

Scenario Development Quick Reference

Best Practices

- For an impactful scenario, identify an action that:
 - Has been identified as high priority by the Subject Matter Experts.
 - Shows a *skill problem*, not just a knowledge gap.
 - *Requires judgment* in a situation with grey areas.
- **IMPORTANT! Scenarios work by giving learners the autonomy to learn from their mistakes.** They are NOT intended as Knowledge Checks of simple facts. In the workplace, we all know facts but need to *apply* them, not to *regurgitate facts* but to *get the job done*. Keep this in mind as you consider your decision points and the scenario flow.
 - Adult learners learn best by having autonomy to make mistakes and learn from them to build competence. Do not create a “control freak” scenario that *tells* the learner if they were correct or incorrect or *leads* them.
- Instead of presenting more information, plunge people into a scenario, provide extra information optionally, and let people pull the information they need.
 - Just like in the real world, people will learn from the consequences of their choices.
 - If we suspect some people will struggle to interpret the consequence, we can provide optional explanations.
- Scenarios are best when used as part of a larger training effort, regardless of how they are delivered. Learners may need a debrief and some structured way to process or discuss, draw conclusions, build a model, and identify how they're going to change what they do. So, consider them as supplemental/supporting of providing practice within a training.

Considerations

- Is there ONE decision point (a “mini scenario”) or multiple points where decisions must be made that may “branch” people to make additional decisions?
- What decision(s) need(s) to be made? (This may be one an experienced person makes automatically but a novice needs to learn and practice. If it helps, ask a novice for their perspective.)
- When considering your scenario, do not assume any particular activity format. We are brainstorming activity ideas, not an online course or other specific format, and maybe not even “training” as you may traditionally think of training.

Ingredients for an Effective Scenario

For a practice activity to qualify as a *scenario*, it needs to have five ingredients.

1. A character or “you”...
2. has to *make a realistic decision*...
3. that requires *judgment*. (Are there “grey areas”? If yes, may need a branching scenario.)
4. The learner *makes the decision*,
5. and *sees the realistic consequence*.

Scenario Elements

The STEM

The STEM is the backstory or setup for the scenario. It introduces a realistic character (which maybe “you”) who needs to use their judgment/experience (a skill) to make a decision.

- Keep the story simple, without too many distracting details.
- **Ask one question that requires a *realistic decision*.**

The OPTIONS

OPTIONS are the choices a person has to make at their decision point(s). There should be good *choices* and “not-good” choices, or *distractors*.

- Provide choices that are *realistic* (not obvious or silly) that consider:
 - What people do right or wrong on the job.
 - What novices versus experts would do (what steps do experts automatically do that a novice may not know?)
 - What resources might a person need to consult (or be reminded of) to make their decision?
- Distractors should be written to sound appealing; these are the most common mistake(s) people make on the job.

The CONSEQUENCES

A CONSEQUENCE is a realistic result of someone making a decision (choosing an OPTION)

- CONSEQUENCES represent the best or bad/worst outcomes (and there may be grey areas).
- They should always “continue the story” and *show the consequence of a decision* versus “telling or correcting” the learner.
 - **This is an important distinction between a *scenario* and a (simple, less-effective) *knowledge check*! If you ask learners to apply knowledge and make a decision and then respond with “feedback” (aka, “Incorrect. THIS is the right/wrong answer.”) you have created a simple fact-checking exercise and are not providing the autonomy for users to learn from their mistakes.**
- In a branching scenario (with more than one decision point), a CONSEQUENCE may become the STEM of the next decision point.

Brainstorm Your Scenario

- Start by considering an action that learners need to perform on the job. To bring to mind a real-life story around that action, ask yourself or a Subject Matter Expert to “Think about a time when [THIS ACTION] was needed or relevant” in a work situation.
- Outline the Stem (Story), Options, and Consequences of your draft scenario.
- Run the scenario by your working group or some colleagues with knowledge (novice vs. expert) in the training area you are targeting to see how realistic the elements sound.
- Refine and test with a target audience, if possible.

Scenario Brainstorming Template

Use the following template to brainstorm and refine your scenario. A brief example is provided for you to follow. Select the table to copy/paste it out to use for building your own scenarios (click into the table, then select the plus sign that appears at upper left to copy it out).

STEM <i>(Story that sets up a decision, brief description)</i>	DECISION POINT <i>(What realistic decision does the learner need to make?)</i>	OPTIONS <i>(What possible decisions can learners make—from best to worst?)</i>	CONSEQUENCES <i>(What are the realistic consequences of each option/decision made? Remember to SHOW, not TELL,)</i>
<p><i>[EXAMPLE:] Avery is a new trail volunteer who has just attended their first briefing; they're not sure they heard the assignment and PPE requirements correctly but are worried about asking a question in front of the crew.</i></p>	<p><i>How should Avery proceed with the assignment?</i></p>	<p><i>[BEST]: Avery raises a hand and asks the supervisor to restate the PPE requirements.</i></p> <p><i>[POOR]: Avery looks around to see what PPE people are pulling out and plans to ask a team member what they heard.</i></p> <p><i>[BAD]: Avery decides to just go with the flow instead of "looking bad" in front of their crew.</i></p>	<p><i>[BEST]: The supervisor thanks Avery for speaking up. She re-briefs the entire group and ensures everyone is aware of their assignment and demonstrates what PPE to bring along. Everyone has a chance to ask additional questions and there are a few who speak up.</i></p> <p><i>[POOR]: The team member they consulted was wrong about their assignment and confusion about where Avery needed to report delayed the whole team. Although Avery has some gloves and boots, they are not the right kind. They end up with blisters after using hand tools and hiking a long distance; they cannot participate fully and need to sit the second day out.</i></p> <p><i>[BAD]: Avery is late meeting the crew and not at all prepared for the work they are to do, lacks proper PPE and did not review the work plan. Others were also confused, which caused significant delays and frustration within the crew.</i></p>
		<p><i>[BEST]:</i></p> <p><i>[POOR/INCORRECT]:</i></p> <p><i>[BAD/INCORRECT]:</i></p>	<p><i>[BEST]:</i></p> <p><i>[POOR/INCORRECT]:</i></p> <p><i>[BAD/INCORRECT]:</i></p>