

SHOULD I TAKE A SUMMER CLASS?

When you think of summer, taking classes is probably the last thing you want to do. Some of you may just want to relax and forget about school. Some may want to go on a long vacation or back home to visit family and friends. However, there may be a few of you that have been tossing around the idea of trying to fit a class or two in. Taking summer classes has many benefits but if you're still not sure, the following pros and cons should help you out.

<p style="text-align: center;">PRO: GRADUATE EARLY</p> <p>While college can be a wonderful experience it can be an exhausting and expensive one. The more time you spend in college, the more you have to spend overall. Taking a few summer classes could give you the credits you need to graduate a semester earlier (or even sooner, if you also entered college with AP or dual enrollment credits). You will need to discuss this with your college advisor to be sure but if you can manage it, graduating early can save you both valuable time and money.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PRO: MORE AVAILABILITY</p> <p>Summer classes can be more limited; however, you may not have to fight your way into a spot for what is being offered. This means that even those highly coveted classes will have a lot more availability, which makes it much easier to take popular courses that are required for your degree. Summer classes tend to be smaller than the fall and spring semesters. With fewer people in the class, you'll be able to get more one-on-one time with the professors.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">PRO: MORE TIME</p> <p>If you made it through the "weed out" process (difficult general education classes) your junior and senior year of college will be the time where you will begin taking more challenging and time-consuming classes. Summer may be a useful time to take some of these classes. You won't have the additional obligations that you normally would have in a semester, which will give you more time and energy to devote to the subject.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PRO: ROUTINE</p> <p>During the school year, it's pretty easy to fall into a sort of rhythm. After a lengthy summer break, you might notice that you've lost your rhythm when school time comes back around. By taking summer classes, you'll already be in full swing of things by the time you get back to school.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">PRO: TAKE CLASS ELSEWHERE</p> <p>You might assume that you can only take summer classes at the university you currently attending but that's not entirely the case. Many general education classes are available at your local community college, and there's a good chance you can transfer those credits back to your university. This process requires a bit of work with applying to another school and making sure you're taking classes that line up with the TN Transfer Pathway, but it can have some major benefits. Community college classes are often cheaper. Also, if you are planning on coming back home it will be much more practical to take classes at the local community college. If you do decide to do this, make sure that you get your college advisor and registrar to sign off on them first. Tell them exactly which classes you plan on taking and which credits you want to transfer. Otherwise, you could spend all the work on a class only to discover that your college won't accept it for credit.</p>
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CON: OPPORTUNITY COST

One of the disadvantages of summer classes is the opportunity lost. The time you spend taking classes is time you could spend doing other productive things. For instance, you could use your summer to do an internship, get a job, do volunteer work, or learn a new skill. Depending on your situation, these could be more valuable ways to use your time than taking a college class. However, bear in mind that if you only plan on taking one or two classes, you could use your remaining free time to work on something else. You could spend part of your summer taking classes and the rest of it working or doing an internship.

CON: LIVING COST

Besides the cost of the classes themselves, another potential con of summer classes is covering your living costs. In addition to tuition, you'll need to pay for your housing, food, transportation, and other essential expenses. Of course, you can control these costs to a certain degree. If you are planning on coming home for the summer, you can save money by living at your parents' house. Even if you can't or don't want to stay at home, you can also cover your expenses with a part-time job. Just be sure that you can fit into your schedule and still have the time you need for your classes.

CON: FINANCIAL AID

While you can save money taking classes in the summer, those classes still aren't free. And depending on how you're paying for your college education, this could have some important fees attached. In general, you can use the same financial aid (grants, loans, scholarships, etc.) to pay for summer classes. However, proceed with caution. First, you will need to check with your college's student aid office about the requirements for summer. In some cases, you may need to fill out the FAFSA again. Second, pay particular attention to class costs if you're eligible for the Pell grant. Federal law limits the amount of Pell funds you can receive in your lifetime, and the amount you use for summer classes count towards that. This won't typically be a problem, but check with your financial aid office so that you don't end up short on funds to pay for classes during the next semester. Using scholarship money is often possible, though it could reduce the amount of funds you have available in the future. You can also search for additional scholarships if you're coming up short [here](#).

HOW CAN I SUCCEED IN SUMMER CLASSES?

Most of the same study advice that applies to regular semester classes will apply during the summer. The main thing to watch out for is that you'll probably have more free time. While this seems great and that it can give you extra time to work on challenging coursework, be careful. All that extra free time can also invite procrastination and bad habits in. To counter this, make sure to keep a schedule as you would during the semester. Have a set wake-up and bedtime, and schedule time to study each day. Most important of all, make sure you attend class!

HOW MUCH DO SUMMER CLASSES COST?

It depends. If you're taking classes at your main university, then the cost will typically be similar to what you'd pay during the semester. Check with the bursar's office to get the latest information about course costs. If you take classes at a community college, then your costs could be a lot lower.

WHEN DO SUMMER CLASSES START?

This varies from university to university. Many schools have multiple summer “sessions”, meaning it’s possible to take two or three courses during the summer. Check the school’s website for the exact dates. Be sure to check for any registration deadlines as well.

CAN I TAKE SUMMER CLASSES ONLINE?

In many cases, yes. You could take online courses at your university, or through a community college. Online instruction generally isn’t available for classes that include a lab or another practical component, however.

WHICH CLASSES ARE BEST TO TAKE IN THE SUMMER?

Typically, you want to use the summer to take general education courses that either don’t fit in your schedule during the regular semester or a class that will require a lot of time and effort. It comes down to your preferences and courses availability.

Just like any option for summer activities, taking a summer college course may not be the best choice for everyone. However, if you choose to take on a few extra classes, it can be a great way to enhance your academic experience.