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With online college degree programs students can participate at any time and from anywhere they have a computer with Internet access. So perhaps it's not surprising that many find such schooling appealing. Online school programs are also abundant, with certificate offerings and degree programs provided by two and four year colleges and universities, as well as by vocational schools that train students for specific jobs. This means that just about any profession has the corresponding education available for distance students.

According to career author, publisher and Web site founder and CEO Randall S. Hansen, online college classes might prove especially well-suited to students who learn better through visuals and experiential tasks and those who are introverted, have language barriers or require more time for studies. Working students might be more easily able to participate in studies offered by online schools because they can control the pace, Hansen suggested. It's also important for students to consider how motivated they are since this, according to an April article in U.S. News & World Report, can be one of the strongest indicators of success with online schools. Students considering online college enrollment should have at least basic technology skills and set time commitments for their studies, the report suggested. If you need more information about [university courses online](#), look on the internet.

The National Center for Education Statistics reminded prospective students that college online or otherwise is a big investment in time and money. Finding the right online college might boost a student's success in studies and better enable that student to achieve his or her goals. Following are five tips that students considering online schools might want to think about in their search for the right college online:

Their needs and goals: Identify online schools with reputations and online programs best suited to those needs and goals. Guidance counselors, people who've participated in specific colleges online and those who work within fields of interest might help. Students can visit campuses and browse the websites for online schools in which they're interested.

Their communication preferences: Online school programs can be offered entirely from a distance or in hybrid forms that combine online and classroom instruction. Being engaged and involved in studies can be important, the U.S. News & World Report suggested. Students considering online college classes might also look toward instructors who have been trained in how to teach online, the report noted. Some online classroom instructors might utilize a wide array of technologies for coursework and offer interaction through message boards, according to reports. Some instructors might respond to questions and concerns more quickly than others, reports show.

Their schedules: Many students enroll in online college classes and online degree and certificate programs because they're better able to juggle studies with family and work responsibilities. But reports suggest that some online course formats might be more flexible than others. If one has a work schedule that changes, this is a good thing to consider beforehand. There is an abundance of information about [associate degree](#) on the web.

An online school's credentials: With online schools that are accredited by nationally recognized agencies, students are more often able to transfer credits and obtain federal financial aid, the U.S. Department of Education suggests. Many colleges online or otherwise are accredited by one of six regional accrediting agencies. Students might also ensure that department and degree programs have specialized accreditation from professional associations such as the American Dental and American Bar associations, according to the U.S. News & World Report article. Students might also determine whether any complaints have been filed about an online school, the National Center for Education Statistics suggested. They can do so by contacting the Better Business Bureau, a state higher education agency, or the state attorney general's office, according to the center. In addition, students can check with institutions to determine which agency or agencies has granted accreditation and confirm any information with the Department of Education and those agencies, an article from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Education reports. Department of Education-recognized accrediting agencies are listed on the department's website, the article noted.

Costs: Students participating in online college classes and online degree programs can save money that they might otherwise spend on meal plans, campus housing and commuting to and from school. Online tuition reportedly costs about the same as tuition for campus-based classes, and students interested in obtaining

financial aid for tuition at accredited institutions might apply for grants, scholarships, fellowships and work study offerings that schools, government agencies, corporate giants, non-profit organizations and community and civic groups make available. A 2009 Society for Human Resources Management report showed most employers offering tuition reimbursement in the survey extend the same assistance for online college classes as they do campus-based classes. Deducting the amount of any assistance from the cost of tuition at different online colleges and universities might put some schools within easier financial reach and help students decide on the online degree or certificate program that provides the best investment for them.

Weighing all the factors involved, [online college degree programs](#) are the smart choice for so many. This includes the new student to the career employee looking to advance via an [online masters programs](#).

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