

5 ways to keep learning throughout retirement

For most of our lives, education is often a means to an end. It's how we gain qualifications, prepare for work, and advance in our careers.

But learning new skills and knowledge can also deliver numerous benefits in retirement. It can often be enjoyable and create opportunities to socialise, while helping to keep your mind active and potentially improve your overall wellbeing in later life.

However, studies show that education tapers off as we get older. In the UK, the [International Longevity Centre](#) (28 February 2024) reports that just 24% of those aged 65 to 74 had engaged with learning in the previous three years, falling to 17% for those aged 75 and over.

There is a range of options for learning in retirement. Whether you'd prefer to learn in a classroom or from the sofa, through full lessons or in more regular bite-sized chunks, you can enjoy building skills and knowledge your way in retirement.

Read on to explore five ways you could keep learning in retirement.

1. Attend lectures at a university

There are a few different ways you could start learning through a university during retirement.

Particularly keen learners might enrol in an undergraduate or postgraduate course. Although you may have the option of completing the course on a full- or part-time basis, this option can be a significant commitment. Not only do they come with fees, but most courses will include regular lessons and assessments.

However, for some people, the commitment may be worth the chance to live out a lifelong dream of achieving a degree in a particular field.

Alternatively, you may be able to sign up for less rigorous classes at a university, such as evening classes or guest lectures. Some universities may run "continuing education" programs with short, flexible courses covering a variety of subjects, so it could be worth investigating what's on offer at your local university.

2. Join a club or sign up for a short course

Learning doesn't need to happen in a traditionally academic setting like a university. Indeed, academia won't be enjoyable for everyone.

If you're looking for something more casual, it might be worth exploring local groups and classes. These can be held in a wide range of locations, from village halls to cafes, and can cover a variety of topics. For example, you might learn another language, how to paint, or what birds to look out for in your garden.

These clubs and classes can be social events, giving you the opportunity to make new friends with like-minded people.

The [u3a](#) (also known as the "University of the Third Age") could be a helpful place to start your search. Their UK-wide network of local interest groups hosts a variety of classes and events for retirees to learn together while socialising.

3. Visit museums, or even volunteer

If you're looking to learn on a more casual basis, you might spend some time exploring local museums.

This can offer an educational and enjoyable alternative way to spend time with friends, enjoying a coffee together as you take a look around an exhibition. It can also be a good option for days out with your grandchildren, learning together while having fun.

Some museums will host regular events and talks from guest speakers, so it could be worth exploring what's on near you.

If you're especially interested in a particular museum or gallery, you might even consider volunteering with them. This could not only help further your learning but also create an opportunity for you to meet new people with similar interests.

4. Enjoy non-fiction entertainment

You don't need to enrol on a course (or even leave the house) to learn new things.

By delving into the world of non-fiction, you could learn more about almost any topic. That doesn't have to mean giving up on your favourite fiction – even just sitting down to read a non-fiction book or watch a documentary a couple of times a week could help you learn.

The key is to choose topics you're interested in. That way, it might not feel like learning at all.

5. Explore the options for learning online

You can learn almost anything online these days, from how to build a computer to the history of Renaissance art.

You might start exploring new interests by reading online articles and watching videos. Then, if you find something you're particularly keen on, you might advance your learning by looking for online courses.

The u3a runs a number of online learning events and interest groups, which could be a great opportunity to meet and chat with fellow retirees with similar interests from the comfort of your own home.

Depending on your learning goals, you might also find a suitable app to support your learning. For example, Duolingo can be a helpful tool for those looking to learn a language.