



## Online Education: A Student's Guide to Making Online Courses Work



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## Introduction to Online Degrees

It has truly never been easier for a motivated person to earn a college degree. A bold statement? Possibly - considering the current state of our economy, an impending credit squeeze, and the challenging task of financing an education becoming all the more demanding. But did you spot the qualifier in that sentence? A motivated person. Never have there been so many opportunities for a student to find a degree program that meets the challenges of his or her daily life. Most working adults can't forgo their day job for the sake of continuing their education. And hopefully, this eBook can put them on the path to continuing higher education. For the last decade, millions of professionals everywhere have been supplementing online course work to increase their earning potential while meeting the demands of their daily schedule.

The financial crisis affects YOU, that motivated high school student or undergraduate in many ways beyond first glance. More than ever, "traditional" students attending or preparing for brick and mortar universities are having trouble paying for 4 years of college, whether it's because of the shrinking availability of loans, poor credit, or both. **And this eBook is certainly for you.**

**Consider this:** Have you considered going to community college for 2 years then transferring to a university (over 50% of all those enrolled online are going for Associate's Degrees - what you spend 2 years earning at a community college)? Have you ever forced yourself to sit through a history, biology, social science, or english lecture (my apologies, History, Biology, Sociology and English majors) that was entirely unrelated to your degree program? Do you ever skip these big lectures and just show up for the exams? Even worse, are these courses that you're only taking by requirement funded by student loans? Then get out while you can! If the average price of a private four-year institution is a little over \$25,000 a year, you figure to be paying over \$2,000 PER COURSE. You could take nearly a whole semester's worth of courses at some online institutions for that price in a single summer.

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**Students need to know about online education so that they can motivate themselves to continue pursuing a higher degree of learning. They need to know that an online education can give them the flexibility they need to balance their personal along with their business life.**

- *Juliet, Online Courses Blog Comment* ”

## Getting Started

This eBook will dissect online degree programs and give you a good shove towards getting started with supplementing your college classes with online classes or a full online degree program. There's data everywhere suggesting online degrees and traditional degrees work better than one another, worse, the same, etc. - but like any important decision, choosing the right education path for you requires a careful self-evaluation, plenty of research, and diligence. This eBook will be one of those important tools for finding just why online courses or an online degree program could be right for you. It will evaluate online degrees at every academic level, from associates to doctorate, and provide some step-by-step instructions on what you can do to set your online schooling in motion.

So if you've ever been intrigued by an online degree program, you may want to consider a few questions:

### Self Evaluation

- Am I career-oriented, looking to advance my degree quickly and on my schedule?
- Am I tired of wasting thousands on required coursework unrelated to my major?
- Am I interested in **SAVING MONEY**—by choosing an affordable online degree program (or by being able to work full time and avoid surviving solely on loans)
- Am I looking for a specific license or certification that may not require 4 years of coursework?
- Am I interested in personal and social development, interacting in a class setting with groups of people from all over the world?

If you can relate to any of the above responses, chances are choosing an online degree program or supplementing your current studies with online coursework could be one of the smartest personal and financial decisions you could make. The steady rise in online degree enrollment, available online degree opportunities, and the diversity of enriching coursework from heralded schools online come as no surprise. Online degrees really do work. And not 'work' in the way that you can hop on Google, plug in "Psychology degree," and purchase a diploma from some offshore company (this is not a made up scenario - see sec. on [Legitimacy/Accreditation](#)). But they work for you in the way any legitimate degree can. Getting there takes just a few simple steps.

# Guide to Online Courses and degrees

So you're interested in taking some courses online or earning an online degree, but still aren't quite sure it's the right move for you? Follow a few simple steps and you could be well on your way to continuing your education as efficiently as you can.

## 1 Conduct your own 'self-evaluation' and determine your needs

Are you finishing up high school and not sure if community college or a major institution is right for you? Are you a current undergraduate student tired of paying big money for big lectures? Or are you a working parent looking to increase your earning potential with an advanced degree. Online education can be tailored to fit virtually any need you have. But maybe you're not entirely sure what schools are out there that meet your requirements. Go find out - [www.edvisors.com/schools/online-courses.html](http://www.edvisors.com/schools/online-courses.html)

## 2 Request information

When I was applying for traditional schools, my conscience for saving paper and the environment was easily trumped by my need to know everything I could about the schools I was interested in. Sure, you may not be concerned with the housing, meal plans, or athletic programs available at your online institution, but that shouldn't mean you should be any less interested in your actual education. Like any university, the quality of experience will vary from person to person depending on his or her needs. How much time, money and effort you invest into your education and what you hope to get out of it is up to you. These online universities are more than willing to send you information about their many degree programs available, but you need to take initiative and ask for it. The only way to really compare what each school can offer you is to request detailed admissions information.

Search for online schools - [www.edvisors.com/schools/online-courses.html](http://www.edvisors.com/schools/online-courses.html)

## 3 Accreditation

Only concern yourself with online schools regionally accredited by the U.S. Department of Education. Anything else is simply not worth your time and money. Again, you don't exactly have to keep your eyes peeled for scams. If you come across some gimmicky school online and it's telling you that you can earn you "Life Experience Degree" for as little as \$199, well...I know you're smarter than that. But did you know schools like Notre Dame, Boston University, and Duke are offering degree programs online?

## 4 Financial Preparation

Let's face it, you're considering an online institution to either save money on your traditional degree or increase your earning power with an advanced degree. You owe it to yourself to see if you're eligible to receive aid. Whether you're applying for scholarships, finding used textbooks, qualify for the Pell Grant (a sort of 'free' financial aid for low-income individuals), or are participating in tuition reimbursement through your company, there are plenty of ways to get out of paying the sticker price for those online courses. Be resourceful.

## 5 Logistics

If you're a current undergraduate student looking to supplement your degree with online courses, make sure you contact both your registrar and that of the online school of your choice. If you are only concerning yourself with accredited online institutions, there should be no problems why your work there won't transfer to your current university transcripts (in many cases online schools will let you transfer up to 90 credits towards a degree). Ditto goes to the students out there considering an online program instead of community college. However, it is always better to be safe.

## 6 Mental Preparation

Online education has come a long way in the last decade. Don't expect to watch a webcast of a lecture or sign on once every couple weeks to hand in an assignment. Although you're working on your own time, you've got to be responsible enough to keep up. There's lectures, homework, quizzes, group presentations, exams—the whole shabaz. Don't expect it to be easy. Like anything worthwhile, online courses are challenging, stimulating, and will require a certain dedication to stay the course.

“**Online Education is a great idea for individuals who are supporting themselves financially without help from family. I work 40+ hours and will definitely consider online courses in the future.**”

- Jessica, *Online Courses Blog Comment*

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## Dispelling Common Myths

Online degrees offer a convenience factor in which no 'traditional' university could compete. However, students young and old alike often approach the idea of pursuing their education online with a certain hesitation. Here are some common myths involved with pursuing an education online:

### **Legitimacy/Accreditation: Online degrees aren't accredited.**

FALSE - There are definitely companies out there to try and con a student into purchasing a degree, but they're almost instantly recognizable as scams. Here's a simple test:

- Is the school's contact information fuzzy on the website (no mailing address, located offshore)?
- Is the website making claims that sound way too good to be true (receive your degree in a week, no exams, only \$299, etc.)?
- Most importantly, is the school accredited by one of the regional accrediting associations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education? [http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation\\_pg7.html](http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg7.html) (There's only 6 agencies - so if your potential online school lists some "International Accrediting Association for Online Universities" or anything of the like - stay away).

When you're choosing to get course credit or enter into a full online degree program, the last thing you want to worry about is if you're being scammed. Luckily, this problem has been all but eliminated. We ask that you only consider online schools that are fully accredited by a regional accrediting bureau recognized by the Department of Education. These bureaus are the same organizations that determine traditional universities as legitimate institutions of higher learning.

### **Earning a degree online means you miss out on traditional experiences and resources.**

FALSE - Many online schools gives students access to a library system, career services, tutoring, advising, financial aid and the like. You may not be able to play on the intramural basketball team, but you can still be a part of a college community.

**Transfer credit: I don't think my school accepts credits from online universities.**

FALSE - if you take courses from a regionally accredited University, the rate of transfer credit is the same as it would be for any institution. However, be aware that many public and private universities limit the amount of transferred credits to be applied to your general or major requirements. Talk to your academic advisor and you'll see that the transfer process is easier than you would think.

**Quality of Experience: Online Universities lack a "classroom" feel and teacher-student interaction.**

FALSE - Now this one could not be further from the truth. In reality, how much interaction is exchanged between big lecture halls and limited office hours? With a quality technology-based learning environment, the students are all present in a comfortable learning atmosphere - you're often required to use phone, e-mail, instant messages and other electronic communications between both students and faculty. This experience is also characterized by its diversity of contributors - this e-learning atmosphere more closely resembles a workplace than it does a classroom. People from all over the country with a variety of ages and backgrounds are learning and communicating together.

**Online Universities and Career Prospects: My e-learning will reflect negatively on my resume.**

FALSE - This topic has a few variables to consider before making any generalizations. For one, there are plenty of elitist companies out there that aren't interested unless you did very well at a top-tier university.

Your best bet is to call some human resources contacts of companies you'd be interested in working for and ask. I think you'll find that a lot of companies are interested in the types of people who are able to work all day, study all night, and succeed at both. Your resume isn't your ticket to an interview - it's just a piece of paper with supporting facts. If you're able to make a dynamite cover letter telling a story about your experience in a field and making the case that they'd be crazy not to hire you - well, it isn't going to matter much what schools you were or were not able to afford to attend.

## Types of Online Degrees

There is no shortage of literature out there expounding on the benefits of a college education. More than ever, an undergraduate degree is now looked upon as a professional workforce requirement than an accomplishment. And these degrees come in all shapes and sizes, from associates to doctorates, and can ALL be tailored to meet your educational and financial needs.

When I look back on my own college education, I almost prefer not to remember how many thousands of dollars (and now student loans) I've invested in general coursework that I could have taken in one summer of online courses.

### Associate's Degrees Online

Associate's degrees are known as the two-year degree. The actual amount of time to earn an Associate's degree can vary, but they stand as excellent stepping stones into the workforce or as a tool to advance to a Bachelor's (4-year) degree. Associates degrees represent over half of all of those earned through online education. So whatever your goals may be, it is indeed worth it to explore an Associate's degree.

Associate's degrees can usually be categorized by one of 3 ways: Associate of Art (A.A.), Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) and Associate of Science (A.S.)

**Associate of Art (A.A.)** - the academics of an A.A. degree are usually designed to be transferred toward a Bachelor's degree.

**Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.)** - These degrees are tailored to suit a specific career after graduation. A.A.S. degrees are often attached to a career field such as Associate in Business or Information Technology.

**Associate of Science (A.S.)** - are a general degree designed to prepare and transfer a student towards a 4-year Bachelor's degree.

**Requirements** - Associate's Degrees only require a high school diploma or equivalent. Coursework will vary from one degree to another, but in general, students will take general coursework (Sciences, Math, English), major requirements specific to the field of study you choose, and still include the opportunity for elective courses. Associate's degrees can be an excellent starting gate for anyone looking to begin their college education or start and further a career.

## Bachelor's Degrees Online

Bachelor's degrees are generally 4-year degrees, but online education gives one the ability to hasten this process and save thousands. Bachelor's degrees are available online in any possible subject you could imagine, including, but not limited to specific fields within these categories: Arts, Computers and IT, Education, Business, Science, Engineering, Health and Trades.

**Requirements** - The above list could really go on and on. Students generally need a high school diploma or equivalent to apply to Bachelor's degrees online. Every student then has certain requirements for their degree to graduate which will vary from one institution to another. But a student must generally take core subjects in writing, arts, cultural studies, English, math, and social and natural sciences along with their coursework required for their major. Bachelor's degrees are required for many careers, and millions of people are taking advantage of online Bachelor's degrees to start, finish, or supplement their education.

## Master's, MBA, Doctorate/PhD and further education online

Pursuing higher education online has become increasingly popular for a variety of reasons. As with all online degree programs, there is a greater awareness, availability, and quality of enriching coursework to take online. Students and professionals everywhere are realizing that pursuing that MBA (Masters of Business Administration), or Doctorate in Psychology (PsyD) can be personally and financially rewarding. Some available higher-education degree programs online include: Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), Master of Education (MEd), Master of Public Health (MPH), Doctor of Education (EdD), Doctor of Engineering (DEng).

**Requirements** - Again, this only a partial list of the multitude of higher degrees available online. The coursework is very intense, but in many cases can be relegated to a part-time program (such as a part-time MBA, where courses generally take place in the evening). These degrees all require a Bachelor's, and in the case of the Doctorate, often a Master's in a particular subject must be attained first.

“**Online classes are awesome! I've done several already and will be doing more to complete my BS in nursing. It's convenient, it's challenging because you need to be disciplined and not distracted, and most of all, rewarding.**”

- Roxanne, Online Degree Blog Comment

## Conclusion

This eBook isn't meant to promote online education as being the end all be all in your education. We're not used car salesmen here - online degrees won't make you taller, get you that new car you've had your eye on or even guarantee a promotion. However far your education takes you is up to how much you put into it. And just looking at pure numbers, over 20% of the 17.0+ million higher education students enrolled are taking at least one course online. And this figure is on the rise. Traditional schools, employers, and students of all ages are recognizing online education as a legitimate and an endlessly useful tool towards starting, continuing, or finishing a degree. People with degrees in higher education generally make almost \$1.0 million more than those without over a lifetime. Online education simply reduces that gap between those who are able to attend traditional universities and those who are not.

Alright, that's all we have. Your education is in your hands.

To search for Online Degrees and Online Courses, visit - <http://www.edvisors.com>

For additional information on Online Degrees, read the [CampusX blog post](#), "Why Every Student Needs to Know About Online Education" at [CampusX.com](#).

## Additional Resources from Edvisors

### **Edvisors Student Services Resources**

College Search and admissions help at [HowToGetIn.com](#)

Graduate School Resources at [GraduateCenter.com](#)

Student Credit Cards at [StudentPlatinum.com](#)

Free College Scholarships at [ScholarshipPoints.com](#)

### **Student Loan Network Resources**

Private Student Loans at [PrivateStudentLoans.com](#)

Federal Loans at [StaffordLoan.com](#)

Federal Parent PLUS Loans at [ParentPLUSLoan.com](#)

Financial Aid Podcast at [FinancialAidPodcast.com](#)

Scholarship Search at [StudentScholarshipSearch.com](#)

FAFSA Online Application at [FAFSAOnline.com](#)