



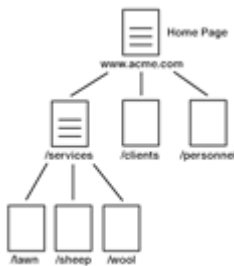
## PLANNING YOUR CONTENT

When planning your content, begin globally by breaking it into manageable chunks and then get more detailed and specific. Build the global structure of the course by organizing the content into major units or modules. Divide the major units into smaller lessons or activities that are manageable for the learner.

When structuring lessons or assignments, think in 30 to 60 minute blocks of time. Assemble your lessons and assignments so that students "come" to the online class at least three times a week in short intervals, rather than for an eight-hour marathon session. Not only will this strategy help build an interactive learning community, more students will enjoy success with increased opportunities for interaction.

### Storyboarding

Once you have a plan for the course organization, it's a good idea to create an organizational model to guide the course development process. The models can be adapted to provide useful information for other instructors and students.



Storyboarding is a concept borrowed from film and animation that shows the progression from scene to scene, prior to producing an actual film. This concept lends itself nicely to designing an online course where you are able to show the configuration and overall approach prior to designing your course. It reveals the logic and structure of a course before it is created, and helps to eliminate shuffling the content around once you've begun to add it to your course.

When you create a storyboard of your online course, it will help you to:

- Visualize the organization
- Plan unit/chapter/lesson titles and sequences
- Diagram what the course will look like

Storyboards can be created with a variety of software programs, several of them freeware, but many developers find Post-it® notes or index cards easy to work with. You can also simply sketch out your storyboard with pencil and paper. We've included some planners and a storyboarding template in the appendix to help get you started.

For storyboard ideas, check out these examples of storyboard development for academic web sites:

- **University of North Carolina at Charlotte** - <http://www.uncc.edu/webcourse/sb/storyboard.htm>

- **Communication & Information Technology Program of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council** - ELICIT - <http://www.elicit.scotcit.ac.uk/modules/intro/task7.htm>

## Identify Available Resources

Now that you know what you want in your content, it's time to assemble existing resources and decide what needs to be developed. When developing an online course, be careful not to reinvent the wheel. Find out what course materials exist that can be leveraged or re-purposed for the course. You should have a ready inventory of the following:

- All files you want to move onto the web
- External resources (web sites, university resources, etc.)
- Textbooks
- Lecture and lab materials
- Assessment tools

Use these in addition to the course materials you already have. They will be a useful starting point for the design and development phases.

## Other Resources

- **Development Resources**

Depending on your situation, you may be working alone, with subject matter experts, or with a team of developers. Be sure to identify and leverage the talents of any available support personnel. In an educational setting, computer-savvy students can often provide a wealth of development skills.

- **Technical Resources**

If you plan on advanced features such as database interactivity or streaming audio or video, make sure that the technical resources are available to support your development efforts. You should also find out what technical help and support resources are available for the students.

- **Time and Money**

A typical estimate for online course construction time is that it can take 5 to 17 hours of development time **for every hour of instruction**, and sometimes more when multimedia need to be developed. Be sure to consider time constraints when conducting your front-end analysis. Likewise, if you are operating on a limited budget, you may have to postpone your plans for interactive, streaming media or original Flash simulation.