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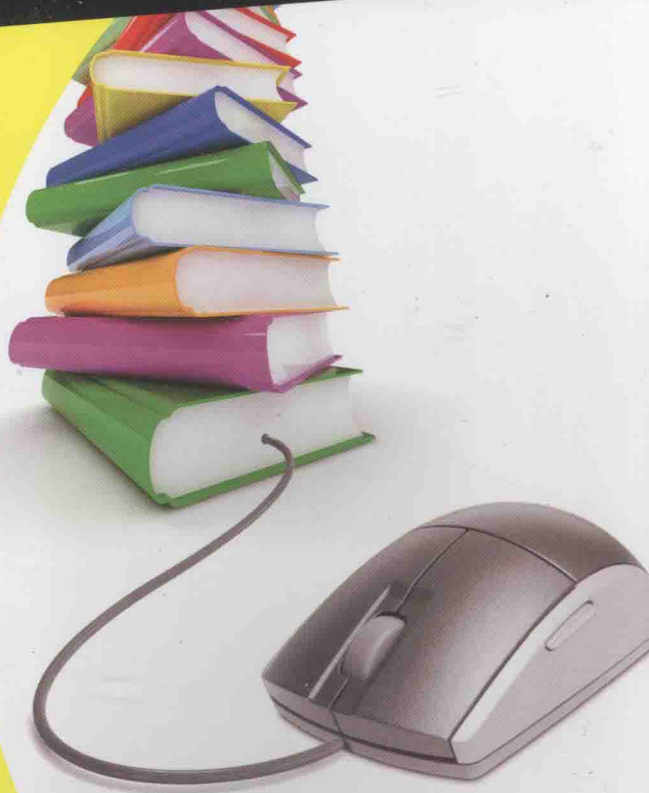
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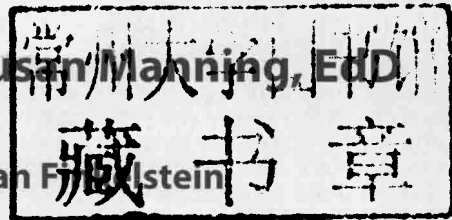
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Online Education FOR **DUMMIES®**

by Kevin Johnson and Susan Manning, EdD

Foreword by Jonathan F. Weinstein




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About the Authors

Kevin Johnson is the CEO of The Cutting Ed, Inc., a consulting company that specializes in helping clients envision education and training for the 21st century. He has more than 20 years' experience working in education and figuring out how to use technology to his advantage.

Kevin's start with technology began as a 14-year-old teaching himself to program. Completing his bachelor's degree at Eastern Illinois University and his master's at the University of Illinois, Kevin developed curriculum and taught in academic and corporate environments for the next 13 years. Due to his desire to save paper (not to mention not wanting to fight for the copy machine), he started providing lecture notes and other resources to students on CDs. As the Internet emerged, he began teaching Web development courses. It was a natural transition to move from burning CDs to placing course content on the Web. Before long, Kevin was interacting with his students electronically and his interest in online education began.

Kevin stays triple-busy pursuing his doctor of education degree in Instructional Technology and Distance Education. As you might guess, he is studying online!

Susan Manning is best known as a teacher's teacher. She develops faculty and prepares them to teach online. Susan teaches online courses for the University of Wisconsin-Stout and the University of Illinois' Illinois Online Network in online learning, instructional design, technology tools, the synchronous classroom, and group work online. She has taught hundreds of faculty, including international faculty from Saudi Arabia, Denmark, Vietnam, and Russia. Because Susan's teaching career began with adult students learning English as a second language, she continues to teach immigrants at Waubesa Community College. These students remind her that basic human interaction and communication skills always trump technology.

Susan's online career began more than 10 years ago when she was asked to investigate the possibility of training literacy volunteers online. Knowing that she needed additional training and skills development, Susan became an online student and earned her certification as Master Online Teacher from the University of Illinois. Additionally, she holds a doctorate in Adult Education from Ball State University, a master's in College Student Personnel from Bowling Green State University, and a bachelor's degree in Communications from Truman State University.

Susan can be heard regularly on The LearningTimes GreenRoom podcast www.ltgroom.org, a series she co-hosts with friend Dan Balzer as they examine issues and topics related to learning.

Dedication

We would like to dedicate our first book to our families. We didn't get this far without good guidance from our parents and couldn't have worked through the development of this book without awesome support from our husbands and children.

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Foreword

We are all already learners. We learn in all kinds of ways, and we learn every day in ways large and small. Whether we are in conversation with colleagues, friends, or family; reading or watching the news; attending a seminar or meeting; or stopping to ask someone for directions; we are absorbing and processing new information.

And if you are one of the many people who access the Web as part of your regular routine to search, shop, socialize, or send messages, you're already learning online.

The leap from here to the more formal world of online education — engaging in online classes, pursuing a degree online, or continuing one's education in a virtual classroom — is not very large, but it does help to understand the landscape; to be prepared mentally, emotionally, and technologically; and to make some good decisions.

In the course of my day facilitating online learning programs, one element always emerges as a key indicator of the success of the online experience: the motivation of the learner. As learners, we need to understand why we're engaging in the process, why it matters to us, and what outcomes we hope for and expect. If you are reading this, you are probably already quite motivated. You are taking steps to continue your formal education and to enhance your life in ways that matter most to you.

The other main ingredient of successful online learning experiences is a humanely designed, appropriately stimulating, instructionally sound, and well-supported online program offering. It's not always obvious when peering in from the outside whether you have found such a program, which is why some guidance from the likes of the professionals who wrote *Online Education For Dummies* is so handy.

When I first started helping others move their instruction and learning online, I often was greeted with doubts that Web-based learning could be "as good as" face-to-face experiences. I don't know about you, but not every in-person class I took deserved a trophy. Thankfully, there is now ample evidence — much of it in the form of success stories from alumni — that online learning

experiences can be even better than offline equivalents. With strong learner motivation and good design, facilitation, and support, any learning program can be great.

Everyone has his or her own learning style. My own personal preference when it comes to learning online is for approaches that feature knowledgeable, authentic, and supportive guides who accompany the learner through new or unfamiliar terrain. That is exactly what you have in *Online Education For Dummies*. Enjoy your journey.

Jonathan Finkelstein
Founder, LearningTimes.net
Author, *Learning in Real Time*

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