



INTRODUCTION

Teaching courses online has quickly become a trend and an outstanding opportunity for small businesses and entrepreneurs to establish a new revenue stream.

Various platforms such as: Udemy, Skillshare, Udacity and many more, have been establishing huge student communities as well as attracting course instructors looking for some nice extra earnings.

Of course, the one main theme behind this is the digitization, and with it comes the ever-accelerating need for everybody to specialize and learn faster. Instant learning is not a trend, but a new reality.

TEACH

So, we clearly see the opportunity for online course instructing based on "on-demand" learning. So, what's the challenge!? The challenge, is that you are not the first one to understand this opportunity, and while new topics to teach come up every day, it's difficult to gauge whether you will have success based on your efforts. The aforementioned marketplaces for online teaching, quickly become crowded and bigger player have already established their supremacy. While change in student needs is an opportunity for new instructors, it also is a pain.

This guide is focused on helping you to understand how the biggest platform "Udemy" is working, and to give you the 5 most important areas and tactics in establishing your successful course business. They are as follows:

Research and Decide on the Right Course Topic
Understand How Udemy Ranks Courses
Create a high Quality Course that Engages and Sells
Optimize your Course Pricing and Listing
Promote Your Course Strategically

So, let's get started!





RESEARCH AND DECIDE ON THE RIGHT COURSE TOPIC

There are two main scenarios here; either you are about to just start out, or you already have one or more established courses. This is important and we suggest focusing your thoughts accordingly.

Just starting out and thinking about what to teach first

When starting out, you usually face a big chunk of uncertainty. Not only about what to teach, but also about the overall process and your probability of success in general. That is, it is important to strongly focus on the process of getting your first course established and learn along the way. We want our first course to be successful, but more importantly, we want to build a foundation on knowledge and encourage your feedback-loop to trigger the next stage. Additionally, various other tactics depend highly on whether you already have a student audience or not.

So, for your first topic, look for areas where you feel most comfortable; that interest you; that are your passion, or you just know a lot about them. This takes some pressure away from the content creation, and gives you more room for mistakes on the process itself.

In addition, you might **start with a smaller course** to make it through, although, as we will see later, bigger courses that are more comprehensive, sell much better.





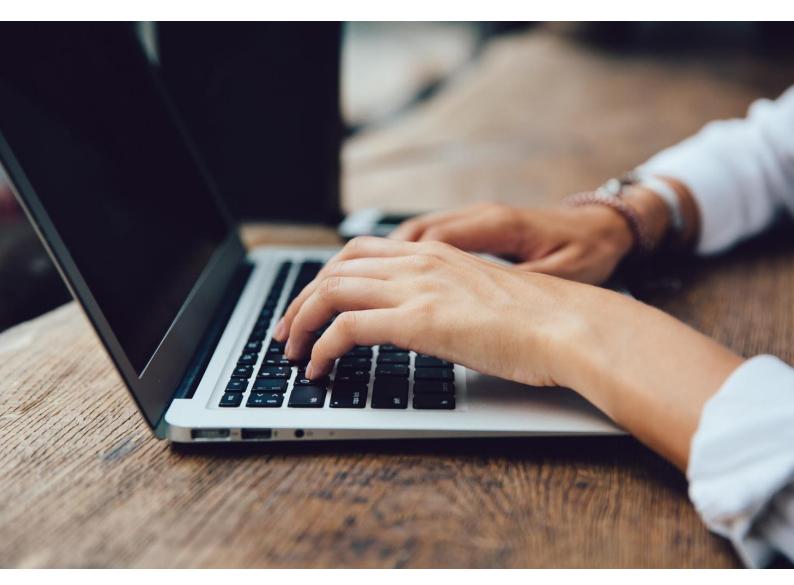
Topic Research and Validation

If you decided on your topic as a beginner, or if you are on the lookout as an experienced Udemy veteran for new fields to conquer, topic and keyword research and validation are important steps.

There are several different approaches to topic research and validation. The main goal here is to make the most revenue out of your courses and make more than a living doing it. This revenue goal is driven by student **demand** and course-market **competition**. The two main strategies here are:

- 1. Find trending and new topics early to get the big chunk before it gets crowded
- 2. Find evergreen topics that we can dominate over time, and profit long term

The decision on the strategy of your choice depends highly on your thinking and time commitment. Of course, you could start with 1 and switch to 2 in the process, if appropriate.





Udemy "Marketplace Insights"

So how exactly do we go about finding those good topics? Well, Udemy has a tool for instructors called "Marketplace Insights" that you will find within your instructor dashboard. Here, you get sample statistics from their platform and some topic suggestions. While you can get some insights if you know your topic already, it is not too much of help if you do not. Usually they offer a few promising topics, with a few related keywords and a high-level categorization on demand and competition (high, medium, low). If you know your topics already, you can get a gut feeling based on "Marketplace Insights", but not much more.

Online Topic Research

So, what can we do about it? What successful online entrepreneurs and Udemy teacher usually do is to undertake their own online research. This includes some of the following tactics:

Research on Udemy:

 How many search results do you get for your main keyword/topic? Many means, of course, a lot of competition, but it also means a lot of demand and that is usually more important.

✓ Research on YouTube and Amazon:

Do you find sufficient books with reviews and YouTube tutorials on this topic?
 If so, you can be sure there is demand for it.

✓ Research on other Online Course platforms like Skillshare:

• Is this topic here, in even more demand? More offerings? If so, you validated the demand for your topic.

Keyword-Tools like google keyword planner:

- Do you see high demand in the main keywords, and, is monthly traffic over the last month raising or falling?
- What is the cost-per-click (CPC) and the competitive index? This is important for promotions and optimization later on in the process.

√ Google Trends:

What are the 12-month and 5-year trends for that topic?



Instructor Research with the Teaching Guide Online App

If you apply those tactics, you can be quite sure, that your topic in general, should be in demand. While that helps a lot and gives confidence about the demand, there are still many unanswered questions.

- 1. How long will that topic be in demand? How much is "much?"
- 2. How good and big is the competition? Who are they? What are their tactics and strategies?
- 3. What is the trend for that topic -- short and long-term?
- 4. What are good keywords around that topics and which ones can you dominate fast?
- 5. What are related topics and keywords students are also looking for?

That's why we built the teachinguide.com web application for instructor research; it answers all those questions. The complete course database and topic/keyword research facilities are based on: current Udemy data, data science-based metrics and external research data like Google and others.

Make sure to check it out and try it; it will help you get off to a good solid start!





UNDERSTAND HOW UDEMY RANKS COURSES

If you want your course to be found by students, your biggest sales channel (especially in the beginning) will be Udemy search. To rank high for important keywords on this search, is essential for student enrollments and for your success. To rank high, you first need to understand how Udemy ranks courses. There are 4 main factors that determine if you will rank high for a specific keyword/topic:

- 1. The Keyword Matching
- 2. The Course Popularity
- 3. Minutes Consumed
- 4. Course Engagement





Let's talk about each of those briefly, because our task is to optimize each and every one of them:

The Keyword Matching

Obviously, you won't be ranked for searches where the keyword looked for is not in your course title or subtitle. So, we have to make sure to take that into consideration while weighing keyword importance against our limited title length. More on that later.

The Course Popularity

Popularity really means; students enrolled. So, how many students are already enrolled in this course. While time plays for longer established courses, this factor is just one; and not the most important one, but should be considered.

Minutes consumed

This might be one of the most important factor, as we have learned that this approach is inspired by YouTube's ranking. The idea is easy. The more minutes students actually consume from a course, the more valuable and relevant it must be for them. So, we have to make sure that this measure goes up for our courses. We will see later, how we can help that.

Course Engagement

Engagement really is a measure of reviews. So how many reviews did the course get from its students: Engagement = Students Enrolled / Amount of Reviews

The idea, again, is very similar. The more students give reviews the more they have been engaged in its content and value.



CREATE A HIGH QUALITY COURSE THAT ENGAGES AND SELLS

We just learned how student engagement and minutes watched are important key elements for our success to rank high and get student enrollments. Also, this triggers a growth loop where even more reviews and minutes watched, bring even better rankings and so forth.

That brings us to the course itself and our primary task of creating a valuable one. The most important sub-tasks for us are:

- Select the Right Course Style
- Outline an Engaging Course
- Optimize Course Creation Equipment and Environment
- Create an Outstanding Content

a) Select the right course style

There are 4 main course-styles, and depending on your topic and your experience, you can try to mix them creatively:

- 1. Screen-Cast-Courses Mainly for hands-on computer and software courses.
- 2. Slide-Show with Voice-Over Good for instructors just getting started or simple topics.
- 3. Video Based Courses Most effort needed. Live sessions, demonstrating something.
- 4. Video with Slides A mix of 2. and 3. Approach to be more engaging than with slides only.

It will feel natural, which course type best fits your topic and skill level. The most engaging courses are video based, or at least "Head-Talking" videos where the instructor can be seen and indirectly communicate with the student "eye-to-eye".



b) Outline an engaging course

When sitting down to outline a course it can be a bit overwhelming. You have a million and one ideas. But where do you tart? What should you say? What's going to be the most helpful for your students?

So, before you write a lesson plan, you have to think from the student's perspective to match his/her expectations and needs. Ultimately your course is about solving a problem and you need to figure out a clear way to communicate that, and keep the student engaged (remember the minutes consumed measure!)

We Recommend the following:

- Start with a guick introduction to build trust
- Focus on great first lessons for students to get quick wins (helps further engagement)
- Keep users interested beyond seven seconds
- Change lesson types and incorporate quizzes and actions for more diversity and attention
- Create action oriented lesson titles

Finally, one more important tie for outlining your course: don't pack too much content into each lesson. For a short course, lessons should be 4-7 minutes long. Definitely don't create lessons that are longer than 20 minutes. Otherwise, students will often tune out, even if your delivery is great.

Make sure you watch the free Udemy instructor video on course creation:

https://www.udemy.com/official-udemy-insights-create-your-course-outline/





c) Optimize Course Creation Equipment and Environment

Obviously, the equipment you need depends highly on your chosen course-style. So, we give you a quick overview about the most important components and some suggestions for each.

Screen Recording Software for Screen Casts

Use programs like: QuickTime (free), OBS (free), ScreenFlow (Mac), Camtasia or Screencast-o-matic. We've had very good experiences with Camtasia, but the other should work well also.

Video Editing Software

For intermediate, we suggest ScreenFlow or Camtasia. For professionals, natural choices are: Adobe Premiere Pro or Final Cut Pro.

Camera

The most simple version is done using your Smartphone. However, make sure to get a tripod for stabilization. For intermediate, we suggest a good webcam like Logitech C920/C930 for Talking-Head Videos. For a more professional choice, consider using a DSLR camera. All cameras above 400/500 USD should be quite good for the task.

Audio

For online course creation, audio is most critical and the difference in quality is obvious. So, make sure you have that covered and never use the computer internal microphone! For screencasts, you can use a high-quality stationary microphone such as: The Blue Snowball or the Blue Yeti.

For Talking Head video, use a shotgun microphone above your head like the Rode Shotgun.

For starters, again, your iPhone is very good at this too.

Lighting

This comes into play for video-based courses or head-talking versions. Depending on your environment, use natural white lighting like paper lanterns or a lighting kit.



d) Create Outstanding Content

So, you've structured your course well, and appear professional with the right setup and equipment. Now, make sure you really delivery on the students' expectations with valuable content. That is a necessity, and you have to make sure to give the best content value you can. Besides that, we have some additional tips for you:

Design Compelling Slides

Make sure you keep the slides simple and focus on the core message. They should be easy to read and be interesting enough. Use images to avoid boredom. You can incorporate your head-talking into the slide to make it even more engaging.

Make Your Head Talking Video Right

Center yourself in the middle and make sure you are at eye-level. Leave a little headroom too, but not too much. Mind the background and choose a real-world background (have your room in order, obviously) or use a backdrop. Not necessarily pure white.

Add More Content

We want more content, value and minutes watched. Everything counts. So, add additional slides, audio versions, PDFs, bonuses and more.





OPTIMIZE YOUR COURSE PRICING AND LISTING

So far, we've talked about the aspects of how important the Udemy course ranking is in order to get sales and trigger the growth loop. In this section, we dive a little deeper into optimizing our course rankings and sales.

a) The Price is right... is it?

Pricing your course correctly is an important aspect in optimizing revenue and new enrollments. If you are too expensive, nobody will buy. If you are too cheap, you signal that there's not enough value for your course. So, how do we deal with that? Remember, student perception is an important part of the equation.

Udemy is rotating sales days frequently, and courses sell for 10-15 USD, based on student location and original promotion participation. Students meanwhile, adapt to that behavior and will wait for those promotions; usually not spending premium amounts of 200 USD for courses.

This being said, we have to use a sticker price that keeps it, high enough to signal the big value in addition to the promotional price. So, leave your course sticker price on a premium price level and participate in promotions to get massive sales when ranked well.

b) Optimizing Your Course Listing

We discussed in section 2 how Udemy ranks courses:

- 1. The Keyword Matching
- 2. The Course Popularity
- 3. Minutes Consumed
- 4. Course Engagement

So, which parts can we optimize, and how exactly?



The keyword matching and title tactics

This is fully under our control, so we need to do that right from the beginning.

Make sure you research the most important keywords for your topic and weigh estimated traffic and trends against the competition (your chance to rank high... fast). Make sure you determine the priority of those keywords correctly and assign them a title, subtitle and course description.

This part is important, because we don't only optimize for Udemy, but for Google and other external search engines as well! Our course landing page is very visible, and search engines will drive important traffic too! So, make sure you pick keywords that will help you to rank high in search engine results.

For keyword research, use the mentioned free tactics from section 1, or even better, use the Teachinguide service to have everything readily available and optimized for fast Udemy ranking.

For course titles and best practices are:

- Use a format like "Your Course Keywords: Student Benefits."
- Shorter titles are usually better, but Keywords and action titles have benefits too.
- Words like "Complete", "Ultimate", "Bootcamp", "Masterclass"tend to sell better, but they have to match the expectations and offerings.

The Course Popularity

There is not too much we can do about the popularity except providing excellent courses and enrolling more students. Therefore, this measure is a result of our efforts.

Minutes Consumed

We can actually help the minutes consumed measure. There are two aspects here:

- 1. Optimize course quality for student engagement. We talked about that in section 3.
- 2. Make sure your course is longer!

Add more content, value and overall assets. Udemy will assign those additional minutes and your course will appear to be longer (and it is). This way, the perception of bringing more value, compared to similar courses (price often identical in promotions) is higher. Also, automatically, people watch more minutes if you can provide more content! That directly helps this measure, and therefore, your ranking.



Course Engagement

As mentioned, course engagement is the ratio between reviews received and students enrolled. So, you need to design a review system that fosters your engagement strategies and ensures that you get your reviews. With Teachinguide, for instance, you easily find highly engaging authors and courses. You can review their tactics on engagement and capturing strategies.

In summary, understanding how ranking works and what we actually can do about it, greatly helps to design strategies and tactics to boost your ranking fast.





PROMOTE YOUR COURSE STRATEGICALLY

Relying on Udemy as your only sales channel is not a good idea. Although it might be you most important channel, most of the time (Udemy does a great job promoting courses) you really need to understand all other possible channels and take-action to optimize those.

As mentioned in the beginning, this plays a vital role if this is your first course or if you already have an audience you can sell to. So, let's look at both scenarios and how those should play out.

Launch Your First Course - no Existing Audience

In this scenario, you heavily rely on Udemy marketplace and therefore, on two factors. Your Udemy ranking and your landing page optimization for external search engines.

We talked about how to optimize both. So what else can we do?

One obvious question is: should we give the course for free in the beginning? Our answer to that is a definite "yes!" Although, it might feel difficult to give away your first course for free, this might be very helpful to get initial students and reviews.

The rationale behind it, is mainly student perception. Prospective students need to see that other students are enrolled in your course and that it has (very good) reviews. It won't really help your ranking initially, because free courses are ranked last! Your only challenge is: How to get reviews from "free students." We all know that free students often don't give a damn, because they often tend not to care about freebees too much.

So, make sure you don't give away free coupons to just any stranger, but people in specific groups that you can approach and brief. People that are prepped and appreciate your free coupons. They need to know what's important to you (valuable feedback). So, find your target groups on Facebook, targeted blogs and the like.

Your overall goal with your initial course, is to build an audience and a content framework around your niche. Try not to focus on the money to much... initially. You will make it back later. However, only if you have done proper research upfront and exercised good execution. Of course, your first course can earn you big money.



Launch a following course and get rolling

Launching an additional course while having an audience is a very different animal. Strategies here are more complex and can boost potential.

The most important areas to look at are:

- How to prepare your audience for an outstanding course launch
- How to use dynamic pricing tiers and pricing tactics over time
- Preparing a thorough launch task list
- How to build your own platform and sales funnel
- Get that snowball effect running.More Students = Higher Ranking = More Students ...

This is a more complex, high valuable topic and Teachinguide members find those tactics in our resource library as part of the insight or guru subscription.



CONCLUSION



Online courses are an excellent way to gain passive income that scale efficiently, with time and effort. This opportunity is open for every entrepreneur and small business owner, and will just grow further with the advent of instant learning. Udemy is a great platform to get started, and with the right research, preparation and execution -- you are on your way to selling your course worldwide, in an automated fashion. This guide was meant to encourage and help you with concrete tactics on how to get started properly and make the most of your efforts.

We at Teachinguide provide competitive information for online instructors to succeed on Udemy and other learning platforms. Try our service on https://teachinguide.com with a 10-day money back guarantee. We would love to see you succeed and stay ahead of the competition.

Thanks!

