



# Course Journey

v1.0

## *Onboarding Manual*

Privacy-first course lifecycle toolkit  
From first idea to enrollment — in one file

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## Before You Touch Anything

You have a course in your head. Maybe it's been there for months — this half-built cathedral of lessons and exercises and "wouldn't it be amazing if" — rattling around between your morning coffee and your midnight doubts. Or maybe the idea landed yesterday, sudden as a bird on a windowsill, and you're afraid it'll fly off if you don't build it a cage fast enough.

Either way, you're here. And Course Journey is here. And the first thing worth saying is this: the tool doesn't care how ready you feel. It'll meet you wherever you are — napkin sketch or near-finished product — and give you walls to lean against while you figure out the architecture.

This manual isn't a software tutorial. Not exactly. It's more like a field guide to the territory you're about to cross. Each chapter maps a section of the app, yes, but it also maps the creative decision that section is asking you to make. Because the buttons are easy. The decisions are the hard part.

So let's walk through the door together. Not running. Just walking.

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### Part One

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## What Course Journey Actually Is The Door

Strip away the features for a moment. At its core, Course Journey is a single HTML file — one file, no server, no account, no cloud — that holds the entire lifecycle of an online course. From the first spark of "I could teach this" to the morning you watch enrollment numbers climb.

Everything lives in your browser's local storage. Your data never leaves your machine unless you choose to export it. There is no analytics dashboard watching you from behind the glass. No usage metrics being shipped to a server farm in Virginia. It's just you and your course, in a room with the door closed.

That privacy isn't a limitation. It's a philosophy. The tool belongs to you the way a leather notebook belongs to you — it doesn't phone home, it doesn't suggest you upgrade, it doesn't expire. You can put it on a USB drive, open it on a plane, hand it to a collaborator. One file. Everything inside.

And if that sounds too simple to be true, you might be thinking of the wrong kind of simplicity. This isn't bare bones. It's distilled.

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## The Shape of the Journey

Course Journey organizes your work into four phases, and if you look at the left sidebar right now, you'll see them stacked like geological layers: Envision, Design, Produce, Launch. Below those, a set of tools that cut across all four.

The phases aren't strict gates. You won't be locked out of "Launch" because you haven't finished "Design." The app trusts you to wander. But the structure is there for a reason — it mirrors the natural sequence that most successful courses follow, whether the creator knows it or not.

### *The Night Kitchen*

Think of Envision as the night kitchen — it's where you're alone with your ingredients before anyone else wakes up. You're tasting, combining, throwing things away. The Course Canvas, Learner Personas, and Learning Outcomes all live here. They're the foundation that every other module will quietly reference.

Design is the blueprint room. Curriculum Builder, Content Tracker, Assessments. You're deciding what gets taught, in what order, and how you'll know if the student actually learned it. This phase has a satisfying precision to it, like laying tiles.

Produce is the workshop. Production schedules, resource lists, beta testers. This is where the abstract becomes concrete — where "Module 3: Advanced Techniques" turns into a list of videos that need scripting, recording, and editing. It's often the phase where creators stall, which is exactly why the app gives it so much structure.

And Launch is the market square. Sales page copy, pricing models, marketing plans, and a timeline that keeps you from sending the "we're live!" email before the course is actually live. This phase is equal parts strategy and courage.

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## A Word About the Percentage Bars

You'll notice that each phase in the sidebar has a small percentage next to it. Envision 0%. Design 0%. These aren't grades. They're not judgments. They're more like a gentle pressure — a way of saying "this section has more to give you, if you want it."

Some creators will get every section to 100% before they ship. Others will launch at 60% and fill in the gaps while students are already learning. Both approaches work. The percentages are mirrors,



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# The Course Canvas

Open the app. First thing you see: a nine-cell grid. It looks a bit like a Lean Canvas if you squint, and that's intentional — it borrows the "everything on one page" discipline from startup methodology and bends it toward education.

The center cell — the one that stretches across the full width at the top — is the Transformation Promise. This is the single most important sentence in your entire course. Not the title. Not the price. The transformation. What will your student be able to do after completing this course that they cannot do right now?

Notice the phrasing: "be able to do." Not "understand." Not "appreciate." Do. A transformation promise is a verb, not a state of being. "Students will build and deploy a production React application" is a transformation. "Students will understand React" is a pamphlet.

## *The Other Eight Cells*

Topic & Niche asks you to get specific. Not "photography" — "portrait photography for natural light in small apartments." The narrower you cut, the sharper the blade. Every successful online course creator I've watched learn this lesson the hard way or the smart way, and the smart way is to pick the smallest viable niche from day one.

# Envision

Target Student is where you name the human. Not a demographic — a person. Their current skill level, their frustrations, their 2 AM Google searches. The more real this person feels to you, the better you'll teach them. If you can't picture them sitting across from you at a coffee shop, you haven't finished this cell.

Prerequisites, Unique Angle, Format & Delivery, Competitive Landscape, Success Metrics, and Estimated Length fill in the remaining architecture. Each one forces a micro-decision that you'll thank yourself for later — especially Competitive Landscape, where you have to honestly name what already exists and explain why yours is different.

The canvas has a circular progress ring in the corner. Fill all nine cells and it goes green. But more important than the color is the feeling: when all nine cells have real words in them, you have a course that can be explained to a stranger in under two minutes. That clarity is worth more than any feature list.

## *Writing a Canvas That Survives Contact with Reality*

Here's an exercise that reveals whether your canvas is finished or just filled in. Read each cell out loud to someone who knows nothing about your topic. After you read the Transformation Promise,

The Competitive Landscape cell is where most creators write too little. "There are some Udemy courses but mine is better" is not a competitive analysis. Name the specific alternatives. Visit their sales pages. Read their reviews. Find the complaints — the two-star reviews that say "I wish this course had covered X" or "the instructor assumed I already knew Y." Those complaints are your competitive advantage waiting to be claimed.

The Estimated Length cell forces a commitment that many creators resist. "However long it needs to be" is not an answer. Here's a guideline: for a self-paced video course, 4-6 hours of content is a weekend course, 8-15 hours is a comprehensive course, and 20+ hours is a certification-level program. Each tier has different pricing expectations, different production timelines, and different student commitment levels. Know which tier you're building before you start recording.

A final canvas tip: save your current canvas as a JSON export before you start changing it. Three months into production, you'll want to compare what you originally planned with what you actually built. The drift between the two is always instructive.

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## Learner Personas

Click the second item in the Envision section and you land on Learner Personas. This is where your "Target Student" from the canvas gets split into actual characters — with names, ages, roles, skill levels, goals, frustrations, and a quote that captures how they talk about their problem.

You can add as many personas as you want, but three is the magic number for most courses. One primary persona (the student you're really building for), one aspirational persona (the student who's slightly ahead of your target), and one edge case (the student who'll stretch your assumptions). Three lets you triangulate without drowning in complexity.

The quote field is easy to skip and the most valuable to fill. Write something that sounds like a real person saying a real thing: "I've watched maybe forty YouTube tutorials on this and I still can't do it on my own." When you're writing lesson scripts six weeks from now and wondering if you're being too basic, that quote will pull you back to reality.

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## Learning Outcomes

Here's where most course creators quietly fail. Not because they don't care about outcomes, but because they write them in the wrong language. "Students will learn about data analysis" is not an outcome. It's a vague intention wearing an outcome's coat.

Course Journey gives you Bloom's Taxonomy right in the dropdown. Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, Create — six levels of cognitive complexity, each one requiring a different kind of teaching. Picking the level forces you to pick the verb, and the verb forces you to be honest about what you're actually asking students to do.

A tip: most courses live at the Apply and Analyze levels. If all your outcomes are at the "Remember" level, you're building a reference guide, not a course. If they're all at "Create," you might be overestimating what's achievable. Spread them out. Let the early modules sit at Apply and the later ones climb toward Create.

Each outcome also has a "Covered in Module" field. This is a forward reference — you're planting seeds that the Curriculum Builder will harvest. When you get to Module 3 and wonder what it should contain, the outcomes will answer.

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## The Curriculum Builder

This is the spine of your course. Click into Curriculum Builder and you'll see an empty space that's almost daring you to fill it. Each module is a collapsible card with a name, an objective, and a list of lessons inside.

The objective field asks: "After this module, students will..." Notice it echoes the learning outcomes. That's not an accident. Modules are containers for outcomes. If you can't state what the student gains by completing a module, the module isn't earning its place.

Inside each module, you add lessons. Each lesson has a title, a type (video, text, quiz, exercise, download), a duration in minutes, and a status (Planned, Scripted, Recorded, Edited, Done). The types get color-coded tags — blue for video, teal for text, amber for quiz, green for exercise, red for download. At a glance, you can see if a module is all video and no practice, which is a common structural mistake.

### *The Staircase Principle*

When you're arranging lessons inside a module, think of a staircase. Each lesson should be one step higher than the last. The student should be able to look back at the previous step and think, "I couldn't have done this lesson without that one." If two lessons could be swapped without consequence, one of them might be unnecessary.

Module 1 deserves special attention. It's where most students will decide if they're staying or leaving. Put a "quick win" in the first three lessons — something the student can do, see the result of, and feel proud about. Not a theory lecture. Not an overview of the tools they'll need. A win.

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## Content Tracker

The Content Tracker is the Curriculum Builder's analytical twin. It takes every lesson from every module and flattens them into a sortable table. Total lessons, total minutes, completion percentage — all the numbers in one view.

This panel is most useful when you're deep in production and need to answer questions like: "How many lessons are still in Planned status?" or "Am I accidentally building a six-hour course when I promised three?" The sort-by-status column is your friend here.

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## Assessments

Quizzes, assignments, projects, peer reviews, final exams — Course Journey gives you a card for each one. But before you start adding quiz after quiz, pause and ask: what am I actually measuring?

Formative assessments (quizzes after each module) exist to help the student check themselves. They're mirrors, not gates. A student who scores 60% on a Module 3 quiz isn't failing — they're learning where their gaps are. Design these assessments to teach, not to punish.

Summative assessments (a capstone project, a final exam) exist to verify transformation. Go back to your Transformation Promise. Does your capstone project directly prove that the student can now do the thing you promised? If your promise was "build and deploy a React app" and your final project is a multiple-choice test, something went sideways.

The "Pass Criteria" field is where you make this concrete. "Score 80% on the quiz" is one kind of criteria. "Submit a working deployment URL" is another. The second type is harder to grade and infinitely more valuable to the student.

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## Production Schedule & the Gantt View

Here's where the cathedral meets the calendar. The Production Schedule lets you add milestones — each with a name, start date, end date, and phase tag (envision, design, produce, launch). Below the milestone cards, a Gantt-style timeline appears automatically, color-coded by phase.

A word of earned wisdom: your first production schedule will be wrong. Not slightly off — wrong. Recording takes longer than you think. Editing takes longer than recording. And the gap between "edited" and "uploaded and formatted on the platform" is wider than anyone warns you about.

Build in buffer. Real buffer, not "I'll just work weekends" buffer. If you think a module will take two weeks to produce, block three. The extra week isn't laziness — it's where quality lives. It's where you re-record the lesson that felt flat. It's where you add the example that makes the concept click.

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## Resources & Assets

This panel is your loading dock. Equipment and software, downloadable resources, external references, community and support — <sup>Part Four</sup> four text fields that collectively answer the question: "What does the student need, and what are you providing?"

The downloadable resources field is secretly ~~one of the highest-value~~ **Produce** parts of your course. Templates, cheat sheets, code repositories, workbooks — these are the things students will keep open on their second monitor long after they've finished watching your videos. Invest here. A beautifully designed cheat sheet can be the artifact that makes a student recommend your course to a friend.

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## Beta Testers

You found five people willing to take your course before it's finished. They're doing you an enormous favor. The Beta Testers panel helps you track who they are, where they are in the course, and what they're telling you.

The "Common Feedback Themes" field at the bottom is the real gold. After your testers submit their notes, sit with all of them side by side and look for the pattern. If three out of five say Module 4 was confusing, the problem isn't the students. If everyone loved the exercise in Module 2, you've found a template to repeat.

Resist the urge to defend your work to beta testers. They're not your audience — they're your mirrors. Let them show you what's actually there, not what you meant to put there.

### *How to Choose Beta Testers*

The ideal beta tester is someone who matches your target persona but who is also articulate about their learning experience. This second quality is rare and valuable. A student who says "Module 3 was hard" is giving you a signal. A student who says "In Module 3, I got lost when you jumped from the conceptual explanation to the code example without showing me where we were in the project" is giving you a blueprint for the fix.

Aim for 3-7 testers. Fewer than three and you won't see patterns. More than seven and you'll drown in conflicting feedback that cancels itself out. Offer them the course for free, obviously, but also offer something they can't get later — early access to a future course, a one-on-one session with you, their name in the credits. Beta testers are investing their time in your success. Honor that.

Give each tester a specific timeline and a structured feedback form. "Take the course at your own pace and let me know what you think" produces vague, unhelpful feedback. "Complete Module 1-3 by Friday, then answer these seven questions" produces actionable intelligence. The Beta Testers panel in Course Journey tracks status per tester — Invited, In Progress, Completed — so you can see at a glance who's on track and who's gone silent.

A tester who goes silent is data too. Follow up once, gently. If they still don't respond, note where they stopped. That's where your course lost someone, and the course lost them for a reason worth investigating.

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## Sales Page Copy

The sales page is where your course meets the world's attention span, and the world's attention span is not generous. Course Journey gives you fields for headline, subheadline, pain points, what-you'll-learn, CTA, social proof, instructor bio, and FAQ. Each one is a small battle for the visitor's trust.

The headline is your one chance at a first impression. It should state the transformation, not the topic. "Master Python in 30 Days" is about the topic. "Build the Side Project That's Been Stuck in Your Head" is about the transformation. The second one makes you feel something. That feeling is what opens wallets.

The pain points section is where you demonstrate that you understand the student's current reality. Not in a manipulative way — in a "you've clearly been where I am" way. Write it like you're describing their Monday morning, not like you're diagnosing a disease.

### *The Quiet Power of the FAQ*

Most course creators treat FAQs as an afterthought. But every question in your FAQ is an objection that almost stopped someone from buying. "Is this for beginners?" means they're not sure they belong. "What if I fall behind?" means they've been burned before. Answer these with warmth and specificity, and you'll convert the people who were one foot out the door.

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## Pricing & Revenue

The pricing panel lets you model revenue across twelve months. Enter your price, your month-one student count, and your expected monthly growth rate, then hit Calculate. A table unfolds showing monthly and cumulative revenue.

A note on pricing psychology: creators almost always price too low. If your course delivers a genuine transformation — especially one that saves time, earns money, or advances a career — a price of \$197 or \$297 is not expensive. It's a signal. It says "this is serious work, and I took it seriously building it." A \$29 course can be excellent, but it will fight for attention against every Udemy sale and every free YouTube playlist. Price communicates commitment, on both sides.

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## Launch Timeline & Marketing Plan

The Launch Timeline breaks your launch into three phases: Pre-Launch, Launch Day, and Post-Launch. Each activity gets a date, a status, and notes. This is your flight plan.

Pre-launch is where most of the work happens. Building an email list. Publishing free content that demonstrates your expertise. Running a webinar or a free challenge that funnels into your paid course. The Marketing Plan panel gives you fields for all of this — lead magnets, email sequences, content marketing, partnerships, paid ads, and launch bonuses.

The email launch sequence is worth lingering on. Five emails over five to seven days, each one with a different emotional register: story, agitation, solution, proof, urgency. If you write these well, they'll do more selling than your sales page. People buy from people they trust, and a well-written email sequence builds trust in a way that a static page cannot.

The bonuses and urgency field is the part many ethical creators feel uncomfortable with. Here's the reframe: urgency isn't manipulation if it's real. "Early-bird pricing ends Friday" is honest if the price actually goes up on Saturday. "Limited to 50 seats in the first cohort" is honest if you genuinely can't support more students. Urgency becomes manipulation only when it's manufactured. Keep yours real and you'll sleep fine.

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## The Anatomy of a Launch Week

Let's walk through what a well-planned launch week actually looks like, because the difference between a launch that converts and one that fizzles is almost always in the choreography, not the product.

Week minus two: your email list has been warmed for at least ten days. You've sent value-first content — a free guide, a mini-lesson, a behind-the-scenes look at the course creation process. You haven't asked for money yet. You've asked for attention, and you've earned it by giving something real in return.

Week minus one: the launch sequence begins. Email 1 tells a story — your story, or a student's story, or both. It names the problem without selling the solution. It ends with a line like "Tomorrow, I'll show you what I built." That's a cliffhanger, not a pitch.

Launch day: the cart opens. Your sales page goes live. Email 3 arrives with the link. Your social channels announce it. And then — this is the part most creators skip — you disappear for six hours.

Day three: Email 4 arrives with a testimonial from a beta tester. Real name, real result, real words. Not a stock photo and a made-up quote. If you don't have a testimonial yet, share a concrete result from your beta test — "When Sarah went through Module 3, she built her first working prototype in 40 minutes." That's proof.

Final day: Email 5 is the last call. The early-bird price expires at midnight. This email is short, warm, and honest. "If this isn't for you right now, that's completely fine. But if it is, the door closes tonight." Then the door closes. For real.

After the launch: silence. Not forever — but for a few days. Let the dust settle. Then send a "thank you" email to everyone who enrolled, a "not ready yet?" email to everyone who didn't (with a waitlist option), and start planning the post-launch iteration based on what you learned.

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## Revenue Projections: Reading the Tea Leaves

The 12-month projection table in the Pricing panel is a forecast, not a promise. But it's a useful forecast because it forces you to confront two numbers that most course creators avoid: your month-one student count and your monthly growth rate.

Month-one students is the hardest number to estimate honestly. If you have an existing audience — an email list, a YouTube channel, a professional network — look at your engagement rates. A 1,000-person email list with a 30% open rate and a 5% conversion rate gives you roughly 15 students in month one. That's not a guess; that's arithmetic.

If you don't have an audience yet, your month-one number is probably in single digits. That's not a death sentence. It's a starting point. Many successful courses launched with fewer than ten students and grew through word-of-mouth and content marketing over the following months.

The growth rate percentage is where optimism bias lives. A 10% monthly growth rate sounds modest until you realize it compounds to a 3x increase over twelve months. If you're a solo creator without paid advertising, 5-8% monthly growth is realistic. If you're running ads or have affiliate partners, 15-25% is achievable but expensive. Be honest here, because the table will show you what honesty looks like in dollar terms.

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## What Makes a Lesson Stick

Before we continue through the toolbox, let's step away from the interface and talk about the craft itself. Because the best-structured curriculum in the world means nothing if the individual lessons don't land.

A lesson that sticks has three qualities. First, it starts with why. Not "in this lesson we'll cover X" — that's a table of contents, not a hook. Instead: "You know that frustrating moment when you've written the code correctly but the page still looks broken? That's what we're solving today." You've just made the student's problem into the lesson's opening, and now they're leaning in.

Second, it shows before it tells. A thirty-second demonstration of the end result — the working feature, the finished design, the solved problem — before any instruction begins. This gives the student a mental target. They know where they're going, so the steps make sense. It's the difference between following a recipe with a photo of the dish and following one without.

Third, it ends with a do. Not a summary. Not a "in the next lesson, we'll..." A concrete micro-task. "Pause the video now and change the color of the header on your project." Three minutes of doing cements thirty minutes of watching in a way that nothing else can.

[Interlude](#)

# The Craft of Teaching Online

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## The Forgetting Curve and What to Do About It

Hermann Ebbinghaus published his forgetting curve in 1885, and it's been making educators uncomfortable ever since. The short version: without reinforcement, students forget roughly 70% of what they learned within 24 hours. Within a week, they've forgotten 90%.

This isn't a reason to despair. It's a reason to design for it. Spaced repetition — revisiting concepts at increasing intervals — is the antidote. In a self-paced online course, you can build this in structurally. A quick three-question quiz at the start of Module 3 that covers concepts from Module 1. A "remember this?" callout in Module 5 that references a technique from Module 2.

The assessments panel in Course Journey gives you the scaffolding for this. Design your quizzes not just as end-of-module checks, but as spaced review instruments that reach backward into earlier material. The student doesn't need to know you're doing this. They'll just notice that things seem to stick.

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## Recording: The Room, the Mic, and the First Thirty Seconds

Your recording environment matters more than your camera. A \$100 microphone in a quiet room with soft furnishings will sound better than a \$1,000 microphone in a tiled kitchen. Sound absorbs into fabric — curtains, carpets, even a blanket draped over a chair behind you. If your recordings have a hollow, echoey quality, the fix is textile, not technology.

Screen recordings need less production value than talking-head videos, which is a relief. But they need more preparation. Zoom your IDE or application to 125-150% so the text is readable on small screens. Use a clean desktop. Close your email. Notifications are the enemy of professional screencasts — nothing breaks the spell like a Slack ping sliding across the top of a code tutorial.

The first thirty seconds of any lesson are either a door or a wall. If you start with "Hey guys, welcome back to Module 4, Lesson 7, where today we're going to be looking at..." — that's a wall. The student is already looking for the skip button. If you start with "Watch what happens when I change this one line" — that's a door, and they're walking through it.

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## Editing: The Art of the Cut

You don't need to edit like a YouTuber. Jump cuts, fast zooms, sound effects — these work for entertainment, but in education they can be distracting. The best course editors do two things: they remove dead air and false starts, and they add annotations or zooms at key teaching moments.

A five-second pause while you think on camera feels natural in person but interminable on video. Cut it. A sentence that starts wrong and restarts — "So if we, uh, let me — okay, so if we look at this function" — cut the false start. These small edits can reduce a 20-minute raw recording to a 14-minute polished lesson, and the six minutes you removed were six minutes where the student's attention would have wandered.

The Production Schedule panel in Course Journey exists partly because editing always takes longer than you think. A useful rule: plan one hour of editing for every ten minutes of finished video. That means a 60-minute module with six 10-minute lessons requires roughly six hours of editing. Block that time in your production schedule, and add a day of buffer for the module that turns out to need more work than expected. There's always one.

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## Student Preview & Drag-and-Drop

There's a tab in the Tools section called Student Preview, and it might be the most underrated feature in the entire app. It renders your curriculum exactly as a student would see it — expandable modules, lesson cards with type badges and durations, a progress bar at the top.

You can click through lessons and mark them complete, watching the progress bar fill. This sounds trivial until you actually do it and realize that Module 4 feels like it drags, or that the gap between Module 2 and Module 3 is a cliff instead of a step.

The drag-and-drop is real. Grab a module by its handle and drag it to a new position. Grab a lesson and move it within or between modules. The changes save back to your actual curriculum. This means you can rearrange your course while experiencing it — editing the map while walking the territory.

### *Pacing: The Invisible Architecture*

Open your Student Preview and look at the module lengths. Are they roughly similar, or does Module 4 have twelve lessons while Module 2 has three? Uneven module lengths create a pacing problem that students feel but can't articulate. They'll describe it as "the course felt like it dragged in the middle" or "I lost momentum around week three." What they're really saying is: the rhythm broke.

## The Toolbox

Aim for modules between four and seven lessons each. Under four feels insubstantial — the student doesn't have time to sink in. Over seven and the module starts to feel like a course within a course, which creates cognitive load and decision fatigue.

Within each module, vary the lesson types. Three video lectures in a row is a recipe for glazed eyes. Instead: video, exercise, video, quiz, video, download. The type variation isn't just aesthetic — different lesson types engage different cognitive modes. Watching is passive. Doing is active. Quizzing is reflective. The alternation keeps the brain from settling into a rut.

### *The Bridge Lesson*

Between modules, consider adding a "bridge lesson" — a short video (3-5 minutes) that explicitly connects what the student just learned to what they're about to learn. "In Module 2, you built the foundation. In Module 3, we're going to stress-test it." This takes thirty minutes to record and saves dozens of students from the disorienting feeling of "wait, how does this relate to what we just did?"

The Student Preview makes bridge lessons visible. When you walk through the course and feel a jarring transition between modules, that's where a bridge belongs. Trust the feeling. If it felt jarring to you — the person who designed it — it will feel worse to a student encountering it for the first

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## The Course Stress Test

Twenty-five questions, divided into four categories: Market & Audience, Content & Pedagogy, Business & Revenue, and Execution & You. Each question is designed to be the thing your honest friend would ask you at dinner after two glasses of wine.

"Who exactly is your ideal student? Have you talked to 10+ of them?" That's the first one. And if the answer is no, you haven't failed — you've found the next thing to do before you record another video.

Click the circle next to each question to cycle through Survived (green check), Failed (red X), and Uncertain (amber question mark). A survival score appears at the bottom. There's no passing grade. But if your survival rate is below 50%, you're building on sand and the Stress Test just saved you from finding out the hard way.

Each question also has a notes field. Use it. Write your honest answer. These notes become a document of your strategic thinking — something you can revisit in three months when the launch dust settles and you're planning the next iteration.

### *Walking Through the Four Categories*

Market & Audience asks six questions that all revolve around one meta-question: does anyone actually want this? "What proof do you have that people want this?" is the sharpest knife in the drawer. If your proof is "I think it would be useful," mark it Uncertain and go find real evidence — a survey, a waitlist, a conversation with ten potential students. Pre-launch validation isn't optional. It's the difference between building a course and building a diary.

Content & Pedagogy has seven questions, and the hardest one is "How will you keep students engaged past Module 2?" Because Module 2 is where the honeymoon ends. The novelty of the enrollment has worn off. The student's schedule has reasserted itself. The free YouTube alternative is still right there. Your answer to this question should be structural (quick wins, varied lesson types, community accountability), not motivational ("I'll just make it really good"). Motivation is a finite resource. Structure is renewable.

Business & Revenue asks six questions about money, and "What happens to revenue after the launch spike dies down?" is the one that separates a course from a business. A launch spike is a one-time event. Evergreen revenue requires evergreen marketing — SEO content, a YouTube channel, a referral program, paid ads that break even. If your entire revenue model is "launch, then hope," the

Execution & You is the most personal category. "What if you burn out halfway through production?" is a question that deserves a real answer, not a dismissal. Solo course creation is a marathon disguised as a sprint. If you don't have a plan for sustaining your energy — and that plan might include outsourcing editing, hiring a VA for marketing, or simply blocking one day a week with no course work — the burnout isn't a risk. It's a schedule.

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## The AI Architect

The floating button in the bottom-right corner — the one with the gradient and the star icon — opens the AI Architect. This is Course Journey's co-pilot, and it's designed with the same privacy-first philosophy as the rest of the app.

It has two modes. Prompt Mode is the default and works entirely offline. Click any action — "Generate complete curriculum from Canvas + Outcomes," "Write 5 headline + subheadline variations," "Suggest beta tester questions" — and the app assembles a highly specific prompt that includes all your course context. Your transformation promise, your personas, your existing curriculum, your sales copy. Everything you've already written becomes fuel for the prompt. Then it copies the prompt to your clipboard, ready to paste into whatever AI tool you prefer.

Live Mode connects directly to an LLM. Course Journey supports four providers: Ollama and LM Studio for fully local, on-machine AI (your data never leaves your computer), WebAI for experimental in-browser inference, and Anthropic as an online fallback. The Anthropic option comes with a clear warning that it sends data externally — the app doesn't hide this behind a settings menu. It puts it in your face, in red, because you deserve to make that choice with open eyes.

### *The Nine Actions*

The AI Architect offers nine one-click actions, grouped into three categories. Under Curriculum: generate a complete curriculum, suggest quick-win lessons, and create an assessment strategy. Under Copy & Marketing: write headline variations, draft an email launch sequence, and generate lead magnet ideas. Under Improve & Refine: improve learning outcomes, identify curriculum gaps, and suggest beta tester questions.

Each action is a carefully crafted prompt that would take you fifteen minutes to write from scratch. The app writes it in a fraction of a second, pulling in your actual data, not generic placeholders. That's the difference between "help me write a curriculum" and "help me write a curriculum for a six-module course on portrait photography for natural light in small apartments, targeting career-changing hobbyists aged 25-40 who are frustrated by expensive studio rental costs and want

The second prompt gets you a useful answer. The first gets you a template.

---

## Course Dashboard & Blueprint PDF

The Course Dashboard is your bird's-eye view. Modules, lessons, total minutes, completion percentage, personas, outcomes, assessments — all the numbers in one place. Below the stats, a summary of your canvas pulls in your transformation promise, target student, and unique angle. If you're about to hop on a call with a potential collaborator, open this panel first.

The Blueprint PDF button — it lives in the top bar and also in the Files panel — triggers your browser's print dialog with a custom stylesheet. What comes out is a multi-page PDF with a cover page, your canvas, all panels rendered in clean print-friendly formatting, and a footer. It's the kind of document you'd expect from a \$2,000 course strategy consultant, and you just generated it from your own data in one click.

The PDF uses warm parchment tones in print mode, making it feel like a designed document rather than a browser printout. If you're pitching a course to a business partner, a publisher, or an internal stakeholder, this is the artifact that makes you look like you've been doing this for years.

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## Saving, Exporting, and Moving Between Machines

Everything saves automatically to your browser's local storage. The "saved" timestamp in the sidebar footer updates every time you make a change. But local storage is local — it lives in one browser on one machine. If you clear your browser data, it's gone.

So export. The Export JSON button in the Files panel (and in the top bar) downloads a complete snapshot of your current project. You can import it on another machine, in another browser, on a plane. The file is small — usually under 100 KB — and it contains everything.

You can also rename projects, delete them, and create new ones from the sidebar. Each project is fully independent. If you're building three courses, you have three projects, each with its own canvas, curriculum, and data.

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## Templates: Standing on Shoulders

Part Seven

In the Files panel, switch to the Templates tab. Five templates wait for you there: Technical / Coding, Business & Marketing, Creative & Design, Health & Wellness, and Professional / Career. Each one pre-fills the Canvas with category-specific language — not placeholder junk, but genuinely useful starting points that you can edit, overwrite, or learn from.

## Living With It

Templates are especially valuable if you're staring at a blank canvas and feeling the particular paralysis that blank canvases cause. Load a template, read what it says, then start changing it. The act of editing is easier than the act of creating from nothing, and by the time you've rewritten every cell, you'll have something that's entirely yours.

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## Dark Mode, Light Mode, and the Parchment

The theme toggle in the sidebar footer cycles between two modes. Dark mode is the default — a deep charcoal background with soft teal and blue accents, designed for long working sessions where you don't want your monitor screaming at you at midnight.

Light mode uses a warm parchment palette — creamy backgrounds, sandy borders, earthy text. It's designed for readability during the day and for printing. If you're about to share your screen on a video call, light mode is the gracious choice.

The theme preference saves per project, so your "serious business course" can be in light mode while your "passion project" stays in dark mode. Small detail. Unreasonable satisfaction.

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## Keyboard Shortcuts

Cmd+K (or Ctrl+K on Windows) opens the search overlay. Type any word and it searches across every module, every field, every persona quote. It's the fastest way to find that one thing you wrote three weeks ago in the marketing plan.

Cmd+Z undoes. Cmd+Shift+Z redoes. Cmd+S force-saves. Escape closes whatever overlay is open. These are small courtesies, but they add up to an app that respects your muscle memory.

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## Multi-Project Management

The project selector at the top of the sidebar lets you maintain multiple courses simultaneously. Click the + button to create a new project, and use the dropdown to switch between them. Each project is a fully independent world — its own canvas, its own curriculum, its own data.

This is useful if you're building a course ecosystem: a free introductory course that funnels into a paid deep-dive. Or if you're a course creator for hire, building courses for multiple clients. Each one gets its own project, its own export, its own theme.

A practical workflow: keep your "main" course as the first project and create a second project called "Scratch Pad" for experiments. Try different canvas configurations, test curriculum structures, explore pricing models — all without touching your real project. When you find something that works, export the scratch pad and cherry-pick ideas into your main course manually.

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## Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

### *The Curse of Completionism*

Some creators won't launch until every field is filled, every percentage is at 100%, every lesson is polished to a mirror shine. These courses often never launch. The pursuit of perfection becomes a hiding place — a way to avoid the vulnerability of putting your work in front of real students.

Here's the reframe: your first cohort of students isn't buying a finished product. They're buying a ticket to the earliest version of something you believe in. Many of the most successful online courses launched with half their modules recorded and the rest delivered live over the following weeks. The students didn't mind. They were in on the ground floor, and they knew it.

### *The Information Dump*

The second most common mistake is stuffing every lesson with everything you know about the topic. You're an expert. You know seventeen nuances of every concept. Your student needs three. The other fourteen belong in an advanced course, a reference document, or the "if you're curious, here's a rabbit hole" section at the end of a module.

A useful test: after writing a lesson script, read it and ask, "If I deleted this paragraph, would the student still be able to do the thing I promised?" If yes, delete it. You can always add depth later. You can never un-overwhelm a student who quit in week two.

### *Pricing by Effort Instead of Value*

"I only recorded eight hours of video, so I can't charge more than \$49." This logic feels intuitive and is completely wrong. A surgeon doesn't charge by how long the operation takes; they charge by what the operation is worth. If your course saves a freelancer twenty hours a month of wasted effort, it's worth \$500 to that freelancer regardless of whether it's three hours or thirty.

Price based on the transformation, not the runtime. Course Journey's pricing panel lets you model different price points — try running the 12-month projection at \$49, \$149, and \$299. The results are often surprising enough to change your mind.

### *Ignoring the First Five Minutes*

The enrollment page sold the course. The first lesson has to re-sell it. Students arrive with buyer's remorse, skepticism, or both. If the first five minutes of your course don't make them think "okay, I made the right decision," you'll see your completion rate drop off a cliff by Module 2.

This is why the Student Preview feature matters. Walk through your course as a student. Feel what they feel when they click "Start Module 1." If it feels slow, bureaucratic, or overly introductory — rewrite it. Lead with the quick win. Let them taste the transformation in the first ten minutes.

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## **The Psychology of Online Learning**

## *Motivation Decay*

Every student who enrolls in your course is at peak motivation on day one. It only goes down from there — unless you build structural interventions. These aren't gimmicks. They're design choices that respect the reality of human psychology.

Progress visibility is the simplest intervention. The Student Preview shows a progress bar; your actual course platform should too. Humans are wired to complete things. A bar that shows "37% complete" creates a pull toward 50% that no amount of inspirational messaging can replicate.

Social proof is the second intervention. If your course has a community element — a forum, a Slack channel, a Discord server — surface student wins publicly. "Sarah just finished Module 3 and deployed her first app!" Every student who sees that thinks, "If Sarah can do it, maybe I can too." That thought keeps them going through the hard parts.

Micro-celebrations are the third. End each module with a moment of recognition. Not a patronizing "Great job, you finished Module 2!" — students can smell condescension. Instead, show them what they've built. "Here's everything you can now do that you couldn't do a week ago: [list of concrete skills]." That's not celebration. That's evidence. And evidence sustains motivation better than praise.

## *Cognitive Load Theory*

John Sweller's cognitive load theory, simplified: your student's brain has limited working memory. Every unnecessary element on screen — every decoration, every tangent, every piece of information that isn't directly relevant to the current task — uses up a piece of that limited capacity.

In practice, this means: one concept per lesson. One new tool per demonstration. One objective per quiz. If you catch yourself saying "and while we're here, let me also show you..." — stop. That's a different lesson. File it. Teach it later. Your student's brain will thank you by actually retaining what you taught.

This also applies to your slides, if you use them. A slide with five bullet points and a diagram is a slide that teaches nothing. A slide with one sentence and one image is a slide that teaches one thing well. Course creators who come from corporate training backgrounds often have to unlearn the "pack the slide" habit. Unpacking it is one of the best things you can do for your completion rate.

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# Workflows: Four Ways to Use Course Journey

## *The Weekend Sprint*

You have a weekend. You want a complete course blueprint by Sunday night. Here's the sequence: Saturday morning, fill the Canvas. Saturday afternoon, write three personas and five outcomes. Saturday evening, build the curriculum skeleton — module names and lesson titles only, no content. Sunday morning, run the AI Architect to generate curriculum details and assessment strategy. Sunday afternoon, write the sales page copy. Sunday evening, run the Stress Test and fix what's broken.

By Sunday night, you won't have a finished course. But you'll have a blueprint that would take most people three weeks of scattered thinking. And you'll have a Blueprint PDF you can show to someone on Monday morning.

### *The Slow Build*

You have thirty minutes a day. Monday: fill two Canvas cells. Tuesday: fill two more. Wednesday: finish the Canvas and write one persona. Thursday: write a second persona. Friday: write three learning outcomes. Over three weeks at this pace, you'll have a complete Envision phase and a solid start on Design. The app saves automatically, so you can close it and come back without losing a character.

### *The Iteration Loop*

You already have a course live and you want to rebuild it better. Import your existing structure into the Curriculum Builder. Run the Stress Test against what you already have. Use the AI Architect to identify gaps. Rewrite your learning outcomes to be more measurable. Then use the Student Preview to walk through the new structure and compare it to the old one. This workflow turns Course Journey into an audit tool for existing courses.

### *The Team Handoff*

You're a subject-matter expert. Someone else is producing the course. Fill in the Envision phase completely — Canvas, Personas, Outcomes. Export the JSON and send it to your producer. They import it, build the curriculum, and send it back. You review it in Student Preview. Back and forth, always on the same data, always in the same tool. The Blueprint PDF becomes your shared reference document for meetings.

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## **Your First Course: A Complete Walkthrough**

Let's build something together. Not hypothetically — practically. Imagine you're a graphic designer with ten years of experience, and you want to teach freelance designers how to run client discovery calls. You've watched dozens of colleagues lose projects because they didn't ask the right questions in

## *Day One: The Canvas*

Open Course Journey. Skip the onboarding (or load the Creative & Design template and clear it). You're staring at the Canvas. Start with the Transformation Promise: "After completing this course, freelance designers will confidently lead client discovery calls that uncover the real brief, set clear expectations, and close the project within the first meeting." That's specific. That's a verb. That's a transformation.

Topic & Niche: "Client discovery and project scoping for freelance graphic designers." Not "business skills for designers" — that's a haystack. This is the needle. Target Student: "Freelance graphic designers with 1-3 years of experience who are getting clients but losing projects due to miscommunication, scope creep, or unclear briefs. They're talented at design but uncomfortable leading conversations." You can picture this person. You might have been this person.

Prerequisites: "Active freelance practice with at least 3 completed client projects. No business degree required." Unique Angle: "Real recorded discovery calls (anonymized), with frame-by-frame analysis of what worked and what didn't. Not theory — forensic examination of actual conversations." That's an angle no Udemy course offers, because it requires your specific experience and your specific relationships with clients who'll let you record.

Format & Delivery: "Self-paced video with downloadable discovery call script templates, a question bank, and a capstone exercise where students conduct a mock discovery call." Competitive Landscape: "Most resources are blog posts or chapters in business books. The few courses that exist (Company X, Creator Y) focus on proposals and contracts, not the conversation itself." Success Metrics: "Student-reported increase in project close rate. Target: 4.7+ star rating, 45%+ completion rate." Estimated Length: "4-5 hours across 6 modules, ~24 lessons."

Canvas complete. The progress ring goes green. Time elapsed: about forty-five minutes. But you now have a document that could survive a conversation with a skeptical mentor, and that's the real test.

## *Day Two: Personas and Outcomes*

Three personas. First: "Maya, 26, freelance brand designer, 2 years in. Gets clients through Instagram but loses 30% of them after the first call because she can't articulate her process. Her biggest fear is looking unprofessional." Second: "Dev, 34, freelance web designer transitioning from agency to solo. Has design skills but has always had a project manager handling the client conversation. His biggest fear is saying the wrong price." Third: "Rina, 29, freelance illustrator working with publishers. Gets vague briefs, does three rounds of revisions on every project, and resents the process. Her biggest fear is pushback."

Five learning outcomes. "Apply a structured discovery framework to extract the real brief from a

Each outcome links to a future module. You don't have the modules yet, but you have the destinations. The curriculum will connect the dots.

### *Day Three: The Curriculum*

Six modules. Module 1: "The First Five Minutes" — what to say, how to open, how to establish authority without arrogance. Quick win: the student practices the opening script on a friend and reports back. Module 2: "The Question Stack" — the twelve questions that uncover the real brief. Module 3: "Reading the Room" — body language, tone shifts, and the moment the client stops telling you what they want and starts telling you what they need. Module 4: "Scope, Budget, and the Awkward Conversation" — how to talk about money without flinching. Module 5: "The Close" — how to end the call with a clear next step. Module 6: "The Capstone" — the student conducts a mock discovery call, records it, and self-evaluates using a rubric.

Each module gets 3-5 lessons, a mix of video (you teaching) and exercise (them practicing). Total: 24 lessons, roughly 4.5 hours. You build this in the Curriculum Builder, adding lessons with type tags and estimated durations. Then you switch to Student Preview and walk through it. Module 3 feels too dense — seven lessons. You split it into Module 3A ("Listening Signals") and Module 3B ("Responding to Signals"), rebalancing the course to seven modules. The drag-and-drop makes this a five-minute operation instead of a full restructure.

### *Day Four: Everything Else*

Run the AI Architect. Click "Generate assessment strategy" — it pulls in your seven modules, your five outcomes, and your three personas, and produces a detailed quiz-per-module plan plus a capstone rubric. Copy the prompt (or generate it live if you've connected Ollama), then paste the relevant pieces into your Assessments panel.

Write the sales page. Headline: "Stop Losing Projects After the First Call." Subheadline: "A discovery framework for freelance designers who are tired of vague briefs, scope creep, and the sinking feeling that the client wanted something different." That subheadline is Maya's, Dev's, and Rina's Monday morning. They'll recognize themselves in it. That recognition is what makes them click "Enroll."

Set the price at \$149. Run the 12-month projection with 20 students in month one and 8% monthly growth. The table shows you hitting \$3,500/month by month twelve and \$22,000 cumulative. That's not life-changing money, but it's proof-of-concept money. It's "this works and I should build the advanced version" money.

Export the Blueprint PDF. Send it to three designer friends and ask: "Would you take this course?" Their answers will either confirm your instincts or redirect them. Both outcomes are valuable. Neither is failure.

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## Life After Launch

### *The First Week*

Your course is live. Students are enrolling. And you're going to feel a very specific cocktail of emotions: pride that you built something real, anxiety that it might not be good enough, and an almost physical urge to check your dashboard every twenty minutes. All of this is normal. The urge will fade. The pride will stay.

In the first week, your job is not to optimize. Your job is to listen. If your course platform has a Q&A feature or a community channel, watch what students ask. The questions they ask in Module 1 tell you whether your onboarding is working. The questions they ask in Module 3 tell you whether your scaffolding is right. The absence of questions in Module 5 tells you either that everyone understood it perfectly or that everyone stopped watching. Check your completion data to find out which.

### *The First Month*

By week three, you'll have enough data to make your first iteration. Course Journey's Stress Test becomes an audit tool here — revisit it with real-world answers instead of pre-launch guesses. "What if your launch generates only 10% of expected enrollments?" is a different question when you have actual numbers.

The most common first-month change is restructuring Module 1. Almost every course creator discovers that their opening is either too slow (students drop off before the quick win) or too fast (students feel overwhelmed). The fix is usually surgical — move one lesson, add one bridge, shorten one video. The Curriculum Builder and Student Preview make this a thirty-minute edit, not a full rebuild.

### *The Long Game*

A course is not a product launch. It's a relationship. The students who finish your course and get results become your most powerful marketing channel — not because you ask them to promote you, but because competence is contagious. A designer who starts closing projects after the first call will tell other designers what changed. That word-of-mouth is slow and it's unstoppable.

Six months after launch, revisit your Canvas. Is the Transformation Promise still accurate? Has your understanding of the target student evolved? Are there modules that should be added, or lessons that should be cut? Course Journey's multi-project feature lets you create a "v2.0" project alongside your original, iterating on the blueprint without touching the live version until you're ready.

A year from now, you might have a second course. Or a community. Or a consulting practice built on the credibility that teaching creates. The course isn't the destination. It's the door to everything that comes after it.

But that's a year from now. Tonight, you have a Canvas to fill.

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## What Happens Next

You've walked through the whole house now. You know where the rooms are, what the furniture does, where the light falls. The rest is you — your knowledge, your voice, your willingness to sit with the discomfort of building something that might not be perfect.

Most courses never get built. Not because the idea was bad, but because the creator got lost somewhere between the vision and the execution. Course Journey exists to narrow that gap. Not to eliminate it — the gap is where the learning happens — but to give you handrails for the crossing.

Start with the Canvas. Fill it in imperfectly. Move to Personas. Give your student a name. Write three Learning Outcomes that scare you a little. Then build Module 1 and put a quick win in it.

That's tomorrow's work. Tonight, just sit with the fact that you started.

The door is behind you now.

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### Part Eight

# The Other Side of the Door

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# Appendix A: Field Reference

Below is a complete reference of every field in Course Journey, organized by panel. Use this when you need a quick reminder of what a field expects.

## Course Canvas

### Transformation Promise

What students will be able to DO after completing the course. Use action verbs.

### Topic & Niche

Specific subject area. The narrower, the better.

### Target Student

Who this is for — skill level, role, frustrations.

### Prerequisites

What students should already know or have.

### Unique Angle

Why you? What's your method or perspective?

### Format & Delivery

Self-paced video, live cohort, hybrid, text-based.

### Competitive Landscape

What alternatives exist and how yours differs.

### Success Metrics

Completion rate, reviews, revenue targets.

### Estimated Length

Total hours, modules, weeks to complete.

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## Appendices

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## Learner Personas (*per persona*)

### Name

A real-sounding name for reference.

### Role / Title

Their job or life context.

### Age Range

Approximate age bracket.

### Current Skill Level

Beginner, intermediate, advanced.

### Goals & Dream Outcome

What they hope to achieve.

### Frustrations & Blockers

What's stopping them now.

### Quote

A sentence in their voice about their struggle.

## *Learning Outcomes (per outcome)*

### **Outcome Statement**

Starts with a Bloom's verb: Create, Analyze, Apply...

### **Bloom's Level**

Remember — Understand — Apply — Analyze — Evaluate — Create

### **Covered in Module**

Which module addresses this outcome.

## *Curriculum Builder (per module)*

### **Module Name**

Short, descriptive name.

### **Module Objective**

After this module, students will...

### **Lessons**

Title, type (video/text/quiz/exercise/download), duration, status.

## *Assessments (per assessment)*

### **Name**

Descriptive name: 'Quiz: Module 3 Review'

### **Type**

Quiz, Assignment, Project, Peer Review, Final Exam.

### **Description**

What does this assess?

### **Linked Module**

Which module it belongs to.

### **Pass Criteria**

80% score, submission of deliverable, etc.

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# Appendix B: AI Architect Prompt Reference

The AI Architect offers nine actions. Each generates a context-rich prompt. Here's what each one asks for:

### **Generate complete curriculum**

Asks an AI to create 6-10 modules with 3-6 lessons each, including types and durations.

### **Suggest 5 quick-win lessons**

Asks for confidence-building first lessons that deliver immediate results.

### **Create assessment strategy**

Requests quizzes, assignments, and a capstone project mapped to outcomes.

**Write 5 headline variations**

Asks for headline + subheadline pairs emphasizing different angles.

**Draft 5-email launch sequence**

Requests a complete email series: story, agitation, solution, proof, urgency.

**Generate lead magnet ideas**

Asks for 5 lead magnets with format, creation time, and connection to the course.

**Improve learning outcomes**

Requests rewrites using Bloom's Taxonomy with assessment suggestions.

**Identify curriculum gaps**

Asks for analysis of missing concepts, pacing issues, and redundancies.

**Suggest beta tester questions**

Requests 10 specific feedback questions covering clarity, pacing, and engagement.

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## Appendix C: Keyboard Shortcuts

**Cmd/Ctrl + K**

Open search overlay

**Cmd/Ctrl + Z**

Undo

**Cmd/Ctrl + Shift + Z**

Redo

**Cmd/Ctrl + S**

Force save

**Escape**

Close active overlay or modal

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## Appendix D: Supported LLM Providers

**Ollama**

Local. Runs on your machine. Default: llama3.2. Data never leaves your computer.

**LM Studio**

Local. OpenAI-compatible API at localhost:1234. Data stays on your machine.

**WebAI**

Browser. Uses WebGPU for in-browser inference. Experimental. Requires Chrome 113+.

**Anthropic**

Online. Sends data to Anthropic's servers. Use as fallback. Claude Sonnet 4 / Haiku 4.5.

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# Appendix E: Glossary of Terms

## **Transformation Promise**

The core outcome statement: what the student will be able to DO after completing the course.

## **Bloom's Taxonomy**

A hierarchy of cognitive skills: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, Create. Used to write measurable learning outcomes.

## **Formative Assessment**

An assessment during learning (e.g., a quiz after a module) designed to help the student self-check.

## **Summative Assessment**

An assessment at the end of learning (e.g., a capstone project) designed to verify the transformation.

## **Quick Win**

A lesson early in the course that gives the student an immediate, visible result. Builds confidence and reduces dropout.

## **Lead Magnet**

Free content offered in exchange for an email address. Used to build an audience before launching.

## **Cohort-Based Course**

A course where all students start and progress together, often with live elements and community features.

## **Self-Paced Course**

A course where students progress independently, accessing pre-recorded content on their own schedule.

## **RICE Score**

A prioritization framework: Reach  $\times$  Impact  $\times$  Confidence  $\div$  Effort. Not used in Course Journey directly but referenced in course strategy.

## **Cart Open / Cart Close**

The period during which a course is available for enrollment. Creating scarcity through limited enrollment windows.

## **Spaced Repetition**

Revisiting concepts at increasing intervals to combat the forgetting curve.

## **CAC (Customer Acquisition Cost)**

The total cost to acquire one paying student, including advertising, content creation, and platform fees.

## **LTV (Lifetime Value)**

The total revenue a single student generates over their relationship with you, including upsells and referrals.

## **Completion Rate**

The percentage of enrolled students who finish the entire course. Industry average for self-paced online courses: 5-15%. Well-designed courses: 30-60%.

## **NPS (Net Promoter Score)**

A measure of student satisfaction: 'How likely are you to recommend this course?' Score from -100 to 100.

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## Appendix F: Recommended Reading

These are books and resources that have shaped the thinking behind Course Journey. None are required. All are worth the time if you want to go deeper.

**Teaching What You Know — Karl Kapp**

Practical instructional design for subject-matter experts who aren't trained educators.

**Building a StoryBrand — Donald Miller**

A framework for clarifying your message that applies directly to course sales pages.

**The Craft of Research — Booth, Colomb & Williams**

How to structure arguments and present evidence. Applicable to curriculum design.

**Show Your Work — Austin Kleon**

A philosophy of sharing your process publicly. Useful for content marketing and building an audience before launch.

**Badass: Making Users Awesome — Kathy Sierra**

The best book ever written about designing learning experiences that create competent, confident users.