

Online instruction takes off among crafters

September 19 2012, by Jennifer Forker



This undated publicity photo provided by Craftsby shows Elizabeth Hartman who teaches "Inspired Modern Quilts" and "Creative Quilt Backs" classes online at Craftsby. A self-taught quilter from Portland, Ore., Hartman is the author of "Modern Patchwork" (C&T Publishing; 2012). (AP Photo/Craftsby, Joe Baran)

If you're itching to take up knitting or are stuck in a beadwork project, there's help - and many classes - online.

Options range from professionally videotaped courses to quick tutorials posted on YouTube and craft blogs. Some cost money, others are free.

A look at just some of what's out there:

Craftsby, a relative newcomer to the business of online craft [classes](#), is already a giant in the field, having racked up 1 million registered users since its start last summer. The Denver company's lighthearted website -

one page features a Chihuahua decked out in tiny scarf and matching leg warmers - lists more than 100 courses and workshops.

Craftsy provides classes for beginners and advanced hobbyists in cake decorating, quilting, sewing, beadwork and more. Class enrollment is up to 1,600 a day, and the site is adding 15 new classes each month, says John Levisay, [chief executive officer](#) of Craftsy and [parent company](#) Sympoz.

"People are busy. That's why they can't take a live class," says Levisay. "But people do have small-size chunks of time."

A three- to six-hour Craftsy class - provided in 30-minute lessons—costs from \$14.99 to \$49.99. Instructors are professionally videotaped and the classes posted to the site. Once purchased, a class can be watched at any time. Students can post questions to teachers, who respond within a day or two.

The crafting world has long shared knowledge via tutorials, usually free and posted to YouTube and blogs. A few popular sites: Cut Out + Keep, Knitting Help and Sew Mama Sew.

Kristin Link of Portland, Oregon, started Sew Mama Sew, an online fabric and supplies shop, more than seven years ago. While that site provides dozens of free sewing tutorials, Link also will be teaching two classes for Craftsy.



This undated photo provided by Craftsby shows Susan Khaljie, who teaches a class on making a dress from scratch called "The Couture Dress," online at Craftsby. She is a contributing editor to "Threads Magazine." (AP Photo/Craftsby, Joe Baran)

"People have different ways of learning," says Link, a former middle-school teacher. "Some people really need to hear it as well as see it to be able to understand it."

Kate Mason, who is on the communications staff at YouTube, the online video-sharing company based in San Bruno, Calif., says she taught herself how to work a sewing machine and the basics of quilting by watching YouTube videos - lots of them.

Crafters post questions to the [YouTube](#) videos they watch, often eliciting new videos.

"It's an incredibly dynamic place where the conversation goes both ways," says Mason.

Craftcast with Alison Lee offers its own take on the craft class: Students tune in to live, 90-minute classes that lean heavily toward jewelry-making and sculpting. The classes are offered once a week, says Lee, of

New York City, and recordings are available for \$39.95.

Lee's live classes, which cost \$44.95 each, work like a Webinar: As an instructor works through a project, participants can type questions to Lee, who moderates the discussion. She recently hosted a free live class featuring artists and their favorite craft tools, for which 800 people signed up from around the world, she says.

"It's more of an online party," says Lee. "We have a really good time."

CraftArtEdu features crafts such as weaving and scrapbooking, and also hits upon the fine arts, including oil painting, watercolors and sculpture. Classes range from 30 to 90 minutes, and cost \$15 to \$75, according to David Pyle, chief executive officer of CraftArtEdu.

Instructors featured on the 2-year-old company's website use short video clips, written tutorials, step-by-step photographs and voiceovers. Students can choose from a changing assortment of 350 classes, says Pyle, adding that some classes attract hundreds of students and a few attract thousands.

"We're focused on very high-level crafts and art and a very high level of engagement of experience," says Pyle.

A new crafting kid on the block, the San Francisco-based Creativebug, which launched in May, offers a different payment plan for its 30-minute classes: Pay a monthly fee to view all of the site's video classes, from paper crafts and sewing to jewelry and printmaking. Subscriptions range from \$16.99 per month for a six-month membership to \$24.99 for one month.

The goal is to feed a crafter's overlapping interests.

"If you knit, you are probably curious in how to sew, or how to make a print," says Kelly Wilkinson, editorial director for Creativebug, which offers about 100 classes.

The many varieties of online craft instruction "just goes to show you there's a huge demand for someone to talk people through this," says Link.

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