



E-Learning: *Doing the Virtually Impossible*

People often struggle to balance their personal and professional lives. You may be juggling parenting and domestic responsibilities with a full-time career, as well as caring for aging parents. Finding the extra time to pursue an education or finish a degree, until recently, may have seemed out of the question.

But today, electronic learning, or e-learning, has changed all that. E-learning refers to the use of computer-based electronic technology as an educational tool. Internet, email, websites, Multimedia tutorials, micro-games, lesson-based podcasts, simulations, blog posts, and online discussion groups are some of the platforms used to deliver, facilitate, and enhance learning. Some online courses are “synchronous.” This means all students must be online at the same time for live discussions or exams. Other e-learning courses allow students to work independently during the week, but require weekly deadlines for assignments and exams. Still others allow students to work at their own pace. They may finish the course as quickly, or as slowly, as they like.

Rather than the traditional classroom experience, e-learning offers a far more flexible way to achieve educational goals and remain competitive in the workplace. Many people are self-directed and self-motivated with the ability to multi-task; ideal candidates for e-learning. It is important to keep in mind that, because a growing number of online courses are including participation in blogs, wikis, or

game-like simulations, e-learners must have good computer skills and access to computers with high-speed Internet connections. Students who are unsure about their ability to use such technology should seek online schools with readily accessible help desks and other technological guidance and support.

Even in a challenging economic climate with a tight job market, college graduates may fare better than those without college degrees. In addition, in recent years, the responsibility for training and higher education has shifted from the employer to the employee in the workplace, which essentially requires workers to be more in charge of their own career growth and responsible for the acquisition of more marketable skills. As technology continues to advance, people in the workforce may need as much education and training as possible in order to keep up in the competitive job market.