

What is an Authoring Tool?

If you are new to elearning, you may be confused by the many types of authoring tools available. So just what is an authoring tool?

Authoring Tools and eLearning

The term authoring tool is misleading to some people. Given the word 'authoring,' you might think that an authoring tool refers to a specialized form of word processing software used by professional writers. In the elearning world, authoring tools which are also referred to as elearning authoring tools, elearning authoring software, elearning content development tools and elearning course development software go far beyond writing and word processing.

eLearning authoring tools enable trainers to integrate an array of media to create professional, engaging and interactive training content. With an authoring tool, you can repurpose digitized elements or learning objects from an existing course for use in a new course. In this way, you can realize a return on investment for components that may have been developed using outside programmers or graphic design resources.

In reality, 'elearning course creation tool' is a better term for this category of software rather than the more popular 'authoring tool.' As you begin your search for an authoring tool, you'll quickly come to find that this term embraces a wide range of development functions. You may also discover, as others have, that a combination of tools—that perform complementary functions—rather than a single tool may best fit your needs.

Why Authoring Tools?

Custom content is at the forefront of the elearning frontier. Trainers are continually trying to identify ways to create and publish increasingly complex custom elearning content for use on the Internet, company intranets or CD-ROMs. Some trainers seek high-speed deployment of critical information through an organization, known as rapid elearning, while others want control of courseware and independence from programmers.

Many organizations are attempting to reduce their training costs by developing elearning materials in-house. Some organizations want an authoring tool that is easy to learn and can be used by a large team of people with different skill sets; others want to move to a blended training solution by offering a combination of classroom and elearning courses. Authoring tools offer a way for elearning managers to achieve their goals.