

Choose Your Own Adventure

Shake things up, try something new or enhance your current know-how with local courses and activities that offer exciting and easy ways to explore your world

By Kailey Bender

Want to Teach Yourself a New Trick?

Acquire a new and entertaining talent that's as much fun to learn as it is to show off

You're never too old to learn a new trick. And if a circus-inspired twist on fitness and fun is what you're after, look no further than the **Mazomanie Movement Arts Center**, where experienced instructors lead a host of lessons in the world of (tame) circus arts. Dabble in the low-flying trapeze and you'll learn to hang, dangle and float with ease. Or if you'd rather keep your feet closer to the ground, try your hand at juggling, low tight-wire walking or acrobatics instead. Month-long sessions occur regularly so prepare to let loose and share some laughs with fellow acrobats-in-training.

If running away with the circus isn't your thing, look for a more intimate pursuit by picking up where your grade-school music lessons left off. Local sites such as **Farley's House of Pianos** offer group classes for adult beginners through advanced individual classes. If you abandoned piano lessons for a reason, grab a guitar and pluck away at **Ward Brodt Music Mall**, or tackle a more unusual musical pursuit with harmonica lessons (you know you want to!) through the **Wisconsin Union** mini-courses.

When you'd prefer to amaze friends with a little slight of hand, stash a few tricks up your sleeve—literally—with a mini-course in magic at the Wisconsin Union. Beginner magic classes teach both the skills and confidence necessary to delight audiences with mind-boggling tricks.

Whatever your choice, you're sure to be a hit at the next cocktail party (just don't juggle the wine glasses) or campfire sing-along.

Want to Expand Your Résumé?

Give your career a boost with hands-on skills and networking knowledge

The job market is tough. Whether you're in job-hunting mode or just looking for ways to enhance your skill set, finding the resources you need is easy in this area's friendly business climate.

Work your way to becoming a computer whiz by learning PC or Mac basics at **Madison College**, where you can find lessons for true beginners (how to create and open files) to advanced courses in anything from Microsoft Word to the wonders of Photoshop.

If business-related workshops are what you're after, don't miss free and low-cost classes covering a variety of topics—including business banking and accounting, Web design and marketing, entrepreneurship and management—available through the **Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation**.

When networking is what you need, Madison has options aplenty. Join casual events like **High Tech Happy Hour** to meet hundreds of business professionals or look to more targeted groups such as **Madison MAGNET**, **Wisconsin Women Entrepreneurs Southcentral** or the brand new chapter of **The Moxie Exchange Movement**.

Contemplating a complete career overhaul? Start with a career change workshop, a free program to help you get your new career goals on track, through **UW-Madison's Continuing Studies Department**. On that same note, don't be afraid to grab a meeting with a counselor at any number of the local continuing education institutions. Sometimes simply asking about your options can present a world of possibilities.

Want to Please Your Palate?

Whet your appetite with a mouth-watering course or two

Watching The Food Network can only get you so far. Expand your food knowledge and recipe repertoire with hands-on lessons.

Grow your green thumb with herb gardening lessons from **Olbrich Botanical Gardens** or check out the **Wisconsin Union** mini-course on starting a tasty vegetable garden. Local nonprofits such as **Community GroundWorks** and **Fitchburg Fields** also offer garden-based workshops on a variety of quick topics.

If you've got the ingredients but are clueless in the kitchen, perhaps a culinary class should be on the menu. Many restaurants and stores, including **Carr Valley Cheese**, **Orange Tree Imports**, **All Through the House** and **Willy Street Co-op**, offer an array of classes in everything from general cooking skills to specialty classes in pasta making, ethnic dishes and even time-saving meals.

Those with a soft spot for desserts will adore the cake decorating and candy-making classes from **The Vanilla Bean** on Madison's west side or short courses from **Madison College**.

Then pair your hard-earned meal (or dessert) with its perfect mate by learning the ins and outs of wine tasting and selection. Take the wine appreciation mini-course at the Wisconsin Union or join a weekly tasting at **Barriques Wine Cave** or **Metcalf's Market**. Sample recommended vintages and ask questions of area pros, then snag your favorite bottle to take home and savor.

Go it alone or grab a group of friends, either way it won't be long before your kitchen will be sizzling with hot dishes and tasty sips.

For links to
all the activities
and locations
mentioned, visit
[bravamagazine.com!](http://bravamagazine.com)

Want to Trace Your Family's Steps?

Learn new technologies to document the past and present for the future

Maybe you're wondering the roots of your last name. Maybe you're looking for health history. Or maybe you simply want to create a great record of your life for the next generation.

Now that the Internet brings a world of information to our fingertips, tracing genealogy has become a popular hobby for all ages. Begin creating a family tree or unearth buried secrets with a Genealogy Intro course at **Madison College** or a mini-course at the **Wisconsin Union**.

When you'd like to bring the best moments of your life into sharper focus, start with a course in digital photography. Classes for shutterbugs are offered at dozens of area locations—from Madison College and the Wisconsin Union to local stores like **The Camera Company**—that cover the fundamentals of operating your digital camera, adjusting and using flash and even how to retrieve photos from the camera. For a little more advanced work, such as developing your signature style and shooting at night, **The Center for Photography at Madison** offers an intriguing mix of classes.

Once you have a pile of precious photos, learn how to arrange them in style online with a Wisconsin Union mini-course on starting your own blog, or on paper by taking a workshop on scrapbooking at **Scrapbook Superstore**, where expert teachers will show you how transform a pile of mementos into a timeless treasure.

Before you know it, you'll have the past documented and a host of skills to bring all your memories into the new age.

Want to Get Out of Your Comfort Zone?

Test your limits by conquering a fear or trying a hobby you never dreamed of

Try an activity that pushes you beyond your comfort zone and you'll find it can be rewarding long after you're done.

If dancing is what you dread, check out a low-pressure class at one of Madison's dance studios. From ballroom to ballet, hip-hop to African, studios such as **Tempo Ballroom and Latin Dance Studio**, **Dance Fabulous**, **Kanopy Dance School** and more offer dozens of classes assured to help you get your groove back.

If you prefer learning new moves without your two left feet, try studying a different language. Whether you're taking a trip or simply think foreign languages sound sultry, classes at the **Wisconsin Union** (which offers mini-courses for travelers), **Madison College** or specialized schools such as the **Russian School of Madison** and the **Italian Game** will take you from fumbling tourist to savvy traveler ready to mingle with the locals.

No matter what language you're fluent in, public speaking can set anyone's heart aflutter. If you need help facing a professional crowd, groups such as **Toastmasters**, **Capitol City Club** or lessons offered by **Dale Carnegie Training** will help you speak with confidence. But if you truly want to shake things up and confront the fear of being on stage, try joining **Ladies Rock Camp**. In one weekend you'll start a band and experience the thrill of performing in a live show.

Whatever you choose, be warned: You might unleash a rock star or dancing queen (who happens to be fluent in French) or at the very least discover being in the spotlight isn't so bad.

Want to Test Your Creative Limits?

Express yourself and let artistic juices flow while creating your own masterpiece

When you want to get in touch with your creative side, opportunities to gain artsy skills and find a creative release abound. If it's the fine art of painting that strikes your fancy, pick up a brush and look to one of the classes offered through **UW-Madison's Continuing Studies Department** for a range of skill levels from first-time painters to budding Picassos.

When getting your hands dirty is what you need, try a class at **Fired Up Pottery** or **Higher Fire Clay Studio** where you can learn the basics of molding and producing your own pieces. If you're an experienced potter, **Madison School and Community Recreation's** summer programs offer opportunities to create at your leisure. For a slightly less messy option, head to **The Vinery**, which offers workshops in mosaics along with the art of stained glass design.

More of a casual crafter? Stop into a store such as **Anthology**, where you can choose from their "Craft Party Menu" to make stylish creations from unique jewelry to funky picture frames or **The Glitter Workshop** for fun and functional crafts, including candle making and knitting. And they're not the only one to offer help to knitters. Whether novice or advanced, find classes at stores such as **The Knitting Tree** and **Stitcher's Crossing**, which also offer crochet and basic quilt-making as well.

It's all about personal expression and trying something new. Just remember: Every great sculptor started with a shapeless mound of clay. Give anything a try—and find your world expanding before you!