

8 MOOC Providers for Job Seekers Looking to Upskill or Pivot to a New Industry

With unemployment in the US now at 40 million, COVID-19 has spurred many job-seekers to focus on professional development as they pursue a new role or pivot to a different industry. Millions have enrolled in massive open online courses (MOOCs) in order to upskill and increase their competitive edge in a hyper-competitive job market.

Wait. What's a MOOC?

A MOOC is simply an online course designed for unlimited participation and open access via the web.

Got it. So, how does a MOOC differ from an online degree?

MOOCs are usually less expensive than online degrees, offer a certificate of completion (usually for a fee), don't require an application process, and offer the option to audit a course (for free, with no certificate awarded and usually no access to graded assessments). For a student, getting started with a MOOC is often as simple as clicking "enroll" and diving in.

Hmmm. How hard is it to complete a MOOC?

Successfully completing an online course can seem deceptively easy. The time investment required usually correlates with the duration and difficulty of each course. Think of it as attending school but without anyone holding you accountable. It's up to you to set your goals, map out a schedule, and regularly show up to get it done.

Students who successfully reach their online learning goals have developed traits like discipline, organization, persistence, and resourcefulness. These, along with the initiative and dedication shown by a successful self-guided learner, are some of the skills employers seek in today's remote-work climate.

Okay, but how can job seekers apply what they've learned in a MOOC?

Many course-providers simply supply knowledge. It's up to the learner to integrate it and apply it in a practical setting, like a job or volunteer role. The best online course providers don't stop there.

They know it's critical to offer students the opportunity to *apply* the knowledge they've gained. Some courses incorporate either smaller projects throughout the course or one significant "Capstone" project (doesn't always go by that name) at the end of a series of courses to allow students to demonstrate the skills they've assimilated. These types of projects sometimes include the opportunity to work with a mentor and are more often than not included as part of paid membership or enrollment.

Interesting. Which MOOC providers should I know about?

Most MOOC providers offer courses spanning a wide breadth of industries and interests. Your particular industry, interests, goals, time, and budget will dictate which one is right for you. But here are some of my favorites, as well as a little background on each one.

1. [edX](#)

EdX is a MOOC provider that hosts online university-level courses in a wide range of disciplines for learners across the globe. It was created by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard in 2012 and offers a wide selection of courses in computer science, language, humanities, data science, engineering, and business & management created through partnerships with institutions like Princeton University, University of Oxford, and Boston University.

There is no cost to audit edX courses. Auditing grants access to the information for a limited amount of time and does not offer a certificate of completion for learners to post on LinkedIn or other social media sites, communicating a student's accomplishment to their network and potential employers.

Paying for a course grants access to the course for as long as it is on the edX site (some courses are archived after an indeterminate amount of time). The cost of a paid certificate certifying an achievement varies depending on the course but generally runs between USD \$50 and \$300.

2. [Coursera](#)

Coursera is another MOOC provider that enables learners to build new skills, earn a degree from an accredited university, earn professional certificates through Coursera partners like Google and IBM, and take individual courses to strengthen specific skills.

Costs for these options vary widely. For most courses, learners can audit for free (no certification) if they're interested in accessing the lectures, videos, and reading assignments for personal enrichment. Certificate pricing varies but generally cost upward of \$39, with degrees from partnering accredited institutions costing upwards of \$900 per course credit (for college credits).

In 2017, [Grow with Google](#) partnered with Coursera to offer certificate-granting courses designed by Google and administered by Coursera.

While only English-language courses are listed below, several of these certifications and specializations are offered in other languages, like Spanish, Portuguese (Brazil), French, German, and Japanese.

Wow, so Google crafted and certifies its own courses via Coursera?

Because it can get tricky, let's talk definitions before diving into the list.

A [professional certificate](#) on Coursera is a program that allows learners to earn a professional certificate from the institution providing the course content for that program. (With the exception of the one SEO course below, Google is the creator and provider of all content in the list programs below.)

A [specialization](#) is a series of related courses designed to help learners master a specific topic. Some specializations include as few as three courses and can be completed in a few months, while others include more courses and can take up to a year.

All specializations include a hands-on project, which may be multiple, smaller projects interspersed throughout the specialization or one Capstone Project course at the end of the specialization. Completion of the project gives students the opportunity to apply the knowledge they've learned and is required to earn the specialization

certificate. When you finish and pay for all the courses within a specialization, you get a Specialization Certificate.

Google's offerings currently include these 20 programs:

- [Google IT Support](#) (professional certificate)
- [Google IT Automation with Python](#) (professional certificate)
- [Cloud Architecture with Google Cloud](#) (professional certificate)
- [Cloud Engineering with Google Cloud](#) (professional certificate)
- [Data Engineering with Google Cloud](#) (professional certificate)
- [Machine Learning with TensorFlow on Google Cloud Platform](#) (specialization)
- [Advanced Machine Learning with TensorFlow on Google Cloud Platform](#) (specialization)
- [Developing Applications with Google Cloud Platform](#) (specialization)
- [Search Engine Optimization \(SEO\)](#) (specialization through the University of California, Davis)
- [G Suite Administration](#) (specialization)
- [From Data to Insights with Google Cloud Platform](#) (specialization)
- [Data Engineering, Big Data, and Machine Learning on GCP](#) (specialization)
- [Architecting with Google Kubernetes Engine](#) (specialization)
- [Networking in Google Cloud](#) (specialization)
- [Security in Google Cloud Platform](#) (specialization)
- [Developing APIs with Google Cloud's Apigee API Platform](#) (specialization)
- [Install and Manage Google Cloud's Apigee API Platform](#) (specialization)
- [Architecting with Google Compute Engine](#) (specialization)
- [Machine Learning for Trading](#) (specialization)
- [Architecting Hybrid Cloud Infrastructure with Anthos](#) (specialization)

Grow with Google partially subsidizes the cost of each of their programs with Coursera, so learners pay a discounted rate of \$49 per month for the specialization after their free 7-day trial expires. By investing 8 to 10 hours per week on the five-course Google IT Support program, students can earn the certificate in 8 months.

[Insidehighered.com](#) notes that Google has launched a “completer community” for those who complete the Google IT Support Specialization, which facilitates support in learners’ career progression, including “a job board, downloadable résumé templates, simulated interview practice, and a virtual gap analysis so that learners can identify areas of weakness in their knowledge.” In addition, Google IT Support Specialization graduates can elect to share their resumes with 30 employers, including Hulu, Intel, GE, Bank of America, Sprint, and The Home Depot.

3. [Grow with Google OnAir](#)

Grow with Google is a philanthropic initiative launched in 2017 to help re-train those at risk of losing their jobs to AI-fueled automation. Initially offering free classes in Grow with Google’s New York City location (on pause due to COVID-19), Google has pivoted to offering live and on-demand webinars via Grow with Google OnAir.

Small business owners can learn about Google Analytics, how to make their website work for them, and getting their business on Google Maps. Job seekers and students can attend a webinar on resume writing, and using videoconferencing (Google Hangouts Meet) successfully for collaboration or interviews. Registration required.

Interested in [Virtual 1:1 Coaching with a Googler?](#)

For a limited time, Google is offering 30-min Virtual 1:1 Coaching with a Googler (one per learner) on a first-come-first-served basis to those who sign-up and attend Grow with Google OnAir's virtual workshops and events. You can sign up to discuss any one of 5 topics with a Googler: Resume Tips, Google Productivity Tools, Google My Business, Google Analytics, or Google Ads.

4. [Google Digital Garage](#)

Looking for an intro to digital marketing concepts? Google Digital Garage provides learners with a tailored learning path to pick up digital skills, completely for free. You can learn about coding, machine learning, online business security, digital marketing, or career development. Note, a digital marketing certification from Google is free, but some classes run by Google's partners that offer other certifications may carry a cost of \$75+.

5. [Udemy](#)

A combination of "You + Academy," Udemy (pronounced YOU-deh-mee) is an online learning and teaching marketplace with over 100,000 online courses available for purchase (and some offered for free, like this [Intro to Python](#) course). Because private individuals create courses, student reviews are a subjective indicator of quality often drive course enrollment. Costs can vary widely, with holiday sales sometimes reducing courses from USD \$200 or more to \$9.99 or less.

6. [Udacity](#)

A for-profit massive open online course (MOOC) provider, Udacity has shifted from initially offering university-style courses to now offering more vocational courses for professionals. Udacity was born out of a Stanford University experiment in which Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig offered their "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence" course online to anyone, for free.

Udacity offers FREE interview-prep courses for job applicants in tech fields like [machine learning](#), [Android programming](#), [product manager](#), and [front-end developer](#), as well as career-advancement courses on [building LinkedIn branding](#), [refreshing a resume](#), and [crafting a cover letter](#). They also offer paid "Nanodegrees" (exclusive to Udacity) that cost as much as \$399 per month.

7. [The Great Courses Plus](#)

Originally founded in 1990, The Great Courses is produced by The Teaching Company, a company based in Virginia. The company vets and hires experts in their field and works with them to create in-depth, college-level video courses.

Initially selling their courses exclusively on CD and DVD formats, they also now offer a streaming service called *The Great Courses Plus*. This commercial-free, subscription-based, video-on-demand service was added around 2016 to meet customer demand for digital access. Initially partnering with top-rated professors and producing academic courses, the company has since broadened its scope to non-academic topics.

With a catalog of over 500 courses, learners can stream classes on a wide variety of topics including Photography, Anatomy, The Secrets of Mental Math, Customs of the World, Dog Training, and Critical Decision Making, to name just a few. Dubbed “My new Netflix” by one Amazon reviewer, most of the offerings from The Great Courses Plus resonate with adults who see themselves as lifelong learners, enjoy the classroom setting, and take pleasure in learning for the fun of it (yep, count me in).

A monthly subscription to The Great Courses Plus gives learners unlimited digital access to all 500+ courses (and growing) in the catalog and costs \$49.95 per month or \$360 annually. Deals are promoted on social media from time to time.

Lastly, it’s worth checking if your public library, college, or university partners with [Kanopy](#), a service that allows viewers to stream movies with their public library card or university login. If so, you may have unlimited, free access to the Great Courses, thanks to a partnership between Kanopy and The Teaching Company.

8. [LinkedIn Learning](#)

Originally founded as Lynda.com in 1995 and rebranded as LinkedIn Learning in 2017, the subsidiary of LinkedIn offers video courses by industry experts in business, technology, and creative skills.

LinkedIn, the most popular social media site for professional networking has compiled a [list](#) of the most in-demand hard and soft skills of 2020. The top five soft skills are creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. The top ten hard skills are blockchain, cloud computing, analytical reasoning, artificial intelligence, UX design, business analysis, affiliate marketing, sales, scientific computing, and video production. With more than 5,000 courses in their catalog, learners are sure to find courses touching on these topics and more.

According to this LinkedIn Learning [article](#), some of its top viewed courses include [Excel 2016 Essential Training](#), [Project Management Foundations](#), [Cert Prep: Project Management Professional \(PMP\)®](#), [JavaScript](#) and [Python](#) training, [Time Management Fundamentals](#), and [Communicating with Confidence](#).

A paid subscription to LinkedIn Learning gives unlimited access to all digital courses in its catalog. The subscription service costs \$29.99 as a monthly subscription or \$19.99 per month billed annually. Subscribers can cancel anytime. It may be worth checking if your local public library offers its cardholding patrons. If so, you'll log in through your library's portal and gain free access to the full LinkedIn Learning catalog of digital courses.

Has a MOOC you've completed helped you shine in a job interview? Post in the comments.

About Me

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