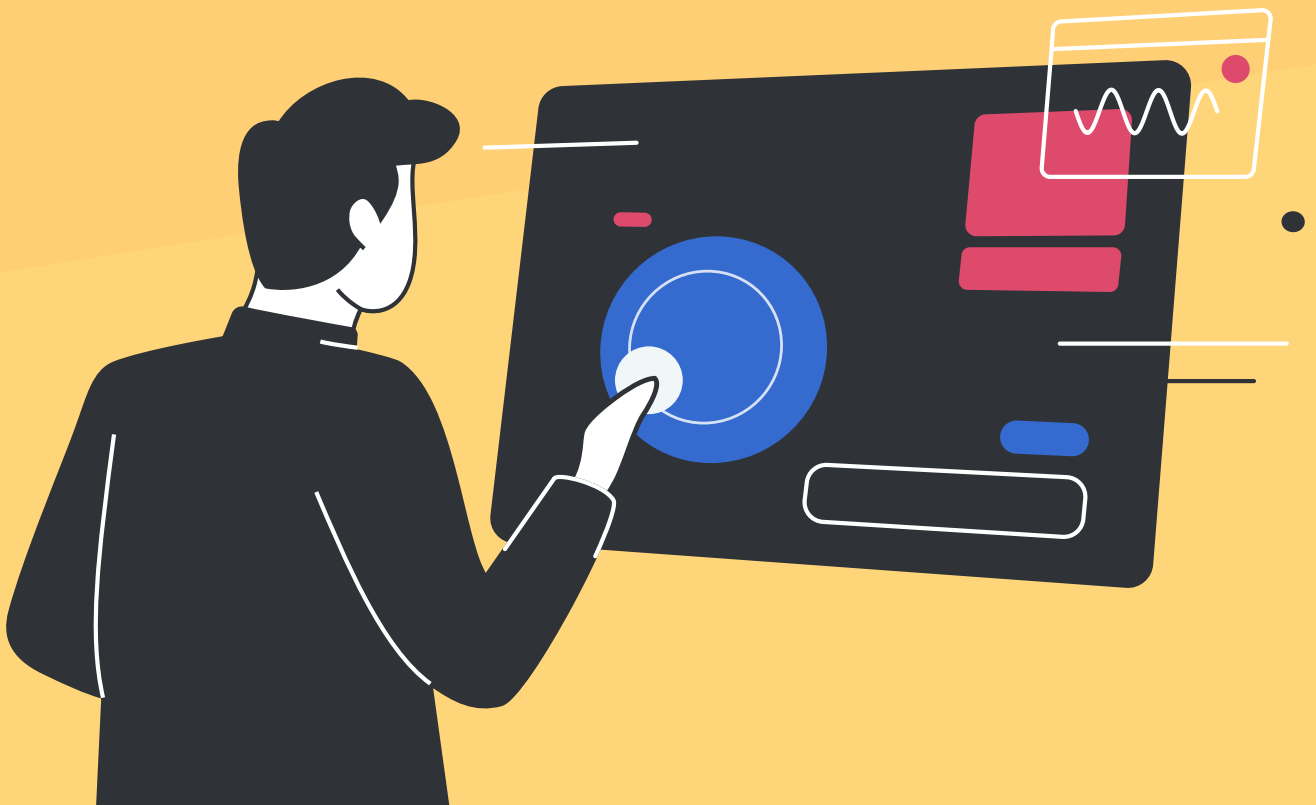


Guide

How to Create an Effective eLearning Course



How to Create an Effective eLearning Course

Are you planning to create an online course? Maybe you already started and realized there's more to it than first met the eye! Here's what you'll get from this guide:

- ✓ Where to start
- ✓ How to design online learning modules that really work
- ✓ How to make an online course attractive and engaging
- ✓ How to make content accessible
- ✓ How to deliver your courses to learners

The guide is a recap of a series of live webinars with Michael Sheyahshe, an eLearning expert with over two decades of experience. He provides a professional step-by-step approach on how to build online courses – the entire development process from setting the goals and defining the audience to publishing the content. You can find a complete list of [webinar sessions to watch here](#). For shorter instructions, you can also watch this brief video guide or go directly to the article.



iSpring Suite

How to Create
an eLearning
Course



[View the full video →](#)

Step 1. Do Some Prep Work

Your course development process will only be as productive as your pre-planning. By taking the time to do some prep work, you're troubleshooting problems before they have a chance to happen. Here's what you need to do first:



- An employee should double sales after finishing the training.
- An employee should be able to identify a PC hardware problem and fix it.
- An HR-manager should correctly tell the candidate about the company and what it does.



- An employee should know how to sell products.
- An employee should learn about different PC hardware problems and how to fix them.
- An HR-manager should know how to deal with job candidates.

Training goals and objectives

This doesn't necessarily mean making a list of objectives that you can often see at the beginning of any presentation. This is about what results you want to get after your learners complete an online course. So, define the purpose of the course by answering this question: "What should a learner BE ABLE TO DO after finishing the training?"

Useful resources

- [Training Needs Assessment and Analysis: Is Training Really Needed? →](#)
- [Learning Goals and Objectives in Course Design →](#)

Targeted audience

Trying to create an online course for everyone is a wasted effort. You need to make it for a certain reason and a certain audience. Before you get started with training development, take a closer look at your prospective learners.

- ✓ How many learners will you have?
- ✓ What is their position? (Are they sales representatives, customer service agents, HRs, etc.?)
- ✓ What are their demographic metrics and characteristics? (Average age, educational level, geographic location, computer literacy, devices the learners are using, etc.)
- ✓ Have the learners received prior training in this area of expertise? How well do they know the topic?
- ✓ Are there any learners with disabilities?

Learning platform

The next thing you should think about is how you'll deliver your course to the audience. The way you will distribute the content will define the choice of the course format (video, SCORM, etc.) and the type of software you'll need.

If you're focusing on corporate training, the easiest and most comfortable way to manage the learning process is with the help of a learning management system (LMS). It will let you automate a lot of functions like invitations, course assignment, and results tracking.

If you're going to become a successful course seller, opt for a platform that will enable you to host, deliver, and sell your courses to end users seamlessly and manage everything from building the course to marketing and payment processing.

Useful resources

- [What Is an LMS, and What Can It Do for Your Business? →](#)

eLearning authoring tool

This is the main tool you'll use throughout the entire development process. If you're new to course building, you'll need to choose a handy tool that will allow you to create eLearning modules as quickly as possible, while also meeting all your authoring needs. For instance, if you want to create interactive courses with quizzes, videos, and dialogue simulations, you need an authoring software that is a single set of tools under one roof that can cover a variety of tasks.

A great example of such a toolkit is [iSpring Suite](#). Later in this guide, we'll tell you how to build an online course with iSpring. But first, see what a course made with this tool looks like:

How to start working from home

Arranging your space, tools, and mindset

Start Course



[View the full demo →](#)

Useful resources

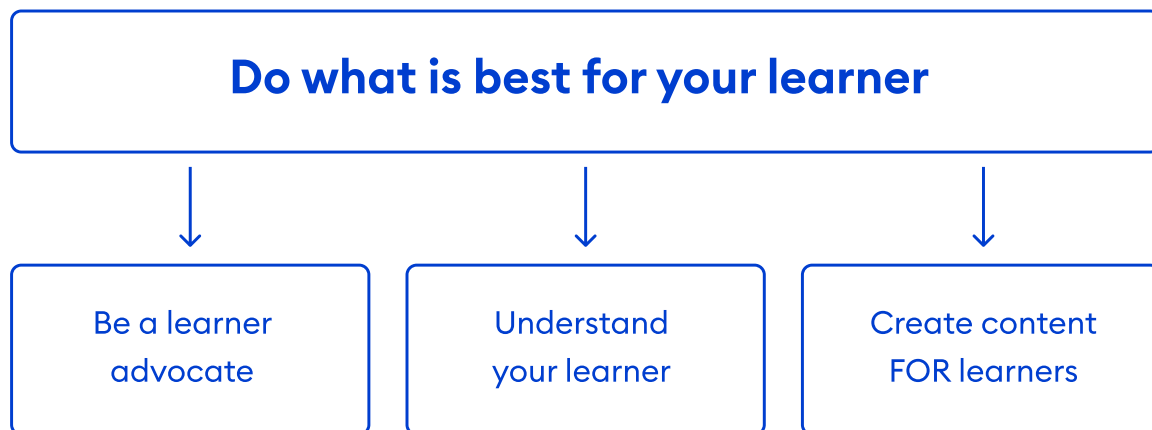
- [What Is an Authoring Tool? →](#)

Step 2. Organize the Work with SMEs and Stakeholders

When developing an online course, you need to deal with both subject matter experts (SMEs) and stakeholders. Here's what they are and how their roles differ:

SME	Stakeholder
<p>A subject matter expert (SME) is both the main source of information and the main idea generator for the online course developer. Their key roles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Helping define the learning objectives✓ Providing content on specific subject matter✓ Validating and refining the course material <p>Without subject matter expertise, the course is likely to be useless.</p>	<p>A stakeholder is any independent party that has an interest in a course's successful development. There may be multiple players involved like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Upper management✓ eLearning project managers✓ Trainers✓ Tech experts <p>The task of both course developers and stakeholders is to ensure that the project stays on track at all times.</p>

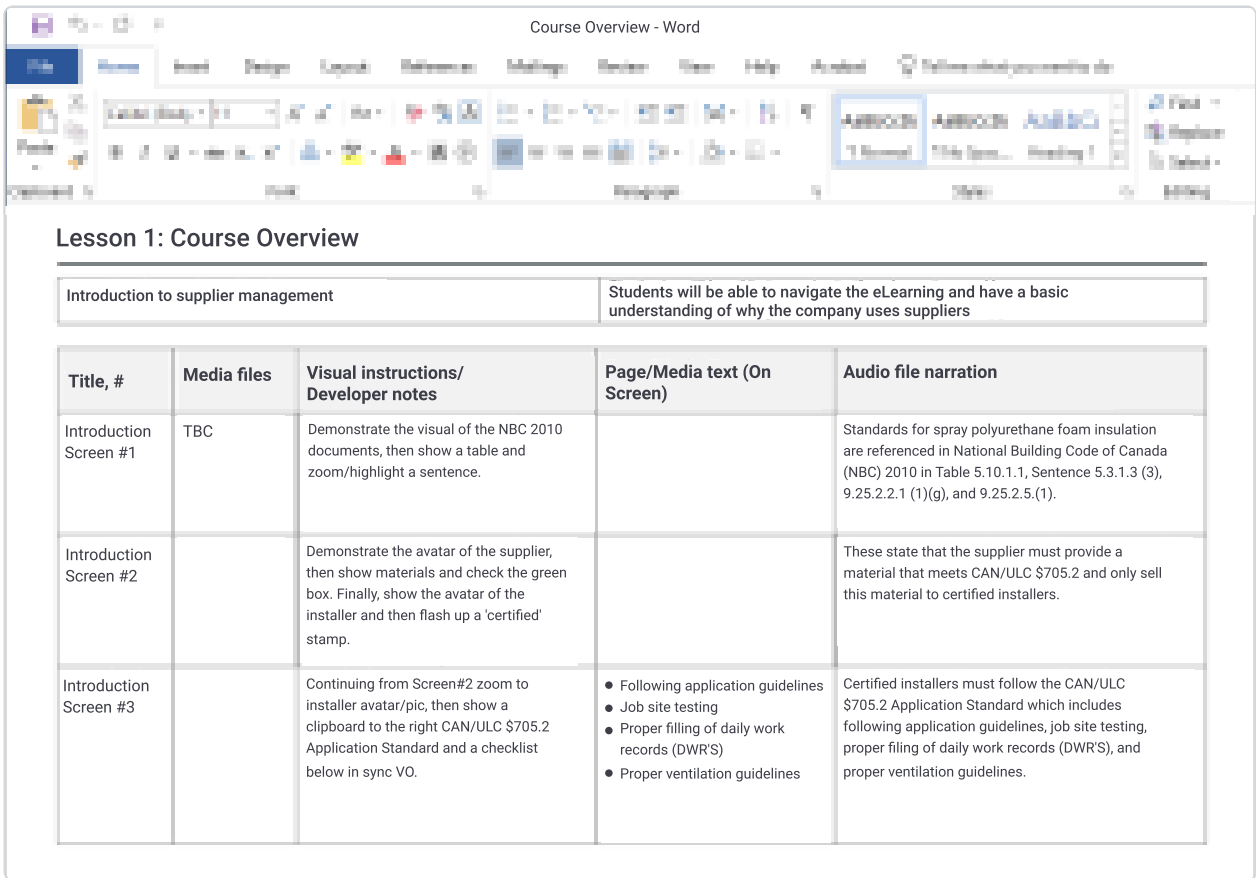
For example, if you develop training courses for the sales team, you may have to collaborate with the VP of Sales, the CEO, HR managers, and admins. You'll need to decide on the content together with the SMEs and meet the stakeholders' requirements. However, no matter what your stakeholders say or what your content is, your true mission is to do what is best for your learner. And here is what that means:



Note: If you're going to create a course with the intention of selling it online on your own initiative and you yourself are an expert on the subject of your course, you may not have SMEs and stakeholders to deal with.

Step 3. Create a Course Storyboard

After you've gathered all the necessary information for your online course, it's time to map out the course or "create a storyboard." A storyboard is a document, slide deck, or prototype in which the training developer lays out the framework for the course. In addition to the written content (we'll discuss that in detail in the next step), it also includes all of the information in terms of photos, icons, charts, infographics, animations, or videos that will be used in the course. By the way, at this stage, it's important not only to think of what media you'll use but also to prepare all of the necessary assets.



Example of a storyboard in Word

This is what can be included in an eLearning storyboard:

- Slide title/name
- Screen text and elements (see next step)
- Graphics and animation
- Navigation
- Branching
- Audio narration script

There's no one-size-fits-all solution, but there are some industry-standard methods for storyboarding that you can use as your foundation and adapt as required. To streamline the process, you can download the ready-made [PowerPoint](#) or [Word storyboard template](#) and customize them as desired.

Note: If you're going to include a large volume of information in your online course, divide it into short modules. This is what eLearners refer to as "microlearning." A microlearning course can be a 5- to 8-minute lesson or a series of short standalone lessons that cover one topic or target one specific learning objective. Follow this rule: one lesson – one skill.

Useful resources

- [eLearning Storyboard 101: How to Map out an Online Course →](#)
- [Microlearning is the New Black →](#)

Step 4. Write a Script

Now that you know the structure of your online course, you need to write a script. When done correctly, a script serves as the backbone of your course design and transforms the subject matter into something engaging.

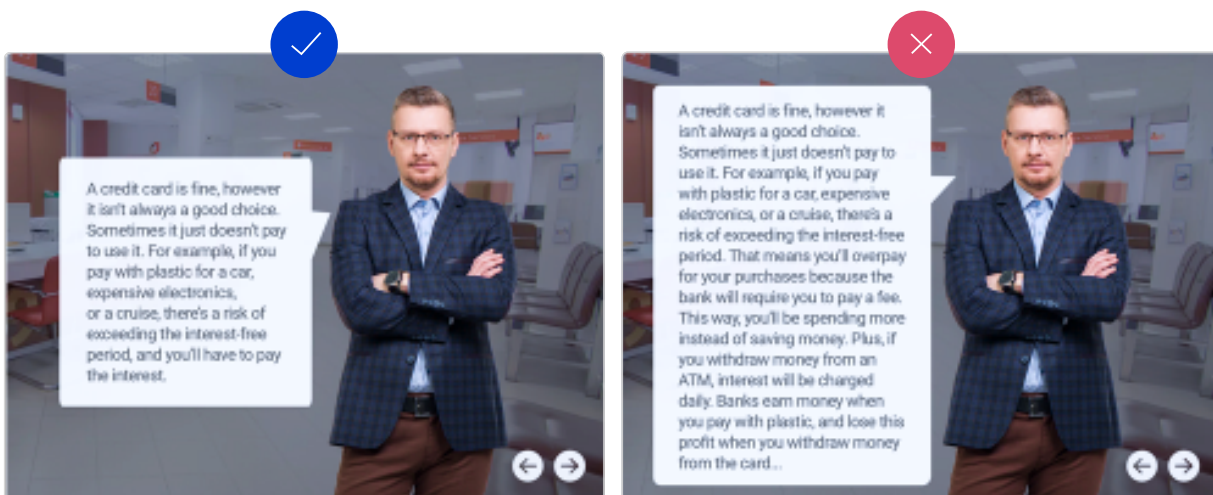
Very often, an eLearning developer has to deal with two types of scripts: an on-screen text and a narration script. Since there are different practices for writing them, let's have a look at each of these types separately.

On-screen text

Here, we mean all of the text a learner will see on the slides. To make it really helpful, you need to consider the following things:

Add only core concepts to the slides. If you want to provide some additional information, you might record a voice over or support the text with images, infographics, and videos.

Minimize the text on a slide. Eyes glaze over when they see large blocks of text, so try to make it as short as possible. Remove unnecessary words and break down long sentences; one line should have a maximum of 40 characters. Here, the main rule is one screen – one idea.



Make sure the content looks good on small screens. The text, as well as other content items, must be visible, whether a course is viewed on a tablet or a smartphone. Keep this in mind when creating a course and check how it looks on a smartphone at the end of the development process.

Narration script

Creating a narration script is about writing a text for learners to hear, not read. You may skip this step if you're not going to include a voice-over in your course.

If you're still planning to add narration, your primary task is to make a script that is listener-friendly. To do this, you need to turn it into a conversation. Your learners should feel like they're dealing with an actual person. So write a script that has a conversational tone, without complex sentences or a lot of acronyms and jargon. You can use contractions, transitional phrases like "now that we...", "let's examine...", or "let's shift gears...", and even slang.

After your script is ready, read it aloud. You may find that you need to replace or remove some phrases to make the speech smooth and clear. If so, make any necessary touch-ups.

You can also check the text for readability in the [Hemingway App](#). It will help you find lengthy complex sentences, passive voice constructions, and phrases that have simpler alternatives.

The screenshot displays the Hemingway App interface. At the top, there is a toolbar with options: Bold, Italic, H1, H2, H3, Quote, Bullets, Numbers, and Link. Below the toolbar, the main text area contains the following content:

Hemingway App makes your writing bold and clear.

The app highlights lengthy, complex sentences and common errors; if you see a yellow sentence, shorten or split it. If you see a red highlight, your sentence is so dense and complicated that your readers will get lost trying to follow its meandering, splitting logic — try editing this sentence to remove the red.

You can utilize a shorter word in place of a purple one. Mouse over them for hints.

Adverbs and weakening phrases are helpfully shown in blue. Get rid of them and pick words with force, perhaps.

Phrases in green have been marked to show passive voice.

You can format your text with the toolbar.

Paste in something you're working on and edit away. Or, click the Write button and compose something new.

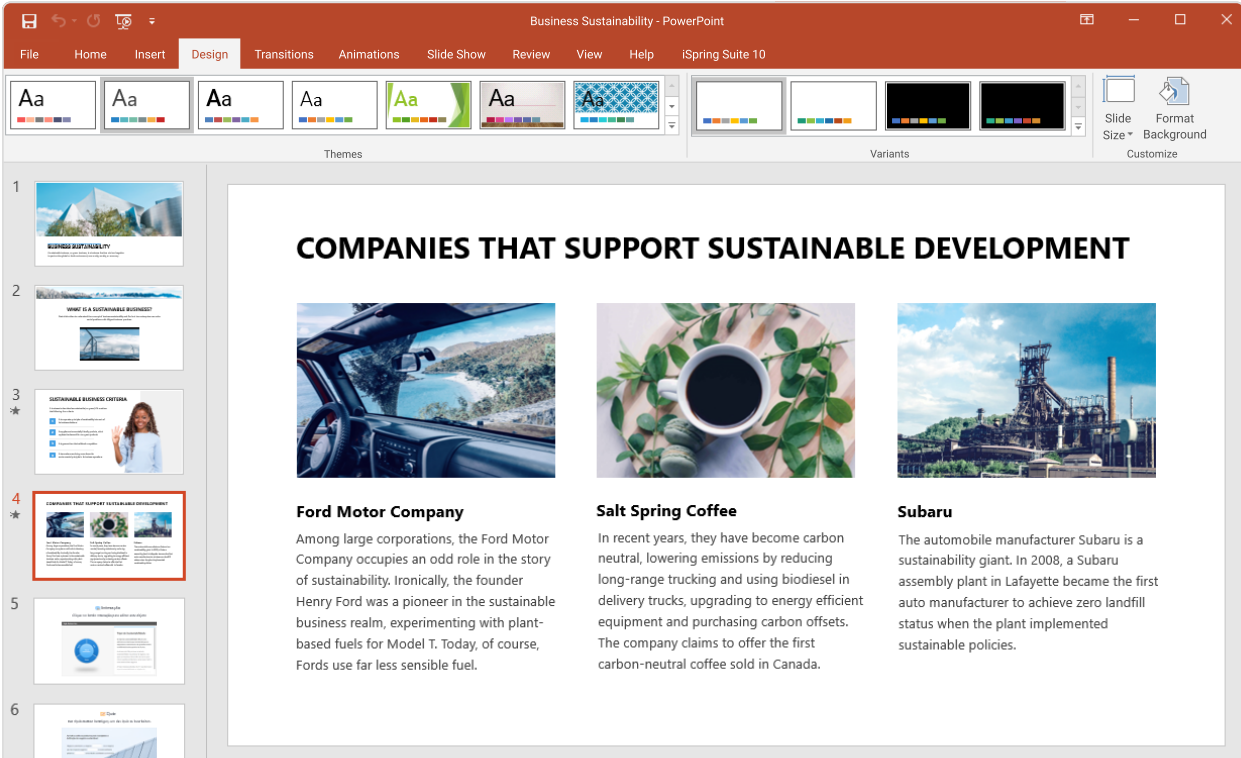
On the right side, there is a sidebar with the following information:

- Buttons: Write, Edit
- App Name: Hemingway
- Section: Readability
- Grade: 8
- Quality: Good
- Words: 133
- More options: Show More
- Feedback items:
 - 1 advert. meeting the goal of 2 or fewer
 - 1 use of passive voice. meeting the goal of 2 or fewer
 - 1 phrase has a simpler alternative.
 - 1 of 11 sentences is hard to read.
 - 1 of 11 sentences is very hard to read.

Step 5. Put the Content Together

After you've structured your course, prepared all the necessary media, except probably a voiceover or video (we'll discuss how to record them in this guide too), and made a script, it's time to put all the content together in a course. We'll do this with the [iSpring Suite authoring toolkit](#).

iSpring is a PowerPoint-based tool, so if you already know how to use PowerPoint, it will be very easy for you to start creating courses there. Simply populate the slides with the text, images, and videos by following your storyboard.



The screenshot displays the iSpring Suite 10 software interface. The main window shows a PowerPoint slide titled "COMPANIES THAT SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT". The slide content includes three columns of information:

Company	Description
Ford Motor Company	Among large corporations, the Ford Motor Company occupies an odd role in the story of sustainability. Ironically, the founder Henry Ford was a pioneer in the sustainable business realm, experimenting with plant-based fuels for Model T. Today, of course, Ford uses far less sensible fuel.
Salt Spring Coffee	In recent years, they have become carbon neutral, lowering emissions by reducing long-range trucking and using biodiesel in delivery trucks, upgrading to energy efficient equipment and purchasing carbon offsets. The company claims to offer the first carbon-neutral coffee sold in Canada.
Subaru	The automobile manufacturer Subaru is a sustainability giant. In 2008, a Subaru assembly plant in Lafayette became the first auto manufacturer to achieve zero landfill status when the plant implemented sustainable policies.

The interface also shows a slide navigation pane on the left with six slides, and a top menu bar with options like File, Home, Insert, Design, Transitions, Animations, Slide Show, Review, View, Help, and iSpring Suite 10.

Useful resources

- [How to Convert PowerPoint to eLearning →](#)
- [How to Create a Training Module: A Blueprint for eLearning Success →](#)

Step 6. Record or Add Audio and Video

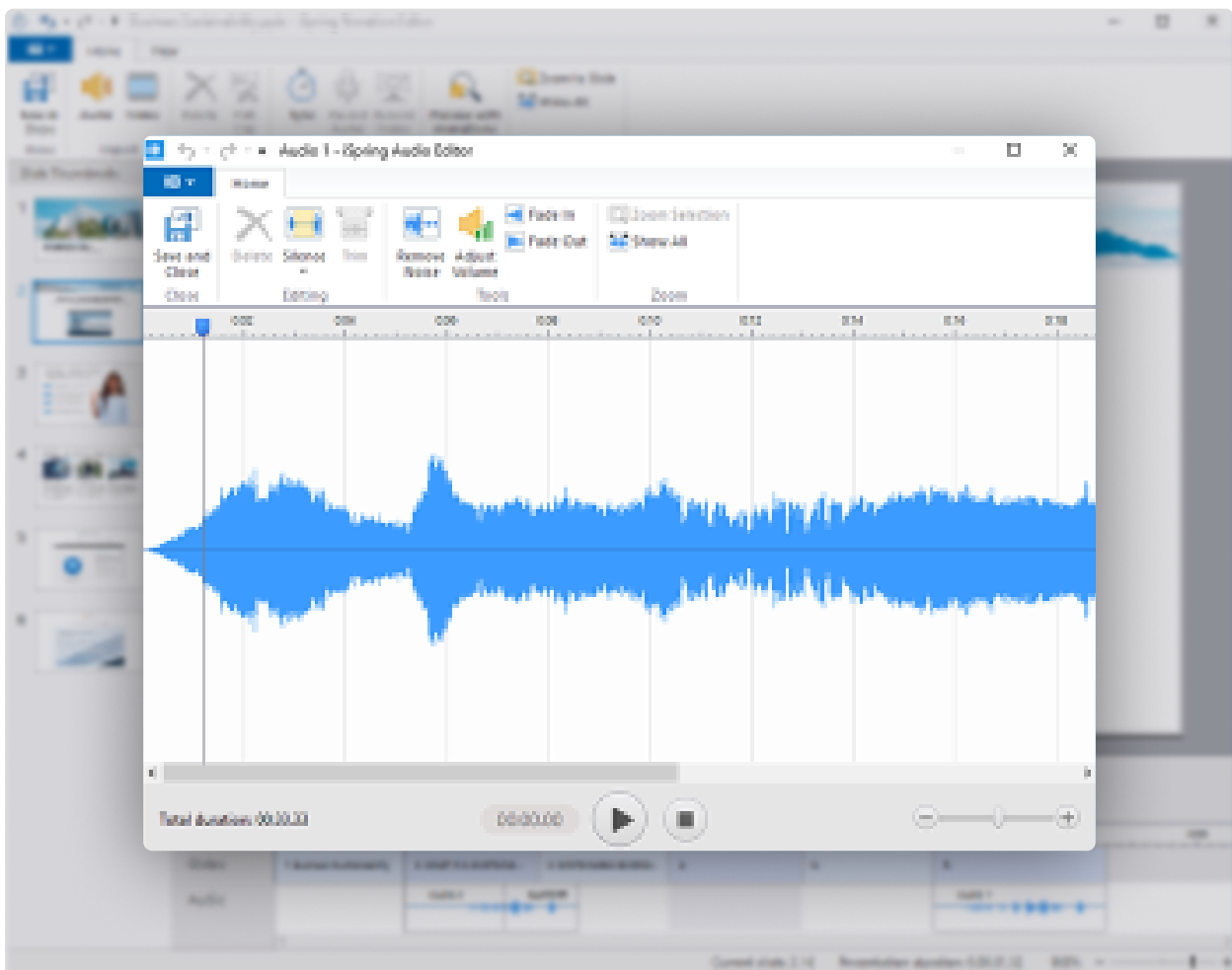
As mentioned, audio and video can serve as great assets to support the text on the slides. Plus, they can help you make your online course even more engaging. However, if you're not going to record a voice-over or a video, feel free to skip this section and move to the next step.

Audio

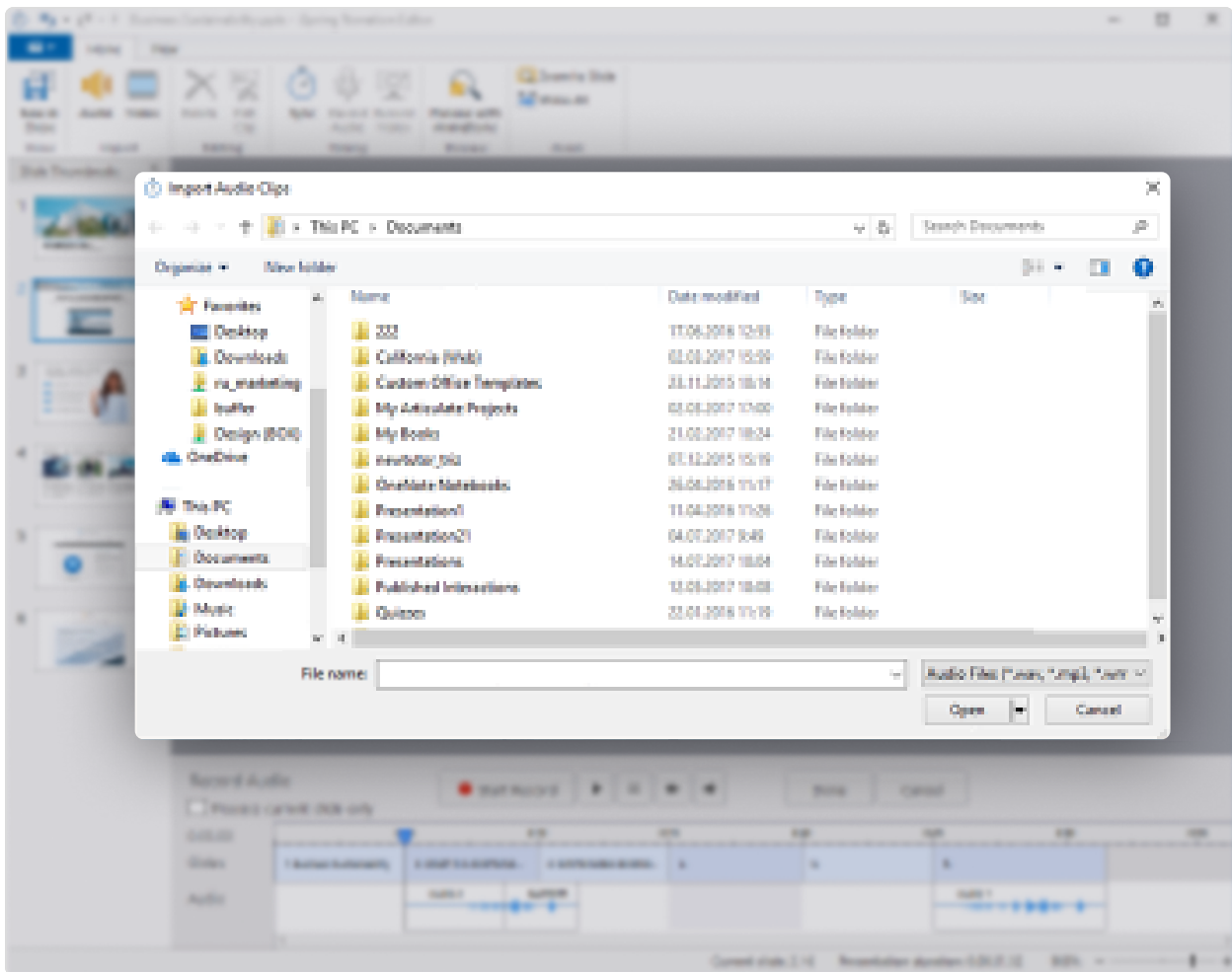
Now that you have a narration script ready, you can record a voiceover. The question is whether you invite a professional voiceover artist or do it yourself. Whatever you choose, here are several tips to get the best out of voice over (VO) recording:

- ✓ **Find the quietest place possible.** If you don't have a special recording studio, you can try to use different locations, like a tiny room, a walk-in closet, or even a vehicle in a garage.
- ✓ **Try to get as much recording time as you can with your VO artist on the same day,** as a voice can change from day to day, and even from morning to afternoon.
- ✓ **Use a good-quality external microphone.** Before recording, check if your microphone is properly set up and adjust the settings, if necessary.
- ✓ **Prepare your voice for recording.** Have tea with lemon before recording to get your voice deeper and 'cleaner.' Moisturize your lips so they don't stick together and the words will form correctly when speaking.
- ✓ **Make sure you create your narration script early** in the development process to reserve time for edits.

After your prep work is done, it's time to record your VO and you can do this right in iSpring Suite. It has a built-in audio recorder that allows you to record your audio narration and easily sync it with animations and transitions on the slides. The tool also provides editing options like trimming audio, adjusting volume, removing noise, and even silencing an entire section.



If you are used to recording voice-overs with another tool or just need to add some sound, you can import an existing audio file with iSpring Suite.



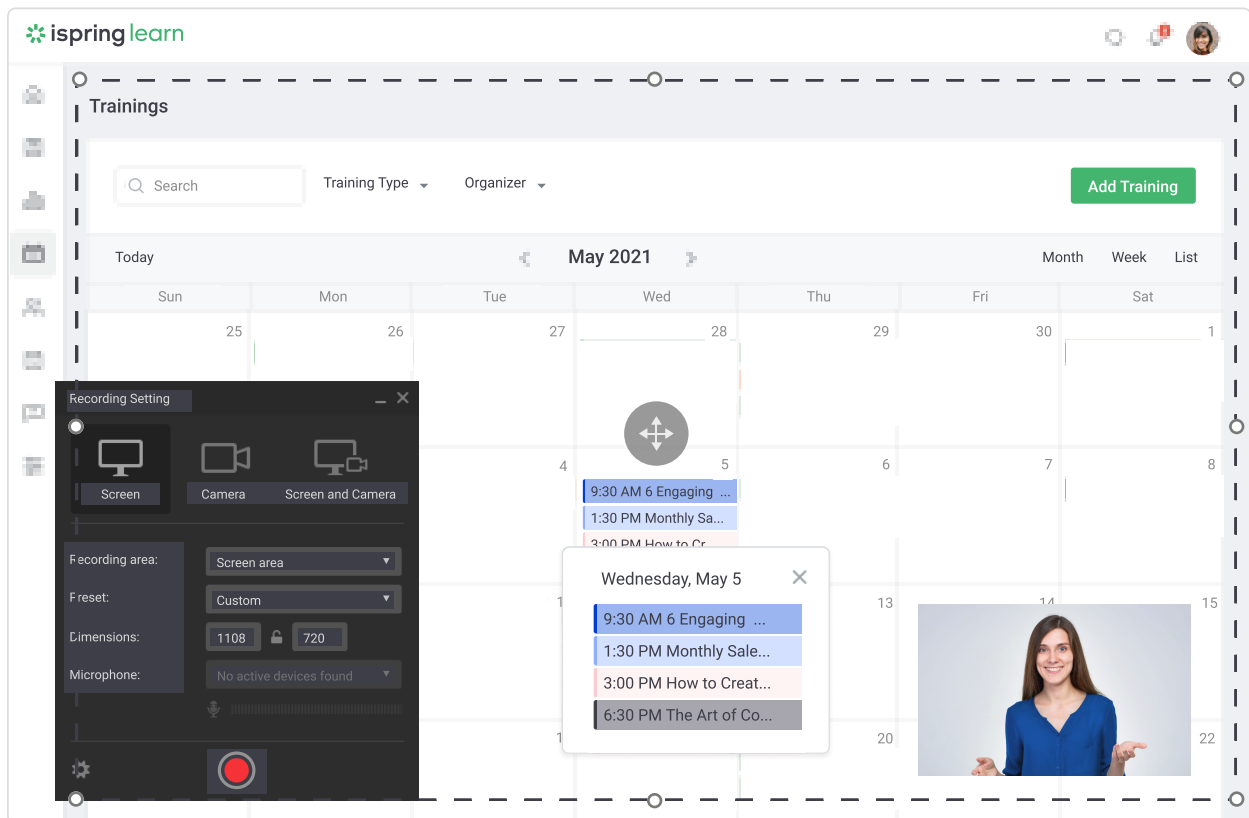
Useful resources

- [How to Record a High-Quality Audio Narration at Your Workplace →](#)
- [How to Add Narration to a PowerPoint Presentation →](#)
- [Best Microphones for Voice-Over: The Buying Guide →](#)

Video

With iSpring, you can also import or record a video. It includes a professional video studio that enables you to record your screen with webcam and audio. This tool has all the necessary features to make

professional-looking videos. For example, you can delete unwanted fragments, add titles and captions, insert images and infographics, or create transition effects.



iSpring Suite is perfectly suited for both making complete video courses and adding video fragments in specific places throughout your course. For instance, add a video to show your new hires how to use specific software, walk your employees through some work process, or explain an incorrect answer in a quiz.

Useful resources

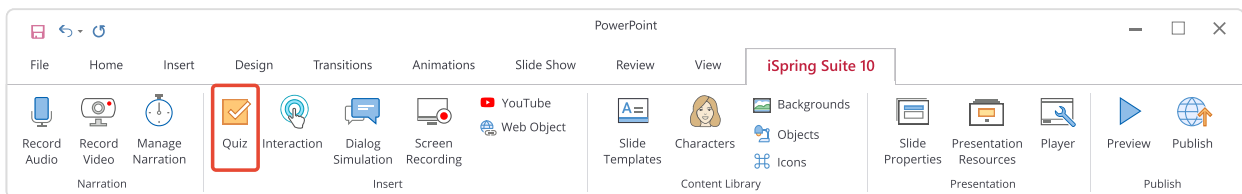
- [How to Make Tutorial Video: A Complete Guide →](#)
- [How to Create an Employee Training Video: A Practical Guide and Tips →](#)
- [How to Make a Screencast: Tips and Tricks →](#)

Step 7. Add Assessments and Knowledge Checks

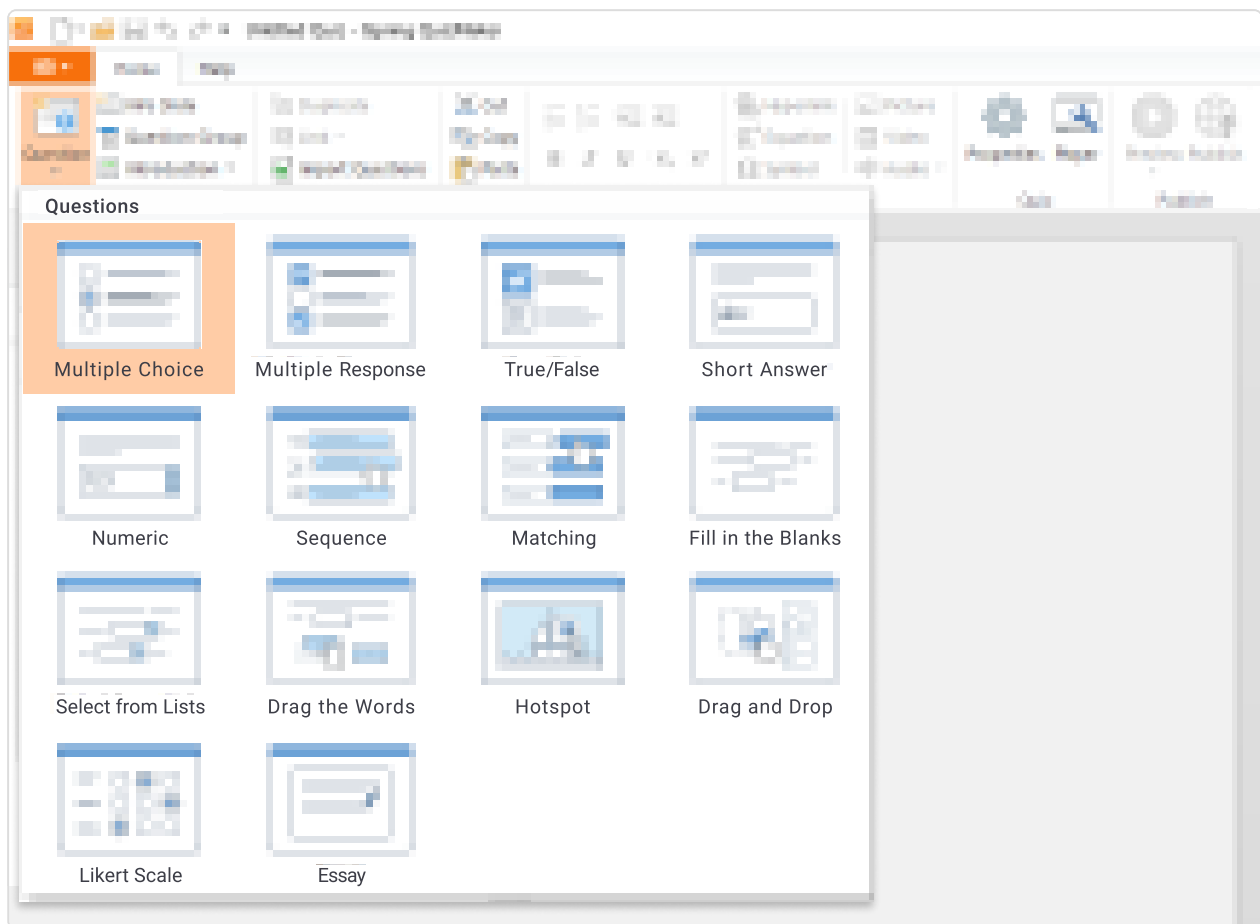
Quizzes and tests are primary tools for checking knowledge in eLearning. They allow you to keep track of employees' progress and let you see what has been learned and what has not. If you're going to create a course to sell it online, assessments may not be your primary goal, but interactive quizzes can still drive learners' engagement and help them retain new information longer, so it is certainly beneficial to include them in your courses. However, not all quizzes are effective. Good assessments are those which are properly integrated into the course or the entire training process, are relevant, and well written.

Many of the best instructional designers develop questions before the rest of the learning content and then build the content to answer those questions.

You can create quizzes with the iSpring QuizMaker tool.



It has 14 question types, including matching, sequence, hotspot, fill-in-the-blanks, and drag-and-drop.






Here are a few tips on how to make your quizzes even more engaging and work for you even better.

Branching

Branching creates a non-linear scenario in your quiz that leads to another slide, depending on the learner's answer. For example, when a learner answers a question incorrectly, you send them to an info slide to additional information, while those who answer correctly proceed to the next question.

True/False Question





The mountain was officially named after George Everest, a retired Surveyor General who never even saw the peak.

Choices

Correct	Choice
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	True
<input type="radio"/>	False

Feedback and Branching

	Feedback		
Correct:	That's true! Sir George Everest was the leader of the British survey team which		
Incorrect:	In fact, this is true. The mountain was named after Sir George Everest, the		

- Next Slide
- Finish Quiz
- Question Group 1
- Beginning of Group

0

Video and audio

With iSpring, you can enhance a quiz with audio and video. Add video/audio to the questions themselves; to the answers; or incorporate the assets into a branching scenario with info slides like the one shown below.


Info Slide

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS CRITERIA

Description

A business is described as sustainable (or green) if it matches the following four criteria:

1. It incorporates principles of sustainability into each of its business decisions.
2. It supplies environmentally friendly products, which replaces the demand for non-green products.
3. It is greener than the traditional competition.
4. It has made an enduring commitment to environmental principles in its business operations.

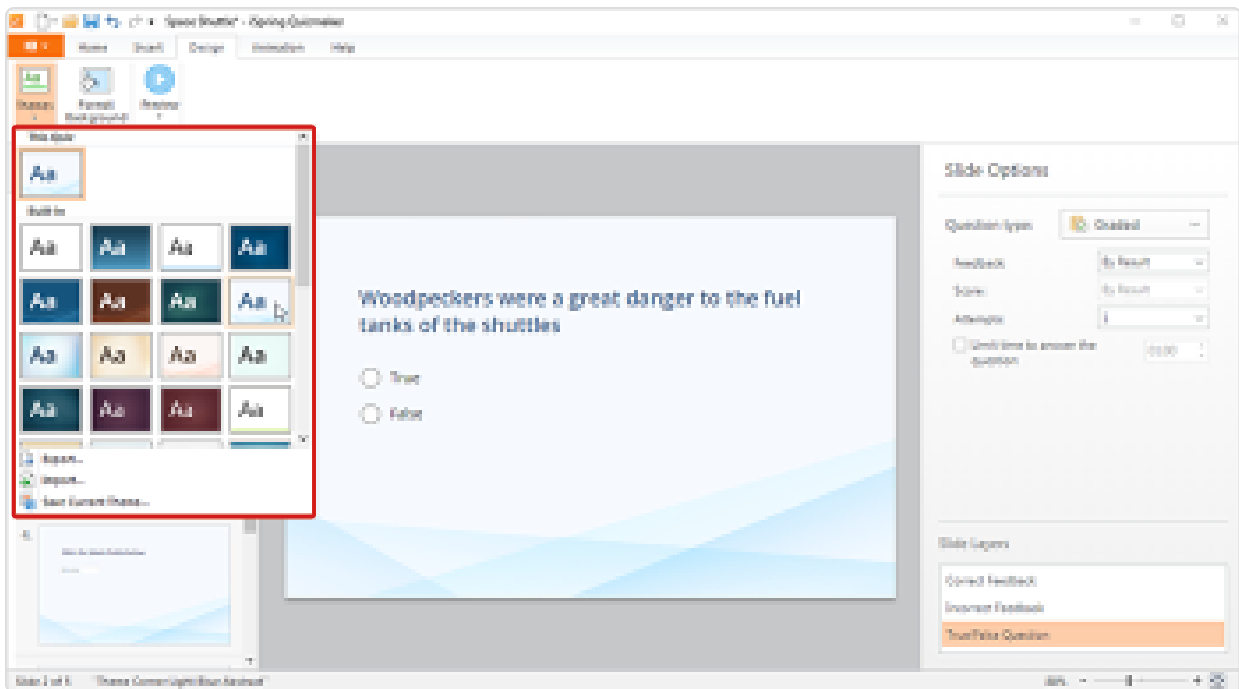


Feedback and Branching

	Feedback	Branching
Answered:	(Feedback is disabled)	... →

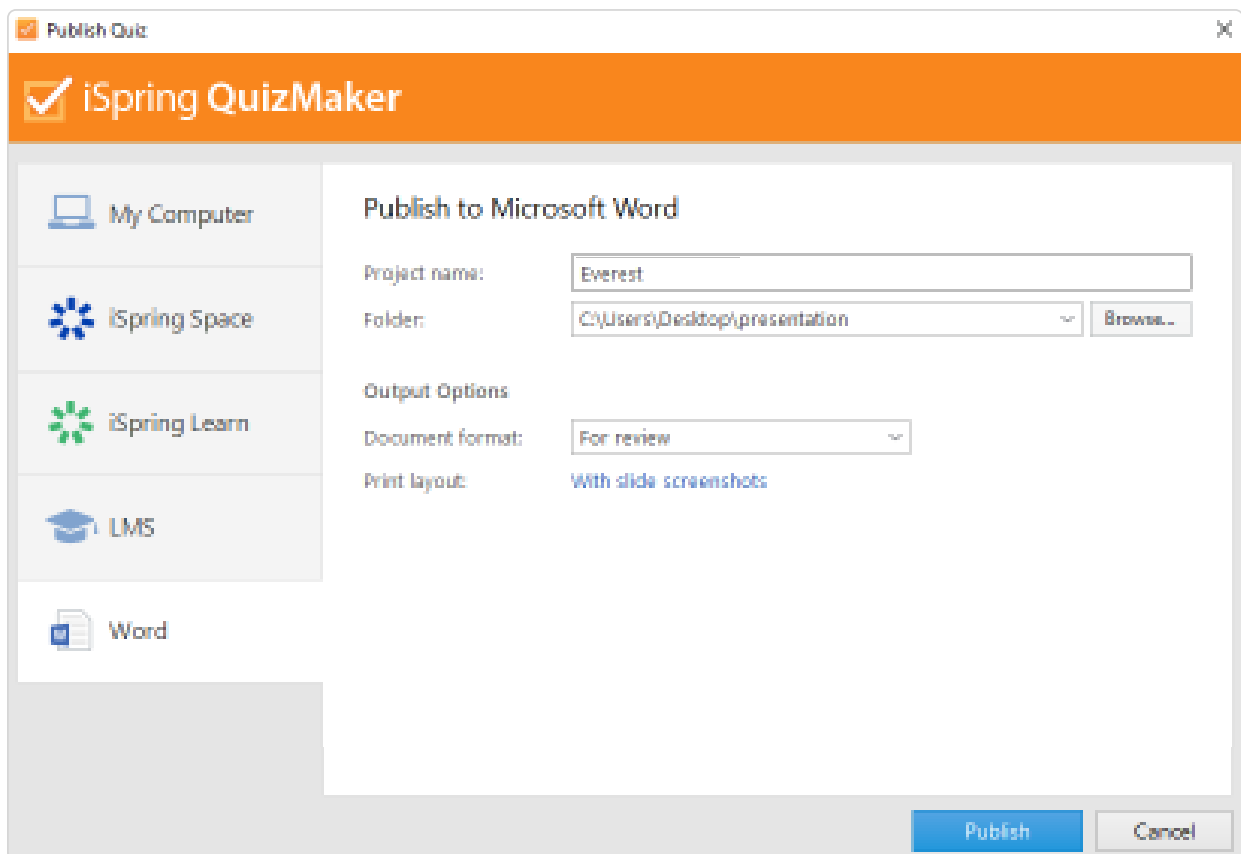
Quiz design

To make the quiz look appealing and match the overall look of your course, you can customize your slide design. Set the font, change the layout, and choose a color scheme for the question.



When the quiz is ready, you can easily share it with your peers, colleagues, or other stakeholders to get feedback.

Note: If your reviewers don't have iSpring Suite, you can publish your quiz to Word. This will produce a DOC file with all questions, answers, and their feedback on the quiz. Your stakeholders will be able to review the test right in Microsoft Word and send it back to you.



Useful resources

- [How to Make an Online Quiz in iSpring Suite Like a Pro →](#)
- [How to Make Effective Educational Quizzes and Put Them Online →](#)
- [Knowledge Checks in eLearning: Assess to Success →](#)

Step 8. Create a Dialogue Simulation

If you're going to build a course for sales professionals and customer service agents so they can improve their communication skills, one of the best ways to do it is to create a dialogue simulation. This is an interactive exercise that imitates an actual conversation with a person and helps people master communication skills in a risk-free environment – without the risk of ruining a deal or damaging client relations.

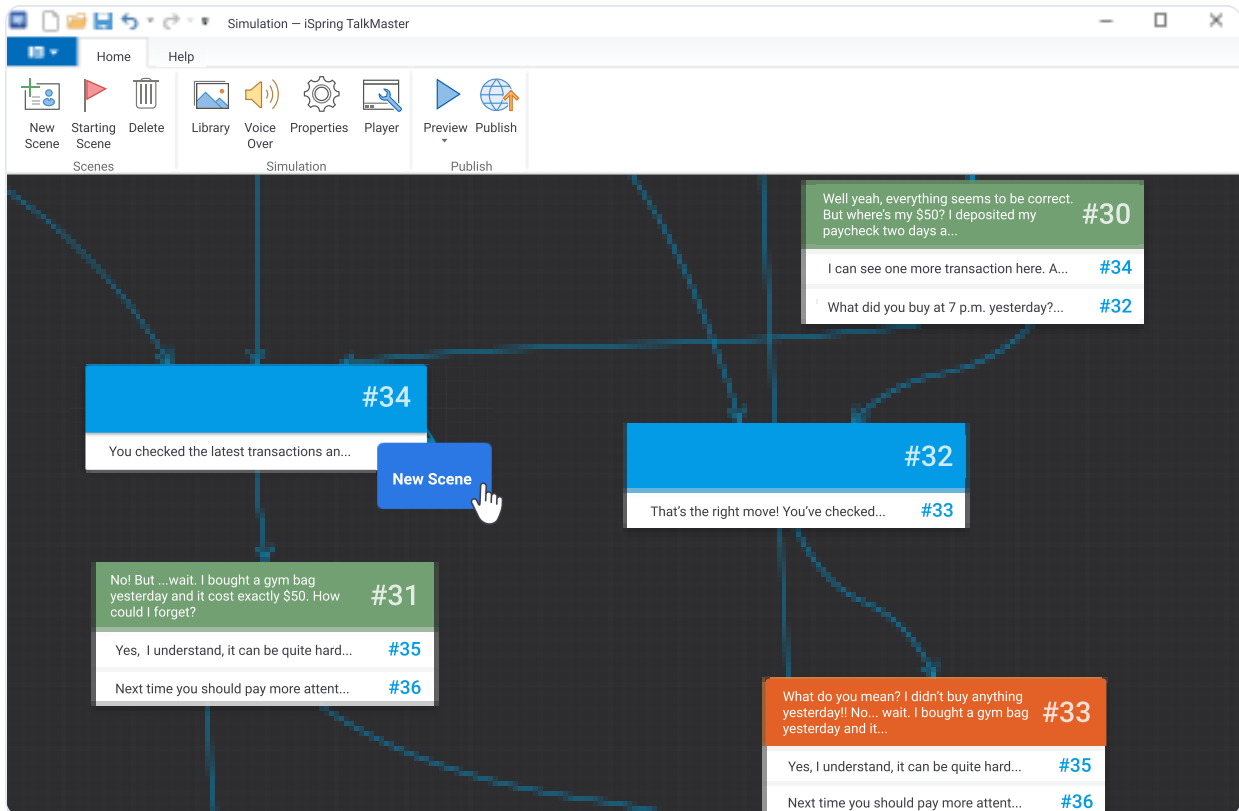
iSpring Suite includes the TalkMaster tool that allows you to make realistic simulations quickly and easily. This is what a dialogue sim created with iSpring looks like:



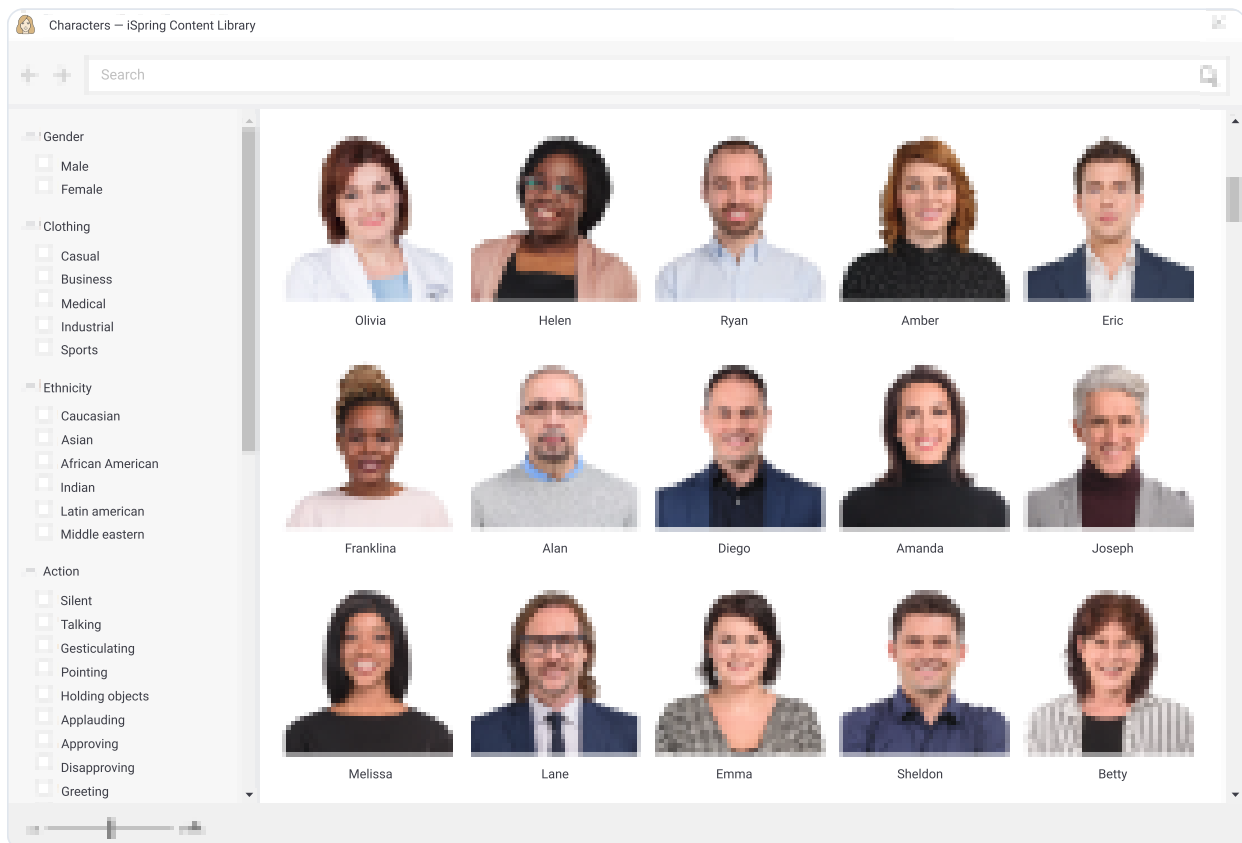
[View the full demo →](#)

The principal feature of a conversation simulation is its branched scenario, where each decision has consequences. It works like an actual communication between two people: say something inappropriate and you'll anger your opponent; be friendly and polite and he'll reflect your sentiment.

With iSpring Suite, you can build a dialogue tree – a well-organized structure that you can manipulate with one click.



To make a simulation more realistic, you can add backgrounds, characters for each scene, and add voice-overs. You can upload your own images or use the built-in collection of assets. A great way to save time on course development is to use [iSpring Content Library](#), that offers a large set of characters of different ages, ethnic groups, and professions, and a huge collection of locations suitable for different situations.



Useful resources

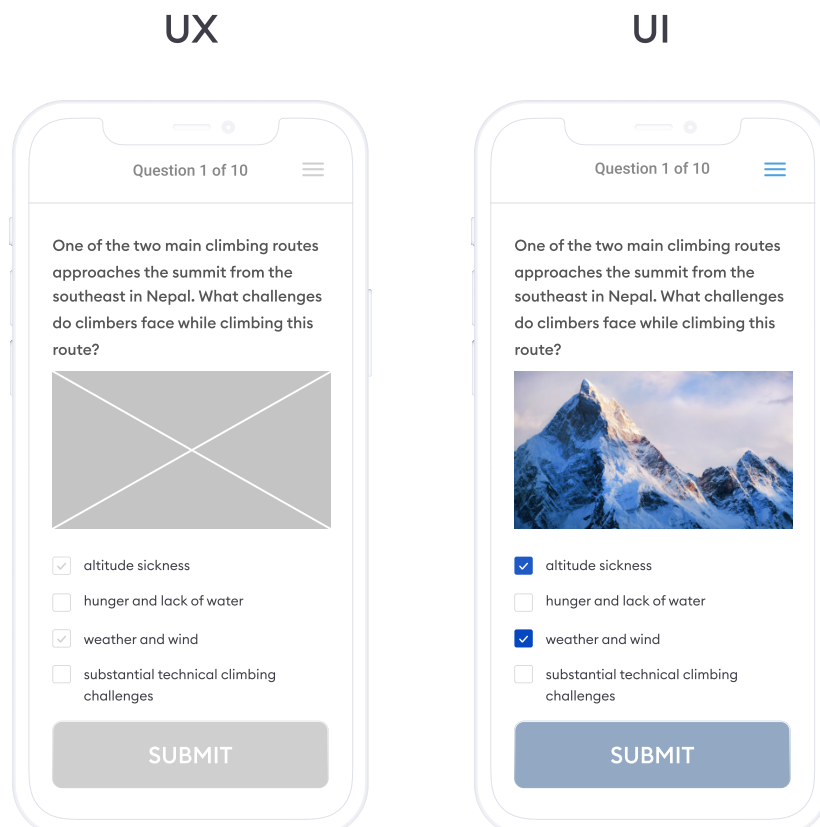
- [Black Belt In Negotiations: How to Improve Your Employees' Skills with Dialogue Simulations →](#)
- [How to Create Conversation Simulations with iSpring →](#)
- [8 Role-Playing Scenarios for Customer Service Training →](#)

Step 9. Apply UI/UX Best Practices

Even if the content is useful and interesting, the online course won't engage learners if it looks sloppy and pale. To create beautiful eLearning modules, you should be familiar with the notions of UI and UX.

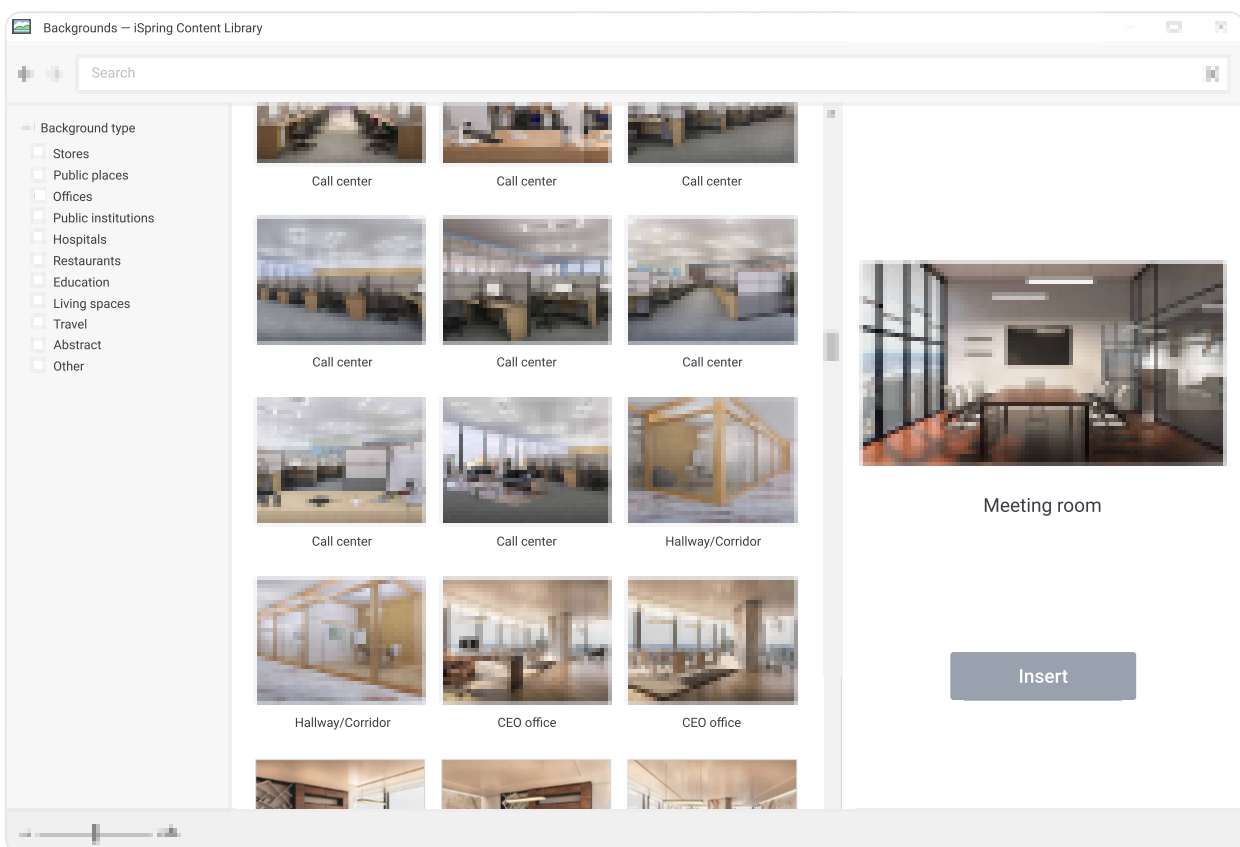
Fortunately, if you're going to create online courses with iSpring Suite, you don't need to be a professional designer – it's quite enough to know the main UI/UX practices. But first, let's dive deeper into what these abbreviations mean and how these concepts compare.

Simply put, UI (user interface design) is what makes an online course visually attractive. It uses the principles of graphic design and typography to bring the UX (user experience design) to life. UX refers to the way an eLearning module feels for a person – focuses on the learner's experience, satisfaction, and usability. So, using the restaurant analogy, "UI is the table, chair, plate, glass, and utensils. UX is everything from the food to the service, parking, lighting, and music." (Ken Norton, Partner at Google Ventures).



To learn about the basic principles of UX and UI and find out how to make an online course even more appealing for learners, read on or watch this video:

As mentioned, with iSpring, you don't need to be a UX/UI guru. You can use the ready-made templates from iSpring Content Library, arrange various blocks like a title slide, chapters, and info slides in the order you want, and simply populate them with your text and images. It also includes ready-made icons and objects.



Useful resources

- [How to Create a Mobile-Friendly Online Course: 10 Must-Follow Rules →](#)
- [How to Design Online Courses – 6 Graphic Design Principles →](#)
- [UI Design Dos and Don'ts →](#)

- [UX Crash Course: 31 Fundamentals →](#)

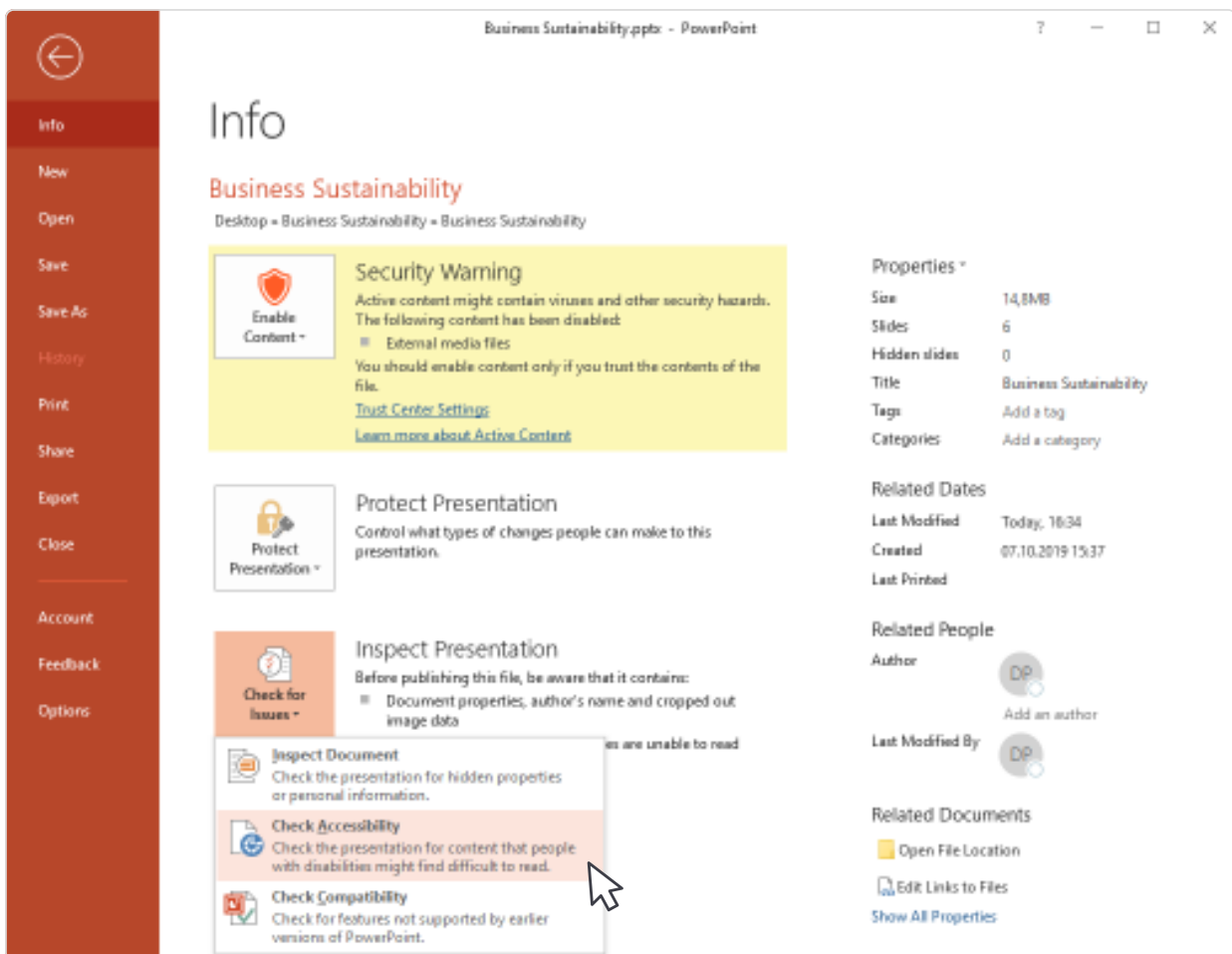
Step 10. Ensure Your Content Accessibility and Mobile Readiness

If you're a government agency interested in training employees online, or any other business that aims to make its eLearning fully accessible for people with impairments, you need to create courses that comply with Section 508. This is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which requires that all electronic information be available for people with disabilities.

PPT accessibility

It's convenient to prepare slides for your courses in PowerPoint since Microsoft itself offers ways to make your presentation accessible for learners. For example, you can use a screen reader, alt text, and built-in layouts for images.

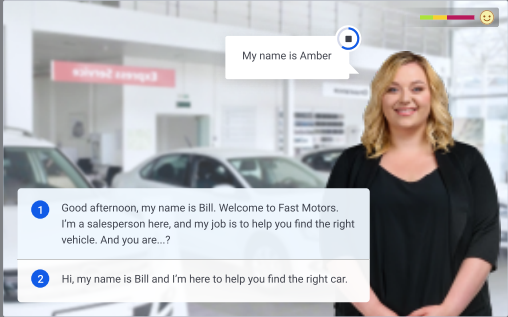
Microsoft also provides a built-in accessibility checker. When the checker is used, it shows a list of potential accessibility issues with suggestions on how to address them. The course creator can fix these issues to make the slides more accessible to people with disabilities.



Section 508 compliant content in iSpring Suite

Though the Microsoft Accessibility checker is a great option, with iSpring Suite, you can make courses accessible to individuals with a visual impairment even faster and easier. To create accessible content, you don't have to develop a separate version of your course, master a new tool, or even invest your time in checks – you just build a course in the respective editor, as you always do, and tick a single checkbox.

Here's how a course slide looks in different modes:



Character emotion: Puzzled

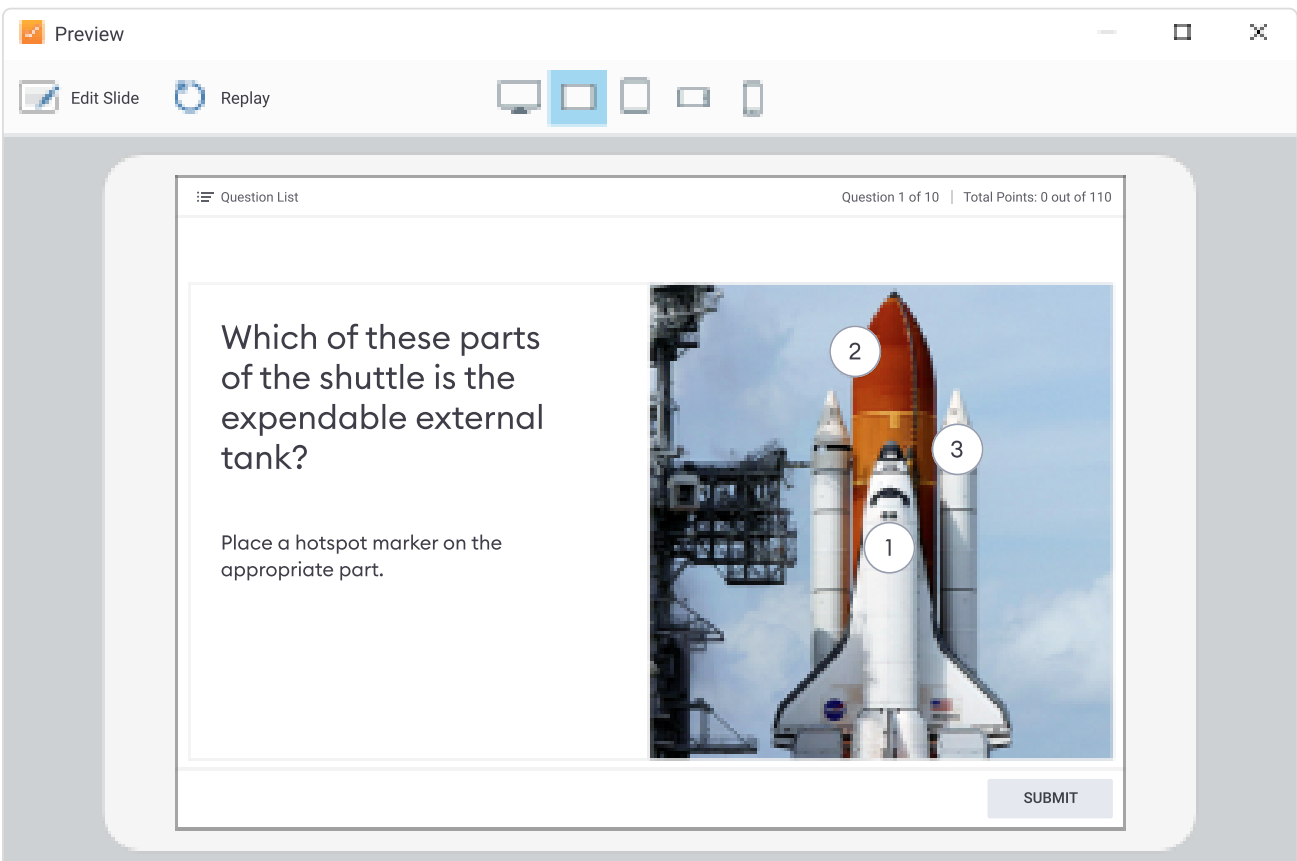
My name is Amber.

Answer options:

1. Good afternoon, my name is Bill. Welcome to Fast Motors. I'm a salesperson here, and my job is to help you find the right vehicle. And you are...?
2. Hi, my name is Bill and I'm here to help you find the right car.

Mobile readiness

Courses created with iSpring Suite play well on any device, including PCs, Macs, tablets, and smartphones. However, before publishing the content, ensure that it displays perfectly on each device type. You can do this in a few clicks by using a Preview mode.



Preview

Edit Slide Replay

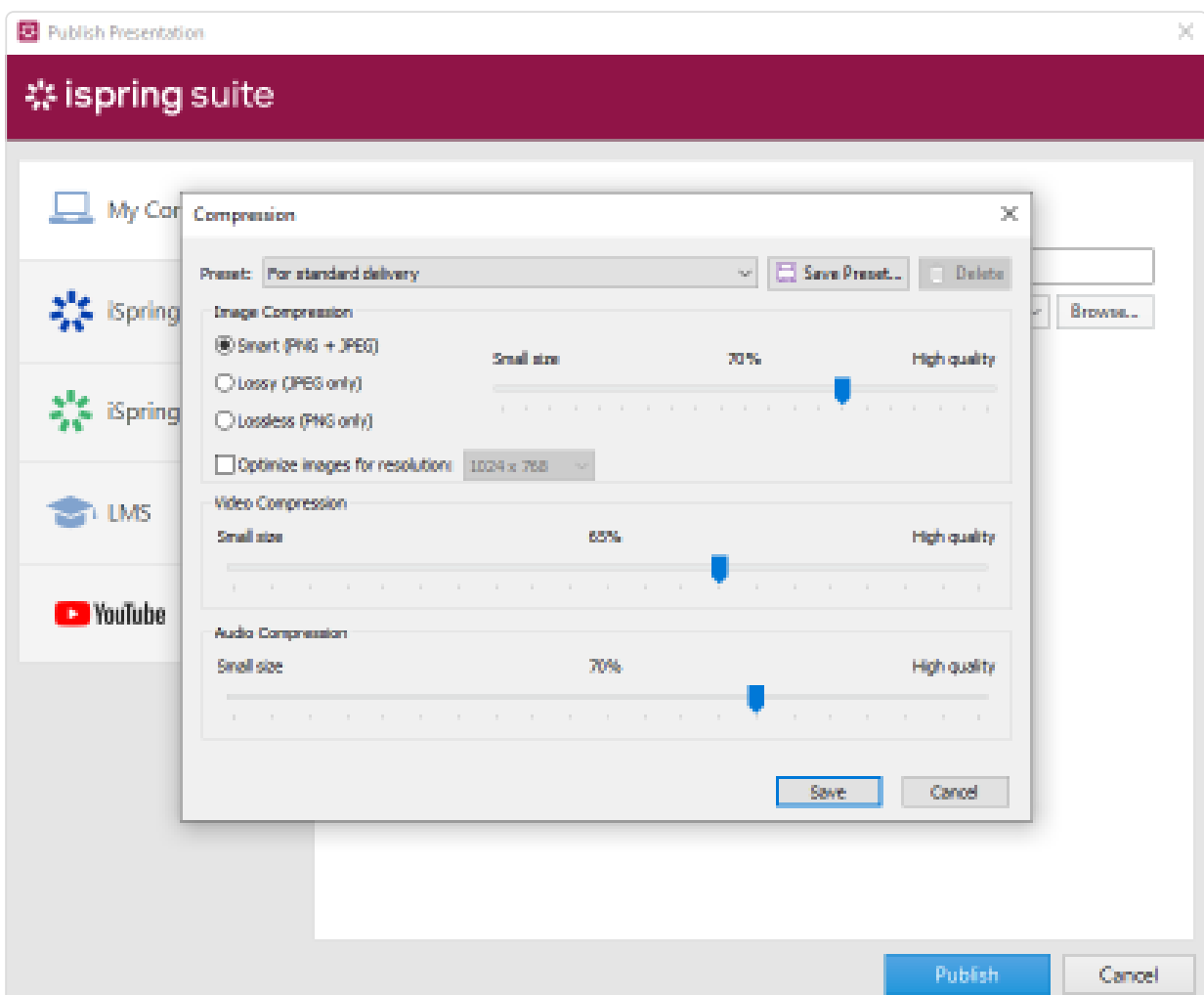
Question List Question 1 of 10 | Total Points: 0 out of 110

Which of these parts of the shuttle is the expendable external tank?

Place a hotspot marker on the appropriate part.

SUBMIT

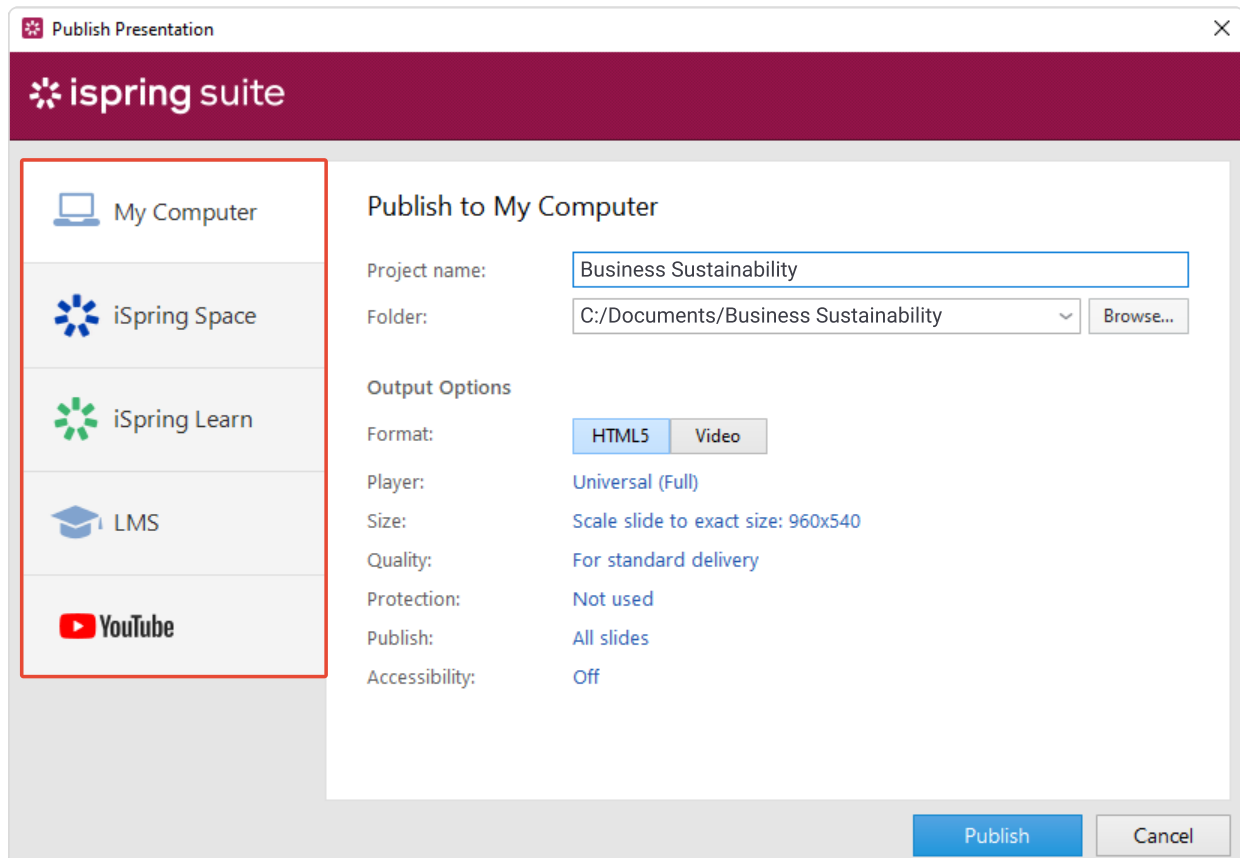
When finishing a course, you may also need to think about how extensive the content you're providing is and if it is compressed to the level that the learners' device can readily process. You can choose presets that adjust files for various levels of image, audio, and video compression. This will help you find a balance between file size and quality.



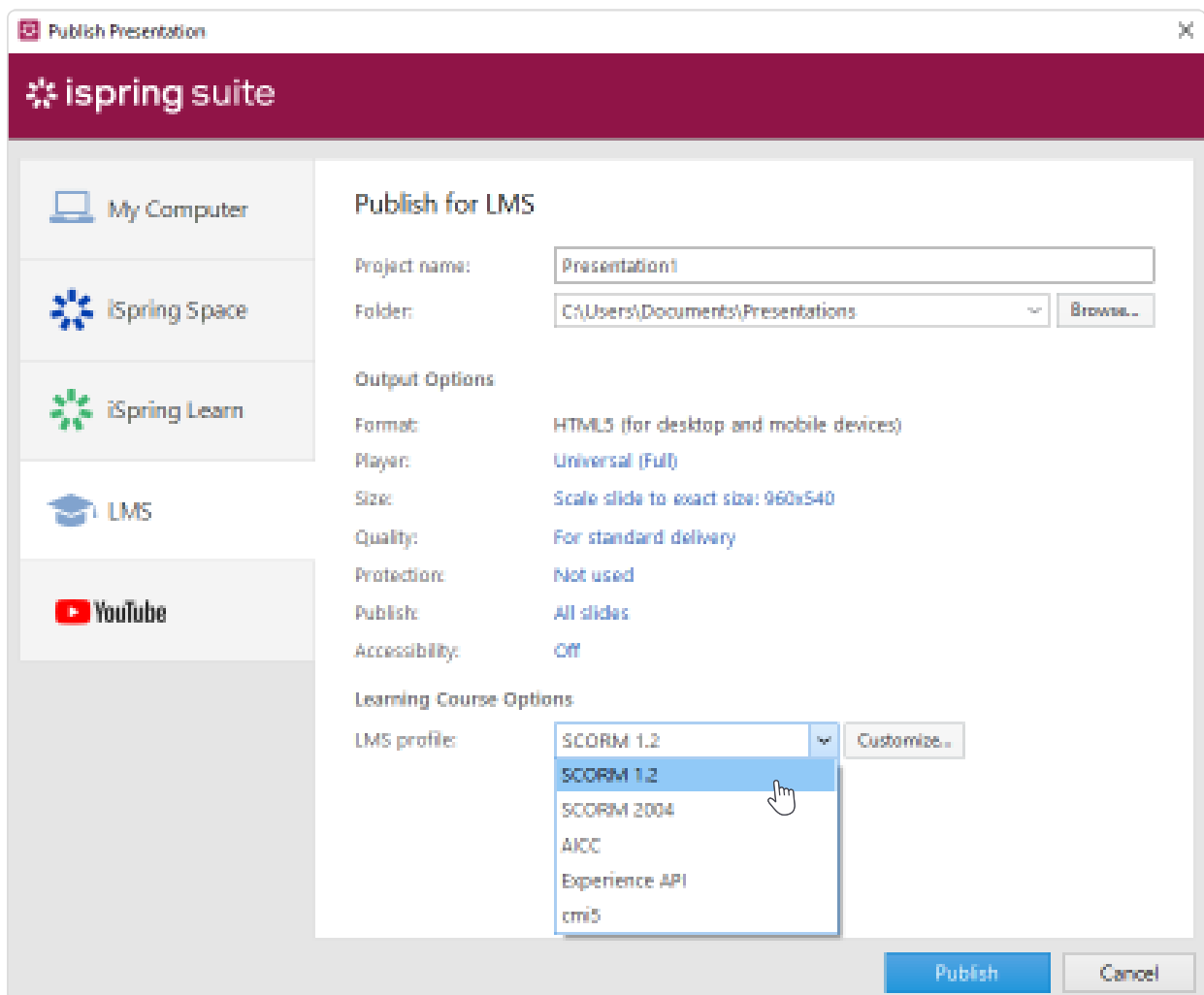
Step 11. Publish Your Course

Now that you've planned, designed, and developed your eLearning content, it's time to pull it all together by publishing your course.

iSpring allows you to publish content in several ways: to My Computer, to [iSpring Learn LMS](#), to other LMSs, and to YouTube.



The format you'll publish your course to will depend on your goals and the platform from which you're going to distribute it. For example, if you're going to showcase your course in your blog, choose HTML5. If you're planning to upload it to your LMS, find out what eLearning formats it supports (SCORM, xAPI, etc.). If you're aiming to sell courses online, check out the formats that your selling platform accepts (video, PDF, or maybe even SCORM if it's a highly progressive platform).



Useful resources

- [What is SCORM and Why Does it Matter? →](#)
- [How to Create SCORM Content for Your LMS →](#)

Summary

We hope these basic instructional design processes and guidelines help you develop better, more engaging, and more effective e-courses! If you still haven't checked how easy and fast it is to build learning content with iSpring Suite, [get a free 14-day trial](#) and try out all of its features for nothing.