

Online learning: What's in it for you?

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Taking courses online has made it easier for thousands of college students to meet their degree requirements, but this type of learning may hold the most benefit for people who are interested in continuing

education throughout their lives.

Courses that let you explore a topic of interest or gain a new skill for work keep your mind sharp and could even pay off with a promotion. Being able to do coursework online often means you can fit it into your schedule, no matter how hectic it is. This is especially true if you choose a class with prerecorded sessions, though you might prefer one with a live experience and participant interaction.

Online study also allows you to take classes from universities that could be thousands of miles from home. There's no shortage of choices with varying fees. But there are also free [courses](#) from outstanding institutions. For instance, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has put material from 2,400 courses online through its MIT OpenCourseWare. The HarvardX program offers free courses from Harvard and its partners, including MIT, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Texas System and Boston University. The idea is that the feedback from participants can improve their courses and help independent learners enrich their lives.

The only thing you need besides an [internet connection](#) is self-discipline. It could take more dedication to tune in on your own than to attend a class in person at a specific place and time. But the more interested you are in the topic, the greater your motivation is likely to be.

More information: The Open Education Database has listings for thousands of [free online classes](#) to choose from. You can also access courses at [edx.org](#).

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