

WOMAN DISTANCE

GIVE me some



It's nothing personal.
It's just more and more people would prefer to not be so close to you.

Distance education has experienced huge growth around the world in the last decade. New technologies such as email and internet have revolutionised the distance education industry.

And because people's lifestyles have changed too – loads of people are moving away from the cities or working from home – distance education seems to have no boundaries.

Because you won't be taking up a seat, there are not the same entry requirements – that's a big advantage of many distance courses. There may be no education prerequisites, no limits on numbers and in most cases no requirements to attend a campus at all. But there's loads more reasons than it can be easier to get into to!

So many reasons why distance ed can be great!

- **Location.** It doesn't matter where you live, you will access the same course choices and schedules as the rest of the population.
- **Savings.** Students can save huge amounts of time and money. There is no time invested in commuting to class and therefore no travel costs either.
- **Working.** Students can find it possible to work longer hours when they study by distance because their timetable is so flexible. As an added benefit, many employers will pay fees for you to further your education.
- **Focused.** Courses are more customised and flexible allowing you to learn at your own pace. Classes are often available any time, anywhere, making it possible to study when and where you want.

- **Great** if you dislike or don't perform well in traditional classrooms, or have physical or psychological problems that make studying on campus difficult.
- **Perfect** if you don't want to move away from family, friends or work.
- **Super** if you're caring for someone at home.
- **Magic** if you can't gain a place at a 'physical' education provider.

Oh, also quite a few reasons why distance education might not work for you!

- You need to be **disciplined** and self-motivated (but becoming so is probably a good thing).
- You need a basic understanding of **technology** (but getting this is probably a good thing).
- Despite buddy groups and other methods to keep you in contact, it can be **lonely** – there is usually no live face-to-face contact with teachers and other students.

The low-down

Each provider and each course works a little bit differently. Some have real workshops during the year where you will get together with teachers and other students and meet, work through things or, especially for vocational courses, get hands-on.

Online. Some courses are all run online with emailed assignments, online information and chat group tutorials. As a rule, distance education is becoming more and more internet-based.

Snail mail. Other courses are predominately done through the mail – assignments and course material is sent out, and you return work the same way.

Other. The telephone, audio tapes, DVDs, video tapes, computer programs, radio, satellite TV, teleconferences, occasional face-to-face classes and meetings, and written materials might be used.

Combo. A combination of all or some of the above.

FEE-HELP or other government assistance may be available (see page 68 for more info).

Right, let me at it!

1. Talk to any education provider – university, TAFE or private college – about distance study options they might have. Many TAFEs, colleges and unis run their own distance education arms.
2. Open Universities Australia is a broker of distance education. Their courses are developed by 18 academic providers, including Curtin, Griffith, Macquarie, Monash, RMIT, South Australia and Swinburne universities. The qualifications are issued by the universities and are identical to those awarded to on-campus students. The only difference is you learn at your own pace, when and where it suits you: 1300 36 36 52; www.open.edu.au

For instance

Let's look at doing a distance education course on textile design. This is fictional – a total fabrication you might say.

You might have a course textbook at home that you refer to. There are course assignments posted each week on a website. This includes reading material as well as links to further information. It's up to you when you look at it but you need to email an assignment once every two weeks.

Once a week there is a 'live' chatroom tutorial where you contribute to discussions about fabric and textiles history and design, and ask that question about Turkish weaving that has been puzzling you. Twice a year you head to the Textile Study Centre of Excellence, which is in Hessian, WA. The lecturer is Hugo Weaving. For a week you look at weaving and dyeing practices in person, talk with your fellow students who you had got to know in the online tutorials. At the end of the year you have to sit a supervised exam. Afterwards, you celebrate. Rip into it!

KNOW YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK



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