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Free online sites CAN teach old dogs new tricks

By Garland M. Baker
Special to A.M. Costa Rica

Aging expats do not need to be sticks in the mud when confronted with modern information and technologies. Neither do youngsters. Some already know the secret and come to Costa Rica to play and study. Today there is no excuse not to learn what one wants or needs to know. And much of it is 100 percent free with no strings attached.

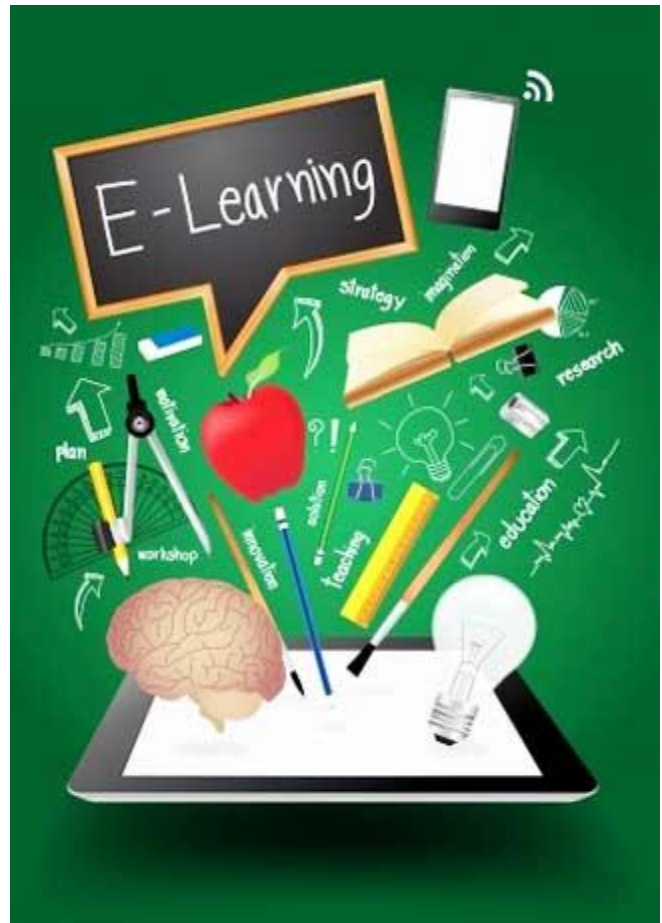
The Internet has made the world a much smaller place, but it has also widened opportunities for most to expand their universe. The possibilities are almost endless for those with inquisitive minds.

Many community colleges and universities now offer online education for adults, paid and free. To get credit to earn a diploma, one usually needs to pay. This said, there are many resources available to get grants and loans to pay for adult education.

Most expats wanting to expand their horizons do not want or need a diploma. They just want to learn something new to enhance their lives or expand their business opportunities. For these people, the Internet is a great tool with excellent resources over and above traditional colleges and universities. Here are some at the top of the list:

[ALISON](#), short for Advance Learning Interactive System Online, offers free certified online courses, workplace skills, interactive education and multimedia learning. Best yet, one can self-certify or get a diploma across 10 [subject areas](#). Free certified learning.

[UDEMY](#)'s goal is to enabling anyone to learn and teach online. Many expats have skills they have learned throughout their lives. Udemy gives them the opportunity to record them into courses. What a great legacy to leave



behind for the young. For those who want to learn something new, like real estate or Wordpress, for example, this is the place to go. One expat who was totally frustrated putting his new real estate company online registered for a free Udemy course called, "WordPress Essentials for Business" and was up and running in a day. The [course selection](#) is out of this world. Many courses are free, others

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cost money. All are reasonable. Once a paid course is taken, no matter the cost, most others are discounted up to 50 percent.

[COURSERA](#) offers full, high-quality courses from top universities all around the world. Best yet, it's 100 percent free. This is perfect for those who want to improve their resume, advance a career or just expand their knowledge in some area of expertise. The organization's list of education partners is impressive indeed. Best yet, all students can earn verified certificates for their studies. Want to get started learning about food and nutrition or the arts? It is as easy as signing up and [selecting the course](#). Coursera's vision is to "have a future where everyone has access to a world-class education. We aim to empower people with education that will improve their lives, the lives of their families, and the communities they live in."

[KHAN ACADEMY](#) is completely free, forever. One can learn [almost anything](#). The organization has thousands of videos, everything from arithmetic to physics, finance, and history and hundreds of skills to practice. Salman Khan's goal in 2006 when he started the not-for-profit was to provide "a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere." The group has received significant backing from Bill and Melinda Gates.

[UDACITY](#) was founded by three robotic scientists with a vision of providing the world with university classes at a low cost. The idea exploded. Now the organization wants to do the same for free.

[EDX](#) is very similar to Coursera but governed by Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. The organization was founded by Anant Agarwal, a circuits and electronics professor at MIT. Courses are free, too, just like Coursera. Another group with a great vision: high quality education online and in the classroom at no cost trying to make the world a smarter place.

[MIT OpenCourseWare](#) is a library of course content open to anyone in the world. There are over 2,000 courses that reflect almost all the undergraduate and graduate subjects taught at MIT. All free.

[UoPEOPLE](#), the University of the People, proclaimed to be the first tuition-free online university is dedicated to

worldwide education. Shai Reshef, an Israeli businessman, founded UoPeople in 2009. The organization offers associates and bachelors degree programs in business administration and computer science. Yep, free too.

For those more adventurous souls looking for more technical offerings, no worries! There are great opportunities here, too, but they are not free:

[LEARNABLE](#) is subscription based like most of the paid learning online systems. It offers mostly techie courses like IT, Web development and design. Want to impress the people coming over for bridge with knowledge of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. This is the place to learn them.

[LYNDA.COM](#) is probably the most popular of online learning sites. It is mostly for creative and artistic people. Lynda offers thousands of courses with excellent teachers for creative projects like software programs for photography, illustrations, videos, and documents. More and more people are looking to expand their cooking skills to save money at home. This site falls short in cooking classes.

[TREEHOUSE](#) is a learning site for computer coders and programmers, those who like to socialize on GitHub not Facebook. Expats who still remember the IBM card punch machines of the past can surely update their knowledge with Treehouse.

Some expats retire to Costa Rica and get into a rut. They end up bored to death or in the bar all day drinking Imperials. There is absolutely no excuse for this because no matter where one is in the world, learning and new opportunities exist and are only a few clicks away. The "I can't afford to learn anything new because I am on a fixed pension," rationalization belongs in the waste basket too. Almost anything can be learned for free.

Garland M. Baker is a 44-year resident and naturalized citizen of Costa Rica who provides multidisciplinary professional services to the international community. Reach him at info@crexpertise.com. Baker has undertaken the research leading to these series of articles in conjunction with A.M. Costa Rica. Find the collection at <http://crexpertise.info>, a free reprint is available at the end of each article. Copyright 2014, use without permission prohibited.

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