

Take a Free Online Class Today

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From language learning to religious instruction, the Internet is a fantastic place to find distance-learning courses for free.

Whether you want to improve your programming skills, learn to play guitar, or gain a French vocabulary, there are thousands of free online classes to choose from. So many options can make it difficult to choose a free online class and stick with the syllabus. But, there are a few strategies that can help you get the most out of whichever free online class you select.

Know your options. You may be sure of the subject you want to study, but don't be so quick to choose a free online class. There are thousands of possibilities, all varying in depth and quality. If you're looking to study in a more traditional academic format, consider open courseware classes prepared by actual universities. If you prefer something more informal, free online video classes may capture your attention.

Survey the free online class before beginning. Before beginning any free online class, take an overview of all class materials. Does the class offer lecture notes? Multimedia? A suggested schedule or syllabus? Once you know what is available to you, make your own study schedule and stick with it.

Locate optional materials. Many free online classes suggest optional reading material. If you want to get the full student experience, using these materials can help.

Work with a study buddy. Independent learners often improve their knowledge and stay on track by working with a peer. Study with a friend over dinner once a week, email a similar-minded learner monthly, or join an online discussion group about the subject. The level of interaction is up to you.

Journal your progress. One of the best ways to monitor your growth is to keep a log. Write down what you want to learn by taking a free online class and regularly record your progress. By the end of the course you may be surprised at how far you've come.

Many students are interested in distance learning but not quite ready to risk their tuition money. If they are still on the fence, they may be able to get a feel for virtual studies by taking a free online class. They can use the following guidelines to help enhance their experience in whichever free online class they may select.

Record your expectations. Before beginning, make a list of your distance learning expectations. Do you expect to enjoy studying independently? Plan to save time? Record all of the hopes you have for online learning.

Record your concerns. Distance learning isn't for everyone, and it's important that you consider any concerns you may have. Do you worry that you won't be motivated or that you'll miss in-person interaction? Make a note of it.

Select a class. Choose a free online class on a subject that interests you personally or on a topic that will eventually help you professionally. There are many types of free online classes available. But, it's best to choose one that mimics the workload and schedule of a for-credit course.

Follow the syllabus to complete assignments. While taking the free online class, pretend that your work is being graded. Set a schedule for yourself and try to meet the deadlines. Free online classes can be enjoyable and enlightening, but you also want to make sure that you'll be able to meet the requirements of a traditional distance-learning environment.

Evaluate your experience. Once your free online class is completed, review the lists you created in steps one and two. Did online learning meet your expectations? Were your concerns resolved? If you were unmotivated and failed to meet the requirements, online classes may not fit your learning style. If you enjoyed the free online class and were able to complete the assignments on time, it may be a sign that distance learning is a good fit.

So, if you're new to learning through the internet, want to test out a class, need to brush up on some skills for credit classes, or just want to learn a few new facts, you'll want to check out one of the many free courses available online. Although these courses don't provide college credit, they do give a lot of information and can be a valuable supplement to regular studies. There are two main types of online courses: independent courses that are made exclusively for the Internet and open courseware classes that are designed for actual classrooms.

Independent Courses. These courses are made especially for e-learners. From poetry to financial planning, there's something out there for everyone.

About.com offers a number of online courses available by email. Readers can select the courses they want and learn through course materials sent in the form of a newsletter. There are many subjects available; just search for your favourite topics on the About site. Just sign up for the classes you want, and they'll show up in your inbox.

Brigham Young University has a number of free online classes open to the general public. These classes have a nice set up and often provide useful information. The most common subjects offered are genealogy and religion.

Stanford University offers free lectures, interviews, and material available for download on iTunes.

Free-ed.net offers a variety of courses that include materials completely online. Some

even have free online textbooks. The Information Technology programs are some of the best and include step-by-step instructions on mastering computer skills.

Open Courseware. These programs are designed to give students around the world access to course materials actually used in university classrooms. Participating colleges post syllabi, assignments, calendars, lecture notes, readings, and other materials online making it easy for self-learners to study the topic on their own terms. Open courseware programs do not require registration or charge tuition. However, they also do not award credits or allow for interaction with a professor.

[Tufts University](#) offers free open courseware classes to the public, focusing on life science and international issues. Each class includes all of the components students need to study independently: a syllabus, lecture transcripts, exams, and slideshows.

Every semester, University of California Berkeley records several popular courses and offers them free to the public. Anyone can watch these open courseware recordings and learn from home. New lectures are posted to the web each week during the run of the course. The webcast classes are kept as archives for about a year, after which they are removed from distribution. UC Berkeley's open courseware webcasts can be found on three websites: [Webcast.Berkeley](#), [Berkeley on YouTube](#), and [Berkeley on iTunes University](#).

[Carnegie Mellon's Open Learning Initiative](#) offers 11 free online classes in subjects such as economics, physics, and French. Anyone can learn from their syllabi, written lectures, and videos. These courses are designed with the distance learner in mind and include all of the materials necessary.

[MIT OpenCourseWare](#) is a collection of over 1,800 college-level class materials available at no cost to the public. The content offered on the MIT website is taken from actual classes offered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Anyone is free to learn from the educational material provided by studying the lecture notes, completing assignments, reading study guides, and watching lecture recordings. Your students may be particularly interested in the Highlights for High School section, which offers AP and college prep classes.

[Utah State University](#) also offers a handful of quality open courseware classes as does [John Hopkins University](#).