



Mayer's Principles Pre-Publish Checklist

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Run this on any course, video, or slide deck before you publish. Work top to bottom and check a box only when you can answer yes. Anything unchecked either gets fixed or gets written down as an accepted exception with a reason. The callout under each section lists the exceptions worth accepting.

Project	Reviewer	Date

1. Reduce extraneous processing

Cut everything that makes learners process material they do not need.

- ☐ **Coherence.** Have I cut every image, sound effect, story, and fun fact that does not support the learning objective?
- ☐ **Signaling.** Do arrows, highlights, or headings point to the essential material at the moment it matters?
- ☐ **Redundancy.** Is on-screen text limited to keywords instead of duplicating the narration word for word?
- ☐ **Spatial contiguity.** Is each label or caption placed right next to the part of the graphic it describes, not in a legend or a paragraph below?
- ☐ **Temporal contiguity.** Do the narration and its matching visual play at the same time, not one after the other?

Acceptable exceptions

Closed captions are an accessibility requirement, not a redundancy violation, as long as learners can toggle them. Full on-screen text is fine when there is no narration at all, or when many learners watch without sound or in a second language.

2. Manage essential processing

Help learners handle material that is genuinely complex.

- ☐ **Segmenting.** Is the content broken into short, learner-paced chunks with a clear continue control between them?
- ☐ **Pre-training.** Are the key terms and component parts introduced before the complex process that uses them?
- ☐ **Modality.** Are graphics explained with spoken narration instead of blocks of on-screen text competing for the eyes?

Acceptable exceptions

A longer continuous segment is fine when the content is simple or the audience is expert. Printed text beats narration when learners need to reference exact wording, such as formulas, code, legal language, or unfamiliar technical terms.

3. Foster generative processing

Motivate learners to make sense of the material, not just receive it.

- ☐ **Multimedia.** Does every key idea pair words with a relevant graphic instead of standing as text alone?
- ☐ **Personalization.** Is the script conversational, using "you" and "your," rather than formal third person?
- ☐ **Voice.** Is the narration a friendly human voice, or one natural enough that learners will not register it as synthetic?
- ☐ **Image.** Have I removed static talking-head images that sit on screen without adding instructional value?
- ☐ **Embodiment (newer).** Do on-screen instructors or agents gesture, draw, point, and make eye contact instead of standing still?
- ☐ **Immersion (newer).** If I used 3D or VR, does the task actually need it, or is it there for novelty?
- ☐ **Generative activity (newer).** Does the learner do something with the content, such as summarize, self-explain, practice, or map it, rather than only watch?

Acceptable exceptions

A formal tone can fit legal or compliance content where a casual script would read as flippant. A talking-head video earns its place when social presence is the point, such as a course introduction or a leader's message.

Common violations and their fixes

Use this table when a box stays unchecked and you need the fastest path to a pass.

Violation	Principle	Fix
Narrator reads on-screen paragraphs aloud	Redundancy	Cut on-screen text to keywords; offer captions as a toggle
Decorative stock photos on every slide	Coherence	Delete them or replace each with a graphic that shows the concept
Labels sit in a legend below the diagram	Spatial contiguity	Move each label next to the part it names
Animation plays first, explanation follows	Temporal contiguity	Play the narration and the animation together
One 20-minute video with no breaks	Segmenting	Split it into short chunks with a continue button between them
Jargon gets defined mid-process	Pre-training	Add a short terms-and-parts screen before the process begins
A wall of text sits beside the graphic	Modality	Narrate the explanation and keep on-screen text minimal
Slides are text only	Multimedia	Add one relevant diagram or graphic per key idea
Script reads like a textbook	Personalization	Rewrite with "you," "your," and contractions
Learners watch but never respond	Generative activity	Add a summary prompt, practice question, or short scenario

Tip

Log any exception you accept next to the unchecked box with a one-line reason. A deliberate exception with a reason is a design decision. An unchecked box with no reason is a defect.

Have any questions? Email me at devlin@devlinpeck.com