

Seamless learning

Connecting learning across settings, technologies, and activities

Seamless learning brings together learning experiences that take place at different locations and times. It can be done on purpose, starting with an activity led by a teacher and moving into discussion with family members or online students. It can also be accidental, as when an interesting piece of information from the television or Internet sparks discussion and a lesson. Learners can bring these linked experiences together using a paper notebook, a phone, or a laptop.

Classroom lessons take place in a controlled environment, where the teacher specifies the activity and supplies all the necessary tools. Seamless learning gives more responsibility to learners, encouraging them to find tools and resources in their environment that can help them to learn.

To prepare students for seamless learning, encourage them to explore how they can use the tools available to them for different learning activities. How many ways can they think of to find and explore information, produce written work or images, share ideas with others, or apply what they are learning in their own environment? Obvious resources may include books, paper, pens, smartphones, and computers. Others might include family members, talking over a landline, smartwatches, digital helpers such as Alexa, or accessing the Internet via a games console.

Include training on Internet safety and security that is appropriate to your learners' age and experience. Your seamless learning sessions could also incorporate work on how to establish whether information and sources can be trusted, and on how to use Internet search effectively.

Seamless learning works best when the learner brings everything together in one place or on one device. Ask your students to decide which tool they are going to use and to reflect on their decision and any potential problems. Paper notepads make it difficult to share work at a distance, smartphones may run out of data, laptops are often shared with other family members. Identifying and overcoming these problems is part of the learning experience.

Supporting seamless learning at a distance

<p>Most smartphones contain the tools listed on the right, and often many more. Challenge students to find out what their phone or a family member's phone can do, and to think about how they might use these tools to support their learning.</p>	<p>Accelerometer, ambient light sensor, camera, GPS, gyroscope, magnetometer, microphone, proximity sensor.</p>
<p>Help your students to find information more effectively. There are many lists of tips for effective use of search engines.</p>	<p>In some parts of the world, learners can test their skills using Google's daily challenge www.agoogleaday.com</p>
<p>Internet safety is important for all learners, so include it in your learning support.</p>	<p>One of the many sites that offer Internet safety resources www.childnet.com</p>

How did it go?

Let us know in the comments on www.open.ac.uk/blogs/innovating how seamless learning worked for you and your students. Please share any tips that others would find useful, or link to examples of seamless learning activities.