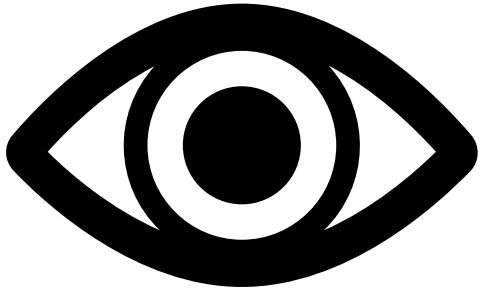
Identifying and Reducing Bias in Instructional Design

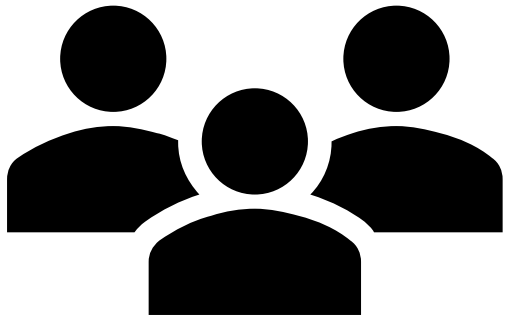
Internal Micro-Learning for Instructional Designers

Why This Matters

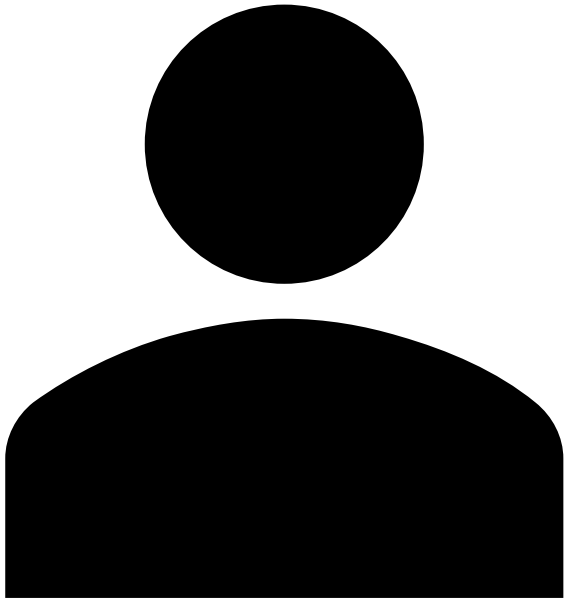


- Bias often appears unintentionally
- Small design choices can exclude learners
- Inclusive design improves learning for everyone

Importance of Audience



- Learners bring diverse backgrounds and experiences
- Culture, access, and context matter
- Audience awareness shapes design decisions



The “Default Learner” Problem

- Designing for a “default learner” creates gaps
- Assumptions about access, time, or experience
- One-size-fits-all examples can exclude learners

Knowledge Check: Audience Awareness

Which design choice best demonstrates audience-centered thinking?

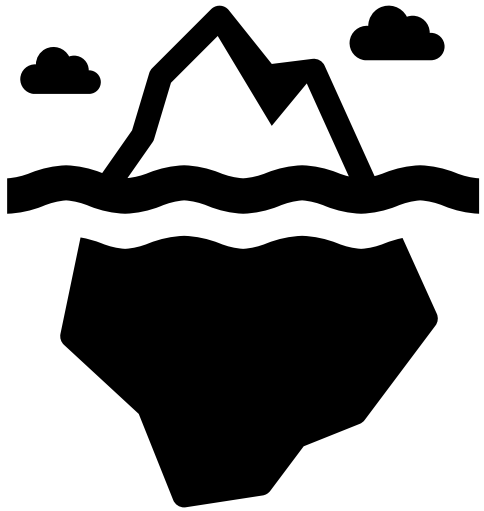
A. Designing for a single learning style
B. Reusing existing slides without updates
C. Using generic examples for all audiences
D. Conducting learner analysis to understand needs

Effects of Bias in Learning Materials

- Reduced learner engagement and trust
- Increased frustration or confusion
- Some learners feel invisible or excluded

Bias is Often Invisible

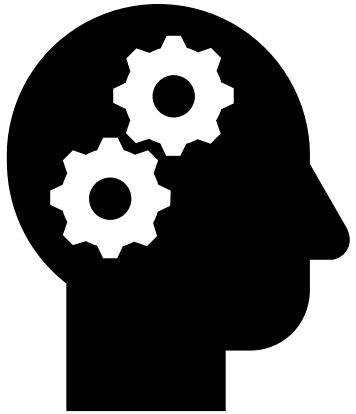
- Bias is rarely intentional
- Often appears through omission
- Can exist even in “neutral” content



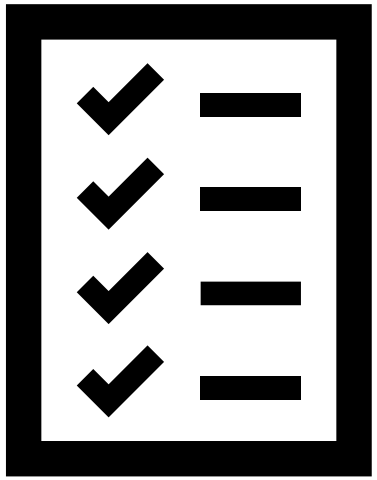
Knowledge Check: Effects of Bias

Choose whether the statement is true or false: Bias in instructional design is usually intentional and obvious.

A. True
B. False



Where Bias Commonly Appears



- Language and tone
- Visuals and representation
- Examples and scenarios
- Accessibility barriers

Questions Designers Should Ask

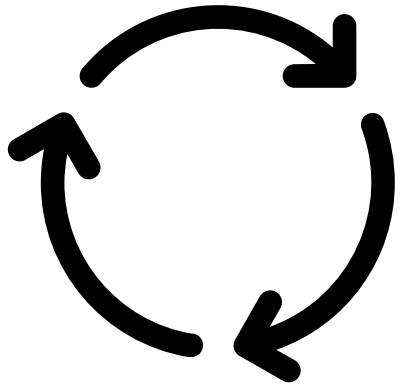
- Who is represented?
- Who is missing?
- What assumptions are being made?
- Who might struggle to access this content?

Knowledge Check: Identifying Bias

A training module uses only one cultural perspective in its examples. What type of bias might this reflect?

A. Accessibility bias
B. Bias through omission
C. Technical bias
D. No bias is present

Reducing Bias Through Intentional Design

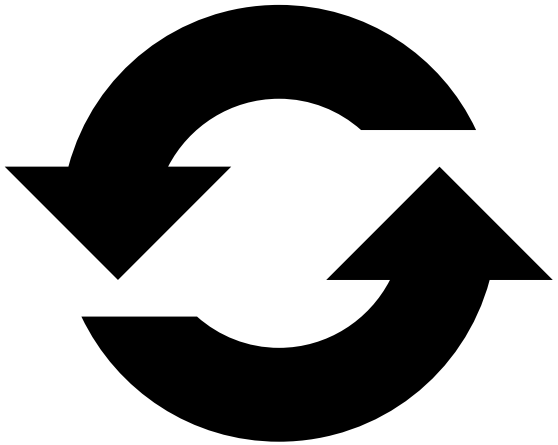


- Conduct meaningful learner analysis
- Use inclusive, neutral language
- Vary examples and scenarios

Accessibility as Bias Prevention

- Captions and transcripts
- Clear structure and navigation
- Visual contrast and readability
- Multiple ways to engage

Continuous Improvement



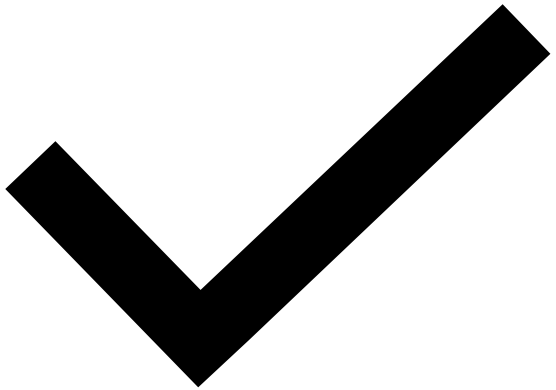
- Seek feedback from diverse perspectives
- Review materials regularly
- Review materials regularly

Knowledge Check: Applying Strategies

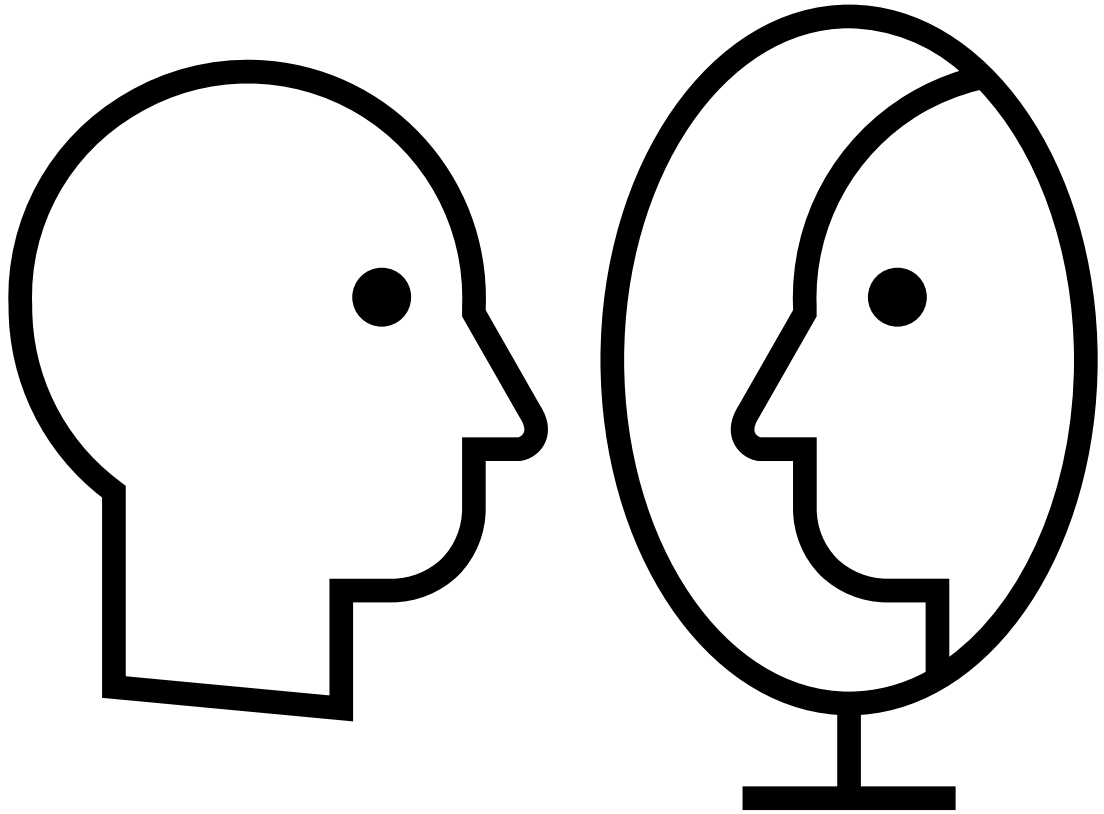
Which practice best helps reduce unintentional bias in learning materials?

A. Relying on personal experience during design
B. Using the same examples repeatedly
C. Avoiding accessibility considerations
D. Gathering feedback from diverse stakeholders

Key Takeaways



- Bias in instructional design is often unintentional
- Audience awareness helps reduce assumptions
- Inclusive and accessible design benefits everyone



Reflection

What is one design habit you will be more intentional about after completing this module?