

'A Day in the Life'

Aim

For participants to reflect on the different needs of learners, and to consider learners' use of technology for learning in relation to their whole lived experience of technology use.

For participants to consider how institutions can respond positively to learners' differences.

Preparation

Print out each 'day in the life' on stiff paper or card. Each pair or small group of participants receives 1 card. Ensure that larger groups e.g. around a table have a range of different cards: e.g. A, B and D together, or C, E and F together. This will provide enough variety to support discussion after the pairs activity.

Setting the scene

These are *not* the diaries of real learners. They are based on a format used by the Thema project at the University of Oxford, but the content is compiled from a wide range of different learners in order to demonstrate the different ways technology can manifest in learners' lives. Real-life learner diaries from Thema, video diaries from STROLL, and other genuine case studies can be downloaded from the Learner Experiences of e-Learning web site. Before taking part in this activity, participants should take time to listen to real learners talking about their lives, through these or other resources.

This activity can be used in conjunction with the 'pyramid' model of developing effective e-learners. Participants may be introduced to the pyramid model before or during this activity.

This activity can also be used in conjunction with the 'strategies of effective e-learners' activity. Participants may be introduced to the range of strategies before or after this activity.

Instructions to participants

Working in a pair or small group read through one of the day in the life cards on your table.

With your partner(s), discuss:

- Does this learner have good access to technologies for learning? How could it be improved?
- Does this learner have the skills they need to support learning with technology? How could they be enhanced?
- What strategies are working for this learner? Are there any other strategies you could recommend?
- How could other learners benefit from this learners' experiences?

It may help to use a blank copy of the 'pyramid' model in your discussions.

Feeding back to the whole group and discussion points

Working in table groups (or in plenary) consider:

- What learner differences are most problematic for institutions and/or course teams?
- What learner differences can be a positive advantage to institutions and/or course teams?
- How can we help learners to support each other in learning to learn effectively with technology?

Anne	
6.30 am	Get up, grab a cup of coffee, get breakfast on table, make packed lunches, put in washing, check kids' schedules and make sure the right kit etc is packed in all their bags.
7.30 am	Get kids up (x3), help youngest get washed and dressed, breakfast eaten and into the dishwasher.
8.15-8.55 am	Drive youngest to pre-school, older girl to junior school on the same site, our foster son (13) at the bus stop for <i>his</i> school run. I still work two-and-half (call it three!) days a week while I'm doing my foundation degree in Youth Work, but this is one of my college days, <i>and</i> I get a parking space – hurrah!
9.00 - 11.00 am	Two lectures back to back, I take notes and cross reference with the background resources which I've printed out from the VLE and read last night. Technologies: powerpoint, hand-outs, pen and paper
11.30 am	Receive a message from my husband on my mobile. Youngest is sick but we have a quick chat and decide he should collect her so I can make my tutorial. I meet with my course tutor where I get feedback on our my assignment. The tutor thinks I should be including more 'contemporary references' and suggests I use some Internet sites like Guardian online to do this. Technologies: mobile phone
12.30 -4.30 pm	Quick lunch then on to the library where I spend the afternoon reading and making notes, and finding resources for our group presentation next week. I have some problems with my group because they are all young and like to leave everything to the last minute. Also I've just got used to email and the VLE, which I like because you can see what everyone's contributed and agreed to do. But they seem to text each other all the time, and use this social thing called my space. Technology: online library catalogue, books, journals. (speculative) email, VLE
4.45 pm	Before I leave I print out all the materials for my next day in college, which costs a fortune, but I hate reading off the screen and anyway it's always a fight for the computer at home. Call home to check on youngest – she's fine now. Technology: library PC, printer, mobile phone
5.15 pm	Drive home via the supermarket
5.30 – 8.00 pm	While husband cooks, bring in the morning's washing, read a story and put youngest to bed, look and learn while our 13 year old helps our 8 year old daughter find something on the internet, then I supervise her bath time. Technology: shared home PC, IE (with parental controls)
9.00 – 11.30 pm	Eldest finally lets me onto the computer. I feel guilty because I know most of his friends have their own computer in their rooms, and without him I wouldn't have been able to get online and take part in my course at all. I check my course webmail and Guardian online as my tutor suggested. I email my tutor with a question, then think log onto the VLE to post it on the discussion board as we're meant to do, but I lose heart when I see how confidently all the other students are contributing. Finally I update some schedules for work tomorrow. Technology: Home PC, Internet Explorer, web mail (University account), Guardian online, VLE, MS Excel
11.30 pm	A glass of wine with my husband before bed.

Beth	
7.00 am	My MacBook wakes me up with something from my 'morning' iTunes library. Breakfast with other girls in my shared house. Sadly we are all such geeks we have been known to skype each other from our rooms to arrange coffee! Listen to digital radio on the iMac we use as a shared entertainment centre downstairs. Technology: MacBook, iTunes, coffee maker, iMac,iPlayer
8.00 to 9.30 am	Log onto youtube from my powerbook, which is where we are showcasing our digital video work, and make some comments on two other students' projects. There are a couple of nice comments for me so I log into the college VLE as well, then cut and paste the comments into my e-portfolio. This takes me ages. I wish we could just link out to youtube but the college won't let us and actually I think our tutor is in trouble for even thinking up the youtube idea. Technology: MacBook, wireless network, youtube, VLE, e-portfolio
9.30 to 11.30 am	Back up files onto my hard drive and share a car ride into college for review meeting. My powerbook goes everywhere with me, I can't think without it. Watch a lot of animations and listen to comments. The tutors and other students say some really useful things, but I don't type well - in fact I think I'm quite dyslexic – so I miss a lot. Technology: MacBook, overhead projector, pages (Mac word processing software)
11.30 am	Coffee and chat about the review. I ask my friend Ness to send me her notes, which are always really good. In return I promise to help her with a style sheet problem.
11.45 am to 12.30 pm	Lecture on my history and theory module. I really understand this lecturer when he's explaining things in class, but when it comes to revising from hand-outs or trying to write an essay it all seems much harder. Better ask Ness for her notes again! Technology: powerpoint, hand-outs, MacBook, pages
12.30 pm	Lunch with friends, walk to work through the park, taking some pictures that I'll probably use in my graphics module. Send a couple I like to my boyfriend on my mobile phone with a text to tell him how my day's going. Technology: digital camera, mobile phone
2.00 – 5.15 pm	At the marketing company where I've been working part-time since I left school. I'm helping to design pop-up ads for web sites now. I get to use the latest professional tools, and there's a real buzz from working for real clients, but I don't always learn as much because I don't have that pressure to put things in the e-portfolio. Technologies: PowerMacs, Macromedia Dreamweaver, Macromedia Flash
5.30 pm	Home, my turn to get dinner. Listen to i-tunes and surf some digital tv channels while I'm cooking and while we all eat. Technologies: iMac, iTunes, iPlayer
7.30-10.00 pm	Study time. Meant to be writing an essay for next week but I need to sort out Ness's style sheet problem so I spend an hour on user forums getting the answer, and that gives me some ideas for my own graphics project. About to get down to writing again when my boyfriend skypes me, then I get an update that I've been favoured on youtube and I get distracted surfing other videos that my reviewers have liked. Technologies: MacBook, online help and user forums, pages, skype, youtube
10.00	Decide I might as well call it a day and watch TV until bed time. Technologies: iMac, i-player

Carla	
7.30 am	Get up, shower, check email and facebook on laptop before leaving the house. Also I check friendsabroad and maybe flickr in case any of my family and friends have posted photos for me from home, which is near Barcelona. Technology: Laptop, Hotmail, Facebook, Flickr
8.15 – 9.00 am	Bus ride to College, listen to ipod, receive text messages from friends to decide who's skipping class that day and who will take copies of the notes to share with the others. This is my second year on the foundation degree in Business Studies. Technology: Mobile phone, ipod
9.30 – 11.30 am	Phone and ipod off ☹ - in class, copying from the whiteboard and listening to the lecturer talking. I prefer it when we have activities to do in pairs or groups. Techology: Laptop (but no socket ☹), electronic whiteboard
11:30 – 1:00 pm	Lunch with friends in the college common room, checking phone and laptop for messages. I have an unlimited tariff on my mobile otherwise I don't know what it would cost me! Technology: mobile phone, laptop (plugged in – there's a spare socket I know behind the water cooler ☺).
1:30 – 4:00 pm	Meet my project group in the library to work on our presentation for Friday. We access the pbWiki we're using to put all our information together and decide how it could be organised better. Then I do a search for pictures and video we can use in our presentation, to make sure it really stands out from the rest! Technology: College PCs, USB memory stick, Google images, Google video, flickr, pbWiki, Powerpoint
4:30 – 6:30 pm	Phone and ipod off – class again
6:30 – 7:45 pm	Walk to bus stop and ride back home, listening to ipod and texting my friends. Technology: mobile, ipod
8.00 – 9.00 pm	Dinner in front of the television, then upload some photos of last night's Salsa session from my phone onto flickr. I also write in my blog and link my entry through to the photos. Finally I tag some photos posted by other people from the Salsa club and write some comments. Technology: Digital TV, Mobile phone (camera), Laptop, Facebook, Flickr, WordPress (blog)
9:30 – 11:30 pm	Email my powerpoint slides to a couple of English friends for them to check, and rewrite some of the information I got from the internet. Tidy up my class notes and send them round my share group. In between I check my facebook page, set up a Salsa evening as a 'forthcoming event' on the students' union facebook page, and watch who's planning to come through the RSVP function. Technology: Laptop, Word, Powerpoint, Facebook, flickr

Dan	
8.00 am	<p>Wake up, shower, and eat breakfast. If not rushed I'll maybe check my RSS feeds for anything new on the forums I'm in, or any twitter or twine updates. I find RSS really valuable to keep up with all my different interests and I like to see who's tagging what. Synchronise laptop and smart phone.</p> <p>Technologies: laptop, smart phone, RSS, delicious, twitter, twine</p>
9-9:30am	<p>Bus to Archaeology School for a lecture. I am very hard of hearing but I can usually manage lectures OK with my hearing aid, if the lecturer is facing us, and with the help of powerpoint. It's good if there are notes on the VLE so I can read up beforehand and anticipate.</p> <p>Technology: invariably PowerPoint, plus VLE, smart phone for notes, digital hearing aid</p>
11am	<p>Break from lecture. Check smart phone for any emails, feeds or updates, plus any text messages from my wife or friends. It has extra loud volume and high vibration levels for receiving voice calls, but I tend not to use these in college.</p> <p>Technologies: smart phone, RSS, pager</p>
11.30 12:30	<p>Course meeting to prepare for field trip next week. Face to face meetings like this can be difficult for me with several people talking at once, but I am learning to lip read. After the meeting, a couple of students ask me for help with the GPS assignment. I'm a bit of an IT guru on my course, I guess because I use so much of it myself, so I show them googlemaps on my PDA. I ask the tutor about tagging video and images with GPS so we can easily locate a site again later, but she doesn't seem to know much about it. I'll have to look it up myself later.</p> <p>Technologies: smart phone for notes, Garmin GPS (global positioning system) for practice, Googlemaps</p>
1.30 – 3.30 pm	<p>After lunch a library session doing some research online for our field trip. I access Archnet and print out a couple of articles and site maps, then copy some web links onto my PDA. I start working on the write-up we'll have to do after the trip - I guess being older than most of the students and also having a disability I have learned to be very organised and to think ahead.</p> <p>Technologies: Library PC, Library catalogue, online portal (Archnet), Printer, pdf, smart phone</p>
4.00 – 5.00 pm	<p>Another lecture. I use the opportunity of good mobile connection to twitter with some of my friends in the cyber archaeology community and I download some personal emails.</p> <p>Technologies: smart phone, email, twitter</p>
5 6.30pm	<p>Bus ride home and a chance to catch up with my wife, watch the local news – with subtitles, thankfully. That is one problem when I am downloading PowerPoints or videos at the university – they never seem to have subtitles or captions.</p> <p>Technologies: digital TV</p>
7.00 to 9.30 pm	<p>Short walk to the community centre where I am a volunteer youth worker two nights a week. I take some digital video of kids' hands working on a mosaic for the new extension. I'll upload this to the facebook site later. We've found facebook the best way of keeping in touch with the kids between when we see them at the centre, which can be weeks.</p> <p>Technologies: digital video recorder</p>
10.00 11.00 pm	<p>Time to power up the laptop and log in. I read through the articles and maps I printed out earlier, check through lecture notes, tag a couple of the URLs I found earlier, which automatically adds them to twine and delicious, update the to-do lists on my smart phone and prepare for tomorrow. Finally I update the community centre facebook site before getting read for bed.</p> <p>Techologies: Laptop, smart phone, internet browser with bookmarking (twine, delicious enabled), Facebook, digital video recorder</p>

Ewan	
8.00 – 8.45 am	<p>Trying to get up. I work at a takeaway pizza place four nights a week which means I'm used to late nights. I'll probably check the VLE before I leave halls to make sure I've got all the information I need for the day. I feel like the only person here with a desktop PC but I just can't afford a laptop. And I'm not weighed down so I can run faster to...</p> <p>Technologies: Desktop PC, local area network, VLE, diary</p>
9.00 am	<p>... first lecture of the day. I usually have print-outs of any VLE materials with me, and I make written notes on these to help me revise later. It's better if you get hand-outs in the lecture so you save on printing, but it's usually only the really badly organised lecturers that do that.</p> <p>Technologies: powerpoint, printer, pen</p>
10.15 am	Coffee followed by another lecture, as before.
11.30 am 1.00 pm	<p>Get a workstation in the resources room. I use my lecturers' notes and reading lists as starting points but to be honest there's much better information out there, especially at other universities like Oxford and MIT and through the UK Centre for Materials Science. I cross check our lecture notes with others on slideshare and OCW, and copy some details onto my data stick.</p> <p>Technologies: Library computers, university network, internet, browser, academic portals, USB data stick</p>
1.00 pm	<p>Lunch, text friends and phone girlfriend back home in Scotland. We've both got the same mobile package where we can phone each other for free, and I've also got a special deal on texts. Quickly back to my room where I check out what I need for the afternoon – I don't print anything out unless I really have to because of the cost.</p> <p>Technologies: Mobile phone, SMS, desktop PC, diary</p>
1.45 – 3.15 pm	<p>Lab session using a materials analysis simulation running on the departmental computers. We're meant to be writing a group report on this and in my group we've just decided to write different bits and stick them together at the end. I don't know how else we should do it really. We can't access the simulation outside of the departmental firewall so I grab the screenshots I need for my bit of the write-up and I export some data outputs into excel to work on later.</p> <p>Technologies: Departmental PCs running simulation, specialist data analysis software, screen capture, USB data stick, Excel</p>
3.30 to 5.00 pm	<p>Another lecture, but probably the last one of this module I'll be going to. I've just been offered an afternoon shift at the pizza place and I think I'm going to take it, as I can't afford to get any more overdrawn. It will mean I have to catch up from the VLE and by getting a friend to talk me through the lecture notes afterwards.</p> <p>Technologies: Powerpoint, printer, pen as before.</p>
5.00 – 6.30 pm	<p>Get home, relax a bit in the common room before reading through everything I've printed or downloaded for the day. Then I go onto the VLE and do some practice questions for the first year exams which are coming up.</p> <p>Technologies: common room TV, print-outs and pen, USB data stick, personal PC, local area network, VLE, CAA materials</p>
6.45 pm 12.45 am	<p>Working. Sometimes I listen to music on my mobile phone while I'm cleaning up or on a break, and I've thought I could listen to recordings of the lectures I miss instead, but I find it hard to remember things unless I can write them down as well.</p> <p>Technologies: mobile phone as MP3 player</p>
1.15 am	Bed at last!

Furui	
8.30 am	Get up. Check emails on gmail and currency exchange rates, surf between business TV from the UK and news from Taiwan on my laptop as I eat breakfast. Email from my tutor confirms a meeting at lunchtime. Technology: Laptop, home wireless network, gmail, Windows Media Centre
9.30-11.30 am	Work on the programming project I've undertaken for my MSc in Advanced Computing. Deal with comments that my tutor has made, but I'm not sure he's right about sub-typing rules in C++. Post a question to my web ring – this is where Chinese and Taiwanese students studying computing abroad share information. Some are studying in the US where they seem to have a lot more online resources. While I'm checking my work I get RSS feeds from a couple of cyber forums I follow, including an answer to my sub-typing question, and a twitter from a friend in Taiwan. As I see it, this is all relevant to my degree and I work better if I don't have to think about just one thing all the time. Technology: Laptop, C++, gmail, RSS, twitter, internet browser
11.30 am 12.30 pm	Cycle into college for meeting with my tutor Technology: Tutor's laptop, data stick for sharing, lap-top friendly cycle panniers
12.30 2.00 pm	Sandwich on my way to library where I check out a couple of sites the tutor has recommended, but most of it is just discussion between developers. I browse a couple of online journals too, but don't find exactly what I'm looking for. I feel my tutor should give me the information I need directly, not expect me to waste time searching for it. Technology: Library desktop, University network, Library catalogue, online journals
2.00-4.00 pm	Supposed to attend a study skills session on academic writing, but I need to get on with my project so I just look on the VLE for the session resources. There's a list of links I add to my bookmarks to check out later. I have to pass the study skills element as an international student but for me it's a distraction. Technology: Laptop, VLE, Computing Department wireless network
4.00 – 7.00	Cycle to internet café near home where wireless connection is good. Coffee, call Taiwan using skype, surf the net, check emails again before going home and playing some wii (Dungeon Explorer) with one of my housemates. Technology: Open wireless network, laptop, webcam, skype, gmail, Nintendo wii, Java and C++ as before
7.00 – 8.00 pm	Jogging then quick shower. Technology: ipod
8.00 – 9.30 pm	Have dinner watching digital TV from Taiwan using wwiTV on my laptop. Technology: Laptop, wireless broadband, wwiTV
9.30 – 10.30 pm	Work on my project some more. Technology: Laptop, Java, C++ as before
11.30 13.30 pm	Meet two friends from home in World of Warfare where we are in the same Guild. It's more fun and cheaper than phoning! It's early morning for them so when they leave for work I log off WoW and add some detail to my character in Shadowbane. Technology: Laptop, Massively Multiplayer Online Games WoW and Shadowbane