



FEATURE ARTICLE FROM ALWAYS BEST CARE

Go Back to School – On Your Computer!

Many experts advise keeping your mind active if you want to live a healthy life. One way to exercise your brain is to learn new things. Fortunately, with the Internet, there's no shortage of educational courses, many of them at no cost.

There's a new term for online learning: MOOC, or massive open online course, which opens the gates of academia to anyone with a computer and desire to acquire new information. In addition to traditional course materials such as videos and readings, instead of a classroom discussion, MOOCs provide interactive user forums where students, professors and teaching assistants can communicate.

Some of the advantages of learning via your computer, rather than sitting in a classroom, are that you can attend classes at your convenience, you don't have to worry about traffic and you can set your own learning pace.

Disadvantages include struggling with poor Internet connections, misinterpreting the instructor's or other students' messages because of lack of visual cues and being uncertain about the class's quality because online courses are relatively new (from "The Advantages & Disadvantages of Online Classes Used in Colleges," *Global Post*).

Degree Programs

Many universities and colleges offer degree programs online, which are often less expensive than traditional classroom courses. For example, the University of Illinois offers an online program for degrees, certifications and professional development sequences. The curriculum for these online options does not differ from traditional programs, and the university records online degrees the same way as those earned from the on-campus program.

All courses require a computer with Internet connectivity, and some necessitate specific hardware and/or software.

Most classes use a Web-based conferencing system or email as the primary tool for communication between students and the instructor. Courses can be in real time or "asynchronous," as determined by the instructor. A real-time session is one in which all participants log on and interact at the same time, similar to a live chat on the Internet. With asynchronous activities, participation is not concurrent or live. One member of the class, for example, might post a message in the morning, and another might not read or respond to it until later.

If you are interested in a degree that will lead to a job in your field, you should make sure the degree from the online school is "accredited" by its credentialing organization, which is a required step to get a job.

In some states, seniors can take classes at state universities for free or for a nominal cost. California, for instance, waives tuition fees for residents aged 60 and beyond who wish to take classes or pursue a degree. Texas also provides reduced rates or free classes for seniors. *Senior Resource* lists tuition waiver policies for senior citizens at community and state colleges and universities. Each state is different, breaking down by age, institution and number of credits allowed each year at the waived or reduced tuition rates.

Individual Classes

If you aren't seeking a new degree but just want to satisfy your curiosity about the solar system or different religions, for example, many websites offer classes—some free and some for a small fee.

Some well-known sites offering classes are:

[**OnlineCourses.com**](#) is focused on professional classes that help people meet career goals. For example, “Dementia: Update for the Practitioner” from Columbia University provides credits for those seeking a continuing medical education. Experienced instructors from around the world design these free classes.

[**Open Culture**](#) offers 1,000 free online courses from the world's leading universities—Stanford, Yale, MIT, Harvard, Berkeley, Oxford and more. You'll need to download these audio and video courses (often from iTunes, YouTube or university websites) to your computer or MP3 player. For instance, if you want to learn the “History of Political Theory” from University of California-Berkeley instructor Wendy Brown, the link will take you to the iTunes site.

[**Coursera**](#) partners with top universities and organizations, including the University of Pittsburgh, Caltech, Brown, Princeton, Ohio State and University of California-Berkeley, to offer free courses online. For example, you can learn “How Things Work 1: An Introduction to Physics in the Context of Everyday Objects” from the University of Virginia or “Deciphering Secrets: Unlocking the Manuscripts of Medieval Spain” from the University of Colorado.

[**Saylor Academy**](#) works with professors, teachers and industry professionals who have previously taught specific subjects and who research, design and outfit its free courses from start to finish, after which the course is subject to a peer-review process.

[**Udemy**](#) is focused on technology and business, recruiting authors, CEOs, celebrities and Ivy League professors to teach everything from programming to photography to design to yoga. Founded in 2010, Udemy is funded by Insight Venture Partners, Lightbank, MHS Capital, 500 startups and other investors. The cost is between \$5 and \$1,999 per course.

[**Peer 2 Peer University**](#) is a nonprofit online open learning community that allows users to organize and participate in courses and study groups to learn about specific topics. Peer 2 Peer University follows the style of Wikipedia, where people share their knowledge about a topic and have the ability to create a course. If you don't want to take a course (or start one), you can join a study group on the topic you're interested in. The courses focus on technology and business topics, and some courses use technology to go beyond traditional learning. “Play With Your Music,” for example, takes the music you love and remixes it in the browser using Soundation, SoundCloud and Google Hangout.

10 Best Online Courses

The Open Education movement makes academic courses from some of the world's top universities available through digital technology. Because Open Education course websites can be hard to navigate, and some professors are better teachers than others, [Senior Planet](#) created a list of the 10 most interesting, engaging and user-friendly courses for seniors.

Art Through Time: A Global View. This [Annenberg multimedia site](#) offers videos and artwork, and is taught by directors of museums around the world.

Cars: Past, Present and Future. Lectures from Stanford University's continuing education arm discuss how cars defined our past and will shape our future, and where we're going in terms of mobility.

Financial Markets. Yale University's undergraduate lecture series features famous economist Robert Schiller's talk about the history of financial markets and how they've shaped society, and how they'll evolve as we dig deeper into the information age.

Darwin and Design. This [MIT undergraduate video course](#) looks at the topic of evolution within literature and speculative thought since the 18th century, and covers Darwin's model for understanding how natural objects and systems can help us understand design.

Google Art Project videos by the [KhanAcademy's SmartHistory site](#). Each video in this series—118 total— focuses on a single work of a well-known artist. The videos are based on unscripted conversations between art historians.

Science & Cooking. This [public lecture series](#) combines Harvard professors with well-known chefs, focusing on the physical transformations of foods and material properties.

String Theory, Black Holes and the Fundamental Laws of Nature. This video course from [Harvard](#) delves into the mysteries of the universe.

New York City: A Social History. From New York University, this [video course](#) looks at NYC from the 17th century to the present, through the human-made environment, music, dance, film and other media.

Elementary French. [Carnegie Mellon University's Open learning Initiative](#) has created a video-based, highly interactive course for beginners, which plunges you into the language.

An Introduction to Psychology. Via [MIT](#), this scientific look at why we think, feel and act in the ways we do reflects the latest research.

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The Certified Senior Advisor (CSA) program provides the advanced knowledge and practical tools to serve seniors at the highest level possible while providing recipients a powerful credential that increases their competitive advantage over other professionals. The CSA works closely with [Always Best Care Senior Services](#) to help ABC business owners understand how to build effective relationships with seniors based on a broad-based knowledge of the health, social and financial issues that are important to seniors, and the dynamics of how these factors work together in seniors' lives. To be a Certified Senior Advisor (CSA) means one willingly accepts and vigilantly upholds the standards in the CSA Code of Professional Responsibility. These standards define the behavior that we owe to seniors, to ourselves, and to our fellow CSAs. The reputation built over the years by the hard work and high standards of CSAs flows to everyone who adds the designation to their name. For more information, visit www.society-csa.com.



About Always Best Care®

Founded in 1996, Always Best Care Senior Services is based on the belief that having the right people for the right level of care means peace of mind for the client and family. Always Best Care assists seniors with a wide range of illnesses and personal needs, and currently provides more than 3 million hours of care every year. Franchise opportunities are available to individuals interested in leveraging the company's clear strategy and proven track record for delivering affordable, dependable service to seniors in their local areas.

By working with case managers, social workers, discharge planners, doctors, and families, Always Best Care franchise owners provide affordable, comprehensive solutions that can be specifically matched to meet a client's particular physical or social needs. The hallmark services of the Always Best Care business portfolio include non-medical in-home care and assisted living finder and referral services, with skilled home health care now being phased in throughout the country. For more information, visit www.AlwaysBestCare.com. For franchise opportunities, visit www.FranchiseWithAlwaysBestCare.com.

Always Best Care also offers *Always in Touch*, a telephone reassurance program that provides a daily phone call to seniors and disabled adults who are living alone and have limited contact with the outside world. Always in Touch is the *only* absolutely **free** national telephone reassurance program of its kind anywhere in the USA and Canada. For more information on Always in Touch, or to request an application, visit www.Always-in-Touch.com.

Another special program from Always Best Care is *Always on Call* –provided **free** to Always Best Care clients and their families with a minimum of 5 hours of monthly care. Families will have *anytime* access to physicians 24/7 if they're considering ER or urgent care for non-emergency issues, if they need a non-narcotic prescription or refill, if they can't take time off from work or school, if they're traveling and need medical care, if their primary physician is not available, or if they have a sick child, spouse or elderly parent. This special service is provided to Always Best Care clients and their families by 24HourMDNow, an independent company not affiliated with Always Best Care.

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