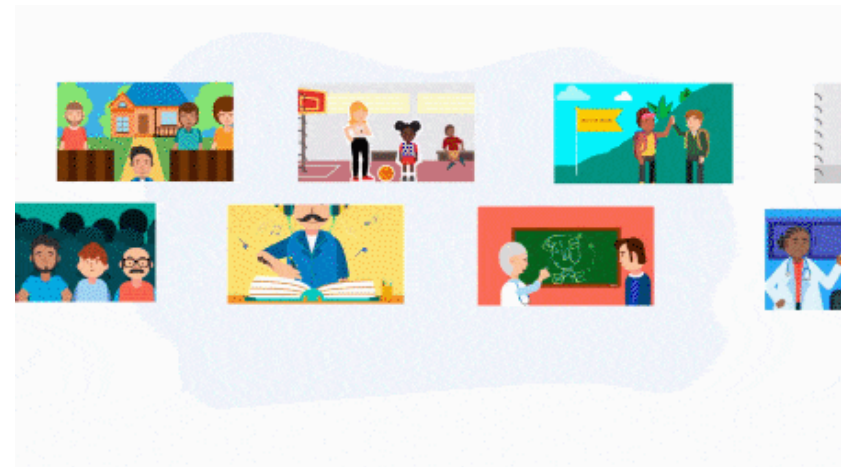
The second skill is the ability to take your eLearning storyboard and interpret it in a way that aligns with your brand.

This person would have graphic design and illustration skills to translate the storyboard into a branded scenes. They use software like Adobe Illustrator to build caricatures, illustrations, traditional vectors, and more that complement your microlearning video's story. Technical skills required:

- Adobe create suite of tools, such as InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop
- Good use of typography, grid-based design, white space, and color theory
- Brand analysis to design solutions within corporate brand guidelines.

### 3. Animation (and a little bit of video editing)

The third skill your eLearning video animator must have is the ability to take assets and move them in alignment with your audio and sound effects. They will know animation software like After Effects or Maya, depending on the project.



- Diverse capabilities in the principles of 2D and 3D, such as; animation, modeling, rigging, texturing, shading, lighting, rendering, effects, scripting, tracking and compositing
- Ability to edit and incorporate content (stills, footage, music, graphics, etc.) as needed.
- Retouches, corrects, and color-grades video and photo content.

This person needs to be awesome with communication. Juggling animation projects and SME/Instructional Designer relationships can feel stressful. Effective project communication can ease the pressure and set up the eLearning animation project's success.

The importance of communication as an animator is HUGE!

Even as a eLearning animation agency – we feel that finding an animator with all 3 plus communication skills is very very difficult.

Our solution? Hire an account manager, storyboard, illustrator and animator (animation focused). Our ability to give our clients entire teams in the same room (at our ninja base) is part of our secret sauce.

You do need a full team of Ninjas on your side if you're creating 60+ videos for your next eLearning project, though.

That's why Ninja Tropic has built a team of workers who are real gems. Every person has deep, niche expertise in their area of work, which means making better videos on a tight turnaround.

Don't try to DIY something so complex.



## **MICROLEARNING VIDEO SOLUTION PROVIDER GUIDE**

Thinking about hiring a microlearning video agency? Before finding us, our clients struggled with this because of a huge gap in the industry. The eLearning industry is full of incredibly talented generalist agencies for SCORM, Gamification, Simulations.

If you are in the market for elearning video, you might be a little frustrated finding an affordable elearning video production company. Finding and vetting the ideal microlearning video solution comes down to 3 steps:



## 1. Review their system

Always ask a prospective agency for their eLearning video process. You want someone who has an efficient system already in place for scripting, revisions, animation, and more. In other words, go with someone who has a proven, repeatable system.

If you choose an agency that offers video as a one-off service, they don't have an efficient process because they don't have the staff. You're their guinea pig, which means you're wasting time and money on a low-quality product or they are subcontracting to a freelancer - slowing the production time.

## 2. Test their ability with a sample

Has this agency actually done eLearning videos before? Ask them how many animators do they have on staff vs the amount that they freelance.

Remember, ask whether their team will be subcontracted or whether they're in-house. In-house resources, like our team of 50+ in-house animators, means you get consistent quality on schedule.

If they have staff in-house and you are producing more than 10 minutes of video - ASK FOR A FREE VIDEO SAMPLE! This is an industry-standard. If you are producing less than 10 minutes of video - ask for a concept scene.





### 3. Get a fixed price

Some agencies charge you an arm and a leg (and maybe another leg) for eLearning video. Choose an agency that fits with your budget. Ninja Tropic keeps our rates at low, freelancer pricing thanks to our cost-effective setup. After you get your sample, they should be able to provide you a fixed-price per minute.

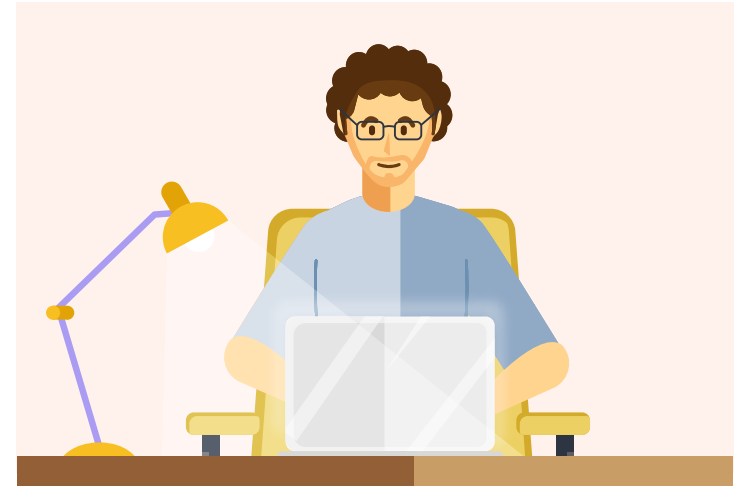
### Are you exploring other options?

Let's say you need to crank out 50 videos. How are you going to produce them on time and within your budget?

We founded Ninja Tropic because there wasn't a reliable source to crank out high-volume, high-quality videos on a budget. Before Ninja Tropic, eLearning pros had to turn to:

## 1. Freelancers

Freelancers are fine if you're making a few videos. They're also really affordable. Problem is, freelancers can't work at scale. They also lack consistent quality and organization, which means you can't guarantee results with a team of freelancers.



## 2. In-house staff


In a perfect world, companies would have enough funds or access to local talent to hire internal animators. You have more flexibility and control with in-house resources. But there's the issue of budget, finding skilled employees in your area, and having enough work in the pipeline.

### 3. Agencies

Agencies can do high-quality, bulk work. But people usually don't turn to agencies just because of the exorbitant cost.



Thankfully, we're out of the dark ages. Ninja Tropic combines the best of freelancers, in-house staff, and agencies. Our 100% internal team offers prices that compete with freelancers and quality that rivals top agencies.

	<b>Freelancers</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Agencies</b>	
<b>Deadlines</b>	Lack of coordination/ security	Ramp up time/ Nonscalable	Hires freelancers	100% internal employees with 5 ready jump in
<b>Budget</b>	\$25 - \$40	\$30 plus benefits pay for time	\$70 - \$100/ hour	\$20 - \$35 and fixed prices with revisions. Pay for results
<b>Quality</b>	Variable - can't scale	Good	Great!	Great! Constantly learning new skills/styles



*Ninja Tropic*

