



News Release: New Year's Resolution, 1/4/10

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News Brief - 1/4/10

Thinking About Going Back to School Online? Western Governors University Provides Guidelines for Determining Whether 'Online' is Right for You

Online university encourages prospective students to consider "fit" before they enroll

For many working adults, the New Year brings a resolution to go back to school to finish a bachelor's or master's degree. And, because they are juggling work and family responsibilities, an [online university](#) or college may be their best option. Going to school online does offer some distinct advantages—no traveling to a campus to attend classes, and in most cases, students can study when it's convenient for them—but online is not right for everyone. Non-profit Western Governors University recommends that prospective students take a few minutes to answer the following questions that are designed to help individuals determine whether any online college or university is a fit for their lifestyles and learning styles.

- 1. Are you focused on earning a degree that will help you start a professional career or advance your current career?*
Going to college is a major commitment of time and money, so you want to know that when you've finished your degree, it will support your career goals. And, make sure you're committed to those goals and are ready to do the work needed to achieve them.
- 2. Have you already completed some college-level courses, and were you successful?*
If you've already finished some college coursework, going to school online may be a bit easier for you, even if your college experience was not online. You'll know the expectations of college courses, what was challenging for you, and how to study. And, if you tried college before and didn't feel successful, be sure you take the time to understand the reasons because you'll want to have a plan in place to address them before you try again.
- 3. Do you have time to commit to studying?*
Quality, [accredited online universities](#) offer degree programs that are rigorous and challenging, and you should expect to spend between 15 and 20 hours a week on your studies. Be sure that you can arrange your schedule to allow you the time you'll need to work on your degree.
- 4. Do you enjoy learning and studying independently?*
While all good online universities offer support, and in some cases, actual instruction through webinars and other online delivery methods, the students who are most successful in online higher education are those who are good independent learners. If you enjoy independent study and working at your own pace, you'll probably enjoy going to college online. However, if you think you'll need classroom interaction and discussion and constant feedback from an instructor, an [online university](#) may not be right for you.
- 5. How would you rate your time management skills?*
Adults who go back to college must meet job and family obligations and still find time to complete their studies. To be successful, you'll need some strong time management skills as well as old-fashioned self-discipline. You may want to consider some time management training as part of your preparation for college.
- 6. Do you feel confident working with email, word processing programs, Internet searches, and related technologies?*
If you decide to [earn a degree online](#), you'll have "regular" textbooks and other learning materials, but you'll be submitting your work and interacting with the university through your PC. It's vital that you feel comfortable working with email and word processing programs, and that you can navigate and do research online. If you don't have much experience working with PCs, you should consider a basic computer course before you enroll or stick with a more traditional classroom format.

Getting a bachelor's or master's degree in a high-demand career field can have a significant impact on your lifetime earning potential, and just as important, can help you get into a career or profession that will be interesting and rewarding throughout your work life. If you've decided that going back to school online is right for you, the next step is to do some research to learn about online universities. You can find some tips to help you select the right online school at www.wgu.edu/tips.