



DO YOU THINK THERE ISN'T ENOUGH TIME OR RESOURCES FOR YOU TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL?

Think again. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are changing the learning landscape by offering classes to students of all ages and backgrounds. MOOCs are affordable for anyone with a thirst for learning – and often are even offered free of cost.

MOOCs are available on every subject imaginable. From the software programmer trying to stay relevant with the latest programs, to the museum-goer wanting to learn more about the history behind the art, there is a MOOC for you. Because they are offered in several languages, MOOCs are reaching students all over the world.

CONTENT OF THE COURSES

The instructors are the stars of these courses, and include professors from prestigious universities (Harvard, MIT, Stanford and University of Michigan among others) and experts in their fields. To say MOOCs are popular would be an understatement: 33,000 is the average enrollment of these courses. Due to large enrollment numbers, peer-grading is common, but feedback isn't as consistently reliable as it would be from a professor.

Courses follow a schedule containing video lectures and assignments and vary in length from 4-15 weeks. In most cases content comes entirely from the lectures and studying is mainly from students' own notes on the lectures. Unless the course is self-paced, quizzes and assignments have strict deadlines. Students with other commitments may struggle to meet assignment deadlines and forfeit higher grades.

HOW MOOCs ARE BEING USED

Due to the grading of these courses, transferable college credit is not given to students. However, upon completion of each course, a signed certificate of completion is given. With this in mind, MOOCs aren't going to be an alternative to college but can be helpful for other outlets.

MOOCs are a great introduction to a topic. High school students can take them to sample their interests and decide on a college major. **For the job-seeker, MOOCs make nice additions to your resume, especially in areas relevant to the position,** and can be cited as extracurricular activities in your cover letter. Teachers take MOOCs to develop their teaching strategies and stay informed on educational changes, such as new common core standards. CEOs take MOOCs to learn better management strategies.

TAKING A MOOC

No single database of MOOCs currently exists. The most comprehensive databases are Coursera, EdX and Udacity. Coursera provides a signature track for some courses where students pay to complete a final exam for official recognition for completing the course. Most colleges still won't accept this as transfer credit, but exam results can be sent to employers.

A preview is provided for most courses to help narrow down a selection. Some courses require background knowledge on the topic; for example, a computer science course may require some knowledge of HTML. **Once you've found the course, registering is easy and only requires basic information.** Multiple courses can be taken simultaneously but are registered for separately.

ARE MOOCs REPLACING COLLEGE?

No, traditional college courses are still the way to gain formal recognition for learning the materials and earning a degree. As a traditional student, you are able to make an appointment with a professor for additional help which just isn't feasible for the massive enrollment in MOOCs. **For now, traditional college courses are here to stay. If you are just looking to learn for the sake of learning, though, a MOOC might be your answer.**

