

Building your confidence for higher education

I'd like to learn more but....

Everyone has things that stop them from doing what they'd like to do. Sometimes it is a past experience, sometimes it is fear of the unknown, and sometimes it is to do with life at the moment. So you might be feeling that university level study isn't for you.

Here we look at some of the obstacles that might be stopping you from signing up for a college course and suggest some ways to overcome them.

"I was never any good at school – why should it be different now?"

Many people have bad memories of school. There can be all sorts of reasons why you didn't get on well. For example:

- "I wasn't interested in the stuff I had to learn."
- "I missed out on a lot of school and never caught up."
- "I couldn't write quickly enough."
- "I was told I wasn't any good and I believed it."

Learning as an adult is different:

- You choose what to study.
- You can get advice about choosing what level to study at.
- Everybody is able to learn – nobody is "no good". With the right subject, the right level of study and some study support, a great deal is possible.

"What is a learning difficulty?"

Any problems you had at school with reading, writing and numbers may well have been because of a learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADHD or ASD. These can cause problems with things like reading, writing, number work and organisational skills.

The good news is that once the problem is diagnosed, you can get one-to-one support and help with things like note-taking and organising yourself. Famous high achievers who have learning difficulties include Richard Branson, Eddie Izzard, Steve Redgrave, Whoopie Goldberg and Susan Hampshire.

The learning opportunities website at:

www.learning-opportunities.org.uk has information to help you:

- [Disability support in further education](#)
- [Disability support in higher education](#)

“It’s years since I did any study – can my brain still cope?”

There’s nothing to stop anybody studying at any age. Learning opens up new horizons however old you are and age has one very big advantage – namely experience. Indeed, relevant work experience may be the only qualification you need to register on a foundation degree.

“I’ve spent the last ten years bringing up children. I’m brain dead.”

Many parents feel that they are incapable of adult conversation after spending so much time with small children! However it does not take long to realise that you can still study and getting back into study can provide a really positive role model for your children. You could try a taster or short course to gain confidence and brush up your skills before committing yourself to anything longer. Check with your nearest college to see what’s available or contact the Open University and find out about their **Openings Courses**: www.open.ac.uk or ring **0845 3006090**

“I’d love to study, but I don’t know how to write an essay, produce a report or use a computer.”

Colleges and universities provide help with study skills like essay writing, note taking and computer use. They don’t assume that you know how to do all these things before you start. Bookshops (and, of course, Amazon) have a wide range a study skills books for higher education students. You could also try searching online for free study skills materials. The learning opportunities website at:

www.learning-opportunities.org.uk has information to help you:

- [Brush up your maths for higher education](#)
- [Develop your ICT skills for higher education](#)
- [Develop your writing skills for higher education](#)
- [Finding time for study](#)

“I’m worried about failing.”

If you chose a course you are interested in, at the right level for you, and you do all the work then you are unlikely to fail. If you are not keeping up with the coursework, for whatever reason, your college tutors will have strategies to help you. Above all they will want you to be successful - so never start out expecting to fail!