



The UNIVERSITY of
WEST ALABAMA

Are Online Classes Right for You?

Online classes can be a great resource – either as a replacement for traditional classes or as a supplement to an on-campus program – but they’re not for everyone. While you can certainly expect the same quality and the same learning goals as a traditional classroom, your overall experience will be very different.

Here are some things to consider in determining whether online courses might be right for you:

Are you tech savvy? Most people today, regardless of age, are pretty comfortable working with a computer and a smart phone. But how do you feel about downloading and uploading files? Sharing documents with fellow students in real time to work on group projects? Or interacting with your professor exclusively via email? These are things that might slow you down while you’re concentrating on course content, so be sure you have a tech mindset going into it.

Are you self-disciplined? Without a weekly or bi-weekly class, you’re on your own to pace yourself through your assignments. It’s up to you to set time for your readings or videos, group work, and anything else that’s required for the course. Connecting with someone in your class (not necessarily nearby, but at least in your time zone) can be a helpful way to keep yourself accountable.

Do you have good time management skills? Just like a classroom course, many online courses will require only a few, large projects during the semester. Unlike a classroom course, you won’t have those frequent, in-person reminders in class. It’s important to set a regular work schedule – probably about the same time and frequency you’d attend class – to keep a good pace and avoid a last-minute panic.

Do you like to work independently? Without the camaraderie of classmates and some routine face-time with the professor, an online course can be pretty lonely work. You’ll have videos to watch, content to read, papers to write... all on your own. Of course, if you’re incorporating online courses into a mix with traditional classroom courses, this likely won’t be a problem for you. But if you’re taking a whole semester of online courses, makes sure to find time to get out and be social.

Online classes offer a number of advantages that classroom courses can’t. They’re flexible, so you can do your coursework when it’s convenient for you—a major plus for people who work full time. Online courses can be less expensive than classroom courses, too, which can make these courses more accessible to more students. And because you can do your coursework literally anywhere, you don’t have to limit your college choices based on geography.

Before you dive into all the benefits of online classes, consider if they’re right for you and your own study habits. Consider taking a single course to get your feet wet first. Then, make the decision that best suits *your* needs to get you moving toward your educational goals.