

The Guide on the Side: Best Practices

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What is It? The Guide on the Side is a new and exciting open source software program developed by the University of Arizona Libraries that allows librarians to quickly and easily create interactive online tutorials that can be used to teach students how to use databases.

Is It Effective? The Guide on the Side was built on sound pedagogical principles of online learning including interactivity, authentic tasks, and individualized feedback. It has garnered national recognition and has been awarded the Association of College & Research Libraries' Instruction Section Innovation of the Year Award for 2013 and the American Library Association's Office for Information Technology Policy 21st Century Cutting Edge Technology Service Award.

How Can I get it?

See Example: <http://www.library.arizona.edu/applications/quickHelp/tutorial/searching-the-ua-library-catalog>

Download and Support: <http://code.library.arizona.edu/gots/>

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Best Practices:

- Text
 - Keep text to a minimum – students tend to skim and scan most digital text, even important directions
 - Break text apart with spaces, bullets, and chapter headings
 - Highlight important words
 - Use steps to highlight key directions
 - Use images instead of text
- Questions
 - Use a variety of question types: short answer, long answer, multiple choice, and true/false
 - Use questions for comprehension checks
 - Use questions to ensure students are on the correct screen
 - Individualize feedback to student's response – avoid using "incorrect" only
 - Let students go back and figure out the correct answer
- Navigation
 - Pick starting point carefully – students tend to begin with immediate action and click on what they already know without reading directions
 - Give clear directions for what to click on - NOT: "Click on the Results button," but "Click on the green Results button located on the top menu on the left side"
- Updates
 - Offer plenty of chances for hands-on, authentic practice
 - Update regularly and have a schedule
 - Have student workers go through tutorial to find mistakes