<http://www.personal.psu.edu/yxc8/IDDoes.html>

### What does an Instructional Designer do?

The bottom line is that an Instructional Designer solves problems. From the title, you would think that an Instructional Designer only solves instructional problems, but that is not always the case. Sometimes, at first glance, the solution to a problem will look like it needs to involve instruction, but, after careful investigation, you can find that what is really needed is entirely different. Since the problem still needs to be solved, the Instructional Designer may be the best qualified person to develop a solution, even though it might not involve instruction.

Good instructional design (and problem solving) always begins with a clear audience and goal, a needs assessment, and a needs analysis. A clear goal and audience give you the target you want to aim for. The needs assessment and analysis give you the current conditions and clarify exactly what kind of problem you will be dealing with. Then, determining exactly how to get from where you are to where you want to be, becomes the plan for the project and the solution to the problem.

What does an Instructional Designer do? An ID works with a content expert to define the audience and goal, conduct a needs assessment, analyze the results, and determine a solution that will achieve the goal with the specified audience. Then the ID designs the materials and works with other team members to develop and produce the materials necessary to implement the solution. It is important for the ID to work closely with the content expert to be sure that the solution is on target. Then the ID will test the solution, analyze the results, and make modifications to the materials if necessary.

An Instructional Designer is a team player. I think it is safe to say that 90% of the work an ID does can not be done without the assistance of the content or subject matter expert. An ID has expertise about how people learn, how to solve problems, different types of media and technologies, how to organize information, and how to design instructional materials. The content expert has expertise about the specific subject. When the two work together, they are able to develop a detailed, accurate plan that will solve a specific problem. In addition to the Instructional Designer and the Content Expert, a design team will often include a computer programmer, a graphic designer, and an editor.

An Instructional Designer is also a "jack of all trades, master of several." In order to develop effective solutions to problems, an ID must be familiar with all standard modes of delivery of information and instruction as well as with new and innovative technologies. Everything from pencil and paper to index cards, to Web-based instruction, to streaming video is within the expertise of an innovative Instructional Designer, as well as learning theories and how learning styles relate to various delivery methods. Since choosing the most appropriate mode of delivery is critical to the effective solution of the problem, an ID must also be familiar with production processes, from preparing camera-ready print materials to building dynamic, database driven Web sites.

A mistake that is often made is that the ID is a master of all of these different technologies, skills, and processes. That would clearly be impossible! The ID usually depends on other team members to be the experts; the ID is the person who coordinates the solution by knowing how the technology works and what the requirements are for production. The ID designs the solution, other team members will often be the ones who possess specific expertise and who actually do the production. That doesn't mean that the ID isn't involved in production, just that the ID doesn't usually work alone.