

# Using bite-sized learning with apprentices in an automotive workshop



A scenario-based learning resource to support trainers and assessors.

## Focus

Using microlearning to drive capacity: Designing training that fits around shift work and site demands.

## Scenario

Nathan is an automotive trainer working in a busy workshop that supports apprentices at different stages of development. He noticed that many apprentices were becoming overloaded with lengthy explanations before practical tasks - often retaining part of the process but missing key details such as inspection order, recording requirements, or the reason behind a check.

The workshop environment added to the challenge. Vehicles need to be turned around on time, supervisors have limited time to stop and provide training, and apprentices are learning while keeping up with real job demands. Nathan needs a training method that is fast, practical and easy to embed in the working day.

## The challenge

Traditional delivery is not keeping pace with the workshop. Apprentices need learning that is:

- short enough to use between jobs
- clear enough to support immediate application
- specific enough to improve one skill at a time
- practical enough to build confidence on the floor.

Without this structure, some apprentices rush tasks, rely too heavily on tradespeople or complete work without fully understanding what they are checking.

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## Solutions

Nathan introduced short learning bursts built into the normal workshop schedule. Each learning burst lasted 5 to 8 minutes and focused on a single part of a single task. Instead of delivering a full session on vehicle servicing, he broke the topic into smaller pieces, such as:

- checking engine oil correctly
- identifying signs of coolant contamination
- inspecting tyre wear patterns
- recording findings on a job card
- explaining a service issue clearly to a supervisor.

Nathan delivered each session just before the apprentice performed that part of the job. This timing mattered - it made the learning relevant and easier to apply straight away.

He used a consistent pattern:

1. state the task
2. show the correct method
3. explain why it matters
4. ask 1 or 2 questions
5. watch the apprentice do it.

During a session on tyre wear, Nathan showed a tyre with an uneven wear pattern, explained what it indicated, then asked the apprentice to inspect the next vehicle, explain their findings, and record them. This kept the learning active and job focused.

Nathan also created simple visual job aids to match each topic - short checklists, parts photos and quick process prompts kept near the work area. Apprentices used them during tasks, reducing the likelihood of repeated errors and supporting consistency.

He reinforced learning over time instead of treating it as a one-off lesson. If a common issue kept appearing, he revisited it in another short session from a different angle. This repetition improved retention without slowing the workshop down.

The results were positive. Apprentices became more accurate in their checks, more confident in explaining what they found and more independent in routine service tasks. Tradespeople also reported spending less time repeating the same instructions.

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## Next steps

Other trainers can apply this learning by:

- breaking routine workshop tasks into small teachable parts rather than teaching the whole job at once
- delivering learning just before the learner performs the task
- using the same short structure each time so learners know what to expect
- creating quick visual prompts or checklists that stay near the job
- revisiting key points through repeated short sessions instead of relying on one longer explanation
- choosing topics based on common apprentice errors, supervisor feedback and actual workshop tasks.

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