[Online Schooling for Elementary: Does it Have Negative Impacts on Social Skills](http://bangordailynews.com/community/online-schooling-for-elementary-does-it-have-negative-impacts-on-social-skills/%22%20%5Co%20%22Permanent%20Link%20to%20Online%20Schooling%20for%20Elementary%3A%20Does%20it%20Have%20Negative%20Impacts%20on%20Social%20Skills)

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According to[Ambient Insight](http://thejournal.com/articles/2009/10/28/10.5-million-prek-12-students-will-attend-classes-online-by-2014.aspx), nearly 10.5 million children aged 5-18 will attend online school by 2014, a huge surge from previous years. The same research suggests that nearly 4 million of those students will be full-time online students, and 6/5 million will attend at least some of their classes online.

[The advent of high speed internet](http://www.comcast.com/internet-service.html) has allowed the concept of online schooling to grow and expand, but there are opponents to the concept of self-passed online learning. Opponents argue that children that do not spend time in physical classrooms are at a marked social disadvantage, or that online schooling has a negative impact on social skills. Proponents, on the other hand argue that children who learn in a self-passed environment, away from the confines of the traditional classroom are actually equally, if not more, socially adept as their peers. So, exactly what is the truth?

**Benefits**

Proponents of online schooling argue that the many benefits of teaching children outside of traditional classrooms greatly outweigh the potential negative effects. Research suggests that students, who learn at their own pace outside of a traditional classroom, are more likely to seek out learning experiences and to take a more active role in their academic growth. Parents agree.

Those who have sent their children to online schools have found their children are more independent and take greater responsibility for their work than their peers who attend traditional schools. Parents also note that online schooling is convenient and it allows both the child and parent to tailor the learning experience to their own personal schedule. Online schooling helps out parents who travel for work, or wish to travel to give their kids additional life experiences. Online schooling can be completed anywhere.

**Pitfalls**

Those who are against the concept of online schooling, on the other hand, argue that children need to be around their peers in order to gain important social skills and grow emotionally. Many also argue that parents who opt for online schooling are actually looking for an easy way out, they are looking to tailor fit their child’s existence into their own busy schedule.

Those against the concept of online schooling also worry that children who complete their work online are not actually learning as much as children who attend brick-and-mortar locations each day. Because the school day is completed online, opponents argue, children are more easily distracted and many not actually get the necessary learning experiences.

**Does Learning Online Impact Children Negatively?**

While there are two distinct sides to the coin, one has to truly wonder whether or not online learning can really impact a child’s social development negatively. While a child gains a unique experience by being in a classroom with other students, being in close proximity to other kids does not always mean social skills will naturally develop.

In fact, recent studies have shown that children who are pushed too hard in their studies in a traditional classroom lack appropriate social skills. A research project based in China has found that children, under enormous pressure to [succeed academically](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90782/90872/7147645.html), actually lack social skills, even though they’ve been in classrooms with other students. Children who learn online, alternatively, have the ability to social with children outside of an academic setting through sports and enrichment programs. In fact, studies suggest that children who learn online may actually develop better social skills more quickly than those who learn in traditional settings.

**What is Needed for Online Learning?**

Many parents wonder if online learning is for their child, and more importantly what they need to begin the online learning process. Thankfully, the schools that now allow online learning are expanding. Parents who wish to get their child involved in online learning need only a stable internet connection, a good computer and/or tablet, as well as a scanner for children to send over their completed assignments. It really can be that simple.