

# Perlego, a digital library to power your learning

*As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Gauthier van Malderen, CEO and founder of Perlego, the ‘Spotify for textbooks’ offering unlimited access to academic titles for students and academics.*

Temps de lecture : minute

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## What was the catalyst for launching Perlego?

During my time at university, I was spending over £300 a year on bulky, outdated textbooks that I often barely used - it felt frustrating and wasteful. At the time, I was already using subscription services like Spotify for music and Netflix for films and I couldn't help but wonder: *Why isn't there a subscription model for textbooks?*

That question stayed with me, and it was the spark that led to Perlego. I wanted to build a solution that would make academic resources more affordable, accessible, and sustainable for students, like my younger self.

## Tell me about the business - what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

At its core, *Perlego* is about making education accessible to everyone. We offer a subscription-based platform that provides unlimited access to over 1 million academic titles across a wide range of subjects. Whether you're studying engineering, philosophy, or business, our goal is to equip

students and academics with the tools they need to succeed - all in one place, for one affordable monthly fee.

We work with some of the world's leading publishers, including Cambridge University Press, Elsevier, and Harvard University Press, to ensure our library is both diverse and of the highest quality. Perlego is used by students in over 250 universities globally, and we're proud to have partnered with institutions like the University of Leeds to provide their students with seamless access to academic content.

What truly sets us apart is our focus on innovation and sustainability. By going digital, we're not just cutting costs, but also reducing the environmental impact of print publishing. We reach our customers through direct partnerships with universities, word-of-mouth recommendations, and a strong online presence, where students discover us as the affordable alternative to buying expensive textbooks.

## How has the business evolved since its launch?

Perlego launched in 2017, and it's been an incredible journey since. What began as a small library of digital textbooks has now grown into a platform offering over 1 million titles in multiple languages.

Our growth has been fueled by the support of visionary investors like Sir Terry Leahy, former CEO of Tesco, whose *recent investment helped us raise \$75M to date*. This funding has enabled us to continue innovating, with projects like Dialogo - our AI-powered Research Assistant.

## Tell us about the working culture at Perlego

Our working culture at Perlego is dynamic, collaborative, and deeply mission-driven. Everyone here shares a passion for making educational

content more accessible and affordable. We believe in fostering an environment where ideas flow freely, teamwork is celebrated, and everyone feels empowered to contribute to our shared vision. It's a culture that thrives on innovation and shared purpose, which is what makes it such an exciting place to work.

## What is your favourite thing about being a founder?

One of my favourite things about being a founder is the opportunity to work with and hire incredibly talented people. Building a team of passionate, skilled individuals who believe in our mission is incredibly rewarding. I also love the freedom that comes with being a founder - the ability to innovate, experiment, and turn a vision into reality. Seeing an idea grow from a simple concept to something that impacts so many lives is a privilege I don't take for granted.

## What's in store for the future?

There's so much to look forward to at Perlego. We're launching exciting new products and expanding on features like our Research Assistant, Dialogo. This tool is designed to enhance the academic experience by helping users streamline the process of finding, organising, and understanding content within our extensive library. It's particularly valuable for students, researchers, and professionals who need smarter, faster ways to access information. It also empowers publishers to drive revenue by directing readers straight to their verified content.

We're also focused on continuing to grow globally, adding more languages and publishers to our platform, and building innovative tools that make learning even more accessible. The future is all about scaling our impact and finding new ways to support our users.

# What's one piece of advice you'd give other founders or to future founders?

Embrace resilience - it's one of the most important qualities a founder can have. Startups are full of challenges, setbacks, and unexpected pivots, and that's just part of the process. The key is to learn from failures rather than fear them. My advice? Make as many mistakes as possible - but do it cheaply! Every stumble is a step forward if you take the time to understand what went wrong and how to improve.

Gauthier van Malderen is the CEO and Founder of [Perlego](#).



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