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From Workshop to Workflow: Spaced Practice for Busy Teams

How to turn one-off training into short, spaced practice that fits into a working week and lasts.

5-minute read

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In short

1. **A one-day workshop puts all the learning in one place, and memory fades fast.** More than a century of research shows that the same practice, spread out over time, is remembered far better.

2. **Spacing and recall work together.** Short sessions that ask people to retrieve and apply what they learned beat re-reading, especially a week or more later.

3. **A 30-day rhythm fits busy teams**: about 80 minutes in total per person, in 10-minute sessions, with short challenges after a week, two weeks and a month, and a 15-minute manager check-in.

839

assessments of spaced practice, from 317 experiments, in the review by Cepeda and colleagues (2006)

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1 The problem with one day

The workshop is the default format for workplace training. It is easy to schedule, it feels substantial, and people enjoy it. But it asks memory to do something it does badly: absorb a lot at once and keep it for months without being used.

Hermann Ebbinghaus described the forgetting curve in 1885: without review, memory of new material drops quickly in the first days and then levels off. Anyone who has tried to recall a workshop model three weeks later knows the feeling. The notes are still in the notebook; the skill is not in the moment.

2 Space it out

The spacing effect is one of the most replicated findings in learning research. Nicholas Cepeda and colleagues reviewed 839 assessments from 317 experiments. Practice spread over time led to better long-term retention than the same amount of practice crowded into one session.

> **10–20%**
>
> **In a later study by the same team, the best gap between practice sessions was roughly 10 to 20% of the time people needed to remember the material.**

They also found that the best gap depends on how long you need to remember. In a large follow-up study, the ideal gap was roughly 10 to 20% of the retention period. To remember something for a month, a gap of a few days works well. To remember it for a year, practice should return after several weeks.

3 Recall beats re-reading

Spacing works best when each session asks people to retrieve what they learned, not just look at it again. In an experiment by Henry Roediger and Jeffrey Karpicke, students who re-read a text did better on a test five minutes later. One week later the result reversed: students who had practiced recalling the material remembered more.

For workplace skills, recall means more than answering quiz questions. It means meeting a new situation and choosing what to do: the angry client, the missed deadline, the meeting that drifts. Each decision pulls the framework out of memory and puts it to work.

4 Plan the moment, not just the lesson

The last step from learning to doing is often the hardest. Research on implementation intentions, reviewed by Peter Gollwitzer and Paschal Sheeran across 94 studies, found that simple “if–then” plans had a medium-to-large effect on reaching goals. “If my team member misses the next deadline, then I will talk to them that day, using facts, not labels” is more likely to happen than “I will give better feedback.”

That is why every Ludora Lab module ends with a planner. Learners write their own if–then plan for a real situation they face, and keep it in their account.

5 A 30-day rhythm for busy teams

When	What happens	Time
Week 1	Eight sessions of a module, on any phone, in any order of days that suits the person	About 80 minutes, in 10-minute sessions
After 1 week	A short challenge: a new situation that uses the same skills	5 minutes
After 2 weeks	A second challenge, a little harder	5 minutes
After 1 month	A final challenge, plus the planner review	5 to 10 minutes
At 30 days	Manager check-in: “What did you try? What was hard?”	15 minutes

The total time per person is under two hours across a month, compared with eight hours or more away from work for a single workshop day. There is no travel, no room to book, and no need to cover for a whole team at once.

6 Bring managers in

In a study of 150 organizations, Alan Saks and Monica Belcourt found that what happens in the work environment before and after training was more strongly related to transfer than what happens during training. A manager who asks one good question after a module does more for transfer than a longer course.

- **Before:** tell the person why this skill matters for their role now.
- **During:** protect 10 minutes a day; don’t book over it.
- **After:** ask about their if–then plan, and notice when they use it.

Spaced practice also works with workshops. Use modules before a workshop so time together goes to discussion, or after it to keep the skills alive.

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Run a 30-day rhythm with your team

A Ludora Lab pilot uses this rhythm by default: modules in 10-minute sessions, challenges after a week, two weeks and a month, and a team dashboard to follow along. Start at ludoralab.com/companies.

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Sources

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About Ludora Lab. Ludora Lab makes short, bilingual workplace simulations for early and mid-career professionals in the Arab world. People practice real decisions, see the consequences and build skills that last, in Arabic or English.