## Putting the teacher in the text Introduction to preparing resources for distance learning

To be effective for learning, distance teaching materials should be much more than manuals, self-instructional packages, correspondence courses, or online resources. Distance teaching should present the learner with engaging and well-planned study materials made up of clear guidance and rich experiences that encourage active learning. The learning experience is, of course, greatly enhanced if the student has the benefit of a supportive and inspiring tutor but an important principle of developing resources for independent learners is that this support should not be assumed. If you are preparing materials for distance learning, you therefore have to put the ‘teacher in the text’.

In this activity you will be introduced to some key principles for distance learning resources and learn how materials prepared for independent study can be made engaging and effective. To illustrate the principles, you will be analysing the style and approach of some existing resources from a programme of study about water, sanitation and hygiene in Ethiopia.

### Learning outcomes

After completing this activity you should be able to:

* Describe some key principles to be considered when preparing resources for distance learning
* Identify and give examples of features of effective distance learning materials.
* Explain the role and function of learning outcomes in educational materials.

### Activity components

**Discussion** in the group about your experiences of distance learning (DL), as a student, as a teacher or in another role.

**Slide presentation**, running through both sessions, which will introduce you to some key principles for preparing resources for distance learning. These principles are presented as a set of questions that are unpacked one by one:

1. Who are your students?
2. How will learning be delivered to students?
3. Who are you working with?
4. What is going to be taught?
5. How will students’ learning be assessed?
6. What style of writing will be most effective?

**Exercise** **and discussion**: to identify key features of DL material. In this part of the activity you will be working with another member of your group. You will be provided with an example of educational material that was written using the DL principles described in the slide presentation. Your task is to identify the key features of the material that can help distance students to learn.

The material you will be looking at is from OpenWASH. OpenWASH is a programme of study that provides a broad curriculum for the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector in Ethiopia. The OpenWASH modules were written using DL techniques but are used to support face-to-face teaching in technical colleges and also for professional training in the WASH sector. The modules are freely available as Open Educational Resources. Each OpenWASH module consists of 15 separate study sessions of approximately 4000 words. You will be given printed copies of individual study sessions from one of the OpenWASH modules to analyse.

**Exercise** **and discussion**: to track learning outcomes through DL material. In this part of the activity, you will look more closely at learning outcomes, starting with a short presentation to explain what learning outcomes are and how they should be used.

Then you will have the opportunity to see how learning outcomes are used in the OpenWASH study sessions. Again you will be working with another member of the group using one of the example study sessions. This time your task is to select one learning outcome and track its pathway through the study session looking for evidence of where it is stated, where taught and where assessed.