



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### Dimensions of Computer-Based Training

Computer literacy is rapidly becoming a basic skill requirement for employees. For employees in jobs that require usage of computers, computer-based training (CBT) can help in two ways – providing the intended training content while familiarizing employees' with computers.

Computer-based training varies along three dimensions – timeliness, customizability and instructional formats.

**Timeliness:** Though all CBT programs allow great flexibility in the timing of training delivery, some types are more flexible than others. For instance, a performance support system is more flexible than computer-aided instruction.

- **Performance support systems:** This provides employees with specific and immediate training when the problem arises, without removing them from their job locations. It is best for situations where the instruction is contained within 20 minutes or less and the skills to be learned are simple.
- **Computer aided instruction:** In this process, the trainee operates a computer and receives instructions via computer. It is best for learning complex skills, and the duration of a module can be for any length of time.

**Customizability:** CBT can be customized to whatever extent necessary, depending on the needs of the company.

- **Off-the-shelf:** This is a buy and use application, the content of which cannot be changed. It is inexpensive and is best for learning generic skills.
- **Customizable:** While the content can be customized, the manner in which it is delivered cannot be altered. It is suitable for learning relatively more difficult skills and is appropriate when no ready-made training module is available off-the-shelf or when a large number of people are to be trained.
- **Customized:** It is a CBT that is built from scratch (both the content and the sequence of instruction) to suit specific company needs. Customized CBT can be expensive and is appropriate for training a large number of employees.

**Instruction format:** Independent study, on-site classrooms and off-site classrooms are the three instruction formats of CBT.

- **Independent study:** In an independent study, trainees use the CBT on their own, either at their home, the work-site, or wherever they can access a computer. It works best when the skills are easy to learn, as there is no formal instructor. Trainees, however, will have to be familiar with computers.
- **On-site classroom:** This type of CBT is usually located in the trainees' workplace and is provided with an instructor to facilitate learning. It is best when the skills to be



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learned are complex and have to be completely mastered. This allows different trainees to learn different concepts at the same time.

- **Off-site classrooms:** This type of instruction requires employees to go outside the organization for training, usually an outside training center. It is best for learning complex skills that need to be mastered and is appropriate when the group to be taught is very small.

Organizations will have to carefully assess their training needs and select a CBT that suits their needs from both the conceptual and physical standpoint.