



What did you learn in 2020? Essay contest

In our contest "What did you learn in 2020?" we asked you to write an essay about your learning experiences during the pandemic.

Here's the essay from **Ken Keberle**, one of our website visitors.

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In January I learned the word "COVID 19". In February we learned its impact on my industry. In March I learned my job was over for the foreseeable future. In April and May, I learned my career as I knew it was over. In May I learned about Virtual Instructor-Led Training. Then how to convert all my teaching and content online. Then I learned Canvas, and Zoom, and Technology to support online teaching.

In July I delivered my first VILT class online. In July I discovered the terms "Instructional Designer" and "Career and Technical Education". In July I learned that applying to graduate school at 60 years old is possible. In August I learned that starting a Masters in Science degree is hard. Especially if the university is half a country away. I learned that "distance learning" and "asynchronous" and "online learning" will be part of my language for years to come.

When I began teaching online in August, I was terrified. Then I learned that if you're a good teacher, the medium is not the biggest concern. The quality of your programming and the level of professionalism and caring is. I learned "I can" is universal. I learned the level of disruption in society can be minimized when we care for each other. I learned my students were looking for knowledge and stability and I could make their lives better by being there.

Even if "there" is a monitor in the corner of their kitchen table. I learned smiles translate events through the internet. I learned all the technology I needed, from cameras to microphones, to content development tools. A lot of the learning was painful and sometimes frustrating, but it needed to be done. Some things I already knew, that sharing my world with someone with a sense of humor and grace, and the ability to believe in me, and my ability to adapt was the deciding element to the educational re-creation that 2020 made necessary.

I learned re-doing essays multiple times, and humility and the willingness to seek help with educational resources are critical tools when you reinvent yourself after four decades out of school. I learned carrying a full load of graduate school credits while reinventing and delivering hundreds of hours of online content was a bigger job than I anticipated. I learned that adapting to education, adapting to life, and adapting to the changing world would take effort, persistence, resilience, and humor. I learned Halloween and Thanksgiving, and Christmas needed us to be creative.

We learned there is unlimited joy even in unfamiliar traditions and settings. In December I learned that a 4.0 GPA is something that could make me cry. That I could achieve something at 60 years old that I couldn't at 20. I learned that before 2021 is halfway over, I will be able to call myself an "Instructional Designer" and I will be halfway towards a Master's Degree in Education. What did 2020 teach me? Let's just say "a lot".

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