

Elaboration Theory

Elaboration theory is one of the [cognitivist](#) models for instructional design proposed by [Charles Reigeluth](#) and his associates in 1970s. Very well accepted, it was offering detailed suggestions on how to organize different types of instruction.

Elaboration theory suggests instruction should be organized in the following eight strategies:

- organizing structure (conceptual, procedural or theoretical)
- sequencing content in increasing order of complexity
- within-lesson sequencing (based on type of organizing structure: for theoretically organized instruction present ideas from simple to complex, for procedures present steps in their order of appearance, for conceptually organized instructions start from more familiar and general concepts)
- summarizers (to review content)
- synthesizers (to enable easier meaningful integration of new knowledge)
- analogies (to enable easier relation to prior knowledge)
- cognitive strategy activators (images, diagrams or simply directions to mentally represent learned content)
- learner control (learners are encouraged to exercise control over instructional strategies and content)

A key idea of elaboration theory is that the learner needs to develop a meaningful context into which subsequent ideas and skills can be assimilated.

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Last update: **2023/06/19 15:49**