

# 5 QUESTIONS About Enrolling in Online Prerequisites for the Health Professions

When you have to take prerequisite courses to apply to graduate programs in **Nursing, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physicians Assistant Studies, Speech-Language Pathology, or any other health profession**, a flexible, online format can be appealing. Due to their flexibility and convenient “location,” more students are taking these courses online. But how does someone relatively new to online learning identify a quality course, taught by a well-prepared instructor? A simple Google search can bring up a seemingly overwhelming amount of information so here are 5 important questions to consider when evaluating your options:

## 1 Why would I choose to take a course online?

Online courses are not easier; they take about the same amount of time in preparation and participation as a face-to-face (f2f) course. When you study online all of your course materials are available to you 24/7 through a learning management system (Blackboard, D2L). This means that you can access your “work” from multiple devices so that you can more easily integrate study time into your day.

Anytime/anywhere access and more flexible weekly schedules causes very little disruption to your work and/or family life, allowing you to continue to accrue income until beginning full time graduate study.

## 2 What added value comes with taking a course online?

Taking a course online requires you to take additional responsibility for directing your learning, planning your schedule and accessing the resources provided by your instructor.

Some additional responsibility is valuable because self-direction is a skill *required of all health care providers*.

Directing your own learning also contributes to development of ownership of information, and confidence in one’s ability to learn and grow.

Many online students also appreciate the flexible schedule of online instruction to spend more time thinking about what they have read and composing the thoughts they will share with their instructor and colleagues.



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## 3 Is Online Learning Better or Worse than Face-to-Face Learning?

People have been asking this question for years; lots of studies have tried to compare a course taught online with the same course taught face to face.

There are lots of opinions about the outcome, but I don't think that anyone has proven that either format is "better" than the other.

They are different.

Online learning is not for everyone. But it could be for you if you value your independence. It could be for you if you like to make your own schedule within weekly requirements. It could be for you if you want to build your ability to learn in preparation for the demands of graduate study.

So, to some extent, you have to decide if online learning is better or worse for YOU.

But you also should have some ideas about how to assess the quality of an online course you are considering.

## 4 How do I Recognize the Quality of an Online Program?

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## 4 How do I recognize the quality of an online program?

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Some additional responsibility is valuable because self-direction is a skill **required of all health care providers.**

Directing your own learning also contributes to development of ownership of information, and confidence in one's ability to learn and grow. *Make extra sure you will be able to get the support you need when YOU need it!* For example, when you are struggling to understand a certain topic or problem, you will

Many online students also will appreciate the flexibility of flexible scheduling. In addition to this, look into whether or not an online course offers things like personalized tutoring, student discussion groups, and readily available tech support that are just a few

### Student Experiences With Online Courses

**Read some interesting stories** of students who have taken online courses and labs to fulfill prerequisites for graduate programs in the health professions.



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