

7.2 Online learning

Aim: Develop reading skills such as understanding vocabulary in context and making inferences

Preparation: Make one copy of Worksheet 7.2 for every S.

Comment: Use after or in place of the reading on page 61.

A Pair work

- Ss work in pairs. Give each S a copy of the reading. Ask Ss if they know what MOOCs are. Answer: *Massive Open Online Courses*. Ask Ss to think of some advantages and disadvantages of online education. Write Ss' ideas on the board.
- Have Ss read the article to see if their ideas are mentioned. Then have the class confirm which ideas on the board appear in the article.

B Pair work

- Explain the task. Ss work in pairs to look back at the article to find the answers.
- Go over the answers as a class.

Answers

1. Anyone. There are usually no restrictions.
2. MOOCs continue to evolve as technology advances, though most MOOCs follow a traditional lecture format.
3. The general requirements are a username and password. It is assumed students should have access to the Internet.
4. Lots of people get lost in the bigger courses, especially if Ss don't interact with their learning community. Many drop out before completing their first assignment because they don't realize that assignments might require many hours a week over several months. Without the pressure of traditional college courses, it's easy to miss deadlines and fall behind.

C Group work

- Explain the task. Read the questions aloud.
- Ss work in small groups to brainstorm ideas.
- When groups have finished, have them share their ideas with the class.

A Pair work What are some advantages and disadvantages of online education? Brainstorm some ideas with a partner. Then read the article. Are your ideas mentioned?

An Introduction to MOOCs



Although online education has been around for a long while, it had seemed like an inadequate alternative to traditional learning until Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) showed up and began attracting huge numbers of students. These typically free courses – offered on topics ranging from Artificial Intelligence to European History – are delivered online and usually require no more than a password and a username to sign up. There are usually no restrictions on who can take them and no limit on how many people can sign up. You learn what you want, when you want, all from the comfort of your home. Students who successfully finish assignments, do homework, and pass tests usually receive a certificate of completion.

Millions of learners take advantage of these courses each year. They choose from thousands of available MOOCs provided by an ever-increasing number of providers – many of which work in collaboration with colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher education. Some popular MOOCs have enrollments of more than 100,000 students.

MOOCs continue to evolve as technology advances, though most follow a traditional lecture format. The lectures are recorded and archived online, along with reading lists, study guides, discussion questions, and homework assignments. Those who have trouble with the work can turn to online discussion groups and chat forums – often led by MOOC graduates – for help and support. In fact, students are often encouraged by instructors to interact with others taking the course.

MOOC developer Jason R. Levine says that interacting with fellow learners is an integral part

of the MOOC experience. “That’s your learning community. With thousands of people taking a course, you’ve got to find people to interact with or you’ll get lost.”

Lots of people do get lost in the bigger courses. And not everyone who signs up for a MOOC completes the course. In fact, many drop out before even completing their first assignment. Although people may be interested enough to sign up for an online course, most don’t realize that assignments might require many hours a week over several months to complete. Without the pressure that comes with taking a traditional college course for credit, it’s easy to miss deadlines and fall behind.

“Whether online in a MOOC or in a traditional classroom, learning’s hard work,” says Levine. “People forget that and expect a MOOC to be easy because it’s online. It’s not easy. Learning never is.”

B Pair work Answer the questions with information from the article.

1. Who can typically enroll in MOOCs?
2. What format do MOOCs usually follow?
3. What are the general requirements to take a MOOC?
4. What are the challenges of participating in a MOOC?

C Group work What are some other advantages and disadvantages of MOOCs? Would you ever consider signing up to take a MOOC? Why or why not? Share your ideas with the class.