



# enewsletter

A publication of **aglearn+**

ISSUE **3** MARCH 2012

## Welcome to the AgLearn Newsletter.



Welcome to the March 2012 AgLearn Newsletter — a one-stop shop for news you can use. The new year has begun and with the new year comes new resources in AgLearn. This issue includes information about new courses, popular books and other updates.

Team AgLearn wishes you a happy and healthy 2012!

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

#### New User-Oriented Courses.

Four courses designed specifically for end-users are available on AgLearn. These items are designed to increase your comfort with these key areas.

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#### AgLearn's Top Ten Books

AgLearn is a resource used often by USDA employees. One of the major resources in AgLearn is Books24x7, which is essentially an online library with books on business, technology, leadership, wellness, and other topics.

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#### Who To Call and When.

Among the most common AgLearn questions—and most difficult—is, “Who should I call?” Use this brief guide to help you to decide who to call for the best answer to your question.

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## User-Oriented Courses.

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**AgLearn+ Introduction** – This is where to go for an overview of the user interface. You'll tour the Home Page, learn how to navigate the screens, update your profile, and check your computer's compatibility with AgLearn. In addition, you'll learn how to manage your To-Do List, search the catalog, check the status of and complete curricula, manage completed work, and run reports on your training.

**AgLearn+ IDP** – Maintaining Individual Development Plans (IDPs) in AgLearn becomes required for more employees every year. This course will make you familiar with creating IDPs, goals, and adding activities to accomplish your goals. Managing your IDP using the "tennis ball" approach to provide give-and-take with your supervisor as the plan evolves will also be examined.

**AgLearn+ SF-182 Requests** – This course focuses on creating and submitting online SF-182 forms for external training. You'll also learn how approval processes work and your responsibilities after approval has been granted. Verifying your attendance so training may move to your Completed Work is also covered.

**AgLearn+ Supervisor** – Functions and capabilities unique to supervisors are explored in this course. You'll learn the ins and outs of the My Employees tab, how to assign training to subordinates, register them into scheduled offerings, and run reports on yourself and your team.

Each of these courses takes less than one hour to complete. Like everything else in AgLearn, they may be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from anyplace you can get an internet connection.

To quickly and easily find any AgLearn-related training, enter "AgLearn+" into the "Search Catalog" box at the top of any AgLearn screen.

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## Who To Call and When.

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Login issues are easy: call the eAuthentication Help Desk (800-457-3642; email [eAuthHelpDesk@ftc.usda.gov](mailto:eAuthHelpDesk@ftc.usda.gov)). AgLearn does not control its logins; eAuth is what provides access.

If you can't log in to AgLearn because you don't have an account yet, you may only have to be patient. The processes through which AgLearn accounts are created may take a pay period to complete. If you have been on board for at least that long and still don't have an account, contact your HR representative, as the data required for your activation has yet to flow downstream to AgLearn. (Contractors whose accounts are missing should contact their COTRs.)

The AgLearn Help Desk (866-633-9394; email [AgLearnHelp@genphysics.com](mailto:AgLearnHelp@genphysics.com)) is for times when something doesn't work: an online item fails to launch, content sticks in the middle, or you finish and nothing appears in Completed Work. Before calling, run a system check in AgLearn ("Check System" link at the top of any screen); the Help Desk may need to know the results. Before asking about an item that has not moved to Completed Work, be sure you have submitted the survey required for that item.

Your AgLearn administrator is the person to call when you have an AgLearn-specific question. These can range from "Why is this on my To-Do List?" to "I can't find a course in the catalog." The agency admins will probably know the answer. If not, they are in the best position to find out.

No one likes the frustration of calling for help and feeling as though they're getting the runaround. Knowing who to call the first time is half the solution.

## Top Ten Books.

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Books24x7 enables you to search, browse, and read the books in this online library. Click here to access Books24x7 or you can log into AgLearn and search for "books24x7".

Below are the top ten titles in Books24x7. These books are the most frequently accessed titles by you and your peers.

**#10 – *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*:** By showing you how to gradually replace stress-promoting habits with mindful ones, this accessible workbook introduces you to mindfulness meditation and teaches simple, profound practices that can decrease suffering and bring greater balance and peace.

**#9 – *My Wishes: Your Plan for Communicating and Organizing the Essential Information Your Family Needs*:** Whether you are looking for a way to send a lasting message or simply want to get all your affairs in order, this practical guide provides checklists to develop with your loved ones to ensure that all of their concerns and wishes are addressed.

**#8 – *Beyond Work: How Accomplished People Retire Successfully*:** Filled with retirement stories from people who are considering retirement and those who have retired, this book looks at what happens as accomplished people move beyond work and enter their years as a new adult.

**#7 – *Playing the Beautiful Game: Inspirational Thoughts To Help You Play Well; Work Well and Live Well*:** Whether you play the game, follow a different sport or are looking to sharpen your edge at work, this unique, accessible self-development book will inspire and challenge you to do whatever it is that you do more beautifully, effectively and gracefully.

**#6 – *The Organized Parent: 365 Simple Solutions to Managing Your Home; Your Time; and Your Family's Life*:** Offering effective solutions that fit your schedule and your budget, this easy-to-use guide shows you how to take control of your daily life so you can actually spend time with your kids—and even have some time left for yourself.

**#5 – *Deadline Fitness: Tone Up and Slim Down When Every Minute Counts*:** With five individualized plans for different time frames, this informative book combines proven, easy-to-follow exercise and eating plans with dramatic, inspiring stories about the special life events that spur us to tone up and look great.

**#4 – *The Awakening Course: the Secret to Solving All Problems*:** Explaining the four stages of awakening, this thought-provoking book offers a proven step-by-step approach for finding and achieving your goals and desires, and shows how you can reach these goals while pursuing complete mind, body, and spiritual transformation.

**#3 – *151 Quick Ideas to Improve Your People Skills*:** Culled from the study of human behavior, relationships, and communication, this guide offers tested and true ideas that will help you be more effective, efficient and in control of your relationships with people.

**#2 – *101 Ways to Make Every Second Count: Time Management Tips and Techniques for More Success with Less Stress*:** Learn how to maximize your time by setting priorities, creating useful schedules, and overcoming procrastination with this book's broad range of strategies and tactics.

**#1 – *100 Great Time Management Ideas*:** Designed to be a stimulating and fast read for anyone looking for inspiration and new ideas, this book offers time management strategies from companies around the world that will help anyone manage their time more effectively.

Be sure to browse Books24x7 regularly for new and exciting titles!

## AgLearn's Top Ten Course List.

Below are the top ten courses in AgLearn. The courses range from writing and communication to managing stress and handling workplace pressure. Learn more about these courses in the catalog and add to your To-Do List!

- #1 – Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely
- #2 – The Importance of Flexibility in the Workplace
- #3 – Managing Your Career: Leveraging the Performance Appraisal
- #4 – Communicating with Professionalism and Etiquette
- #5 – Public Speaking Strategies: Confident Public Speaking
- #6 – Building Improved Work Relationships Simulation
- #7 – Time Management: Planning and Prioritizing Your Time
- #8 – Creating A Positive Attitude
- #9 – Developing the Right Attitude for Performing under Pressure
- #10 – 10 Steps to Getting Organized

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## Windows 7 Preparation.

USDA is beginning the process of transitioning over to Windows 7. In preparation for this change, several courses in AgLearn have become available to users.

As we prepare for this implementation - and depending on your role in the organization - you may notice an increase in communications regarding Windows 7. We will periodically be sending targeted emails to those in key roles who will be responsible for the technical aspects of this transition. As the process proceeds, we will be sending communications to a broader audience. Keep an eye out for these important emails.

[Click here to view our first Windows 7 email.](#)

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## AgLearn Quotes.

"The courses that I have taken in AgLearn are interesting and have helped me to do a better job as a USDA/FSIS employee. There are many different kinds of courses in AgLearn and everyone can find something of interest. Keep up the good work!"

~Carolyn Ash  
FSIS Employee

## IDP Webinar Update.

On March 7th, Team AgLearn hosted a webinar titled "The Top Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions About the AgLearn IDP." Well over 300 employees participated in this webinar using Voice Over IP (VoIP) technology. VoIP refers to the delivery of voice communications over the Internet rather than via a teleconference line. For many participants, this was the first time they had attended a webinar using this type of communication, but nearly all attendees were able to configure their computer speakers or headsets to hear the presentation. Team AgLearn will be using VoIP technology for future webinars as it saves thousands of dollars in teleconferencing fees!

Presenter Kathy Fallow began by polling the group as to their IDP usage. Most of the audience has been creating IDPs over the past ten years. Sixty percent of the audience currently track their IDP goals in AgLearn, 18% use paper, and another 18% plan to create an IDP but haven't yet gotten around to it.

Questions submitted via the Q&A menu in the meeting were collected, and the answers were distributed to webinar participants.

If you were not able to attend the March 7th webinar, Kathy's slides with full speaker notes, as well as the Q&A document, are available in the AgLearn+ adding to your knowledge community in USDA Connect. Check out the Activity titled Best Practices for the AgLearn Online IDP.