

Instructional Design Learning Theories



- **What this course covers:** a practical, theory-driven toolkit for corporate training that improves performance
- **Why theory matters:** it connects instructional goals, learner cognition, and workplace outcomes
- **Key theory families:** behaviorist, cognitivist, constructivist, social/situated, and learning sciences
- **Course structure:** foundations, application, transfer, evaluation, and theory selection

Why Theory Still Matters in Modern Instructional Design

- Avoids risk patterns: content dumping, shiny-tool-first, intuition-only decisions
- Theory-informed design aligns with needs analysis and measurable evaluation
- 2026 research confirms theories stay central amid AI and microlearning
- Communicate value to stakeholders in reduced scrap learning and business impact

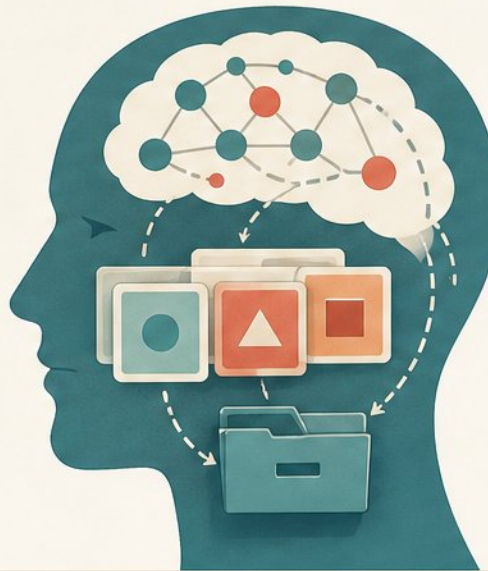


Foundations: Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism

Behaviorism



Cognitivism

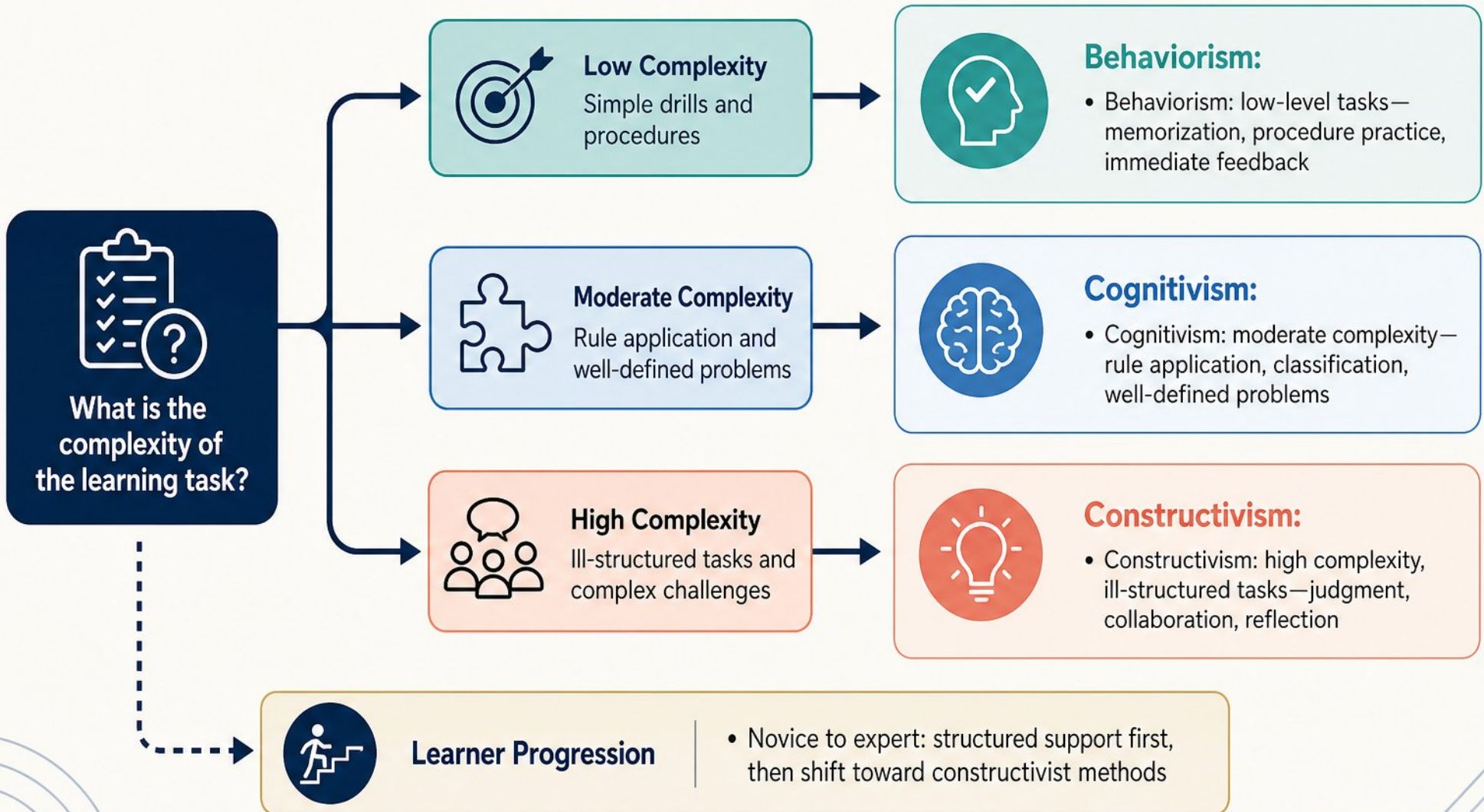


Constructivism



- Behaviorism: Observable behavior, reinforcement, and measurable outcomes
- Cognitivism: Attention, memory, schema, and cognitive load processing
- Constructivism: Experience-driven, active meaning-making and authentic tasks
- Each theory assigns distinct roles to learners, instructors, and assessments

When to Use Each Foundational Theory



Social Learning and Situated Approaches

- Learning through observation, modeling, and feedback
- Situated learning: knowledge tied to authentic contexts
- Apprenticeship-style development and communities of practice
- Modern applications: mentoring, onboarding, collaborative projects
- Design intentional social learning, don't rely on the informal



Learning Sciences Foundations: Cognitive Load

- Working memory limits drive cognitive load design
- Reduce extraneous load by removing distractions
- Manage intrinsic load by segmenting complex tasks
- Optimize germane load for effective learning
- Audit slide decks and e-learning for split-attention



Mayer's Multimedia Principles in Practice

BEFORE

Cluttered and Overloaded

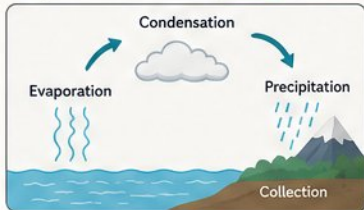
Water Cycle

The water cycle, also known as the hydrologic cycle, is the continuous movement of water on, above, and below the surface of the Earth.



Stages

- Evaporation
- Condensation
- Precipitation
- Collection



Key Points

Water moves in a cycle powered by the sun and gravity. It changes states between liquid, gas, and solid.



Narration

Now I will explain each stage in detail so that you can understand how the water cycle works in nature.

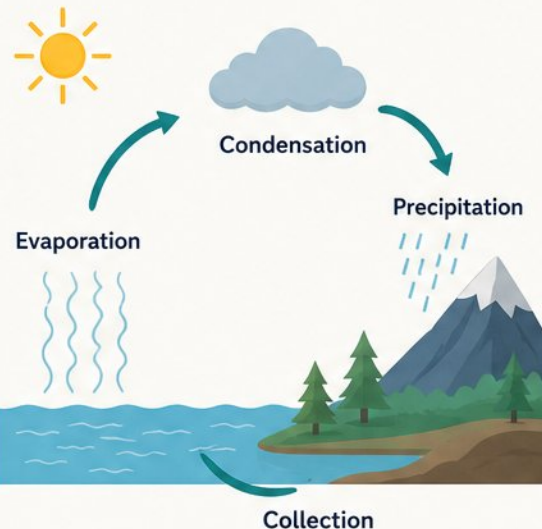
As you can see in the images and diagram above, water is essential for life. Please read all the text carefully while listening to the audio for a complete understanding.

AFTER

Clean, Focused, and Coherent

The Water Cycle

The water cycle is the continuous movement of water on, above, and below the surface of Earth.



- Reduce extraneous load via coherence and signaling



- Manage essential load with segmenting and pre-training



- Foster generative processing: conversational voice, embodiment



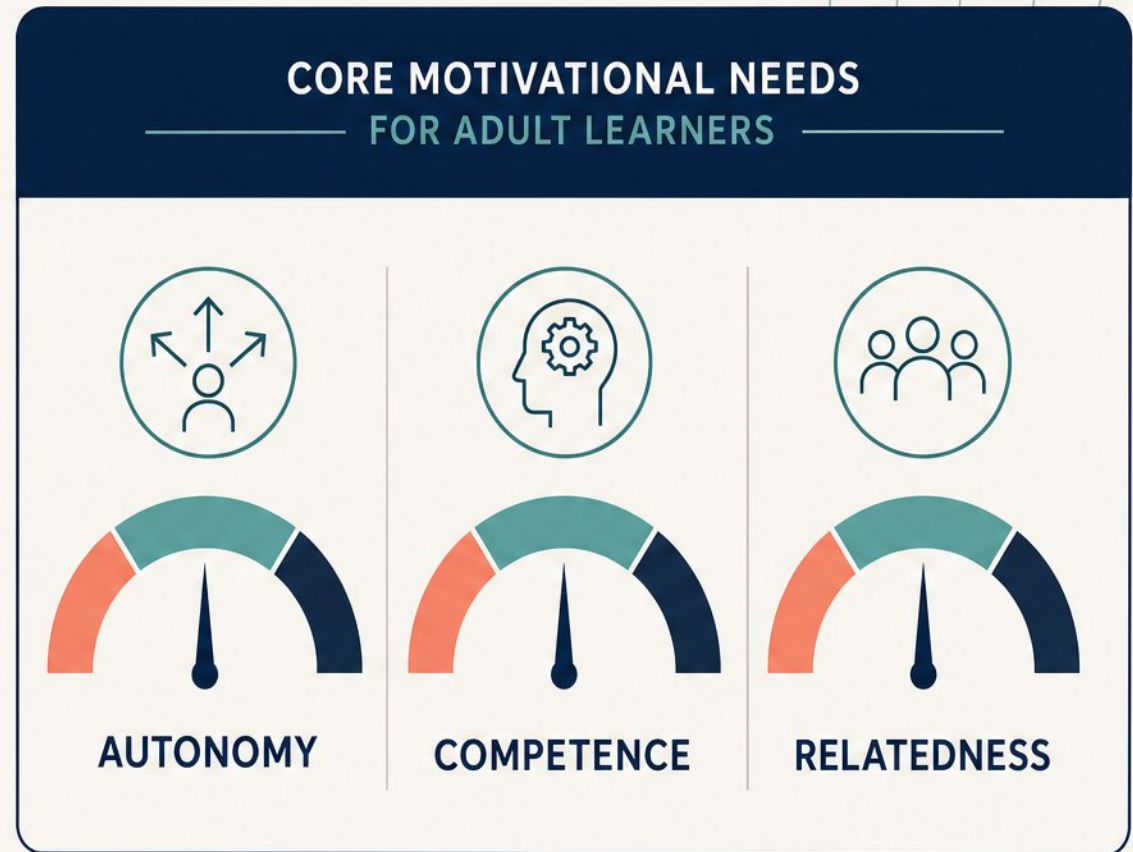
- Watch boundary conditions: prior knowledge, media type



- Use three-pass review: cut, structure, engage

Andragogy and Adult Learner Motivation

- Knowles's andragogy: self-direction, experience, readiness, orientation, internal motivation
- Use as a lens, not a rigid checklist
- Self-determination theory: autonomy, competence, relatedness
- Support these needs even in mandatory training
- Offer rationale, choices, and voice to sustain motivation

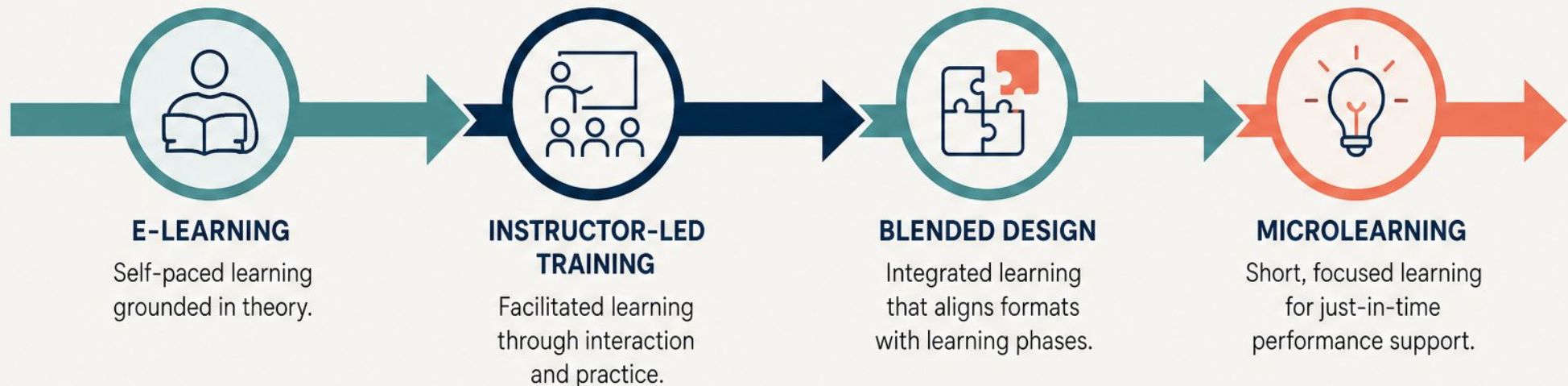


Designing Required Training Without Killing Motivation

- Mandatory training can frustrate the need for autonomy
- Support internalization: move learners from external to identified regulation
- Provide transparent rationale and meaningful choices in format or pacing
- Use supportive messaging and feedback to protect competence and relatedness
- Frame the challenge as design balance, not an either-or choice



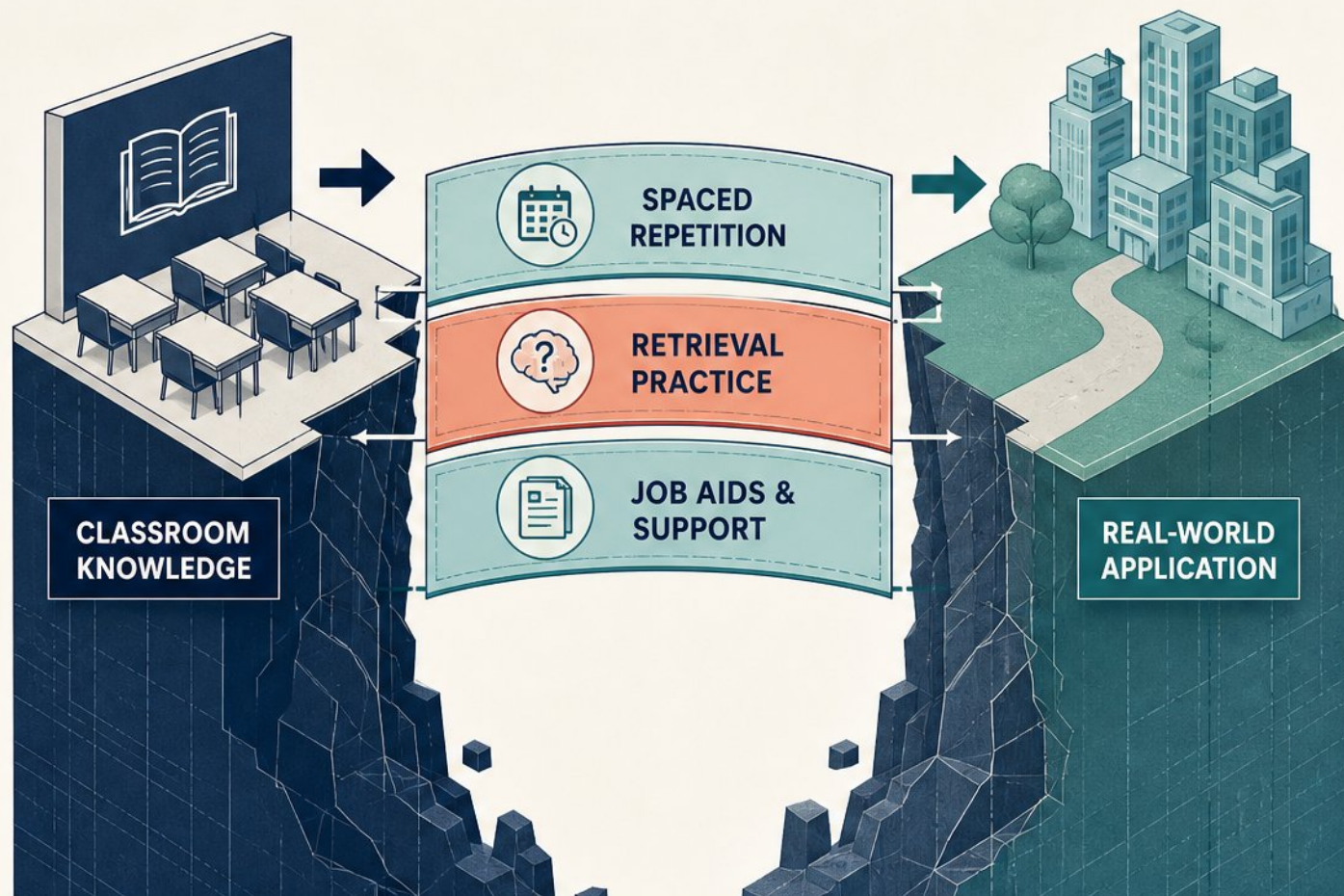
Applying Theory to Common Corporate Formats



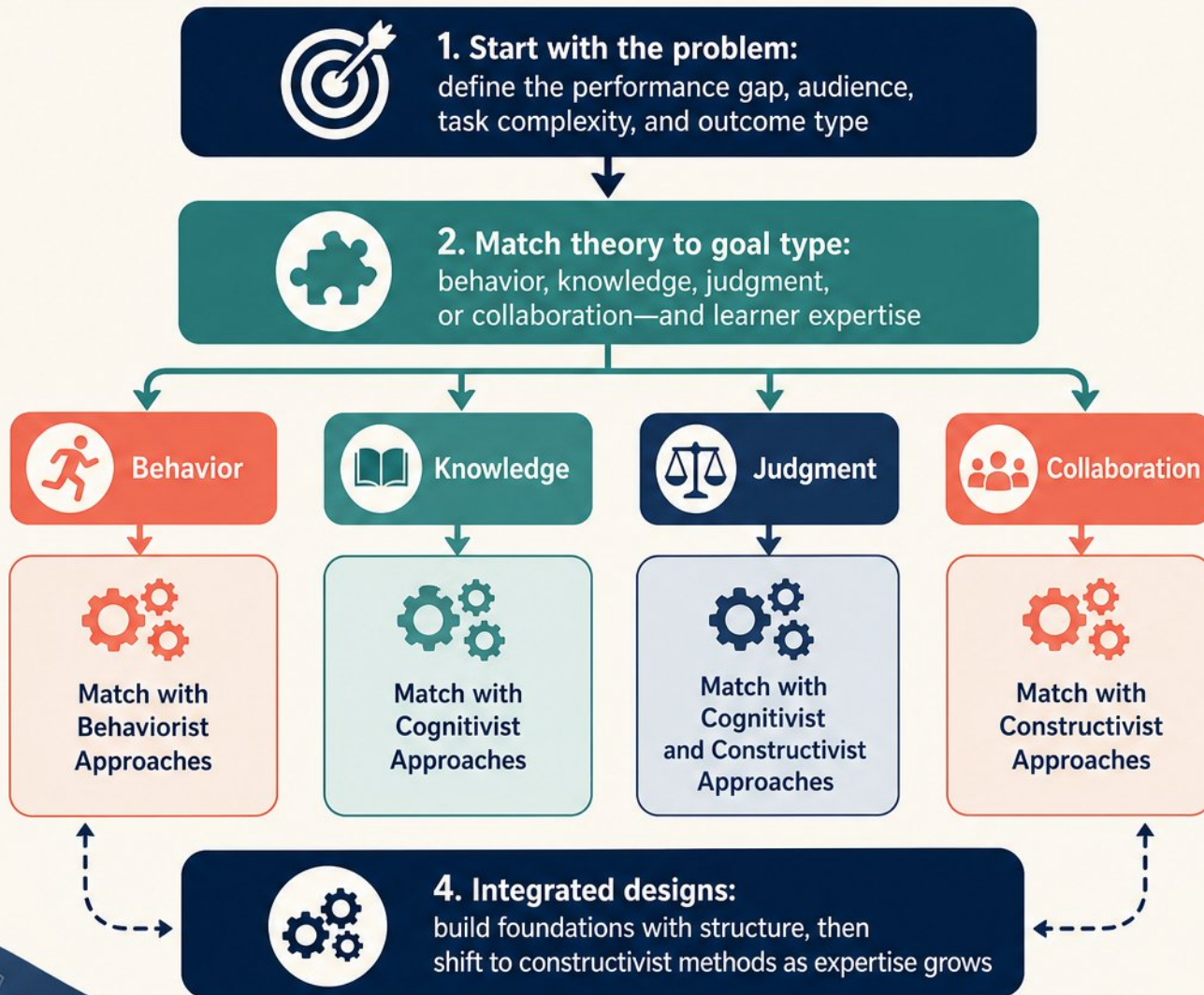
- ▶ E-learning: apply cognitive load and multimedia principles for self-paced work
- ▶ Instructor-led training: blend direct instruction with active, social, and applied practice
- ▶ Blended design: align each format with the theory that fits the learning phase
- ▶ Microlearning is brief, focused, and reduces cognitive load for just-in-time support
- ▶ VILT: balance synchronous activities with asynchronous reinforcement

From Knowledge to Transfer: Designing for Real-World Performance

- Without reinforcement, 70–90% of training is forgotten within a week
- Passive review creates false fluency; active retrieval practice boosts retention by ~20%
- Blend spaced repetition with retrieval practice to combat forgetting
- Align design, reinforcement, and manager support with valued business outcomes

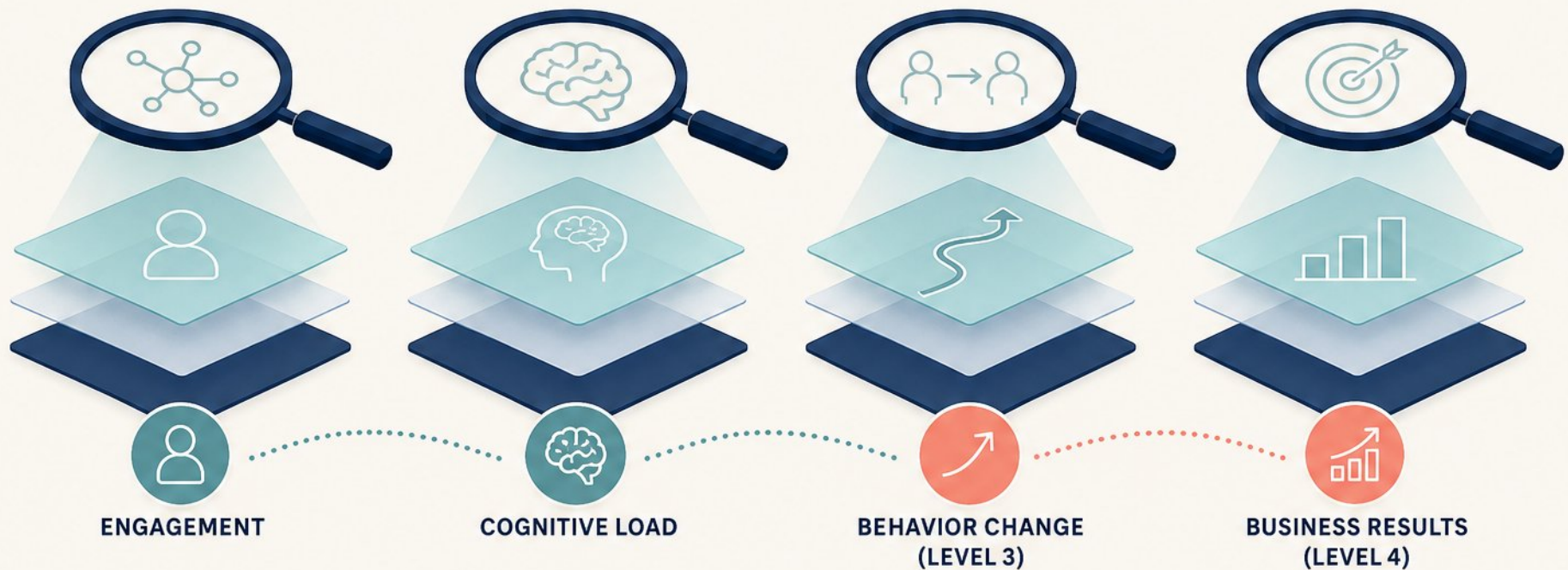


A Decision Framework for Selecting and Combining Theories



- Start with the problem: define the performance gap, audience, task complexity, and outcome type
- Match theory to goal type: behavior, knowledge, judgment, or collaboration—and learner expertise
- Avoid incompatible assumptions; intentional blends of behaviorist, cognitivist, and constructivist elements work
- Integrated designs: build foundations with structure, then shift to constructivist methods as expertise grows

Evaluating Learning Design Through a Theoretical Lens



- - Kirkpatrick-style evaluation plus theory-aligned design questions
- - Formative indicators: engagement, cognitive load, comprehension, error patterns
- - Level 3 behavior and Level 4 results require clear line of sight
- - Avoid over-reliance on satisfaction, completion, and missing transfer

Action Planning: Applying Theory to Your Next Design



- Use transfer-focused design briefs: define behavior, context, and business targets early



- Apply a three-pass multimedia review: reduce load, structure, then add engagement



- Build spaced reinforcement from day one using retrieval practice and varied formats



- Plan theory-aligned evaluation with behavioral metrics and realistic timelines

TRANSFER-FOCUSED DESIGN BRIEF



BEHAVIOR



CONTEXT



BUSINESS
TARGETS

THREE-PASS MULTIMEDIA REVIEW



PASS 1:
REDUCE LOAD



PASS 2:
STRUCTURE



PASS 3:
ADD ENGAGEMENT

DAY-0 SPACED REINFORCEMENT CALENDAR



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