

The Essential Guide to **Building Branching Scenarios in eLearning**

Digital learning offers the flexibility to provide personalized paths to learners. In this guide, learn how to apply branching to create not only personalized learning paths but also adaptive content, life-like exercises and responsive interactions.

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Branching

What Is Branching?

Branching in eLearning refers to a nonlinear instructional design technique that allows learners to navigate through course content by making choices and decisions based on their individual needs, preferences, or understanding of the subject matter. In branching eLearning scenarios, the content is organized into multiple paths that diverge from decision points, where learners choose the direction they want to proceed.

Essentially, like in a story or a flowchart (or a tree), branching in e-learning is when a line of content splits into two or more paths. At its most basic, custom feedback in knowledge checks is an example of branching. A correct answer provides learners with a different response from an incorrect answer.

Branching Benefits

Branching is an effective instructional design technique for creating more engaging, personalized, and relevant eLearning experiences.

This video explains the benefits of branching in learning succinctly.



[Different Learning Preferences](#)

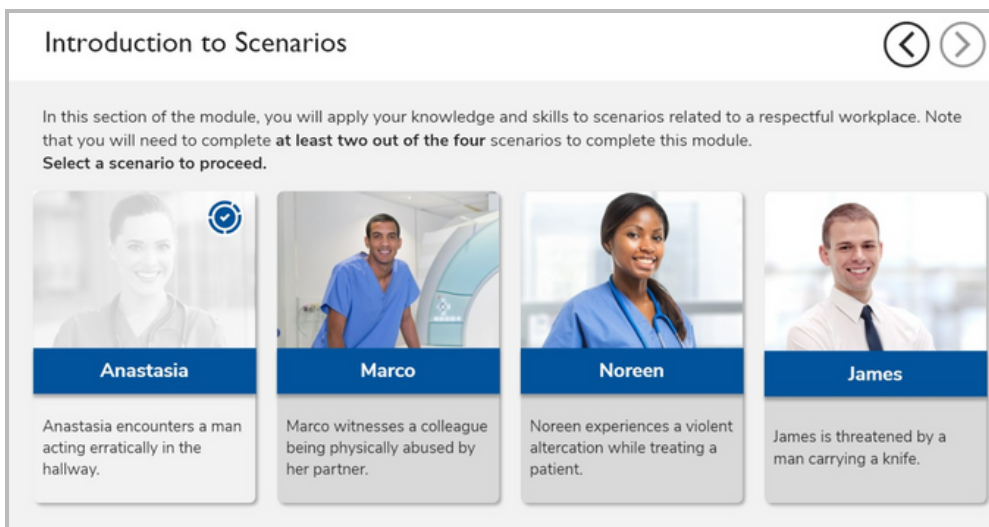
Using Branching

Use branching logic in eLearning modules to build:

- **Personalized Learning Experience**

By offering different paths and content tailored to individual learners, branching allows for a more personalized learning experience, accommodating diverse learner needs, prior knowledge, and learning preferences.

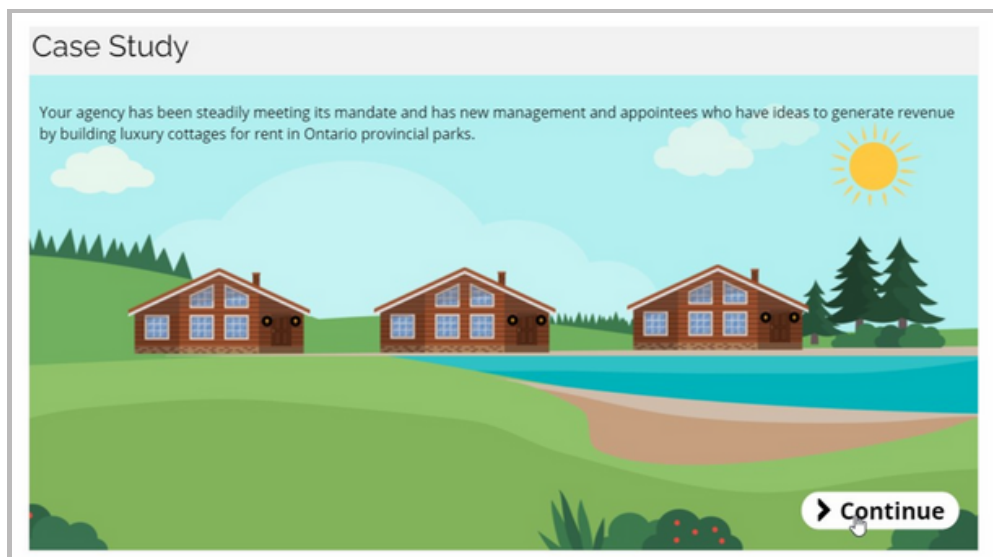
Example: In this course, learners are given a choice to select any two scenarios that they most relate to. This allows them to learn the same material but from their perspective.



- **Enhanced Engagement**

Branching scenarios can make eLearning more interactive and engaging by giving learners control over their learning journey and promoting active decision-making.

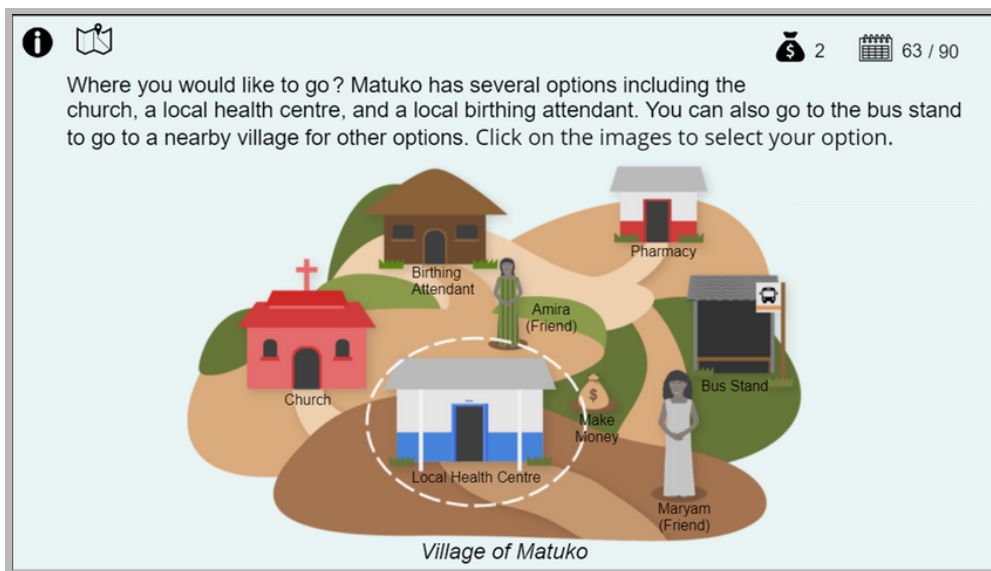
Example: In this course, learners are taken through a branched case study similar to what they might experience in their real-life roles, building curiosity and interest.



- **Realistic Simulations**

Branching scenarios can simulate real-life situations and challenges that learners might face in their professional or personal lives, allowing them to practice critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills in a safe environment.

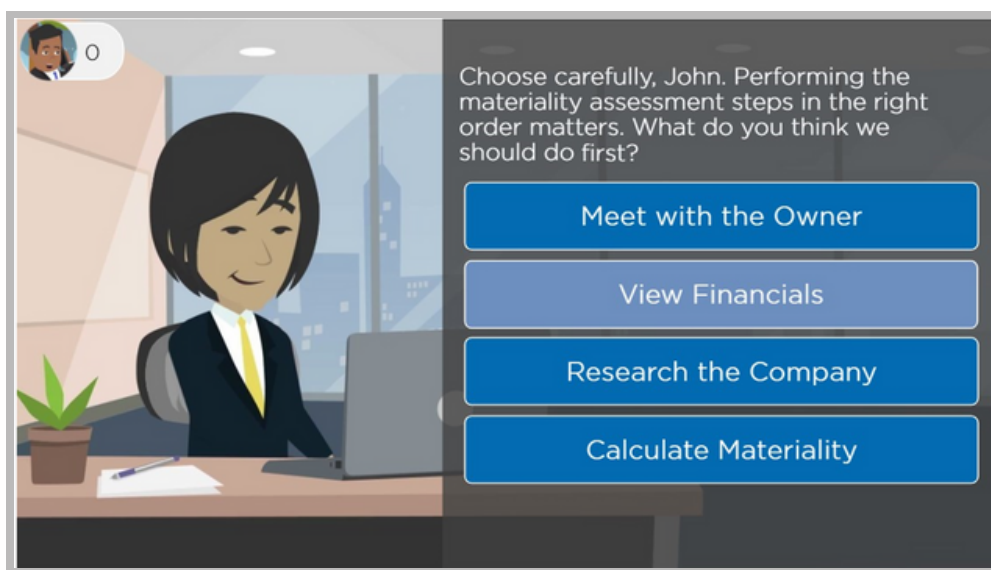
Example: In this course, users can go to any place on the map in a non-sequential manner. This realistic simulation is a close replica of how things happen in life.



- **Adaptive Learning**

Branching can be used to create adaptive learning experiences that automatically adjust the content and difficulty level based on the learner's performance, offering them appropriate support and challenges as they progress.

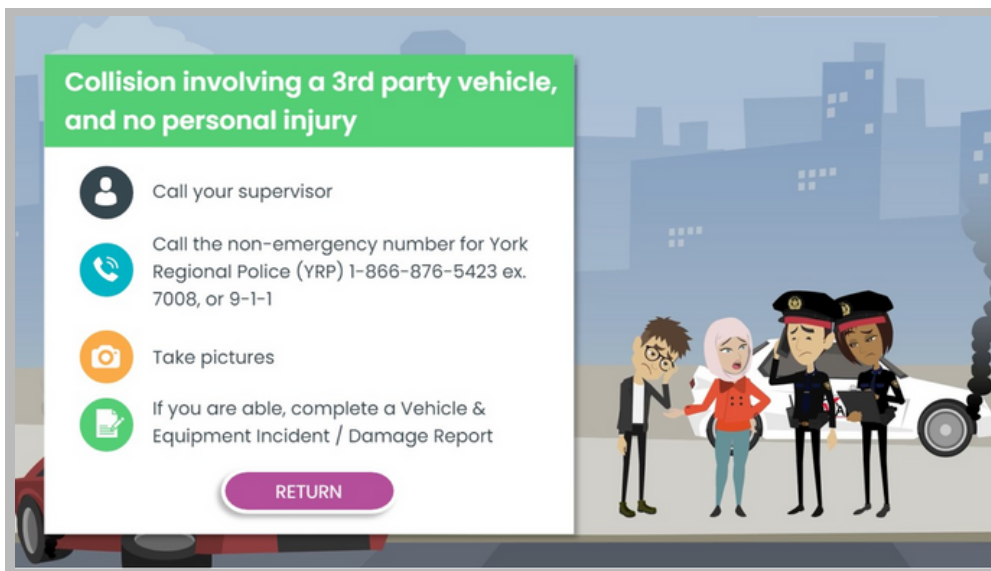
Example: In this example, as the learner makes choice, the eLearning course adapts the follow-up content to reflect their choices.



- **Immediate / Delayed Feedback and Consequences**

Branching scenarios can provide immediate or delayed feedback and consequences based on learners' choices, helping them understand the impact of their decisions and reinforcing learning.

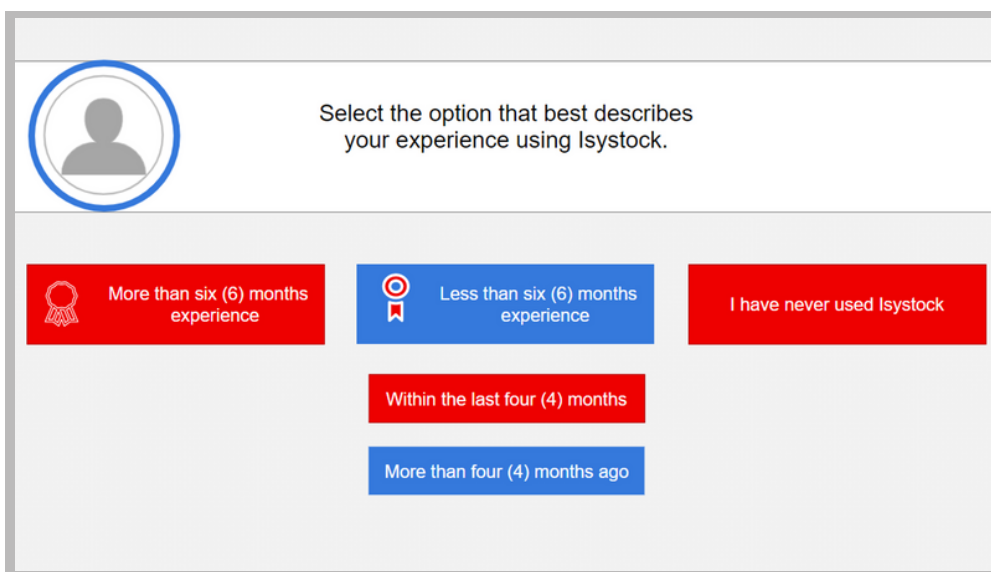
Example: In this example, the learner chooses a vehicle and makes a series of choices. If they end up in a collision scenario, they learn the consequences and required actions to be taken.



- **Manage Seat Time when Not Content Is Equally Important**

Branching can be used as a strategy in an eLearning course to reduce effective seat-time for learners by allowing them to go through only a section of the module at a time.

Example: In this example, the learner self-selects their level of competence with a software program, and is accordingly provided a selection of the training material on that software.

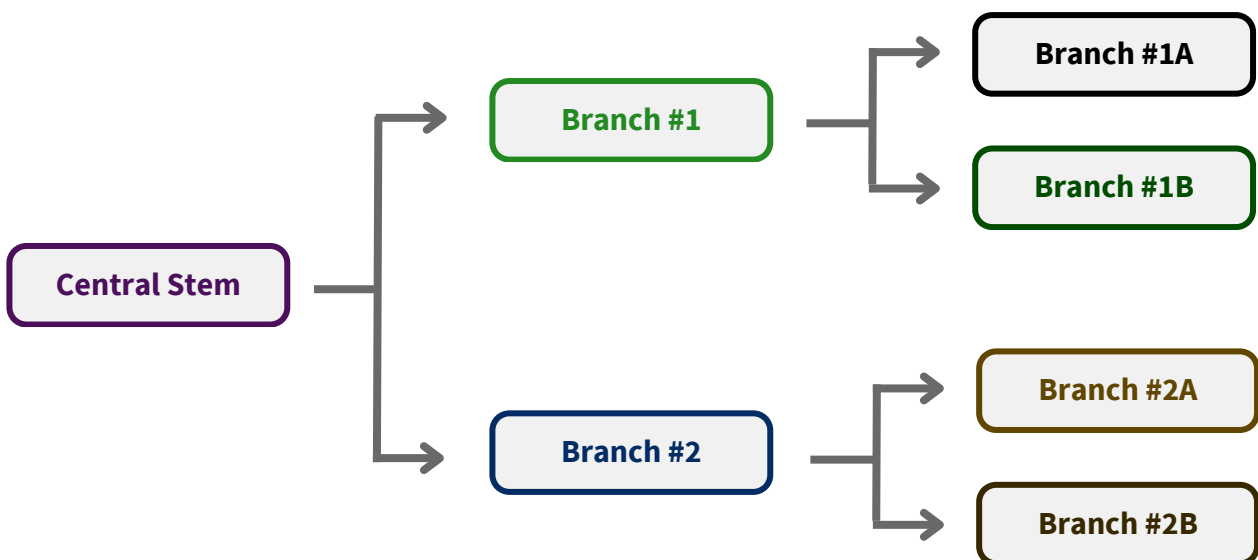


Types of Branching

Convergent branching occurs when different paths in a learning scenario return to the original line of content. This allows designers to move learners along a single route, while adding opportunities for different experiences along the way, which allows subsequent development to be more easily managed.



Divergent branching design is when each branch divides into multiple paths and does not come back together. It best simulates real-life case studies and situations. This approach can quickly get out of hand, so it needs to be carefully developed by an experienced team.



In most cases, a learner's path is based on their actions, but branching does not necessarily rely on action.


Branching logic refers to the triggers available based on environmental factors, such as the learner's user id, role, department, score on a previous quiz, courses taken, and more. Branching logic can even be completely random—for example, to conduct an A/B test, or add variety or randomness to a learner's experience.

Create Your Own Branching Adventure

Practice designing branching scenarios for eLearning courses by creating a simple, yet engaging scenario tailored to different learner personas.

1. Choose a topic: Select a topic relevant to your target audience. This can be any subject matter you or your group of instructional designers are currently working on or interested in.

2. Define learner personas: Create 2-3 learner personas that represent different types of learners in your target audience. Consider factors such as their prior knowledge, experience, goals, and preferences.

 Persona 1	First & Last Name	Profession Age Demographic Details
	Bio	
Prior Knowledge	Goals and Pain Points	Engagement Strategies



Persona 2

First & Last Name

Bio

Profession
Age
Demographic Details

Prior Knowledge

Goals and Pain Points

Engagement Strategies



Persona 3

First & Last Name

Bio

Profession
Age
Demographic Details

Prior Knowledge

Goals and Pain Points

Engagement Strategies







3. Write a realistic scenario: Develop a realistic situation related to your chosen topic. This scenario should present a problem or challenge that the learners need to address.


Tip: First, Identify the problem or challenge that learners might encounter in real life. The problem should be relevant, engaging, and require critical thinking or decision-making skills to solve. Then, set the context. Keep it concise and focussed - including too many details or unnecessary distractions could potentially overwhelm the learner or detract from the problem-solving experience. Define the role the learner will assume in the scenario. This role should be closely related to the learner personas you've created and the problem they need to address. Now you're ready to develop a storyline that sets up the problem or challenge and leads to the first decision point in the branching scenario.

4. Create decision points: Identify 2 key decision points in the scenario where the learner must make a choice that will affect the outcome. These decision points should be based on the different learner personas you've defined, allowing you to tailor the content to their specific needs.

 Decision point 1	
 Decision point 2	

5. Branch the content: For each decision point, create multiple branching paths that lead to different outcomes based on the learner's choices. Be sure to include feedback or consequences for each choice, which will help learners understand the impact of their decisions.

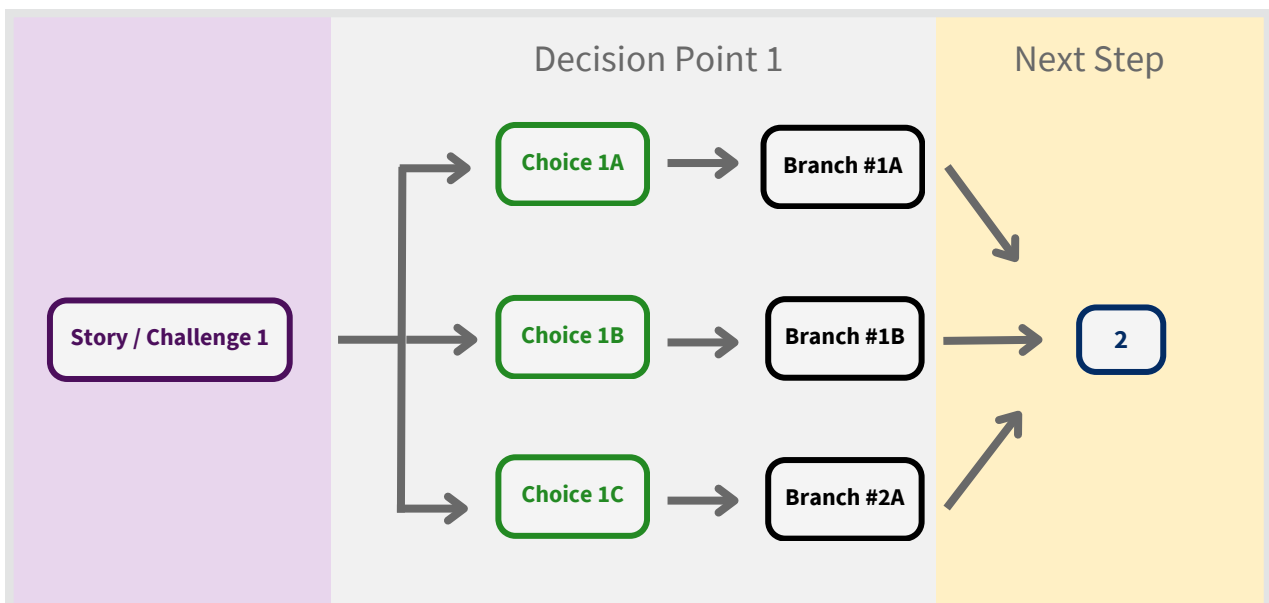
Add what would be the next step for your learner after this decision point. For a convergent branching experience, the next steps might be the same for different choices. For a divergent experience, the next steps would lead to different decision points and new choices.

 Decision point 1	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C
	Consequence A	Consequence B	Consequence C
	Next Step A	Next Step B	Next Step C

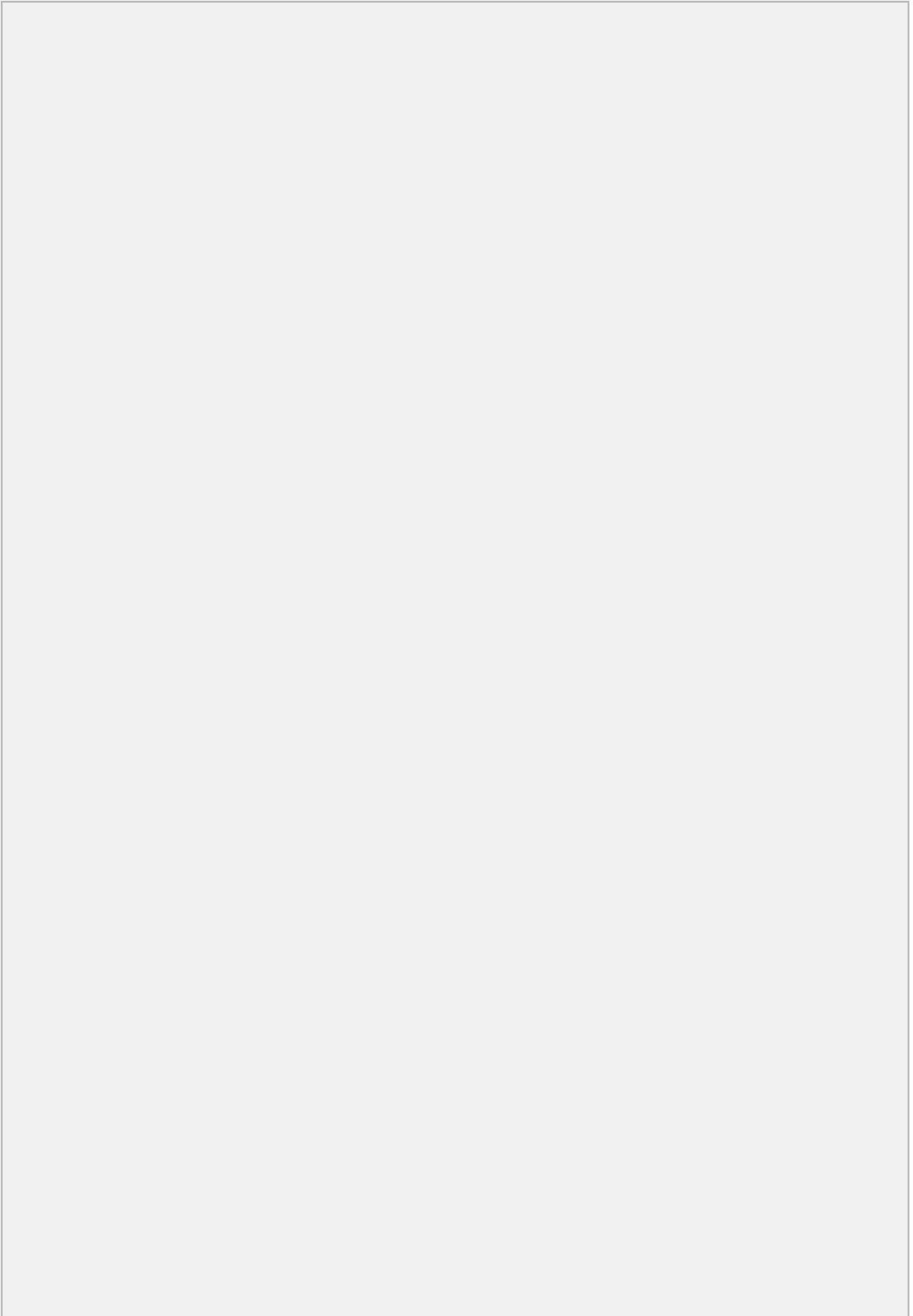
 Decision point 1	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C
	Consequence A	Consequence B	Consequence C
	Next Step A	Next Step B	Next Step C

6. Map the scenario: Create a visual representation of your branching scenario, showing the different paths and decision points. This can be a simple flowchart, or you can use specialized software or eLearning authoring tools to create an interactive map.

Here is an example of decision point 1 with convergent branching:



Make your own visual map:




Conclusion

In conclusion, branched eLearning offers a powerful and effective approach to instructional design, enabling you to create engaging, personalized, and adaptive learning experiences that cater to diverse learner needs and preferences. By implementing branching scenarios in your eLearning courses, you can facilitate a deeper understanding of the subject matter, enhance decision-making and problem-solving skills, and promote active learner participation.

Embrace the potential of branched eLearning to create transformative learning experiences that not only empower learners but also drive meaningful and lasting impact.

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