What is the advantage of online education?

* Choice – when you decide to enroll in an online course, the topics available for study are substantially more than in a traditional education environment. This means you can study subjects that are not available to students in your city or town, or specialist subjects only available from certain institutions.
* Costs – online education usually comes at a more affordable price than face to face or traditional education. This lower cost is because there are fewer physical infrastructure costs, and you don’t need to employ a teacher full time to conduct the class. However, more and more online courses are being offered at a cost equivalent to the price of a traditional college or school education.
* Flexibility – as mentioned above, flexibility is one of the main differences between a traditional and online education. It is also one of the main benefits for students who, for example, need to work or are not able to attend courses at a fixed time or location. This flexibility also allows students to choose subjects they are interested in but do not necessarily want to pursue as a career.
* Guest classes or lectures by experts – while it is possible to invite a professional or business leader to conduct a lesson in a classroom, this requires scheduling the course at a time available to the guest lecturer. It is much easier to ask them to run a lecture via [Zoom](https://zoom.us/) or [Google Meet](https://workspace.google.com/intl/en/products/meet/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=emea-ZA-all-en-dr-bkws-all-all-trial-e-googlemeet-1010042&utm_content=text-ad-none-none-DEV_c-CRE_454023052043-ADGP_Hybrid%20%7C%20BKWS%20-%20EXA%20%7C%20Txt%20~%20Meet%20~%20General-KWID_43700056185337660-kwd-299356619278-userloc_1029006&utm_term=KW_google%20meet-ST_google%20meet&gclsrc=ds&gclsrc=ds), where they can take time out of their day but remain at their office or place of work. This also allows lecturers from across the country or the world to share their expertise with the class.
* Lesson recordings and notes – online courses come with the ability to record online lectures and make them available for repeated viewing by the student. Likewise, class notes and readings can be made available to the student digitally for repeated reference and adaptation and enhancement as required by the student to facilitate their learning. Lastly, digital resources can be quickly and easily updated with new or more relevant content as needed, meaning the student can access the latest information in their subject.
* Participation – participation rates can be higher in an online class, particularly when there are rules for online learning that require a certain number of interactions via different channels per student.
* Quality teachers-student interaction – if the instructor or teacher is comfortable using digital communication tools, the student could have more access to the teacher to ask questions or engage in discussion. This communication can be through email, instant messaging such as WhatsApp, or online forums and discussion groups.

What are the disadvantages of online education?

* Cheating – some students cheat at assessments in both online and traditional classes. However, it is difficult for the teacher to monitor an online evaluation where students may have a browser open searching for answers or instant messaging other students to assist.
* Communication skills – listening to fellow students in class, discussing topics, defending arguments, and listening to others’ opinions develop interpersonal communication skills. This is one of the benefits of a traditional classroom setting, and these skills are difficult to develop in an online course, particularly when asynchronous.
* Procrastination – putting something off until the last minute is a classic trope of the student. However, in an online class that may not have set deadlines for submitting assignments or a completion date, it is much easier to procrastinate.
* Self-motivation – online students need to make the time and effort to complete their course requirements. With no set schedule and, in some cases, no teacher, self-motivation and time management skills are critical to a successful outcome for online learning.
* Social isolation – some students, particularly those who are not employed or involved in other activities, may experience some form of social isolation when participating in an online course. Even though there are chances to interact with the other students online, the informal conversations and discussions between students in a traditional classroom setting are difficult to replicate.
* Time commitment – when an online course is not instructor or teacher-led, there is sometimes substantially more reading or reference material to watch. This means that the student’s time commitment is more significant than a student taking a similar class in a traditional classroom setting.

What are the advantages of traditional education?

* Confidence – in a classroom setting, where a group of students work together with a teacher on a problem, a sense of academic confidence is built in students around their ability to approach new topics.
* Group work – an essential part of the traditional classroom experience is the interaction between students and working together on group projects. These projects can be completed in an online environment but don’t allow for the same level of social interaction and informal learning in a classroom setting.
* Interpersonal skills – by sitting in a class with fellow students and learning to interact with a teacher, critical interpersonal skills are cultivated. These skills are helpful in other situations in students personal and professional lives.
* Pressure – a traditional classroom has a set schedule, with deadlines and set times to complete work. Students need to learn to work in high-pressured environments, which is a skill that is transferable to other areas of their lives.
* Public speaking – having to ask questions in an entire class or debate your point of view in front of a teacher builds confidence in a student’s public speaking ability. These skills are difficult to make in an online class, even one where Zoom presentations are required.

What are the disadvantages of traditional education?

* Costs – there are higher costs incurred with a traditional classroom-based course. These include fees, which can be substantial, particularly at the college level, travel costs to and from the school or campus, and lost income for students working and needed to stop to complete their studies.
* Interactions – depending on the lecturer or teacher’s class size and personality, students could have limited direct interaction with them. For students who need remedial support or would like extension activities, this could be a problem.
* Lack of flexibility – with a set schedule, deadlines for assignments, required study hours and exams set on particular days, there is no flexibility for students who may need to work or care for their family. Likewise, a traditional education structure would have limited course options for a student to choose from.

## What Is Traditional Learning?

Traditional learning almost always involves a ‘sage on the stage’: the teacher who communicates in-person with a group of students in a brick and mortar facility. This method of learning typically involves students gathering in physical classrooms during a certain timeframe with the purpose of learning about specific topics or to gain specific hands-on job training and experience.

The curricula and lessons are typically based on a standardized and government-approved textbook, which the teacher and students work through.

“There will always be a place for in-person learning,” says Glova.

“At the end of the day, we have to consider what’s best for the learners and content. There are some things that we’re just going to have to teach in person,” Glova says.

“I appreciate that the pilots who are flying me across the country have some in-person training experience. I appreciate that the experts who prepare my food in the restaurants I eat at have some in-person training experience. There will always be opportunities for in-person learning,” Glova says.

## The Advantages of Traditional Learning

***Face-to-face learning*:** Learning in-person allows students and teachers to get to know each other much better. Teachers can pick up on physical queues and nuances that might typically go unnoticed in an online setting. Most importantly, interacting with a teacher face-to-face allows students to build an intimate sort of trust with the educator.

“In an in-person format, I’m very focused on the time I have in front of my participants,” Glova says.

***Creates good routines:*** For many children and young adults, the discipline of following a daily school schedule establishes important routines and sets them up for success as a working adult.

***Hands-on examples:*** Educators have the opportunity to provide students with real life examples they can touch and interact with. This is a crucial element for hands-on learners.

***Teaches good social skills:*** The idea of being put into a class with people of all different backgrounds and personality types allows for countless social opportunities that you won’t necessarily experience in an online format.

***Better for physical health*:** Students are way more likely to get physical exercise if they have scheduled time carved out each day to do so, or have a campus gym nearby.

## The Disadvantages of Traditional Learning

***Inflexible hours:*** Teachers and students might find the strict schedule of an educational institution difficult to maintain if they have multiple jobs or other commitments.

***Commuting:*** Driving back and forth to an educational facility every day can take up a lot of time for both educators and learners. Getting to and from school can require a lot of time and money spent on gas, vehicle maintenance, or public transit.

***Larger student loans:*** Piggybacking off of the last point, the loans taken out by students who take part in traditional learning in-person will generally be much greater due to living costs (residence or off-campus), commuting, and [more expensive tuition](https://www.thoughtco.com/online-college-classes-pricing-1098367).

***Passive listening:*** When educators deliver a lecture or lesson in front of a classroom of students, those students may end up only listening passively, which causes the potential for disengagement to skyrocket.

## What Is Online Learning?

Online learning is exactly what it sounds like: learning that takes place in an online format. Online learning typically involves a teacher uploading tailored content onto a learning management software (LMS) and sharing it with their class digitally. The learning content can be accessed on devices that are connected to the internet.

This online learning content can be accessed at any place or time, meaning that students don’t all need to be in the same physical place to take the same course.

In many cases of online learning, students aren’t directly interacting with the teacher or faculty. Many LMSs offer students the ability to interact with teachers via chat rooms, forums, or email. Some LMSs also offer live online streams where students can engage with the teacher as they instruct on the course in a live setting.

A healthy chunk of the online learning industry is typically geared to working professionals looking to continue their education or pivot careers entirely.

Some popular online learning platforms include [Udacity](https://www.udacity.com/" \t "_blank), [Skillshare](https://www.skillshare.com/" \t "_blank), [MasterClass](https://www.masterclass.com/" \t "_blank), and [Coursera](https://www.coursera.org/).

However, more and more colleges and universities now offer [undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral-level courses and programs conducted entirely online](https://www.distancelearningportal.com/).

## The Advantages of Online Learning

***On-Demand:*** Participants can access the learning content whenever it’s best for them. The teacher can also give the participants control over when and at what pace they see the content and at what pace they access the content.

“Whether [the students] do a deep dive into content to get a better understanding, or skip over some resources and focus in another area, it’s really giving that control back to the participant,” Glova says.

***The ability to collaborate on content:*** Another major advantage to online learning is the ability for the class to collectively curate and collaborate on content in the LMS hub. Glova explains how she asked her students to help build out the resources she needed for course topics.

“In an online format, you can create really robust curated libraries of content. You can tag them and organize them in ways to make it really easy for the participants to find what they’re looking for,” Glova says.

“I remember developing one online course and instead of going out as the instructor and finding all the resources I needed to teach a topic, I actually made it a challenge for the participants,” Glova elaborates. “I said, ‘go find resources related to these different topics and choose your favorite ones.’ So with the participants, I built this curated library that they had a hand in creating.”

***Modern medium*:** Many students and working professionals are on their laptop, tablet, or smartphone for a large part of the day. Vast amounts of content and information are accessed through the internet nowadays. Online learning provides students with the ability to absorb information using the technological medium or platform that’s most effective for their style of learning.

“When I switched to teaching online, I found that I used so many different media formats,” Glova shares. “I was using podcasts and videos, and I was having students create videos. You just get opened up to so much more technology in different media formats.”

## The Disadvantages of Online Learning

***The course creator is responsible for building community:*** It can be isolating learning by yourself. Without the opportunity to regularly interact face-to-face with your classmates and teacher, you can certainly [miss out on the benefits of becoming part of an in-person community](https://www.ies.ncsu.edu/resources/white-papers/pros-and-cons-of-online-education/).

“I think the biggest drawback in the online space is if we’re not intentional about creating a community, it can be so cold and isolating,” Glova says.

***Content requires reformatting:***Some online instructors don’t always take advantage of all the functions that an LMS has to offer. Instead, they simply offload all of their course content into the LMS and call it an ‘online course.’

“That’s one of the biggest risks that we see. If instructors and professionals are just taking their learning assets into a digital space and calling it a course, that’s really dangerous,” Glova says. “When we’re not being intentional about how the participants are going to be involved with that content, then can we even call it a course?”

***Monitoring and maintaining student focus*:** It can be extremely challenging to focus for long periods of time if you’re not in the same room as the teacher and required to give your undivided attention. It can occasionally be challenging for online educators to monitor their learners and accurately determine who is engaged and fully participating in their class.

***Lack of LMS faculty training:*** One thing Glova has identified throughout years of teaching and researching at NC State University was a real lack of LMS training for faculty across the country. Glova says that this is due to a shortage of resources at many institutions, meaning that teachers never fully get trained on how to properly move their course content into an online space.

“That’s when we start to see courses that aren’t effective. Students aren’t focused on the learning objectives, they’re focused more on the technology. Or they’re in a course that’s much more like an online resource library and it’s not clear how they interact with content. With that, only basic information is memorized and lost after the next semester because it wasn’t interacted with in a way that students are able to remember it,” Glova explains.

***Cheating*:** Do you actually know the answer because you studied and retained it? Or did you just search the question online and forget about it immediately after you input the answer?

## Comparison of Online Learning vs. Traditional Learning

Since there are a number of elements of online learning and traditional learning that stand in contrast with one another, we figured it might be helpful to see a visualization of them side by side to help determine which method of educational delivery works better for you.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Online Learning** | **Traditional Learning** |
| Learn anywhere with an internet connection | Learn in-person in a physical setting |
| Access content anytime you choose | Adhere to a schedule |
| Limited socialization and sense of community | Interact with teachers and other students in the classroom |
| Virtual interaction with course content | Hands-on learning |
| Employs contemporary technology that comes naturally to students | Conducted in person using means that most educators are familiar with |

## Nanodegrees and New Careers

Due to the rise in popularity of online learning, many are forgoing traditional learning environments to get the convenient career training they need, exactly when they want it.

In the U.S., the average job length is 4.6 years and 20% of workers are in a temporary position, [according to Forbes](https://www.forbes.com/sites/manondefelice/2019/01/15/how-to-pivot-to-an-awesome-tech-job-after-having-kids/#7a997cd165b2). These short-term career stats are showing that more and more people are holding multiple positions in a number of jobs throughout their lifetime.

Leading online learning platforms like Udacity offer ‘nanodegrees’ that allow learners the ability to land jobs, promotions or pivot careers in emerging fields like AI or blockchain, for example.

Well-equipped, working professionals, many of whom already have diplomas and degrees from post-secondary institutions, often don’t have time to go back to school full-time. Nanodegrees or online learning courses tailored to job-specific training and knowledge can ultimately offer the best option.

## Online Learning Success Stories

Jamie Cambell went to the University of California, Berkeley to get his Ph.D. and M.S. in Computer Science. But in order to pursue his career as a cyber security specialist, he still needed some extra training after getting a Ph.D. from such a prestigious university.

Jamie ended up taking some specific online learning courses to land a much-coveted job at Google as a security engineer.

“To be a specialized security engineer in a Fortune 500 company (Alphabet) means you need to be a bit ‘extra.’ You must go out of your way to pursue extra training, develop a skill set that fits a certain niche,” the cybersecurity expert and founder of [GoBestVPN](https://gobestvpn.com/" \t "_blank) says.

“Anecdotally speaking, I’ve seen many of my colleagues who had taken the same route as me – a mix of both [traditional learning followed by specific online learning] can go a long way.”

The same trend is occurring in the UK as well.

Corinne Card is the co-founder of [Full Story Media](https://fullstorymedia.co.uk/) and the former marketing manager at [atom42](https://www.atom42.co.uk/) in London, England. She attended the University of Cambridge and University of Sussex, but still needed to take some online courses to pivot careers.

“In 2017, I decided to leave my job and start my own company, but I didn’t have experience running a business or time to go back to university or college. Instead, I did an online course with [FutureLearn](https://www.futurelearn.com/" \t "_blank) about how to start and run a company, and it was really good,” Card says.

It didn’t take her too long either.

“It took eight weeks because they drip-fed the content but the total time needed to actually do it was more like eight hours.”

Vicky Shilling was also able to completely pivot jobs largely due to the help of some online courses, and says it was a “total game changer.”

Shilling now runs the successful health and wellness coaching resource [The Flourishing Pantry](https://www.theflourishingpantry.com/).

“I did [No Bull Business School’s Blog School](https://www.nobullbusinessschool.com/) back in 2016 and it totally changed my life. I was working in the music industry in London before I did the course, in a job that I was becoming increasingly disillusioned with. The Blog School tools allowed me to build my own blog and start following a passion in health and wellness,” Shilling says.

“I now coach wellness entrepreneurs to set up and run their own businesses, run a series of retreats called ‘The Reset,’ and continue blogging and working with brands, focusing on helping entrepreneurs to eat and live healthily.”

Do you prefer online learning or traditional learning? Have you ever taken an online course to pivot careers? Or maybe you’ve developed an online course!

Do you have an online learning or eLearning course you need a voice actor for? Sign up for a [Voices account](https://www.voices.com/signup) today.

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