

Learning for Carers at The Open University

Learning for carers

Tony Collins-Moore:

Caring is demanding work, and you may well think that you have no time left to do any study or professional development.

I am Tony Collins-Moore, Carers Wellbeing Academy manager at the Carers Centre Tower Hamlets. I've worked with the Open University to produce a guide which aims to help all carers start their learning journey.

This is a journey that anyone can take, regardless of their educational background. You can work at your own pace, and it won't cost you anything.

There's a lot to gain from taking up study. Carers have told us that studying at the OU improves their well-being. They describe a lot of the other benefits, too-- developing different interests, and indulging their fascinations, improving their employability, as well as life and caring skills, having some me time, and keeping their brain cells active, and proving to yourself that you can do university.

The journey begins with the Open University's OpenLearn courses.

These courses range from two hours in length to 24 hours. They are pitched at different levels to suit your learning needs and presented in bite-sized chunks to help you easily fit your study into short time slots in your daily schedule. There are no start or finish dates, and most of the courses have no formal entry requirement. They are also fully accessible, which means that alternative formats are available if you have any sort of supportive needs.

I would now like to take you through the different stages of your learning journey.

First, go to the OpenLearn web page. You can find it at this link, www.open.edu/openlearn/ You can create your free OpenLearn account by clicking on the Create Account tab at the top right-hand side of the OpenLearn web page.

Your account will give you full access to a range of features that are unavailable to guests. When you click on the My OpenLearn Profile tab, you will be able to track your progress and download an activity record.

When you have logged in to your account, you have three different options. If you would like to refresh your study skills before you click, check out Am I Ready to be a Distance Learner? Here's the web address, tiny.one/OUready.

You might want a course related to your caring role. OpenLearn have several on this topic, such as Physical activity for health and well-being in the caring role tiny.one/physical or caring for adults tiny.one/caring

If you know what topic areas you would like to study, use the Search function or head to Pick a Subject at the bottom of the page to explore the eight topic areas.

If you don't know what topic areas you would like to study, you can browse by subjects tiny.one/subjects or perhaps check out some popular courses tiny.one/top10 to help you get started.

If you have any queries, perhaps the frequently asked questions would have the answer. You find it at tiny.one/OUFAQ. Don't forget to keep your certificates and badges so that your study is recognised.

So what next? Once you've had a taste of distance learning and maybe even gained a certificate and badges, you might be interested in continuing your study.

Possible routes for Open University qualifications are, for a gentle introduction to Open University study, try an Access module. You can learn more at tiny.one/OUaccess.

To look at Making Your Learning Count. This is a flexible level one module, which allows you to count previous or current study towards university credits. You can find out more at tiny.one/count.

Explore an Open University qualification. Just google Open University courses it will be the first link. If you need further advice and support, do talk to your local carer service or employment services.

For OpenLearn-related issues, please contact openlearn@open.ac.uk.

Most importantly, enjoy, and the very best of luck.