



The *7 Best* Online Course Platforms Compared

(and How to Choose the
One That's Right for You)



ONLINE
COURSES



KimGarst.

ABOUT

Kim Garst is one of the world's most retweeted people among digital marketers. She is a renowned marketing strategist, keynote speaker, and an international best-selling author of *Will The Real You Please Stand Up, Show Up, Be Authentic and Prosper in Social Media*.

Kim helps entrepreneurs make more money online using social and digital media strategies. Forbes named her as one of the Top 10 Social Media Power Influencers.

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Thinking of creating an online course, but not sure which is the best learning course platform to use?

This is a big decision, and it's one you'll probably want to make BEFORE you start creating your course.

But, Google "online learning software" and you may quickly become overwhelmed!





There are tons of amazing, user-friendly options out there, and there is no one right or wrong option...just ones that are best for YOUR situation.

This guide will help you figure out your options for hosting your online course...so you can get your course up and running ASAP!

3 Options for Hosting Your Online Course

There are a ton of different companies that offer online course software (otherwise known as learning management systems, or LMS's). Some of the most common ones you may have heard of are Udemy, Thinkific and AccessAlly. Regardless, they fall into three main categories: course marketplaces, hosted courses or self-hosted courses .



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1. A Course Marketplace

This is one of the easiest ways to get your course up and running fast, with little to no “techy” skills.

With a course marketplace, you basically sign up and immediately start creating the content for your course. The main disadvantage is that you’ll need to pay a percentage of your earnings as transaction fees to the company.

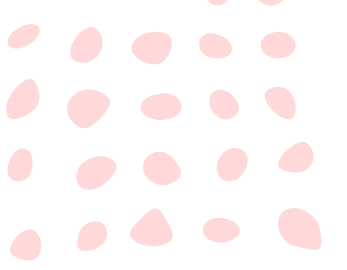
You also won’t be able to host your course on your own website...meaning you’ll have less control over your site design and format, and your course will actually be hosted on the marketplace domain (for example, www.udemy.com/yourcourse).



2. A Hosted Course

This is another easy way to create a course quickly and easily. In fact, in terms of usability, this option is pretty much just like using a course marketplace.

The main difference is that you have the option of paying a one-time or monthly fee, rather than paying a cut of your profits. A major disadvantage is that your course won't get any promotion on the platform itself. While you won't be hosting your course on your own site, you can redirect visitors to a custom site URL (e.g., www.yourcourse.com).



3. A Self- Hosted Course

If you want maximum flexibility and customizability and aren't afraid to get your hands dirty, a self-hosted option may be the right move for you (for example, www.yourcourse.com or www.yoursite.com/yourcourse).

While it takes a lot more work to set up and manage, the main advantage is that beyond the initial – usually one-time cost – of the software or setup, you don't pay a cut of your profits or any transaction fees (besides what your payment processor charges). While you can hire a developer to design and set up your course site for you, a better option is simply to use a WordPress LMS plugin.

The logo for LearnDash, featuring the word "Learn" in blue and "Dash" in white inside a blue rounded rectangle.The logo for Accessally, featuring a blue icon of a person with a speech bubble and the word "accessally" in blue.The logo for MemberPress, featuring a blue "m" icon and the word "memberpress" in blue.

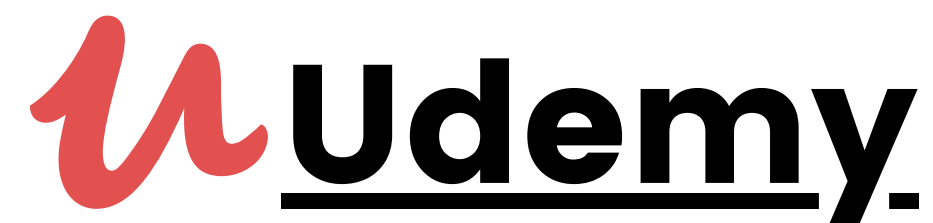
7 Best Online Course Platforms

Once you've decided which type of learning management system you want to use, you can figure out which specific company/platform you want to go with.

For the rest of this post, I'll go over the best platforms for each type of LMS (marketplace, hosted or self-hosted), and discuss the pros and cons of each.



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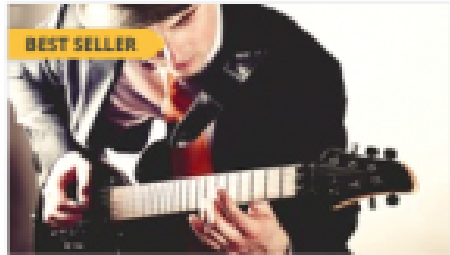

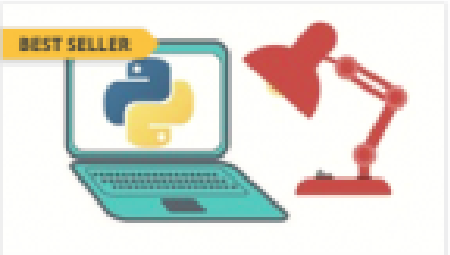
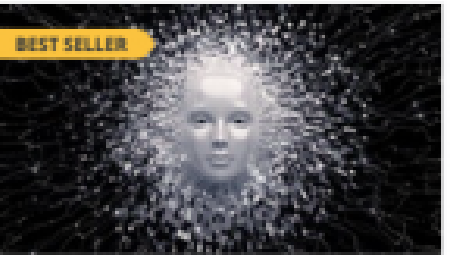
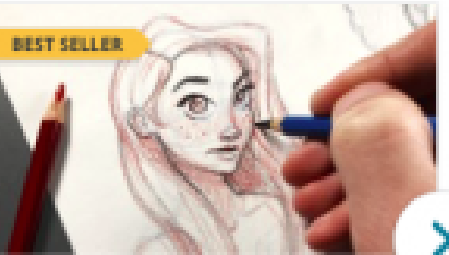
1. Udemy

If you're looking to get your online course up and running NOW,

Udemy is one of the best options. You can literally sign up and start offering courses within a few hours, all without paying a single penny.

Udemy also provides a ton of free training to new course creators, so you can learn virtually every aspect of creating and marketing a course.

Students are viewing See all

 <p>BEST SELLER</p> <p>Complete Guitar System - Beginner to Advanced</p> <p>Erich Andreas</p> <p>★★★★☆ 4.4 (10,283)</p> <p>CA\$149.99 CA\$12.99</p>	 <p>HOT & NEW</p> <p>The Complete 2019 Web Development Bootcamp</p> <p>Angela Yu</p> <p>★★★★☆ 4.7 (389)</p> <p>CA\$204.99 CA\$12.99</p>	 <p>BEST SELLER</p> <p>Complete Python Bootcamp: Go from zero to hero</p> <p>Jose Portilla, Pierian Data Intern...</p> <p>★★★★☆ 4.5 (101,682)</p> <p>CA\$199.99 CA\$12.99</p>	 <p>BEST SELLER</p> <p>Machine Learning A-Z™: Hands-On Python & R In-Depth</p> <p>Kirill Eremenko, Hadelin de Pont...</p> <p>★★★★☆ 4.5 (61,028)</p> <p>CA\$204.99 CA\$12.99</p>	 <p>BEST SELLER</p> <p>The Ultimate Drawing Course - Beginner to Advanced</p> <p>Jaysen Batchelor, Quinton Batch...</p> <p>★★★★☆ 4.4 (51,216)</p> <p>CA\$154.99 CA\$12.99</p>
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1. Udemy.

Pros:

Requires no techy skills, super user-friendly, free to sign up, you only pay when your course sells, you keep 97% of the revenue for sales where you bring in the student (like through your website), built-in promotion on the biggest online course marketplace, ability to use Udemy's Marketplace Insights to find course topics that are in demand.

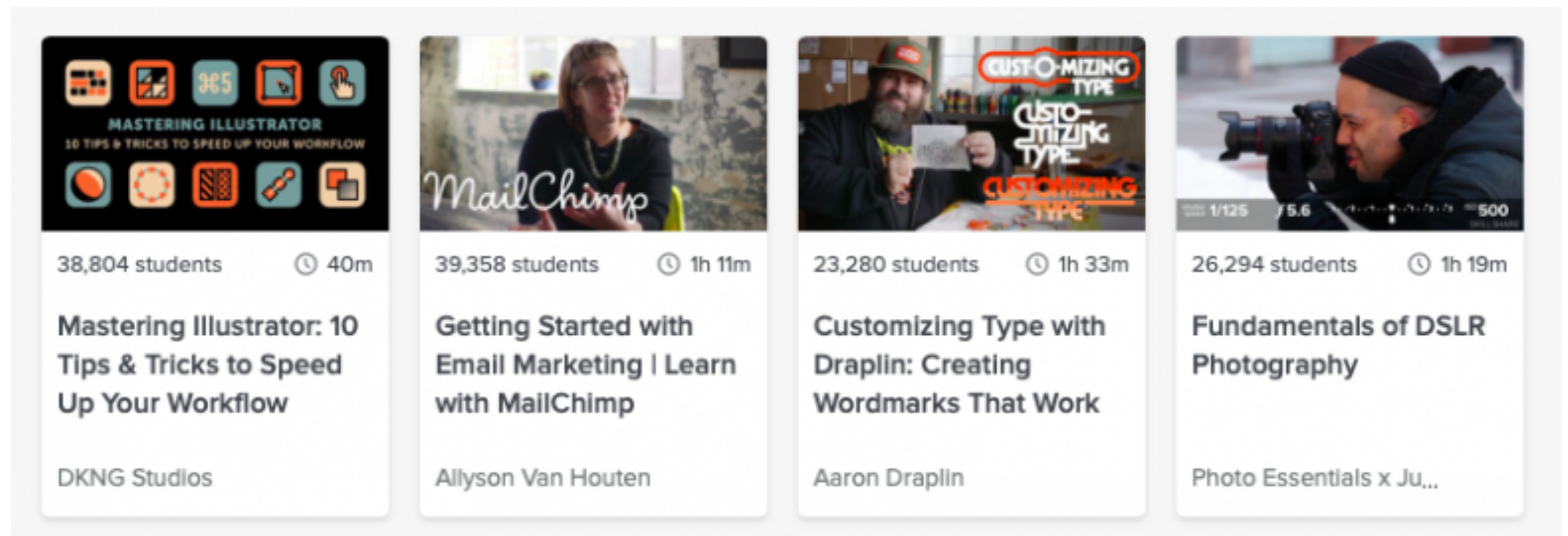


Cons:

Your course is hosted on Udemy rather than on your own site (e.g., www.udemy.com/your-course), low average course revenue (courses typically sell for \$12.99), Udemy gets between 25-50% of general course sales.

2. SkillShare

Skillshare is very similar to Udemy in that you can get your course up and running in no time at all. It's quite user-friendly, and it's completely free to sign up as an instructor.



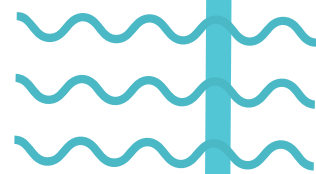
While Skillshare doesn't have quite the reach of Udemy, you're still likely to get quite a bit of reach...especially if your course gets picked up as a "trending" course.

The downside to Skillshare is their revenue model. Users pay a monthly subscription fee, and then you get paid \$10 for each student who signs up for a premium subscription, as well as a small amount (somewhere around \$.50) per minute watched in your class.

2. SkillShare

Pros:

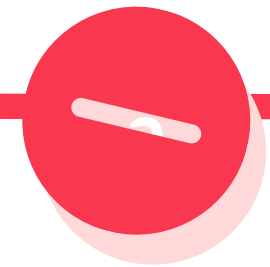
Requires no techy skills, user-friendly, free to sign up, built-in promotion, offers free 30-day course-building challenge to get you up and running.



**SKILL
SHARE.**

Cons:

Revenue model means you need a lot of students to make decent money; also means you don't actually get to determine how much you charge for your course(s). Your course is hosted on [Skillshare.com](https://www.skillshare.com) rather than on your own site (www.skillshare.com/your-course).



3. Kajabi

Kajabi is a great option if you want to create an amazing-looking course quickly and easily, but don't want to go through a marketplace like Udemy.

Probably the biggest advantage of going this route is that you can set your pricing to whatever you want, and you have the ultimate control of your site (for instance, you decide what your return policy is, whether you want to offer a sale or promotion, etc.).



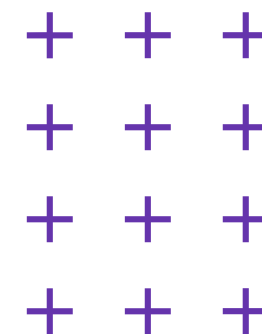
3. Kajabi

Pros:

Tons of gorgeous templates to choose from, user-friendly, option to pay a set monthly fee instead of a percentage of profits, you retain 100% control and ownership of your course.

Cons:

Monthly fee can be steep if you're just starting out (\$149/month for the basic plan for 3 products with no transaction fees), you'll have to do all your own marketing and promotion.



4. Thinkific

Thinkific is quite similar to other hosted course platforms, with one main advantage: Thinkific offers a free option that lets you test drive the platform before you buy. It's also fairly similar in terms of usability and monthly cost (apart from the free option).

In terms of features, I would say Thinkific has the competition beat – so be sure to check out the full feature list of each before you commit. If you want to get your site up and running quickly and don't want to deal with the technical aspects of managing a course site, Thinkific is great!



4. Thinkific

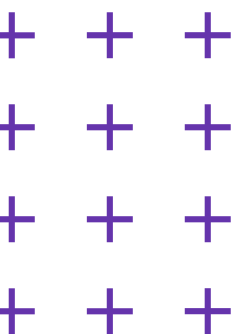
Pros:

State-of-the-art course builder tool, free option, ability to create a membership site (YES!), ability to create an affiliate program, ability to host your course videos right on the Thinkific platform. Plus, you can grab 1 month for free here.

Cons:

To take advantage of all the features mentioned above (and many more), you're looking at \$99/month which may be a lot for some business owners.

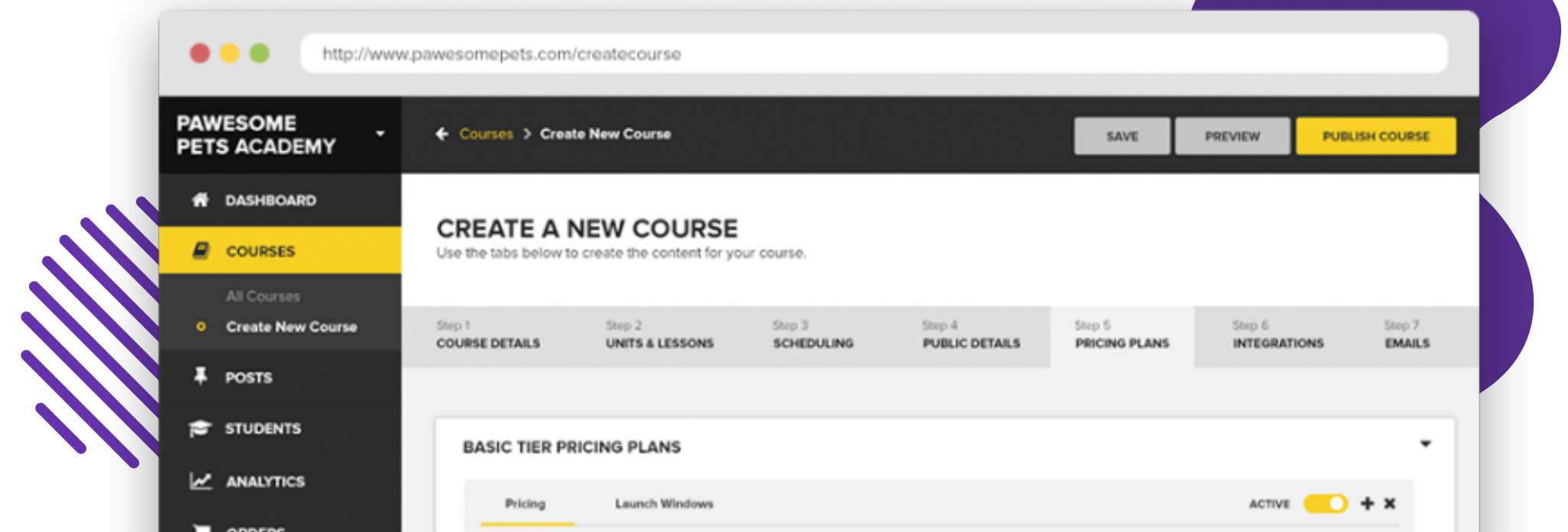
THINKIFIC



5. Zippy Courses

If you're planning to create multiple online courses, Zippy Courses may be the way to go.

Zippy is an all-in-one course creator that allows you to create unlimited courses, with unlimited sales pages and have unlimited students...and they don't take a cut of your profits. Zippy also allows you to set different tiers for your course: for instance, offering a regular and premium tier.



5. Zippy Courses

Pros:

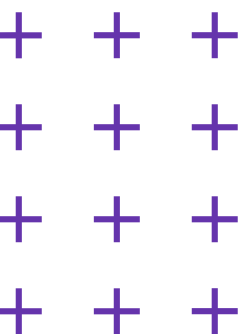
Set monthly fee with no additional costs, web hosting included, 7-day \$1 trial so you can try it out before you buy, all-in-one platform that specializes in helping you create AND market your course.

Cons:

Monthly fee may be high when starting out (Starts at \$99/month), you do all your own marketing and promotion.



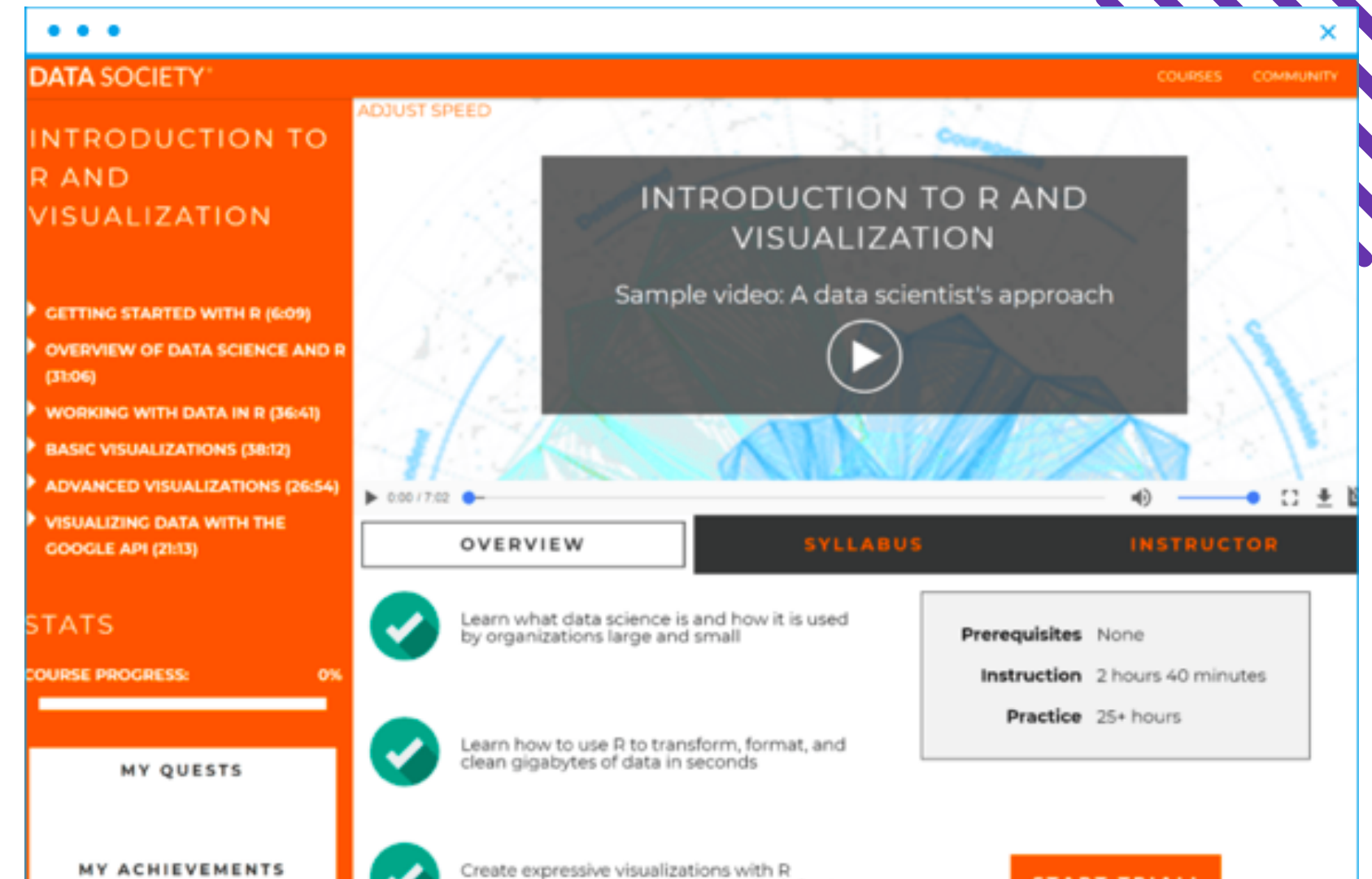
Zippy Courses



6. LearnDash

If you have a WordPress site, a plugin like LearnDash may be the right choice for you. It comes with all the features and benefits you'd expect from online course software, PLUS you host your course right on your own site (www.yoursite.com/yourcourse).

This means you have total control and total flexibility over how you run your course. Of course, this also means that if you run into technical difficulties, the buck stops with YOU!



6. LearnDash

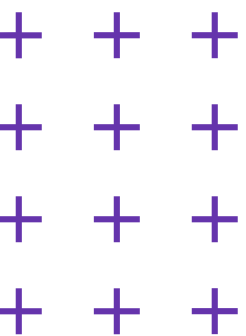
Pros:

Pay a low one-time fee (ranging from \$100-\$185) rather than a monthly fee, don't have to pay a cut of your profits, create unlimited courses with one plugin, integrates with your existing WordPress theme.

Cons:

You need to have a WordPress site to use the plugin, need to pay each year if you want support and updates, you're responsible for all technical elements of your course and site.

LearnDash



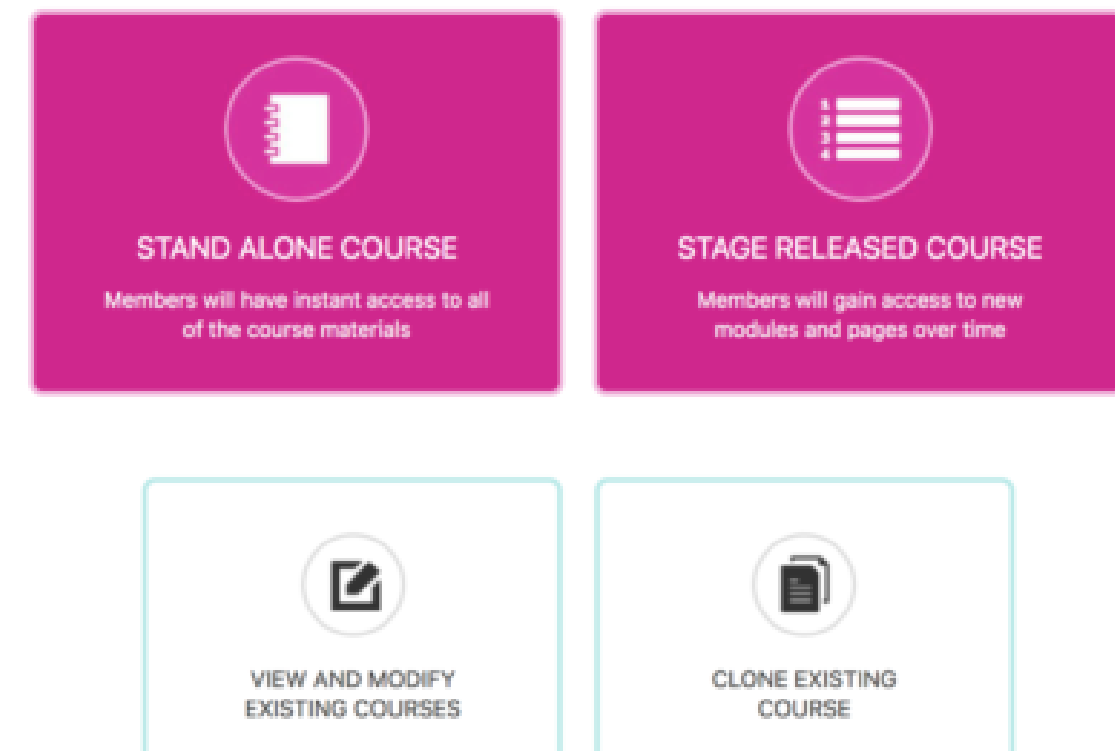
7. AccessAlly.

This WordPress plugin is a little different than other learning management systems because it is also designed to work as a membership site solution. It far exceeds any others I have found...and it's the one I personally use on my site.

The beautiful thing about AccessAlly is that with one tool, you can do payments, course creation, have complex integrations, do member management, along with some pretty amazing automations. Another cool feature is that it allows you to do quizzes – pretty cool, right?

The AccessAlly Course Creation Wizard will create the course on your WordPress site, and then show you how to integrate it with your CRM. You can use this wizard to create both free and paid courses, memberships, and downloads.

First choose what kind of course to create



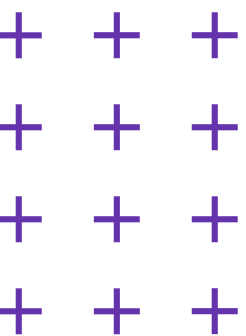
7. AccessAlly

Pros:

The ability to host it on your own domain, have total control and ownership of course, no additional plugins required, built-in payment processor integrates with your CRM and Stripe right out of the box.

Cons:

The ability to host it on your own domain, have total control and ownership of course, no additional plugins required, built-in payment processor integrates with your CRM and Stripe right out of the box.





I've given you a lot to think about!

But, remember that there is no one “right” option...there’s only the right option for YOU.

Carefully consider how involved you want to be in the design and management of your course site, and how quickly you want to get it up and running. It’s also imperative that you consider the long-term costs associated with each option!

Creating an online course is a great way to create passive income for you and your business!

