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EDT 648  
MP5 Online Professional Development  
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## MP5- Online Professional Development

Online professional development can be found with the option of “anytime, anywhere” to “live” interaction, depending on the need.

I have been an advocate of online since the first day I was introduced to the Internet back in the early 90's and have utilized online to expand my knowledge in many different areas, especially technology. The beauty of the Internet is the ability to can find information on every topic, from unstructured to structured learning environments.

Professional development occurs when something is learned or expanded on benefiting an individual in their current and/or future employment. In early 1990's I was an at-home mom on a very limited budget, was fascinated with technology and the Internet. At that time, structured (instructor-based) online professional development in technology was limited and costly. I searched the Internet for free or inexpensive learning options and technical content and was amazed how much information was available. Some of the resources I tapped into were online newsgroups, software developers technical support/help, websites offering “how to” information.

Free options:

- Free tutorials- use search engine for task you would like to complete  
example:Internet 4 classrooms  
<http://www.internet4classrooms.com/on-line2.htm>
- Barnes and Nobel University- still offering free courses although technical online courses are no longer an option.  
<http://university.barnesandnoble.com/>
- Computertim Technology- free technology help and solutions  
<http://www.computertim.com/>
- Software Developer Website- example: Macromedia DreamWeaver-  
<http://www.macromedia.com/support/dreamweaver/>
- Newsgroups most Internet Service Providers have a newsgroup server you can log on to. Example Charter Communication has news.charter.net
- 4Teachers.org- Integrating technology with lessons.  
<http://www.4teachers.org/>

Additional training can be found at websites that offer subscriptions to computer based training (CBT) modules. CBT modules usually do not have an instructor and a student works through each module at their own pace. There are a variety of CBT training options with positive and negative points. One positive point includes availability anytime, anywhere. Another positive point is CBT modules cover the basics of a program in a step by step presentation which can be reviewed over and over again. A couple of the negatives I have experienced is

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while working through a module, if you do not follow the steps exactly the module will say you are doing the task incorrectly, yet when working with the software steps can be done in a different order. (There is usually more than one way of accomplishing a task.) Another negative point is the ability to retain the information presented in the modules, I could memorize the steps while working through the module, but could not always recall the information months later. A solution to the retention problem would be to apply the concepts learned regularly after completing the modules.

Subscription/small cost some computer based training (no instructor):

- Atomic Learning (free login with MACUL membership)  
<http://www.atomiclearning.com/>
- Taskstream- web-based tools for creating lesson plans and electronic portfolios. Taskstream site includes many tutorials for members  
<http://www.taskstream.com>
- Macromedia University: many course offered, most computer based training- self pace no instructor. <http://www.macromedia.com/university/>
- Learn2- Tutorials you can purchase <http://www.tutorials.com/>
- Mind Leaders: Computer base training many courses. Click on buy courses <http://www.mindleaders.com>
- EDclass- integrates technology with lessons that instructors and students can utilize. <http://www.edclass.com>

I enjoy taking online courses with an instructor and peers. I feel being able to communicate and hear the instructors and other classmate's viewpoint is an important part of learning. "Attending" class at my convenience allows time to fit everything else into my family's hectic schedule.

Online Classes with instructor:

- Western Michigan University Distance Education (for credit)-  
<http://dde.wmich.edu>
- Online Learning- <http://www.online-learning.com/>
- Education Finder: list many Universities offering online courses-  
<http://degrees123.org/>

Online professional development is not for everyone. Some material can be presented more effectively in a face to face environment than online. (Although with video conferencing and other technologies material needing face to face meetings are decreasing.) Going to professional conferences and seminars provides attendees a fresh outlook, breaks-up the monotony of the weekly routine and provides excellent opportunities to network with people in the same profession.

Face to Face classes- schedule and information can be found online:

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- Macromedia Product classes  
[http://www.macromedia.com/support/training/instructor\\_led\\_curriculum/](http://www.macromedia.com/support/training/instructor_led_curriculum/)
- SkillPath offers great workshops/seminars on many different topics  
<http://www.skillpath.com>
- Career Track- seminars or online options.  
<http://careertrack.com/index.asp>
- MACUL Conference Michigan Association for Computer users in Learning Conference <http://macul.org>

As the online environment expands, online professional development options are also expanding. Options are not limited and you can develop your talents by utilizing information found online. Some professional development options offered online are self-paced. Other options include a structured environment with an instructor and class interaction. School budgets are tightening and individuals may have to seek out their own professional development to keep increasing their knowledge.

Tech-Learning provides an excellent list of online resources for Professional Development. <http://www.techlearning.com/content/profes/articles/resources.html>