

COMPARISON GUIDE

HeyLoopy vs Moodle: When Free Costs More Than You Think

Moodle is the world's most popular open-source LMS, with 20+ years of development and thousands of plugins. But a free license doesn't mean a low-cost platform. This guide compares two fundamentally different approaches to corporate training.

April 2026 • 10 pages



Executive Summary

This comparison guide is written for training leaders, L&D professionals, and operations managers evaluating learning platforms for their teams. It presents an honest, data-driven comparison of Moodle and HeyLoopy - two platforms that approach corporate training from fundamentally different starting points.

Moodle is the world's most widely deployed open-source learning management system. Founded in 2002, it serves hundreds of millions of users across 100+ languages. It carries a 3.84/5 rating on eLearningIndustry (105 reviews) and approximately 29 ratings on Gartner Peer Insights. Its greatest strength is total customization: with 2,000+ plugins and full source code access, organizations can build virtually any learning experience they want. The tradeoff is that building, hosting, and maintaining that experience requires significant technical expertise.

HeyLoopy is an AI-powered micro-learning platform designed around a different premise: that the goal of training isn't completion - it's retention. Rather than hosting static courses, HeyLoopy generates personalized daily micro-lessons from your existing documents, uses spaced repetition to combat the forgetting curve, and provides an AI coach that answers employee questions directly from your institutional knowledge base.

Both platforms have legitimate strengths. The right choice depends on what you're optimizing for: **maximum customization with full technical control** or **lasting knowledge retention with zero IT overhead**.

The core question

Organizations spend an average of \$1,280 per employee per year on training (ATD 2022). Without reinforcement, learners forget 70% of new material within a week. If your platform is free to license but expensive to deploy, maintain, and create content for - and the training it delivers is largely forgotten - what are you actually saving?

Moodle: Platform Profile

3.84/5

eLearningIndustry rating (105 reviews) - lowest of major LMS

~29

Gartner Peer Insights ratings

2,000+

Plugins in the Moodle ecosystem

What It Is

Moodle is an open-source learning management system originally designed for higher education and adapted over two decades for corporate, government, and nonprofit use. Founded in 2002, it is a B-Corp certified organization committed to open-source principles. Moodle can be self-hosted on your own servers or deployed through Moodle-certified hosting partners. It supports AICC, IMS LTI, SCORM 2004, and xAPI standards, and is available in 100+ languages with WCAG 2.1 accessibility compliance.

Core Strengths

- **Open source and free:** No license fees. You own the software, the data, and every customization. For organizations with data sovereignty requirements or regulatory constraints on third-party hosting, this is a genuine advantage.
- **Infinite customization:** 2,000+ plugins cover everything from advanced grading rubrics to virtual classrooms. If a feature doesn't exist, the open-source codebase means you can build it yourself.
- **Global reach:** 100+ languages, WCAG 2.1 accessibility, and an active global community make Moodle one of the most inclusive platforms available.
- **Standards compliance:** AICC, IMS LTI, SCORM 2004, and xAPI support means compatibility with virtually any standards-compliant courseware.
- **SSO support:** Gartner reviewers highlight single sign-on capabilities as a strength for enterprise deployments.
- **Active development:** Twenty years of continuous community development means a mature, well-documented codebase with regular releases.

Known Limitations

Based on Gartner Peer Insights reviews and eLearningIndustry analysis:

- **Admin interface:** Reviewers consistently describe the admin UI as "not intuitive." Configuration requires technical knowledge that most L&D teams don't have.
- **Visual design:** Dated look and feel compared to modern SaaS platforms. Improving the UI requires custom theme development or purchasing third-party themes.
- **Upgrade complexity:** Major version upgrades can break plugin compatibility, requiring testing and remediation across your plugin stack.
- **Reporting limitations:** Built-in reporting is basic. Advanced analytics typically requires additional plugins or custom development.
- **Security burden:** Self-hosted deployments put security patching, vulnerability management, and access control squarely on your IT team.
- **Performance at scale:** Gartner reviewers note performance can degrade with large user bases, requiring infrastructure optimization.
- **Support model:** FAQ, knowledge base, and community forums only. No vendor support team. Enterprise support requires a paid Moodle Partner relationship.

Pricing

Moodle's open-source software is free to download and use. However, operational costs include server hosting (\$50-500+/month depending on scale), Moodle Partner managed services (varies widely), premium plugins (many are paid), custom theme development, and IT staff time for deployment and ongoing maintenance. Moodle also offers MoodleCloud, a hosted option, for organizations that want to avoid self-hosting.

The Fundamental Gap: Free Software vs. Free From Overhead

Moodle and HeyLoopy represent two different philosophies about what "accessible training" means.

Moodle's philosophy: Learning technology should be open, free, and fully customizable. Any organization should be able to deploy a world-class LMS without paying license fees. The tradeoff is that you supply the technical expertise, hosting infrastructure, and course content.

HeyLoopy's philosophy: Training should produce lasting knowledge with minimal overhead. The platform should handle content generation, delivery optimization, and retention science so your team can focus on their actual work.

The education-to-corporate gap

Moodle was built for universities. In higher education, you have dedicated IT departments, instructional designers on staff, semesters of lead time, and students who are accustomed to navigating complex academic systems. That context makes Moodle's complexity reasonable.

Corporate training operates under different constraints. You need training live in days, not months. Your "learners" are employees with jobs to do. You rarely have instructional designers on staff. And your IT team has higher priorities than maintaining a PHP-based LMS server.

Adapting an education platform for corporate use means working against the grain of the tool. It can be done, and many organizations do it successfully, but it requires ongoing investment in technical resources that most mid-market companies don't have.

The "free" calculation

Moodle's license is free. But consider what "deployment" actually involves:

- Provisioning and maintaining a server (or paying a hosting partner)
- Installing, configuring, and updating the Moodle application
- Selecting, installing, and maintaining plugins for missing features
- Developing or purchasing a modern theme to replace the default UI
- Building every course from scratch (Moodle has no content generation)
- Managing security patches, SSL certificates, and backups
- Handling version upgrades and plugin compatibility issues

For a 100-person organization, initial deployment can easily consume 40-80+ hours of IT and L&D time. Ongoing maintenance adds 5-15 hours per month. Course creation is a separate, ongoing investment measured in weeks per course.

The hidden cost of "free"

A free license is only free if your team's time has no value. For most organizations, the IT hours spent deploying, maintaining, and troubleshooting Moodle could be spent on higher-impact projects. The question isn't "can we afford an LMS license?" - it's "can we afford the ongoing technical overhead of a self-managed platform?"

Feature-by-Feature Comparison

Dimension	Moodle	HeyLoopy
Learning approach	Course-based modules: self-paced or instructor-led	AI-generated daily micro-lessons with spaced repetition
Content creation	Manual course building, SCORM import, third-party authoring tools	Upload documents; AI generates training automatically
Retention method	Quiz at end of module, completion tracking	Spaced repetition + active recall, adaptive per learner
AI capabilities	None built-in; limited third-party plugins	AI coach from your knowledge base, content generation, adaptive difficulty
Setup time	Days to weeks for server deployment and configuration	Upload docs, training live in minutes
IT requirements	Server admin, PHP, database, security patching, plugin management	None. Fully managed SaaS
Learner time	30-90 min sessions per module	5-10 min daily micro-sessions
User experience	Functional but dated; custom themes available at additional cost	Modern, consumer-grade interface optimized for engagement
Knowledge verification	Completion tracking + quizzes	Continuous mastery assessment with gap identification
Customization	Virtually unlimited with plugins and source code access	AI adapts training to each learner; no development required
Standards	AICC, IMS LTI, SCORM 2004, xAPI	API-first; integrates with existing LMS as a complement
Best for	Organizations with IT teams who want full control and customization	Teams that need training to produce lasting, verifiable knowledge

The Retention Argument

HeyLoopy's approach is built on three proven learning science principles that Moodle's architecture doesn't implement:

1. Spaced Repetition

Instead of delivering all training in one session, HeyLoopy spaces content over time. Key concepts reappear at scientifically-optimized intervals - just before the learner would forget them. This transforms the forgetting curve from an enemy into an advantage: each retrieval strengthens the memory further.

2. Active Recall

Rather than asking learners to re-read or re-watch content, HeyLoopy requires them to retrieve answers from memory. This is harder than passive review, but it produces dramatically stronger retention. Every interaction is an assessment and a learning event simultaneously.

3. AI-Powered Personalization

The AI adapts to each learner's performance. Topics they've mastered appear less frequently. Topics where they struggle get more reinforcement. This means two employees working with the same training materials will have different daily experiences - each optimized for their specific knowledge gaps.

Traditional LMS (Moodle)

- Complete a module once
- Pass a quiz at the end
- Receive a certificate
- Never revisit the material
- Forget 70% within a week
- Re-take annually for compliance

AI Micro-Learning (HeyLoopy)

- 5-10 min daily sessions
- Active recall on every interaction
- Spaced repetition prevents forgetting
- AI adapts to individual gaps
- Continuous mastery verification
- Always audit-ready, not just annually

Moodle's plugin ecosystem does include some quiz and gamification tools, but these are add-ons bolted onto a course-centric architecture. They don't fundamentally change the delivery model from "complete once and move on" to "reinforce continuously until mastered."

Three Scenarios: How Each Platform Handles Real Training Challenges

Scenario 1: New Employee Onboarding

With Moodle: Your IT team sets up a Moodle instance (or you use an existing one). An instructional designer builds an onboarding course covering company policies, tools, procedures, and role-specific knowledge. The new hire logs into an interface that looks nothing like the modern tools they use daily, works through several hours of modules in their first week, and gets a completion certificate. Two weeks later, they're asking colleagues the same questions the training was supposed to answer.

With HeyLoopy: You upload your onboarding documents (handbook, SOPs, product guides). The AI generates a personalized training program. The new hire receives 5-10 minute daily sessions starting day one, covering the same material over 2-3 weeks with spaced repetition. They're productive from day one (sessions are short enough to allow real work), and the knowledge sticks because it's reinforced over time. When they have questions, the AI coach answers from your actual documentation.

Scenario 2: Product Knowledge for Customer-Facing Teams

With Moodle: You create product training modules when new features launch. Someone has to build the course content manually, upload it, assign it, and manage enrollments. The sales team completes the module. On the next customer call, they're still referring to cheat sheets because the training was a one-time event and the product changes faster than courses can be rebuilt.

With HeyLoopy: You update your product documentation. The AI automatically incorporates new material into daily training sessions. The team is drilled on current product knowledge continuously. When a prospect asks a question, the AI coach provides the answer instantly - no searching through modules or documentation.

Scenario 3: Compliance Refresher Training

With Moodle: Annual compliance training is assigned. Employees navigate the Moodle interface, click through familiar slides, pass the quiz, and check the box. Between annual refreshers, policy knowledge degrades. If there's an audit or incident, you have completion records but not necessarily a workforce that actually knows the policies. And your IT team spent time ensuring the Moodle server was updated and the compliance course plugins were compatible with the latest version.

With HeyLoopy: Compliance policies are reinforced daily in small doses. The AI identifies which employees have gaps in specific policy areas and increases reinforcement for those topics. When regulators ask for evidence of training, you show continuous engagement data and per-employee mastery scores - not just annual completion timestamps.

Total Cost of Ownership Analysis

Moodle's open-source license is free. But total cost of ownership includes every resource required to make the platform operational and effective. Here's a realistic breakdown for a mid-market organization (100-500 employees):

IT Infrastructure and Maintenance

- **Server hosting:** \$100-500/month for a properly sized instance with backups, SSL, and redundancy. MoodleCloud hosted plans vary.
- **Initial deployment:** 40-80+ hours of IT time for server setup, Moodle installation, plugin configuration, theme customization, SSO integration, and testing.
- **Ongoing maintenance:** 5-15 hours/month for security patches, plugin updates, version upgrades, backup verification, and performance monitoring.
- **Upgrade cycles:** Major version upgrades can require 20-40 hours for plugin compatibility testing, theme updates, and regression testing.

Plugin Management

- **Selection and testing:** With 2,000+ plugins of varying quality, evaluating, testing, and selecting the right combination is a significant time investment.
- **Compatibility:** Plugins built by different developers can conflict. Each Moodle upgrade risks breaking plugin functionality.
- **Premium plugins:** Many advanced features (reporting, analytics, gamification) require paid plugins with separate licensing fees.

Course Creation Labor

- **No content generation:** Every course must be built manually or purchased. Moodle provides the platform, not the content.
- **Development time:** A single well-designed training module can take 20-40 hours to create. For a comprehensive onboarding program, multiply by 5-10 modules.
- **Maintenance:** Courses need updating when processes, products, or policies change. This is an ongoing labor cost.

Comparative Summary

Cost Category	Moodle (Annual Est.)	HeyLoopy
License/subscription	\$0 (open source)	Predictable monthly subscription
Hosting	\$1,200-6,000+	Included
IT staff time	100-250+ hours/year	Zero
Course creation	100-400+ hours/year	Upload docs; AI handles the rest
Plugin costs	\$500-5,000+/year	All features included
Support	Community only (or paid Partner)	Included

The real cost comparison

When you factor in IT staff time at \$75-150/hour, course creation at \$50-100/hour for subject matter experts, hosting fees, and premium plugin licenses, a "free" Moodle deployment for a 200-person organization can easily cost \$30,000-80,000+ per year in total resources. And that's before accounting for the productivity lost to training that employees forget within a week.

Migration and Coexistence

HeyLoopy is not a rip-and-replace proposition. Many organizations use HeyLoopy alongside their existing LMS - including Moodle.

HeyLoopy complements your Moodle instance

- **Keep your existing courses:** If you've invested years in SCORM content, instructor-led training, or Moodle-specific workflows, those remain in your Moodle instance.
- **Add retention to existing training:** Feed the same content into HeyLoopy to generate reinforcement sessions. Employees complete the course in Moodle, then retain it through HeyLoopy's daily micro-lessons.
- **Use HeyLoopy for institutional knowledge:** SOPs, handbooks, and documentation that don't fit neatly into a "course" are ideal for HeyLoopy's document-to-training pipeline.
- **Reduce IT burden over time:** As more training moves to HeyLoopy, your IT team spends less time maintaining the Moodle server, updating plugins, and troubleshooting compatibility issues.
- **Gradual transition:** Start with one use case (e.g., onboarding) and expand based on results. No big-bang migration required.

Getting Started

1. Identify one training area where retention matters most (onboarding, compliance, product knowledge)
2. Upload the relevant documentation to HeyLoopy
3. AI generates a training program in minutes
4. Pilot with a single team and measure knowledge retention vs. your existing Moodle approach
5. Expand based on data

For organizations considering Moodle for the first time

If you haven't deployed Moodle yet, consider whether the IT investment is worth it. HeyLoopy lets you go from documents to live training in minutes with no server setup, no plugin management, and no course creation labor. You can be training your team today instead of spending the next month configuring a server.

Recommendation

Choose Moodle if:

- You have a dedicated IT team comfortable with PHP and server administration
- Data sovereignty requirements mandate self-hosted infrastructure
- You need deep customization that only source code access provides
- Your organization has instructional designers to build courses manually
- You're in higher education where Moodle's academic features align with your needs
- Budget for software licenses is zero, but budget for IT staff time is flexible

Choose HeyLoopy if:

- You need employees to actually remember their training
- You want to turn existing documentation into training without manual course creation
- Your team doesn't have IT resources to deploy and maintain an LMS server
- You need continuous compliance readiness, not annual checkbox exercises
- You want data on what your team knows, not just what they've completed
- You value AI-powered personalization that adapts to each learner

Consider both if:

- You have an existing Moodle instance with years of content worth preserving
- Some training (instructor-led, SCORM courseware) stays in Moodle while document-based knowledge moves to HeyLoopy
- You want to run a pilot comparing retention outcomes before committing fully
- Your IT team can maintain Moodle but you want to stop creating new courses manually

Next Steps

Ready to see how HeyLoopy handles your training content? Start a free trial at app.heyloopy.com/signup - upload a document and see AI-generated training in minutes. No credit card required.



heyloopy.com • Comparison Guide • April 2026

All product names, logos, and brands are property of their respective owners. All company, product, and service names used in this document are for identification purposes only. Use of these names, logos, and brands does not imply endorsement. Moodle is a trademark of Moodle Pty Ltd. Ratings and review data sourced from eLearningIndustry.com and Gartner Peer Insights as of April 2026. Training cost data from ATD 2022 State of the Industry report. Cognitive science claims reference published, peer-reviewed research on spaced repetition (Cepeda et al., 2006), active recall (Roediger & Butler, 2011), and the forgetting curve (Ebbinghaus, 1885; Murre & Dros, 2015).