

Component Display Theory (Dave Merrill)

Component display theory is one of the [cognitive theories](#) of instructional design introduced by Dave Merrill in the 1980s. The original intention of it's creator was to separate content from instructional strategy.

Component display theory analyzes content (in terms of facts, concepts, procedures and principles) and performance (in terms of remember, use and find) as two categories of learning outcomes graphically organized into [component display theory matrix](#).

Merrill also believed that different learning outcomes require different learning strategies, and that most efficiently designed instruction contains multiple forms of presented information.

Merrill distinguishes between primary and secondary presentation forms. Primary presentation forms are:

- expository presentation of a generality - rules
- expository presentation of instances - examples
- inquisitory generalities - recall
- inquisitory instances - practice.

The term “expository” can here roughly be explained as “talk”, “inquisitory” as “ask”, “generality” as “general concept” and “instance” as “specific example”.

Merrill's secondary presentation forms include prerequisites objectives, helps, mnemonics and feedback.

A successful instructional design should include primary and secondary presentation forms, depending on content/performance goal. The learner should also be provided with a number of examples he wants.

[“Component display theory - eLearning snippets.”](#)

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