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Engaging students and enhancing learning
outcomes with Internet & Instructional Technologies

The Free Education Technology Resources eBook

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and hundreds of
resources to help you
get the most out of
them!**

May 2015

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Introduction

Since 2009, EmergingEdTech has sought to help educators learn about tools, techniques, and resources that can help them use information technologies to increase engagement and enhance learning outcomes for their students. These technologies evolve at an ever-increasing pace and keeping up can be a challenge! Fortunately, this also means that every day there are more good quality free resources available to educators.

This digital booklet provides an introduction to many of the wonderful free applications and resources available on the Internet for teachers and those who work with them to use in and out of the classroom as part of the instructional and administrative process. This is the 2015 update of this eBook, and it has been significantly updated since the prior version published in 2013. Whole new sections have been added, less relevant sections have been removed, outdated links have been updated or deleted, some content has been rewritten and reformatted for easier and more pleasurable reading, and so on ... all to help ensure that this resource is packed full of excellent useful information and tools.

Information technologies have more potential than ever to help you address the challenges that you and your students face in this modern day world. You will find plenty of fun, and productive tools and resources here to assist you. Please feel free to share these resources with your colleagues, and to come on out and be a part of the dialogue on EmergingEdTech.com!

In addition to great free resources like those in this eBook, we also cover many other tools, services, techniques, ideas ... a wealth of other teaching and technology related content! Sign up for our articles (4 or 5 new articles every week), and be sure to check out the content from many education and technology expert sources that we share on social media every *day (more on that on the next page)*.

THANK YOU ALL FOR READING & SUBSCRIBING! - Kelly Walsh, 5/11/15

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Chapter 1 - Blogs & Blogging Resources



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The Many Ways Blogs are Being Used in Education Today (and how to get Started)

Well, obviously you're somewhat acquainted with the fact that blogs are being used by teachers and technologists to share resources, opinion, and more ... that's what we're doing at EmergingEdTech!

I am obviously a huge fan of blogging in classrooms and as a professional. The opportunities for writing, sharing, learning, and collaborating are endless! Students and Teachers alike are using blogs in many different ways. One of the great things about blogging is that there are excellent tools available for free (more

on that below). As for how they are being used, here are some great resources for ideas and insights:

- [10 Ways to use Your Edublog to Teach](#)
- [Articles about student blogging from KidBlog.org](#)
- [Curriculum Corner – Using Blogs With Students](#)
- [5 Reasons Your Students Should Blog](#)

There are also many education professionals with their own successful blogs. [Here's 10 of my favorite "edtech" bloggers](#), but remember – teachers, students, librarians, principals, technologists, and many others in the world of education are rocking great blogs too!

Creating your own education related Blog

There are many websites on the Internet where educators can write their own blogs. You can easily set yourself up with your own 'subdomain' (like "tracyteaches.edublogs.com"), where the content is entirely yours. It's surprisingly easy to get started. Two very popular sites are:

[Edublogs.org](#) – This is a very popular blogging tool used by thousands of educators to create and host teacher and student blogs. It is easy to use, has a great deal of available functionality, and there are plenty of resources available to help you learn about using the tool.



[Blogger.com](#) – This is an highly popular free blogging site that is also easy to use. Any "blogspot.com" blogs you come across were created here.



These resources walk you through getting started with these powerful free blogging sites:

- Starting A Blog On Edublogs: <http://help.edublogs.org/getting-started-with-edublogs/>
- How to create a blog with Blogger: <https://support.google.com/blogger/answer/1623800>

For an even more in-depth look at getting started with classroom blogging, check out Mike Wallagher's article, [Blogging in Classroom – How to get Started](#).

Chapter 2 – Class Web Sites & Course Management Tools



Having a safe place online to share content with students is vital in today's world. Many schools offer places for teachers to do this, but if your school doesn't, what do you do? Well, there are many great free options out there. Following are a handful of rather distinct approaches to consider and investigate.

Edmodo

Edmodo is tremendously popular “Course Management” platform among in K-12. While it is not nearly as robust as a full featured LMS, the functionality is rich and free.



In [this article](#), I share 10 reasons why I believe Edmodo is an excellent choice for launching or expanding digital learning in the K-12 classroom. Here's a few of them:

1. **It's Free (and no Ads).** Like John Lithgow used to say in those silly commercials, "*... it's just that simple!*" (They make money through in-application app purchases and they have venture funding capitol).
2. **It's multi-platform and device agnostic** (as the best digital learning tools should be). There are apps for iOS and Android, so you can get to it on smart phones and choose whether to use the tablet app or just use web access on a tablet. Unfortunately, I can't say that it's a flawless cross-platform experience as the iPad app seems a little glitchy, but hopefully they're working to improve on that.
3. **It's a safe environment for kids:** With no advertisements, and a process for inviting and managing which students access which classes, it addresses the fundamental concerns of privacy and safety that are an issue with many other free tools on the Internet that are great for sharing content and social learning, but are not education-specific or particularly student-friendly.

Check out [the full article](#) to learn more about how Edmodo works.

Google Classroom

Google has offered [Google Apps for Education](#) (“a suite of free productivity tools for classroom collaboration”) for years now, and to some extent

[Google Classroom](#) is simply building on that, to evolve GAFE into something much closer to a CMS/LMS tool. That being said, as of April, 2015, Google Classroom is not yet anywhere near comparable to full featured LMS systems like Moodle, Blackboard, Brightspace, etc.



Moodle

Moodle is a full featured LMS that is open-source, which means you can install it for free and manipulate the code to your heart's content. Of course, installing and maintaining Moodle, or editing Moodle code, are intensive technical undertakings. That's one of the reasons a small industry has sprung up around hosting and customizing Moodle.



We use Moodle at The College of Westchester, where I work as CIO. We contract with Moodlerooms, one of the largest hosting and service providers for Moodle (in an interesting development, Moodlerooms was recently purchased by Blackboard). Since Moodle is commonly used in this as paid-service mode, I am not going write much more about it here, but felt it deserved mention, as it is a free option for institutions that choose to host it themselves (and plenty do, but this is most common in Higher Ed, and rare in K-12).

Weebly

So, this takes the dialogue in a much different direction – using easy, free, online tools to create your own site and pages. This is more of an options for the individual teacher than entire schools or districts.



It doesn't get much easier than Weebly (weebly.com) – its free, fast, and very user friendly, but also powerful enough to meet sophisticated needs.

Weebly is a website builder that helps you create a dynamic, interactive site for your classroom. While Weebly comes with a variety of useful features, perhaps the most notable is the fact that the program is entirely free!

Most teachers find the free version of Weebly is more than sufficient. However, there is a Pro version that offers even more perks (the once-a-year fee is about \$40).

I have zero website design skills. Will I be able to figure this thing out?!

Weebly is famous for its user-friendly features. After all, you only need an email address and password to get started!

The entire program operates with a “drag and drop” feature. You won't need to have any computer programming or HTML skills.

After creating your account, you have the option to choose one of any 70 different themes for your site. Once you've chosen a theme, you can customize it to your own preferences.

Even without design or development skills, there are still plenty of features you can add to your site. Weebly makes it easy to create photo galleries and slide shows. You can even embed YouTube videos and add Google maps.

Wikispaces



The last approach to course web sites that I am going to mention is the Wiki (Hawaiian for “quick”). Wiki’s have been around for a long time, and one of popular wiki used in education is [Wikispaces](#). This is entirely free and functionality includes:

- Membership management – Wikispaces can be private, which is great for class websites!
- Share content – Post files and links
- Easy page management – create and link subpages easily
- Discussions – A discussion forum is included

These functions are the basics you need to create and manage a simple but highly functional and interactive class website.

Chapter 3 – Creating Your own Comics and Cartoons for Teaching and Learning



There are so many good free tools for creating comics and cartoons on the web, as well as apps for tablets and smartphones. One of my favorite applications for using comics and cartoon in the classroom is to let students use them for assignments and projects! Following the list of apps below, you will find suggestions for using comics and cartoons in the instructional environment.

Note that some of these tools offer very different types of functionality. It's important to explore them yourself before introducing them students.

Web Apps for Cartooning and Comic Creation

ToonDoo: “Fastest Way to Create Comic Strips and Cartoons”:
www.toondoo.com

BitStrips: www.bitstrips.com/create/comic

Make Belief Comics: www.makebeliefscomix.com/comix (you don't even have to create an account to use this)

Create Your Own Comic from Marvel:

marvel.com/games/play/34/create_your_own_comic

Pixton: www.pixton.com

Comic Creator from Read Write Think:

www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/comic

Strip Creator: www.stripcreator.com

Strip Generator: stripgenerator.com/strip/create

Write Comics: writecomics.com

Toonlet: toonlet.com

Cambridge English Online's Cartoon Creator:

cambridgeenglishonline.com/Cartoon_Maker

Cartoonize Your Pet! www.cartoonizemypet.com

Anmish: anmish.com

“LOL” Builder: builder.cheezburger.com/builder/rage

iPad and Android Apps for Making Comics and Cartoons

Comic Touch 2 (iOS): itunes.apple.com/app/comic-touch-2/id692819867?mt=8

Cartoonatic (iOS): itunes.apple.com/il/app/cartoonatic/id420905479?mt=8

DoInk (iOS): www.doink.com

Comic Puppets Lite (Android):

play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=air.com.touchmultimedia.comicpuppetsfree

Marvel Comics: (Android):

play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.marvel.comics

Draw Anime – Manga Tutorials (Android):

play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=mangatutorial.drawanime

A Few Important Things to Keep in Mind When Using Comic and Cartoon Creation Tools in the Classroom

- Try a few tools yourself and find those you think will work best in your classroom
- Make sure that the app(s) you select actually work in your classroom (they are not blocked, for example)
- Watch out for inappropriate content created by other users

Dozens of Ways to Use Comics and Cartoons in the Classroom

These resources offer dozens and dozens of approaches to using free comic and cartoon creation software in classroom lessons, projects, and other teaching applications:

- [21 Ways to Use MAKEBELIEFSCOMIX.COM in the Classroom](#)
- [20 Ways to Use Comics In Your Classroom](#)
- This 28 page PDF article, [The Benefits of Comic Life in Education](#), contains dozens of ideas, tips, ideas and insights, including a whole section on “Teacher Use of Comic Life in the Classroom”.
- [This Student Interactive](#) about Comic Creator offers numerous ideas for using comics in the classroom broken down by grade level.
- BitStrips offers [this web site](#) focused on unlocking the educational power of comics
- This article, “[How to Use Comic Life in the Classroom](#)“, offers more approaches to using comic strips software in teaching and learning.

Chapter 4 - Educational Games & Gamification



Image Source: http://technabob.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/video_game_badges_prickie.jpg

The Internet is ripe with free games that can be helpful to teachers and students alike. Of course, there are also a lot of lesser-quality tools out there, and sites that might burden your computer with viruses and the like, so it helps to have a vetted list to work from.

In this chapter, we provide a number of nice educational game sites and some other gaming tools, but first we'll start with a couple pieces about the benefits of educational gaming, and how to get started with 'gamification'.

Note that if you're using iPads in the classroom, the chapter on iPads contains lots of educational game information for the popular tablet.

Research Findings Supporting the Benefits of Gamification in Education

There are myriad ways in which “gamification” can play a positive role in the educational setting. Tess Pajaron sent me a great article from Open Colleges about [“The Virtues of Daydreaming And 30 Other Surprising \(And Controversial\) Research Findings About How Students Learn”](#). What really struck me about this article is how many of these findings indicated benefits that can come from the use of gaming in education. Some of the findings directly addressed the subject, while others were indirectly indicative of potential positive outcomes of gaming in an instructional context.

Of course, the “gamification” of educational generally refers to the idea of incorporating gaming elements in instruction and instructional tools, such as the use of digital badges in an online learning application. But with findings such as those below indicating that game playing can enhance the learning process, it is logical to assume that the use of gaming mechanics and concepts in educational tools and processes can also yield benefits. Naturally, it is left to the reader to draw their own conclusions after perusing this content and the original published sources cited.

1. Game playing can develop a positive attitude towards mathematics for children

Mathematics can be a dry subject, “full of repetitive problems, formulas, and exams”. According to [research from Deakin University](#), incorporating games in the curriculum dramatically alters student’s attitudes about math. “More kids were able to articulate positive emotions surrounding math, as well as an increase in confidence about different concepts. There was more energy for math, more motivation, and ultimately more success. It seemed that playing math games helped to alleviate the tediousness of repetitive problem solving.”

2. Children who construct their own video games experience increased cognitive and social growth

[Research outlined in the Lookstein Online Journal](#) indicates that “children show cognitive growth when they are given the task of creating their own video game. In order to develop such a game, students must use prior knowledge, create links between scenes, and take control of their learning through trial and error. Children must use logic, survival skills, and generate new ideas and solutions in order to complete the game.”

3. Mature make-believe play provides the most beneficial context for children's development

“Imaginative scenarios, in which children take on roles, props, themes, and collaborate with other children, is one of the most crucial avenues for development.” Many different games provide such scenarios, offering an opportunity for development. Of course it is also very important that kids also have time to play in traditional social groups. In [an article](#) written by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the argument is made that “play is an ever-evolving skill that children must be guided through. The classroom must allow room for play-based scenarios, as they are one of the building blocks of learning. It is within this context that children build the preliminary skills for advanced academic understanding.”

4. Play-based learning increases children's attention span

“In this study done by the Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology, (*sorry, looks like the study is offline now – KW 5/11/15*) researchers took a closer look at how teacher's beliefs regarding early education influence the classroom environment. A group of teachers partook in the study and here were some of the findings.

- When teachers have confidence in a child's ability to learn independently, the child/teacher relationship is stronger.

- When teachers have confidence in a child's ability to learn independently, the child/teacher relationship is stronger. Teachers are then able to take a more "facilitative" role and observe the student actively learning. The educators also recognized that when children are allowed to learn through play, there is far less time spent on behavior management. A child's attention span is also longer.
- Play-based learning shifts the focus of learning from the outcome or goal, to the process."

5. Playing scary and violent video games help children master their fears in real life.

While many studies have been done centered on the negative impacts and consequences of prolonged use of video games, a study by Cheryl K. Olson appeared in the [Review of General Psychology](#) that suggests there are numerous psychological benefits to playing video games.

"In boys who struggle with stress, fear, and anger- negative emotions that can have violent consequences- video games acted as a safe alternative for the release of pent up emotion. There were other findings as well, comprising the fun of 'unreality' - experimenting with a world where natural laws are suspended- plus the fun of challenge, mastery, and playing with different identities. These findings reveal that video games can be an alternate way to release negative emotion, and help children alleviate their innate desire for risk and adventure."

7. Chess makes kids smart

Patrick S. McDonald is the Youth Coordinator for the Ontario Chess Association and he has compiled a number of papers and selected research [highlighting the benefits of chess](#), with a specific focus on how it education. Chess makes students, "slow down, concentrate, use precise thinking, [and use] both inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as recognizing difficult and complex patterns." There are plenty of online chess games, so this is yet another way in which computerized gaming can have a positive impact on a child's educational development. That

being said, using a traditional chess set is a wonderful experience, so be sure to encourage students to try that as well, and provide access to chess set if you can.

8. Music and movement augment children's language capabilities during the preschool years

“Research [shows that](#) children who engage in music from a young age have a more finely tuned ability to speak and communicate. Though much of modern education focuses primarily on visual sight for learning, the auditory processes are critically important for language acquisition. The younger the child, the more important music becomes. Children who engage in music from a young age have a more finely tuned ability to speak and communicate.” Gamers know that background music is a part of many electronic games, and now we know that this exposure to music provides yet another benefit of gaming in the instructional context!



Getting Started with the Game-based Classroom

Starting slowly is the key for those new to gamification in higher education. Trying to jump straight into a game-based curriculum is not only ill-advised, but probably impossible. Introducing games into the classroom will require a conscious plan and a slow incorporation of game elements in the early stages of course design. Here's how to start:

1. Determine the course objectives and do some basic searching to see if others are meeting similar objectives with games or if there are games that could be used to meet specific learning goals. An excellent place to begin both looking for resources and connecting with a community that will be happy to support gamification efforts is at [Games for Change](#). This community dedicated to the use of games in learning provides F2F meetups as well as a wealth of options for connecting with others online.

2. Once several suggestions for games that might meet the learning objectives have been found, sit down and play the games to determine if they meet the course goals. Keep in mind that it can take up to 40 hours to complete some games, so start planning and playing early in the process. There are also many smaller games that can be equally useful in the classroom and that don't take much time to learn – Angry Birds is one example that could provide an excellent introduction for physics students.
3. While playing, start thinking about the logistics of using games in the classroom. Will students be required to purchase the game? Does the classroom have enough computers or is an appropriate room accessible? Will the campus IT department support the installation of games? If not, are there online options available?
4. Also, begin to think about how to evaluate student success in playing games. Most games have built-in feedback and progress is easy to track. Will students be required to reach a certain level, fulfill certain game objectives, or just play for X number of hours? Decide based on actually playing the game, what best aligns with the course objectives.
5. Finally, think about where the game best fits into the curriculum. Is it an introduction to a concept, a transitional activity, or a summative exercise? Remember that there will also need to be time allowed to either teach students to play or for them to learn on their own. Some games can have a steep learning curve, so be ready to help students at first.

These are some of the basic steps for getting started in thinking about how games could support learning in the higher education classroom. Another option to consider is having students make their own simple games. There are hundreds of free resources available for this and having students create the games themselves opens up a whole new array of learning possibilities. Either way, gaming can provide a refreshing spark in any field. Once gamification has started, it is just a short hop to creating an entirely game-based curriculum.

10 Free Educational Game Sites

In 2009, I searched out and visited a bunch of sites with free educational games and selected the ten I thought were most useful and appropriate to education. In addition to a brief overview of each site, I have also attempted to define the grade range that each site is applicable to. Most of the sites listed here are geared towards K-12 (with many leaning towards K-6 or so), but some do have fun games that will challenge the Higher Ed student and adults as well. Take one for a spin today!

Funbrain (Grades K through 8): This popular site from Pearson Education features 'Arcades' specific to Math and Reading, along with the 'Classic Funbrain' games such as Math Baseball and Grammar Gorillas. Funbrain also has resources specifically for teachers, organized on this [Teacher's home page](#).

Discovery.com's Games (Grades 3 and up): Dozens of activities, organized into 4 categories: Games, Quizzes, Puzzles, and Interactives. This is a high quality site, and it was recommended by several instructors in my children's classes. I enjoyed trying out some of these games, and the site is part of the overall Discovery.com site, which is rich with informative and fun content.

Sheppard Software (All Ages): This site provides a wealth of free games, puzzles, quizzes, and more. An impressive, rich resource of fun educational games and activities. No registration required. I have to say that I personally enjoyed this site quite a bit, partaking in quizzes, completing puzzles, and checking out the many resources there.

FunSchool (pre-K through Grade 6): If you go to the Parents & Teachers section on this site, the games are grouped by Preschool, Kindergarten & 1st Grade, 2nd & 3rd, and 4th and 5th. The site offers more than 300 interactive games and activities that are fun and easy to use. Activities include matching numbers and shapes for preschoolers and geography, math and history for

third through sixth graders. *[This site appears to have transitions to Disney ownership now – KW 5/11/15]*

[National Geographic Channel's Games Site](#) (Grades 3 and up): This site features a variety of games and interactives and leans towards various science and history based adventures and activities, rather than the traditional subjects-specific types of games on many other sites. There's a lot of cool stuff here, like Fossil Hunts, Journey to the Edge, Rhino Rescue, Monster Fish of the Congo, Earth in Balance, and How Taboo are You?

[PrimaryGames](#) (Grades K through 6): Lots of fun games here, covering common subjects like Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and more.

[Educational Games \(and Simulations\) on NobelPrize.org](#) (Grades 6 and up + Higher Ed): As stated on the site, "These games and simulations, based on Nobel Prize-awarded achievements, will teach and inspire you while you're having FUN!" This is one of the more high end sites in terms of the level of content. Challenging fun for middle school students, high schoolers, college students, and adults.

[Prongo](#) (pre-K through middle school): The games here are divided by age level (3-6, 6-9, 9-12). This is a fun site with a dozen or more games in each category.

[Childtopia](#) (pre-K to 6): This site has versions in 5 languages, and 9 categories of activities, including Games, Learn to Draw, Listen and Reading Comprehension, Learn to Draw the Numbers, and so on. It appears to be predominantly Spanish based on the ads that surround the playing area. There is a premium version that eliminates ads and provides a full screen interface for just \$12/year.

Shortly after the above post I learned of these additional sites. Most of these sites offer games that are appropriate for K through 6, with a few offering some games applicable to students in grades 7 and higher.

[Knowledge Adventure](#): “Knowledge Adventure has been making educational games for kids for over two decades. Working with child experts, developmental psychologists and educators, it produces games loved by parents and children alike. The fun educational games created by Knowledge Adventure have won many awards, including the iParenting Media Award, the Toy Man Award of Excellence and the National Parenting Seal of Approval, to name a few. Here is Knowledge Adventure’s collection of one hundred fun, free online educational games for kids.”

[Learning Games For Kids](#): “Educational games are a great tool for building foundation math and language skills that today’s elementary school curriculum requires. These online learning games and songs for kids are fun, teach important skills for preschool and elementary school kids and they’re free. Want educational games that help build skills in math, language, science, social studies, and more? You’ve come to the right place!”

[Multiplication.com](#): “This site contains the techniques, tips, and secrets used by master teachers!”

[Play Kids Games](#): “Play Kids Games provides free online kids games that are both fun and educational. Aimed at ages pre-K through middle school, Play Kids Games offers kids a safe environment to discover their abilities and learn new skills with interactive and fun computer games.”

[Hooda Math](#): This site contains math games organized into three sections: Geometry Games, Arithmetic Games, and Logic Games. The Hooda site also contains a variety of additional resources for math teachers and students.

[4Kids.org](#) : “Take a break from your homework and kick back with these fun games from Academic Skill Builders! Click a game button below to

play.” Site contains many games, grouped into these categories: Language Arts, Addition and Subtraction, Multiplication & Division, Fractions and Ratio Games, Angels & Coordinates, and ‘Fun Stuff’.

Math Playground: “Welcome to Math Playground, an action-packed site for elementary and middle school students. Practice your math skills, play a logic game and have some fun!”

PowerPoint Jeopardy in the Classroom

This is a great way to have some fun and reinforce learning in the classroom (or at home!).

Here's is a templates to try out (it ma be a little slow to load):

<http://elainefitzgerald.com/Jeopardy1Template.ppt>

It takes some time to come up with 50 answers and enter them in a template, but the result (playing the game!) can be a lot of fun. It’s easy to envision this being useful and fun in a classroom setting, for students old enough to be comfortable with the “answer and question” format (probably grades 4 – 12+).

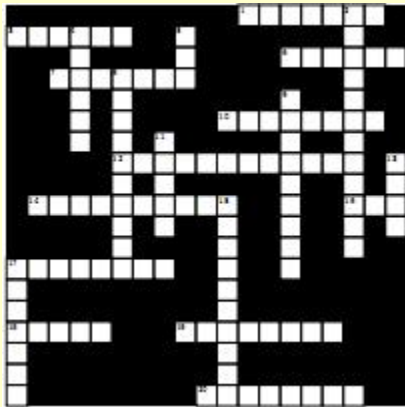
Some considerations to keep in mind:

- Be a little creative about breaking out of the three-player structure, to let everyone enjoy the fun, or create small groups to create and play their own games.
- Plan how you will simulate the “buzzer” - that is, how you will decide which player gets to respond to each clue first (*we went with the first to put up their hand after the question was asked, but there was a fair amount of squabbling over who was first each time, and whether someone put up their hand before the question was finished, etc.*).
- Presenting this through a projector would be nice, or on an Interactive Whiteboard.

- Be sure to have a Final Jeopardy question prepared (there is no template for this).

Fun tool for the classroom – simple Crossword Puzzle maker

This is a fun little tool I came across.



This tool will allow you to create a simple crossword puzzle by plugging in a bunch of words and clues. The result isn't exactly NY Times worthy, but it works, and you might find this to be a fun tool to create a topic-specific crossword for your students, or to let them create one.

Create your own simple Crossword Puzzle at:
<http://www.armoredpenguin.com/crossword/>

Chapter 5: File Sharing Tools



Creative Commons licensed image source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/61423903@N06/8772045680/>

Original blog post contributed by Wes Burns.

Way back when I was still in school, at least half my teachers shared things online. Whether it was syllabuses or lecture notes, teachers posted documents online all the time. The one drawback was that many times, teachers used school-issued software to share these files online. This software was frequently buggy and/or difficult to use.

There's a better way to share files with students. Well actually, there are *several* better ways to share files with students. The following online storage tools use the power of the cloud to give you free storage and simple file sharing. As an added benefit, these tools translate well into real-world experience for students. It is safe

to bet that at least several of your students will be exposed to these tools (or similar tools) when they enter the workforce.

The following file sharing tools are free to use up to a certain limit. Each tool offers a couple gigs of free storage space that you can use to post things online and to receive documents from students. If you work primarily with text documents, presentations and spreadsheets, a few free gigs will last a long time.

Dropbox

www.dropbox.com

Dropbox is a big player in the online file storage game thanks to its simple setup and powerful features. The file sharing options for Dropbox are flexible and make

it easy to share documents with students. Just create a free Dropbox account and specify a folder on your computer. Any file that you store within that folder is saved online.

You can then share any of these files by clicking on that file and creating a download link. From there, you can send that download link to any number of students. All they have to do is click on the link and download the file. Students do not have to create an account to access these files; all they need is the download link.

Box.com

www.box.com

Box.com is a major competitor to Dropbox and offers a similar set of features. You can sign up for a Box.com account and get 5 GB free. Any file that you store in your Box.com account can then be shared by generating custom download links. Give those links to your students via e-mail and they can download any file with ease.

If you upgrade to a business account (\$15 a month), you'll get more file sharing

features. Paid accounts let you share entire folders with your students. You can then store as many files in there as you want and your students will have access to every file. You can also edit permissions and give students the ability to post their own files in the shared folder.

SugarSync

www.sugarsync.com

SugarSync is a popular alternative to Dropbox and Box.com. This storage company offers 5 GB of free storage space with full access to all the features. Free accounts never expire and you won't be bugged to upgrade. If you never go over your 5 GB of storage space, you will never have to pay to use SugarSync. If you do decide to upgrade, you can get 30 GB of storage space for \$4.99 a month.

Both file sharing and folder sharing are supported by SugarSync. You can share any file by uploading it to your account, right-clicking on the file and generating a direct download link. Entire folders can also be shared. As the owner of the account, you can customize the permissions so that students are either restricted to downloading files or are able to upload their own files. You can also password-protect folders and files.

SpiderOak

<https://spideroak.com/>

I added this one, it wasn't in the original article – KW, 5/6/15

I recently converted from DropBox to SpiderOak because the content on DropBox is not encrypted (but on SpiderOak it is). This means that any hacker with reasonable skills may be able to snag your content off of wireless networks – whenever DropBox is synching up to devices across a wireless network, that file info is readily readable to anyone with some skills that can pick on the Internet in a short time.

SpiderOak works on many platforms, and offers 2 GB of storage for free.

Chapter 6 – Interactive Collaboration Tools



There is no shortage of great tools for interactive collaboration in the classroom. In this chapter we offer free tools that are pretty easy to use. Where available, we've also suggested tools that require no sign up for students, which can help to make it simpler to try them in your classroom.

Some of these tools require a computer, but some also work with smartphones or tablets.

Collaborative Discussions and 'Boards'

Here we have three very different examples of online discussion boards, each using very different approaches.

Tackk

With Tackk.com, you can post one or more pieces of digital content and then have online discussion about that content. Students will have to create accounts in order to post, but they can use Instagram, Facebook, Google, or other popular accounts to get started in just a couple clicks. Tackk discussion boards can be private and password protected, so that's a bonus as well.

Check out [this 3 Minute Teaching With Technology Tutorial video](#) to get a quick introduction to how Tackk works.

Learnist

Guest blogger Franca Gilbert shared why she loves Learnist in this February 2013 article, [Why I Love and Use Learnist \(and Why You Should Too\)](#).

This education-focused free media and resource sharing site is a great tool for teachers and students.

I love [Learnist](#). I've had an account with them since it was in invite-only beta form and now, luckily for everyone, anyone can create an account with their Facebook credentials or with a valid email.

What Is Learnist?

Learnist allows you to create "[learn boards](#)" that are dedicated to a particular topic of choice. For example, I teach Advanced Placement (AP) French through the College Board. The course is divided into six themes. I created learn boards for each of these themes. The learn boards are basically "file folders" that keep track of all the websites and resources I use to teach each of the [themes](#), as well as a number of other topics. Each individual resource posted is called a "learning."

You don't just have to limit your learn boards to traditionally educational topics. Are you a great cook? Are you passionate about personal fitness? How about a champion for a charitable cause? You can create learn boards for all of these and more. The idea is that anyone can learn about anything they are interested in just by logging on. I'd always wondered exactly how the Electoral College works...well, there are learn boards created by people "in the know" who are sharing this knowledge.

Recently at my school, we've started an Online Educational Resources (OER) initiative to reduce spending on print textbooks. Each teacher has been charged with finding resources online, evaluate them, and possibly adopt them into their own resource library to facilitate instruction. I've created a [learn board](#) for this and am encouraging all of my colleagues to use it for that purpose, too. Once I evaluate a resource as viable, I put it on my learn board.

Why I Love it!

Here is what I love about Learnist: it allows me to keep all of my relevant resources together in one place; it is accessible to me all the time and I can re-visit any of the saved resources immediately; plus, I can share my "page" with my students and they can easily access any of the sites that I send them to. They don't have to remember websites; I don't have to send them laundry lists of links. It has made sharing resources easier and faster. You can even post your own content, which I have done with my YouTube channel, but not with files or pictures at this time.

Once you have an account, you can follow people with similar interests, and they can follow you, you can "like" learn boards or individual "learnings" (the individual resources posted on the boards). You can make comments on boards and read others' comments, as well. You can even collaborate with other colleagues on boards for cross-curricular activities. So far, all of my experiences have been very positive.

Does this sound like Pinterest? Yes, it is a lot like Pinterest. I love Pinterest, too, but it is blocked at my school. Learnist is not. Learnist is dedicated to Learning. I have not found one iota of inappropriate or offensive material on this site.

Is there an app for that? Yes! Learnist launched its iPad and iPhone apps back in August 2012.

What can Learnist do for you? I think that all depends on you. Maybe you can find your own creative way of using the site with your students. However you use it, I am sure you'll find it to be a positive experience.

Getting Started

You can get started with Learnist by going to a board called "[How to Use Learnist on the Web](#)" created by its founder, Farbood Nivi.

Sign up for Learnist at <http://learni.st/>.

News Activist

When students write original content on subjects they are passionate about, they bolster their self-confidence and take a bold step into the world, learning more about what they can achieve. This is why a site like NewsActivist is a site that I felt deserved sharing.

NewsActivist (<http://newsactivist.com>) was created in 2012 by teacher Gabriel Flacks, Humanities Department Coordinator at Champlain College Saint-Lambert. This free site is being used by students who are collaborating across classrooms and across the world. You'll find students writing about a broad array of topics, typically as part of specific assignments in college classes.

We've used NewsActivist at The College of Westchester and students and teachers alike have found it to be a productive, engaging experience.

If this sounds like something your students might benefit from, click over to their About Page, here: <http://newsactivist.com/en/global-educational-network-designed-and-teachers-and-students>, and think about registering your class!



Collaborative Documents

[Google Drive](#) (a.k.a. Google Docs) is very popular, for good reason, and

[Zoho Office Suite](#) is a great alternative to the Google offering. Being able to collaboratively edit documents is powerful!



Google Docs/Drive (drive.google.com)

You must create a Google Account in order to use Google Drive, but once that is done, sharing and collaboratively editing documents is very easy. Google Drive offers word processing documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and forms (which appear to actually be for surveys). Naturally, the use of each of these tools differs in various ways from other tools (such as the ubiquitous Microsoft Office), but it is not too hard to learn the different command sets. Advanced functions can be tougher to figure out, or may simply not be available. There is extensive help available at <http://support.google.com/drive/>.

The collaboration process is simple: invite another user to collaboratively edit a document by sending them an email using the “Share” function. The invited user will get an email, and will also see the shared document in their Google Drive menu, and can simply open it and edit along with the original user. I imagine it might get rather confusing if a lot of users were editing a document at the same time, but in my test the process was quite manageable, as one user’s changes quickly showed up in the other user’s copy of the document. There is a revision history maintained automatically.

Zoho Office Suite (www.zoho.com)

As with Google Docs, I tested the Zoho Office Suite by creating a couple accounts, starting a new document (in Zoho Writer), inviting someone (my second account) to collaborate on the document, and then edited the document as both users. The process was straightforward. As with Google, a revision history is provided, but

(unlike Google) one has to be in ‘locked’ mode (not sharing the document) in order to access it.

Using the different Zoho apps could take some learning, and each Zoho application has an FAQ page (under the Help menu) that provides links to extensive tutorial information. For example, [here is the FAQ page for Zoho Writer](#). In addition to their free service for individuals, Zoho also offers a Business edition for free for up to 10 users, which provides email with “your personalized domain based email id”, as well as “other features and functionalities that are specifically designed to address the needs of an organization.”

Both Google Drive and the Zoho Office Suite are highly functional environments for collaboration, and each also offers a wide array of additional application tools.

The bottom line is that they are both solid apps and you’re really not going to go wrong with either one of them.

Titanpad (titanpad.com)

What about collaboration on the iPad? Well, a number of the tools in this listing will work fine on many platforms, but Titanpad is geared specifically towards the iPad. TitanPad lets people work on one document simultaneously, and you can get a space for your team on your own private subdomain for free.



Collaborative Mind Mapping, Diagrams, Flow Charts

These tools lend themselves readily to brainstorming and other collaborative efforts.

Bubbl.us

bubbl.us (note that this is spelled correctly – there is no “e”).

This free tool allows users to easily create bubble maps, which can be exported in

various formats, saved (by exporting and re-importing them in an appropriate format), and edited collaboratively. I found it very easy to use. Their “help” section can be found here: <https://bubbl.us/help/topics>.

11th Grade English teacher Ben Davis [explains](#) how Bubble.us helped his students to network: “Typically I have trouble getting them to get excited about word webs. However, they were VERY excited about doing this. The guys loved how the bubbles exploded when you deleted them, and the girls loved the colors. However, the thing they seemed most interested in was the fact that they could network.”

Cacoo (cacoo.com)

Create flowcharts and diagrams online with real time collaboration. This a very useful tool in a wide variety of academic disciplines, and being able to collaboratively edit them makes Cacoo a powerful application. Here's a link to learn about and access their free Academic plan:

<https://cacoo.com/lang/en/academic>.

Limited Time Trial Options for Collaborative Mind Mapping

[Mindmeister](#) appears to provide similar functionality to Bubbl.us, for a fee. A free 30 day trial is provided, and for academic users there is a highly reduced fee, and a custom subdomain can be licensed. Mindmeister has received a number of awards. “Demogirl.com” has made [this brief \(3 minute\) video](#) available to provide some quick insight into this application. [Mindmapper.com](#) is another application that charges, but also provides a free trial, and a reduced fee for academic use. This is an impressive looking site, with an array of offerings, support, FAQs, and much more. The product comes in Professional, Standard, and Academic versions, as well as MindMapper Jr. for kids.

To investigate this category of application even further, Wikipedia's [list of mind mapping software](#) is a great resource.



Collaborative Online White Boards

Twiddla

Our articles on online interactive whiteboard tools have been extremely popular, so clearly teachers love these tools. One of the easiest to get started with is Twiddla.com. You don't even need to create an account, and inviting others to collaborate on Twiddla is quick and easy (just hit the green GO button to start a session and use the Invite option).

Online IWBs are powerful resources for collaboration since you and your students can edit the white board simultaneously. Learn more about Twiddla and five other online IWB's in [this article](#).

Vyew (vyew.com)

Vyew is a collaborative interactive white board. It's come a long way since we [first covered it on EmergingEdTech](#) years ago. Not only can you create a collaborative whiteboard on line, you can upload images and document and write over them, have a discussion around them, and more. Check out the "What is Vyew" video on their home page to learn more. The free version only allows for a small set of users (10 real time participants), but that can work well if you set up a few separate groups. Larger groups of participants aren't too expensive, starting at \$10/mo.

Check out several other free online whiteboards [in this article](#).



Collaborative Social Media Tools

Social Media certainly offer opportunities for collaboration (especially when we want to interact with the world outside of the classroom). Of course, some highly popular social media sites can be quite distracting or inappropriate. Remember that many social media tools are limited to use by users of age 13 or over!

Here are a few different social media applications of different types that can lend themselves to collaborative uses.

Twitter

Students will have to create accounts in order to use [Twitter.com](https://twitter.com), but it's quick and easy to do so. Once students have accounts, Twitter serves as a great interactive 'backchannel' and it can be used in various other collaborative manners. Check out [this old popular favorite article](#), which offers access to over 100 ideas for using Twitter in the classroom.

Fakebook (student-friendly Facebook alternative)

There are plenty of ways to use Facebook to collaborate and interact, but the world's most popular social media site is not where you want younger students to be. Fortunately, [Fakebook from Classtools](#) exists to solve that problem! As soon as you open Fakebook, it will prompt you to create your first post, so it's easy to get going with it. Check out [this gallery of examples](#) to see how students have used Fakebook creatively.

Diigo (Social Bookmarking Site)

[This article from EDUCAUSE](#) is focused on Diigo and explains how, "Social bookmarking websites enhance and improve the learning experience by encouraging group collaboration and making organizing and saving web resources faster and easier for students." Diigo, "allows users to highlight any part of a web page and attach sticky notes to specific highlights or to a whole page. These annotations can be kept private, shared with a Diigo group, or forwarded as a special link to other individuals or groups for collaborative purposes." Click over to the [full article](#) to learn more.

Check out the chapter on *Social Networking Applications and Social Learning* for more ideas on collaborating with social media tools.

Chapter 7 – Learning Content Resources: Educational Videos, Lectures, Podcasts, and more!



A Dozen Great Free Online Video Lecture Sites

A collection of web sites with thousands of free video lectures and related course materials, including many offerings from major universities.

There are thousands of video-taped course lectures, and many other more complete course offerings, available for free on the Internet today. The quality and quantity of these offerings is growing and improving daily.

How educators and students choose to leverage these types of resources is also evolving. As stated on the [Opencast Project](#) web site, “openly accessible course videos help draw attention to a professor’s work, they can keep alumni engaged and informed, and students often supplement their studies with the material.” It should be interesting to see how members of the academic community choose to use this type of resource, in and out of the classroom, in coming years.

General Video Lecture Sites

All of the sites have directories and search tools to facilitate finding content you may desire. Of course, some overlap in these offerings (that is, the same videos on multiple sites) is inevitable.

Academic Earth: This site provides hundreds of free video lectures from professors at leading universities such as Yale, Stanford, Harvard, and more.

Apple's "iTunes U": Apple's vast resource contains over 250,000 lectures, videos, films, and more. Definitely worth being aware of.

The Open Education Consortium (formerly the open Courseware Consortium): According to Makeuseof.com, "Simply put, the OpenCourseWare Consortium is the best place to begin looking for free online video lectures".

Free Video Lectures: This site's vision: "Everybody from every nook and corner of the world should be able to access the best Knowledge Resources available."

Videlectures.net: Almost 7000 video lectures, with a high emphasis on Computer Science. This site makes good use of Web 2.0 tools, having a Facebook Group and Twitter account. This site also introduced me to the interesting "Opencast Project" open courseware initiative.

LearnersTV: "Video Lectures, Video Courses, Science Animations, Lecture Notes, Online Test, Lecture Presentations. Absolutely Free"

Lecture Fox (now **onlinecourses.com**): This site is a central link repository with a very simple interface (I like the simple way in which they indicate whether each lecture has video, audio, and/or notes available).

YouTube EDU: While not all of these videos are lectures, many of them are. A search for "lecture" in this special YouTube section yields "about 60,000" results!

Video Lectures Sites from Specific Universities

These universities make lecture content available to the general public (*and yes, it*

is quite likely that many of these videos are featured in some of the more general sites above).

MIT OpenCourseWare: Thousands of courses. MIT is leading the way with Open CourseWare. “Free lecture notes, exams, and videos from MIT. No registration required.”

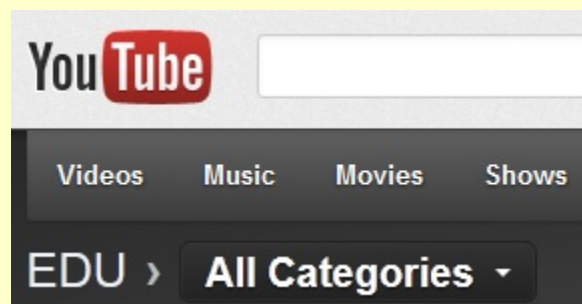
Stanford University's YouTube Channel: Now well over 1,400 videos, including many lectures (unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be any obvious way to search this content in an organized manner). The example video lecture below, “Einstein's Theory of Relativity”, by Professor Leonard Susskind in Sept. 2008, is from this channel.

UCLA “BruinCast”: Most of these are ‘restricted’ (to students in those courses, I assume), but there are still many that are not. Note that to view lectures with video available, you'll need to download Real Player.

There are many other educational video sources on the Internet (*for some examples, see the ‘Related Posts’ listing below*), but I have chosen to concentrate on college level materials in this post (although a few of these sources do contain K-12 level offerings).

10 Recommended YouTube Edu-tainment Channels

Original blog post contributed by Katie Brunson.



YouTube can be a great technological resource for teachers to use in the classroom. But with so many videos and channels, how can educators find quality content without watching hours of video? Here are ten great channels that are certain to provide educational content worthy to spark student's minds.

By the way, if you are concerned about having students come across inappropriate content on YouTube, you can choose to embed selected videos or a playlist in a web page, so they don't have to go to YouTube to watch them. [This page](#) provides resources that show you to tackle this.

1. [Smithsonian Videos](#) – From the national museum complex in the nation's capital comes this channel, with resources on everything from art and history to science and technology. The playlists on this channel are well organized so that it's easy to find what you're looking for.
2. [TED Talks](#) – These lectures from experts in all areas are best for high school and college students. This is another well-organized channel that organizes videos by topics such as the ocean, the workings of our brains, and life lessons. Some talks have featured famous speakers such as Bill Clinton, Jane Goodall, and Bill Gates.
3. [PBS](#) – This resource is great for showing children artistic performances, scientific documentaries, and more. It is also a great way to access programs such as NOVA and Masterpiece Theatre.
4. [Biography Channel](#) – This channel is great to use when your class is leaning about important historical figures. The lives of authors, scientists, presidents, thinkers, and more can apply to lessons in almost any subject.
5. [National Geographic](#) – Unlike other YouTube channels, this one offers full programs. There are over 3000 uploaded videos on all kinds of science topics. While there are ads on this channel, the quality of the content makes up for it.
6. [The Real Bill Nye the Science Guy](#) – Bill Nye is still one of the best video resources for teaching science to children. This channel offers clips from each one of his 100 shows on various science topics.

7. [**Discovery Channel**](#) – Here is another resource for educational clips in science and technology. This channel offers clips from their popular shows such as How Stuff Works and Mythbusters.
8. [**Reel NASA**](#) – This is the official NASA resource for students who are learning about space and space travel. There are videos featuring inside views of the International Space Station, interview with real astronauts, and much more.
9. [**American Museum of Natural History**](#) – If you teach science, biology, geography, or another natural history field, this is the channel for you. There are playlists on all kinds of interesting topics such as dinosaurs, space, and the human brain.
10. [**Khan Academy**](#) – The mission of Khan Academy is to provide a free education to anyone anywhere. It offers videos on practically every topic imaginable, so you’re likely to find just what you need to show in class. It’s also a great resource to offer to your students for extracurricular learning.

MOOCs

Today’s MOOC offerings are expanding rapidly in terms of academic subjects covered, numbers of institutions offering them, and students partaking in them. To provide a sense of the widely varied approaches that are being taken with the creation and delivery of MOOCs, here’s a sampling of start-ups, major players, and a few popular individual courses:

- **Udemy:** Making no bones about it, the ‘About’ blurb on the home page of the [**Udemy**](#) site states, “Our goal is to disrupt and democratize education by enabling anyone to learn from the world’s experts.” They have hundreds of thousands of students taking courses from their selection of hundred of classes courses covering a vast array of subjects. They have both paid and free courses, and these include courses from many different universities.

- **Coursera:** This growing powerhouse in the world of MOOCs, [Coursera](#) currently hosts courses from Princeton University, Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, and University of Pennsylvania. They offer dozens of courses, covering subjects from “A History of the World” to “Vaccines”. These courses are non-credit, but many colleges are starting to consider the possibility of offering credit for satisfactory completion of MOOC courses.
- **Udacity:** As of the writing of this article, recent start-up [Udacity](#) is offering only a handful of course, all in the computer sciences field. Founded by three roboticists who believed that much of the educational value of their university classes could be offered online, over 160,000 students enrolled in their first offering, “Introduction to Artificial Intelligence.” Pretty impressive.

Web Site WatchKnow.org (1000's of Free Educational Videos)

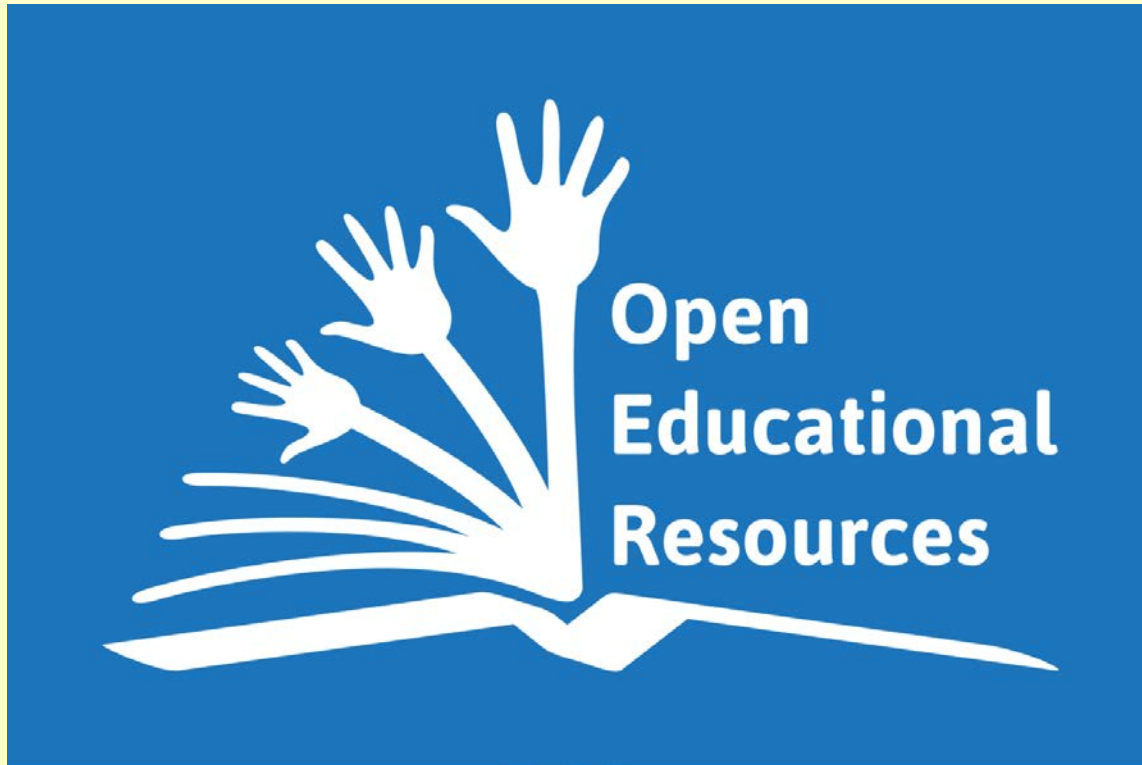
[WatchKnow](#), launched in 2009, is a web site that hosts educational videos. These videos have been “deeply and usefully categorized according to subject, education level, and placed in the order in which topics are typically taught” (*quote from WatchKnow's [About page](#)*).



All the videos on WatchKnow are reviewed by a “Media Review Panel”, and the site is overseen by an Advisory Council consisting predominantly of educators. This non-profit site offers a unique Age Filter, which can be coupled with a Search box and Topical Categories and Subcategories to help users search the growing database of videos for useful content.

WatchKnow is powerful addition to the growing list of educational video web sites on the Internet, and they have attempted to provide a somewhat unique twist with their age level and categorization scheme.

Chapter 8 - Open Educational Resources



Creative Commons licensed image source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_educational_resources

Awareness has Been Slow to Evolve, but OER Appears to be Well Positioned for Growth Thanks to Numerous Encouraging Developments.

Have you heard of OER ... Open Educational Resources? It seems that many educators have not.

Open Education Resources are FREE, that's right ... free and open educational resources, such as textbooks, learning content, lessons, and more. The concept of [OER was formally coined back in 2002](#), and the quantity and quality of these resources has expanded steadily ever since, yet awareness has been slow to build.

So when is the promise of OER going to move from largely ‘hype’ to reality? Will OER remain a piecemeal pipedream or is it getting closer to reaching its potential to radically alter how teaching and learning resources are created and distributed?

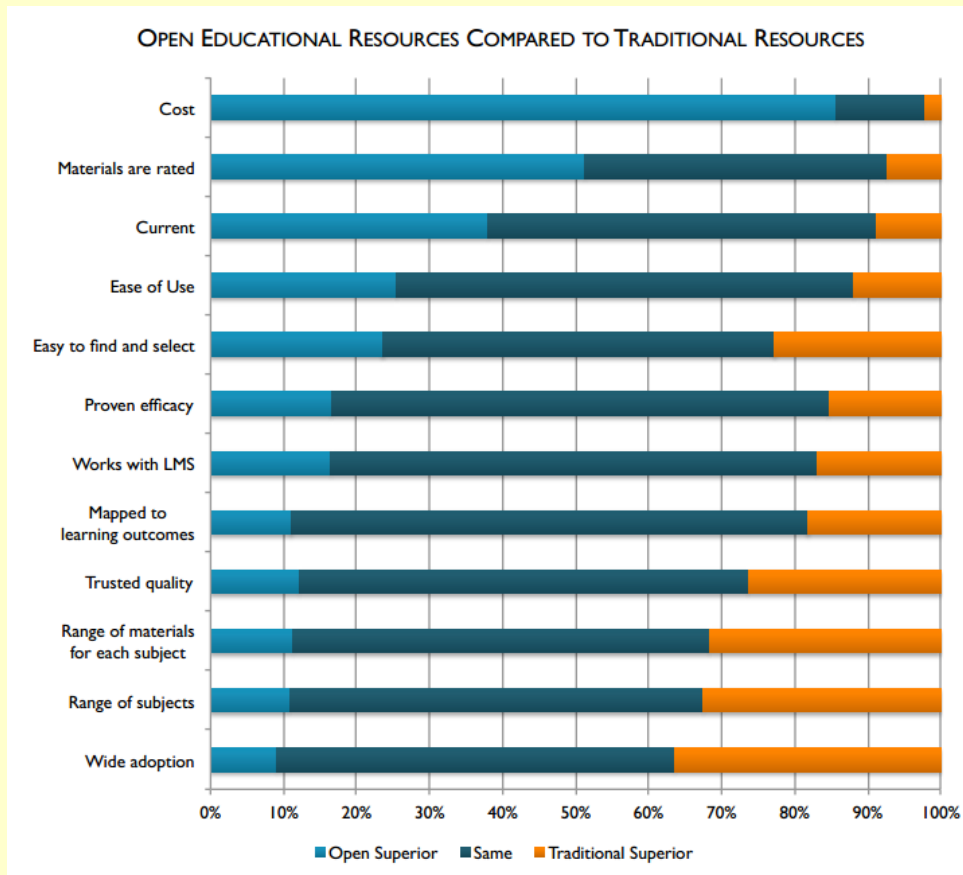
As I’ve been working on the new update to the EmergingEdTech Free Education Technology Resources eBook, I decided to add a section on OER. I kicked around the Web a bit to ascertain how the promise of Open Educational Resources is developing these days.

What I found was a little frustration, offset by news and resources that are surely keeping the dream of a robust world of OER alive!

“Open but Undiscovered”

The November Inside Higher Ed 2014 article [*Open but Undiscovered*](#) explains, “On one hand, faculty see open resources as just as good — if not better — than the products produced by traditional publishers. On the other, few faculty members have actually heard about OER.”

The graphic on the following page is provided via the Babson Survey Research Group’s [report](#) on faculty members’ attitudes and opinions about OER. As you can see, respondents all felt that the cost, ease of use, how up-to-date the materials, and other important factors, are as good or better for OER than they are for traditional printed resources. Yet at the same time, the survey indicated that two-thirds of the surveyed faculty members, or 65.9 percent, were unaware of the existence of Open Educational Resources!



Encouraging Developments

In the article cited above, David Wiley, the founder of the OER support provider Lumen Learning, observed that there is a big upside to what the survey tells us, which is that “The ‘problems’ with OER adoption are so eminently solvable.”

Speaking of Lumen Learning, it was [announced in April 2015](#) that the provider of affordable courseware created using open educational resources (OER), raised \$2.5 million in an equity round ... obviously OER has some serious and enthusiastic backers!

In yet another encouraging news item, the US Department of Education has put its support behind the development and use of Open Educational Resources. During Open Education Week in March of 2015, the feds announced a plan to launch an “online skills academy” using OER as the curriculum for online training that could

lead to degrees, certificates and other kinds of credentials. As stated in [this Campus Technology article](#), “The Department of Ed has long been a proponent of OER. Several years ago it developed the [Learning Registry](#), which acts as an aggregator of metadata about learning resources online, such as publisher, subject and ratings, in order to make them more findable by educators.”

Sources of Open Educational Resources

The OER Commons

The [Open Educational Resources Commons](#) website contains a wide variety of “free-to-use teaching and learning content from around the world”. These resources are organized and accessible by Subject Areas or Grade Levels and the home page contains sections of featured K-12 resources, and featured Higher Ed resources.

Following are some of the resources available from the OER Commons site:

- **Open Textbooks:** There are currently over 1400 listings here, and users are encouraged to add their reviews of these free and open textbooks. Creative Commons licensing for these are clearly indicated, and many of them allow for sharing and remixing.
- **Professional Development:** Sections for [Career and Technical Education](#) and [Leadership in Education](#) provide vocational resources to plan your career, develop marketable skills, and advance the practice of being a leader, decision-maker, and collaborator.
- **Learning as Inquiry:** Resources about “[Science as Inquiry](#)” and “[Art as Inquiry](#)” can help you teach and learn through active exploration, problem posing, visualization, creative thinking, and more.

OpenStax

By no means is Lumen Learning the only organization in the OER game. Take the example of [OpenStax College](#), a non-profit organization based at Rice University and backed by the Hewlett Foundation and many other sponsors. OpenStax “offers students free textbooks that meet scope and sequence requirements for most courses. These are peer-reviewed texts written by professional content developers.” They now have 16 widely used foundational college text books published or nearing completion, and this number will continue to grow. Some titles include College Physics, Concepts of Biology, Introduction to Sociology, Precalculus, and Principles of Economics.

K-12 OER Collaborative

In the world of K-12, the [K-12 OER Collaborative](#), is “creating comprehensive, high-quality, open educational resources (OER) supporting Mathematics and English Language Arts aligned with state standards.” Launched in 2014, the Collaborative sought proposals to create full-course, high-quality resources supporting K–12 Mathematics and English language arts and literacy. This is still a work in progress, and it will be exciting to see in unfold.

There are a number of great organizations that have wonderful web sites in support of OER. Two of these are the [OER Commons](#) and the [OER Consortium](#). I visited their sites to build on my knowledge and awareness of the current state of Open Educational Resources, and the growing body of OER related resources.

Merlot

MERLOT (<http://www.merlot.org>) is a curated collection of free and open online teaching, learning, and faculty development services contributed and used by an international education community.

OER Consortium

This consortium, formally titled the “Community College Consortium for Open

Educational Resources (CCCOER)", is a great example of a grassroots effort to take the concept of OER and run with it. Their web site is jammed with information and resources, including sidebar listings of dozens of Featured Sites and what appears to be about a hundred 'Resources'.

The OER Consortium is a California based organization, but it looks like any higher education institution can request to join ([click here](#) for membership info).

Carnegie Mellon's Open Learning Initiative

The OLI (<http://oli.cmu.edu>) aims to combine open, high-quality courses, continuous feedback, and research to improve learning and transform higher education.

Chapter 9 - Picture And Image Editing Applications



Back in October of 2010 I read the Campus Technology article, [“The Super-Secret, Never-Before-Revealed Guide to Web 2.0 in the Classroom”](#). There is a section in it entitled [“4 Itty-Bitty Content Tools”](#), which in turn has a subsection titled [“Become An Image Editor”](#). They mentioned five photo editing tools in that section, but didn’t go into a lot of detail about them. I sat down and took most of them for a trial run. Here’s what I learned.



Pixenate

[This tool](#) has features like “red eye reduction”, “normalize” (improve color balance), “fill light” (lighten entire pic), “whiten teeth” (although I found the result a little overdone in the example I tested), and “colors tool” (lets you change brightness, saturation, and hue). But the real fun here is the “fun effects”, such as Lomo (add a soft, dark halo around photo), speech bubbles, snowflakes, a filtering tool, and more. You can order prints and products like t-shirts, mugs, etc., that incorporate your masterpiece.

Wet Floor Maker

[This tool](#) “turns your photos into cool reflecting images” - you can choose which axis to reflect on, the degree of reflection, and other options. This is a neat idea, but the end result is a small low-res image, and I don't see any option to let you get a larger end product.

Mypictr

[This applet](#) lets you upload a picture, select a section of it using a presized frame, then save it or email it. The idea is to give you a very easy way to create a profile picture for social networks, but you can do this very easily using Paint on a PC (and I believe Mac Picture Editor is the equivalent on the Mac).

Roundpic

[Roundpic](#) automatically rounds the edges of a picture, but it's limited to 1 MB pictures. It also doesn't appear to offer any control over the way the rounding effect is applied. Pixenate does the same thing but provides some control over the degree of rounding, and also lets you fill the corners with color. You can actually create a multi-layered corner look by applying the technique a couple times.

Picasa

Google's photo editing and management tool offers functionality well beyond those cited above, and it is free, but it has to be downloaded and installed. In addition to photo enhancement features, [Picasa](#) also lets you share photos online, create online photo albums, and more. Of course, there are also options to order products that incorporate your photos. If you work with photos a lot, Picasa is probably worth downloading and setting up. To learn more about it, [click here](#).

Photofunia

An aptly named tool, [Photofunia](#) really is fun! This application uses face recognition technology to merge a picture of a face into any of over a hundred different preformatted scenarios, like the amusing example I've included below. There is also a "Lab" area where you can do things like create an animated GIF using up to 5 pictures, and much more. While the utility of this application is very specific, it is a really pretty neat and worth checking out.



FotoFlexer

FotoFlexer claims to be “The world’s most advanced online editing tool” (it’s right there in their [home page!](#)). Like many of the other tools we looked at there are simple image editing and correction tools, but the array of effects and other image enhancing and manipulating tools does in fact seem to be more extensive than any of the other tools I’ve looked at so far. These are grouped into Tabbed sections such as “Beautify”, “Decorate”, “Animations”, “Effects”, “Distort”, and more.

FotoFlexer really does look like a pretty serious application for image editing and enhancement, and is quite impressive for a free tool!

Photoscape

[Photoscape.org](#) was mentioned by a reader on the [EmergingEdTech Facebook Fan Page](#), so I took a peek at it. The app is free, but it had to be downloaded and installed, and I just don’t see a real good reason to do that since I don’t see any features that look notably different from those available in fully online apps (*why burden my computer with more software, registry updates, etc., if there’s no real benefit?*). The one feature that did jump out as being something that I haven’t seen mentioned in other tools is a ‘Batch editor’, which could allow you to perform edits (presumably the same types of edit) on a group of pictures, which might be useful, and worth checking out if you do a lot of photo editing.

Conclusions & Recommendations

I could have spent weeks looking at these types of tools – there are so many of these. I think that several of the tools that I looked at this week and last are very worth knowing about and putting to use depending on your needs. These were my favorites:

- [FotoFlexer](#): While I don’t really have the expertise to weigh in on whether or not this app truly is “the world’s most advanced online editing tool”, I can certainly say that it has an impressive range of utility, and may be one tool that meets most image editing needs.

- **[Picasa](#)**: While this app does need to be downloaded and installed, it may be worth it if you do a lot with photos. In addition to photo correction, image editing and more, it can help you organize and share photos, and purchase prints and products containing your images.
- **[Pixenate](#)**: Some of the effects here (*things like Lomo, or the Speech Bubble*) I didn't see in some of these other tools, so this is a good app to keep in mind if you're looking for that sort of thing.
- **[Photofunia](#)**: This was a very unique app with the specific function of inserting pictures of faces into pre-configured templates. There are over a hundred of these templates and the results can be pretty funny, and pretty impressive.

If you wish to learn more about other free image editing applications, I found [this Squidoo page](#) to be a good source of insight into popular tools. It has a nice clickable Tag Cloud with links to a lot of popular tools.

Chapter 10 – Presentation Tools



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<https://cooltoolsforschool.wordpress.com/thing-5-digital-storytelling-presentation-tools/>

There are plenty of free presentation and screencasting tools available on the Internet, and here we check out a variety of them. We start with a look at tools to help jazz up PowerPoint slides. Then we get into presentation applications Prezi and Slideshare. After that we have check out free screencasting app ‘Jing’, followed by a brief review of different free screencasting tools. We wrap up with a look at the 5 free presentation tools and suggestions from teachers about ways to consider for using them in the classroom or other professional situations.

Breathe New Life Into Your PowerPoint Slides With Dozens Of Exciting Free Tools & Resources

A wealth of free resources that can help you jazz up those tired old (or new) lesson slides and presentations.

Thanks to a preponderance of boring content, PowerPoint has earned an undeserved bad name. It has become an all-too-easy target for bashing in today’s web media. At a recent education conference, someone used the phrase “Power Corrupts, but PowerPoint Corrupts Absolutely” and they got a lot of laughs.

At the same time, we've all seen PowerPoint presentations that made us stop and think, "wow – that's pretty cool, how'd they do that?" Or even better, we got so caught up in the presentation that we completely forgot about the medium of the slide deck.

Following are a number of ideas and free resources that can help you add fun and pizzazz to your PowerPoint slide presentations by incorporating engaging visual and audio elements. The extent to which you evolve your slides is limited only by the time you wish to devote to it, and how imaginative you are. Of course, it's also important not get carried away (which is easy to do with some of these tools), so remember that the addition of a couple simple visual or audio elements is usually more than enough to add new life to an old slide deck, or make a new one fun for both you and your students.

Add Animations

PowerPoint includes easy tools that make it a snap to add exciting visual elements to your slides using automated animations.

- **Slide Transitions:** [This tutorial](#) from Online Tech Tips explains how to create slide transition automations using easy pre-configured tools in PowerPoint.
- **Custom Animations:** You can really kick it up a notch by creating your own custom animations, which is easier than you might think. [This tutorial from About.com](#) discusses the use of Animations in PowerPoint 2010.

Add cool free picture and text effects and backgrounds using dozens of templates for PowerPoint from Microsoft

There are so many of these cool free templates available on the Internet today. [Click here to access a preconfigured search](#) of Microsoft's Office Site, set up to return dozens of articles with hundreds of free templates for PowerPoint. To use the templates, you just download them and then follow the instructions provided in the articles.

These template sets range from simple, ready-to-use slides, to much more sophisticated templates that require significant effort to update with your own images, but can produce spectacular results. Below are two examples of the kinds of template sets available here (these are for PowerPoint 2007 but should in later versions as well) a simple one and a more advanced set:

- [This is a set of a dozen backgrounds](#) that can be used as is by just inserting text boxes, etc., or if you wish, you can follow the included instructions to learn how to create similarly themed backgrounds using your own images.
- [This advanced set of templates](#) contains two dozen striking animations and step-by-step instructions on how to recreate each of them with your own pictures and text (it will take some time and effort to work through the process).

Add audio to your presentations

Adding audio elements to your presentation is a wonderful way to modernize them and make them more appealing to viewers. Here's a couple resources that offer two different approaches to doing this.

- **Add Audio or Music to Your PowerPoint Presentations**
[This article](#) from the online magazine Presentation Magazine (*more on that below*) explains how to add audio files to your presentations so they can play in the background.
Ed Note – In 2012 EmergingEdTech posted an article and video showing how to add video to your PowerPoint presentations in 5 easy steps – this is now included as the next section in this chapter. - KW
- **Slideshare Presentations Plus Audio**
[SlideShare](#) is a popular free tool that lets you upload your PowerPoint decks and run them across the web. [This SlideShare presentation](#) explains how you can add audio to a SlideShare deck using the free application [Audacity](#).

- **Check out Presentation Magazine for tons of tips, tricks, and templates:**
<http://www.presentationmagazine.com/>

This online magazine has lots of great resources focused on improving your PowerPoint presentations, such as:

- [A whole section](#) of articles devoted to enhancing your PowerPoint presentations
 - [Tips to give your PowerPoint presentation the 'wow factor'](#)
 - Plenty of articles focused specifically on [PowerPoint 2010](#)
 - Hundreds of [free PowerPoint templates](#)
- **“Bonus Option” – Consider synchronizing video to your slides with Zentation.com:** www.zentation.com
Zentation comes in various pricing levels, and the free option claims to allow users to upload a video to YouTube and then “create a new presentation in Zentation to synchronize your YouTube video with your PowerPoint slides”. We have not tried this yet here at EmergingEdTech, but it sounded so interesting, we figured we’d throw it out there for your consideration!

Advanced PowerPoint Tutorials

If you wish to learn more on your own, there are plenty of resources available to you on the web. Here are a couple listings to get you started.

- The [Advanced PowerPoint Tutorial Series](#) from About.com
- [Advanced Power Point Tutorial Video search results](#) from Bing

Add Voice Over to PowerPoint Presentations in 5 Easy Steps

Article collaboratively written with Allison Foster.

The presentation tool in Microsoft Office is one of the most widely used slide presentation applications available today. While PowerPoint has plenty of detractors and is often the butt of jokes (*“PowerPoint has no power and no point ...”, you’ve probably heard a few like this*), there is no denying that slides produced with this application are central to countless educational lectures across the world every school day.

PowerPoint is a piece of software that is pretty easy to use, but at the same time has many features that can elevate your presentations. One such function is the easy ability to supplement a presentation with voice-over (or other audio). Adding your voice to PowerPoint slides is a simple process to accomplish, and doing so can turn a presentation from a plain set of slides into a self-contained instructional asset that stands alone and can be used by students to self-teach. This can be a great way to test the waters with flipped content delivery.

Here is a step-by-step guide to adding voice over to PowerPoint slides (*these steps and the video are based on PowerPoint 2007*):

1. Equipment - When setting up for your voice-over in PowerPoint, make sure you have the right equipment and it’s set up. You’ll need a microphone to record your voice and a working sound-card or integrated audio (which you should always have anyway).

2. New Folder and Presentation File - Create a new folder on your computer and name it something you’ll recognize. Create your PowerPoint presentation (or open an existing one) and save it to this folder. As you record narration, sound files will get created as part of the presentation, and having them all in one folder will help you manage them. If you are spending considerable time on the presentation, you would be well advised to make an occasional copy of this folder for back up in case you run into any problems.

3. ‘Record Narration’ tool - Open PowerPoint and find the “Slideshow” command in the top bar. Once you click on “Slideshow”, a menu will appear – select “Record Narration”.

4. Set Sound Levels and Properties - In the “Record Narration” dialog box that appeared after clicking the previous command, click the “Select Microphone Level” button and use the slider to adjust the microphone’s level to ensure your microphone is recording at optimal sound levels. You want the level to stay in the green range most of the time, and hitting the yellow range in the indicator at louder points is fine, you just don’t want it to peak in the red range on the indicator, as that’s too loud. Once the recording levels are good, click the “OK” button to go back to the “Record Narration” box.

You may want to click on the “Change Quality” button (the default settings are pretty low resolution/quality). Select the drop-down window next to the “Attributes” and choose “44.100kHz, 16 bit, Mono”. This is one of the most used and efficient audio levels for microphone recording. In Clicking “OK” from this window will close it and you should be looking at the “Record Narration” box again.

5. Recording – To record, simply click “Record Narration” on the Slide Show menu. In the bottom left corner of the “Record Narration” window is a check box for “Link Narrations In” – click this box to check it on (you will need to do this each time you start recording a section of voice-over). You can build out your voice-over gradually from the beginning (in other words, you don’t need to do it all in one take). As you record new sections, you will be prompted each time as to whether you wish start on the first slide or on the current slide. Note that if want to record over a section you are not happy with, just record over it and your new content will replace your old content (as long as you save it). Once you are done recording a part, hit the “Escape” key and PowerPoint will ask you if you want to save the timings on the slides. Always choose yes. As you complete each section of narration, save your PowerPoint presentation. Once you have completed part or all of your narration, play your presentation to watch and hear it. Pretty cool, right?!

Voice-over audio can be a very effective part in your presentation process. Voice-over also allows you to turn your existing presentations into self-contained flipped content. There are endless possibilities to using voice-over in PowerPoint and you’re only limited by your own imagination!

Prezi & Slideshare - 2 Great Online Presentation Tools for E-Learning

These two widely used presentation applications are accessible from any web browser.

*This article was originally published on EmergingEdTech as a guest post by **Mark Davies**.*

If you want to present a lecture without too many words, then your best bet is to prepare a presentation and let your slides talk for themselves. This makes presentations a convenient tool for teaching online courses. There are quite a few Web 2.0 presentation creation tools available, but the best free options to consider are [Prezi](#) and [SlideShare](#), both of which are briefly reviewed below.



Prezi

- It's an unconventional presentation design application because you don't have to create individual slides
- You have a workspace where you can create non-linear presentations which you can navigate with the help of pointers – a map shows you how to move around the presentation.
- The user interface is intuitive and easier to understand the more you use it.
- It's great for creating unconventional, interesting and visually appealing presentations.
- It's designed in Flash, which explains the visual brilliance.
- It comes in both free and paid versions – if you don't want to shell out money, the free package comes with 100 MB of storage space and a player that allows you to view your presentations offline. However, you cannot create presentations offline, and all your presentations are stamped with the Prezi logo and published publicly in the showcase.

There are other plans that have more features and which you have to buy, so if you're a serious user, you can try the Enjoy plan or the Pro package.

- It's initially a little difficult to use, but there are many video demos that help you find your way, and once you get the hang of it, Prezi is a great tool for designing presentations online.



SlideShare

- It's more of a presentation sharing tool than one that helps in creating them.
- It allows you to upload and host your presentations in common formats like Microsoft PowerPoint or OpenOffice on an online community.
- The user interface is simply designed and easy to use.
- It converts all presentations to the Flash format. However, this is a time consuming process, so with a slow connection, you could end up spending quite a few hours waiting for your presentations to upload.
- A big advantage of SlideShare is that you don't need to have PowerPoint or any other software installed to view the presentations online (because they're converted into the Flash format).
- The Flash format also allows you to embed these presentations in your blog or on your website.
- You can restrict viewing privileges and control who sees your online presentations.
- SlideShare allows you to view your presentations in the full-screen mode.
- It's completely free to use.

As you can see from the above points, Prezi is good for professional users while SlideShare works well for those who're just experimenting with online presentation design tools and looking for ways to share them online.

Teacher's recommendations for academic uses of several other fun, free presentation tools

Course participants offered their ideas about ways to use these fun free tools in instructional situations and other academic applications.

One of the most meaningful and informative types of communication that happens through education technology blogs like this one is when teachers share their experiences and ideas about how to use technology in the educational setting.



In the summer of 2012, EmergingEdTech ran an online workshop in which participants learned about a variety of free digital presentation tools. With each tool, we got hands-on and created brief presentations, and then discussed our experiences and shared ideas on how we might use these tools in our professional roles. The participants shared a lot good ideas, and I've been meaning to share some of them here.

Following are some of the tools we used, and some of the ideas offered for how to put them to use in education. For brevity, I limited the comments to a few per app, but some of the comments offered had quite a few different ideas packed into them. Hopefully some of these suggestions spark some creative thinking for our readers, and inspire them to try some of these fun presentation apps themselves!

Glogster

[Glogster](#) is a tool for creating unique, interactive digital “posters”, to share ideas, pictures, videos, and more. Learn more about Glogster [here](#).

“I have been eager to create a wiki-based Glogster gallery that would showcase student work on a project, i.e., assemble thumbnails of student Glogs for an assignment on Battles of World War II, for example, so that everyone in the class — and beyond — can review and learn from the work.”

“We are starting a new early college high school program. The consensus was it was a great way to publicize our new endeavor. I think this is a great way to publicize new programs. It was easy to use.”

“... classroom ideas for Glogster use:

- * advertise a word or concept
- * illustrate an oral presentation
- * create a Glogster for an historic or current day pivotal/key person related to a time period, movement, development, etc.
- * back to school ‘introduce yourself’ project”

OneTrueMedia

“Make amazing videos by mixing your photos and video with our effects, text and music” with [OneTrueMedia](#).

“With the ‘old time’ video effects, students could use this tool to create ‘You Are There’ style news reports about historical topics, using primary source images that they research and scripts that they write, record, and upload. Although the 30-second limit may seem like a drawback, it could actually force students to synthesize and condense information, thereby enhancing learning.”

“This tool can be used to convert short writing assignments or projects into videos. For example, a science project on the layers of soil could include images of the three layers and a paragraph about each layer.”

“I would like to use a program like this for an online yearbook. It may be a more affordable way to offer pictures from the year. Acceptable use would be an issue,

but definitely something to think about. I might also use the program to have the students share information about themselves to help me get to know them better at the beginning of each new class.”

Voki

With [Voki](#), you can create a speaking animated avatar! Learn more [here](#) (on their 'About' page.)

“I use Voki to personalize some of the web sites I create. For example, I have a Voki on my blog to send a greeting to students, and I have one on my resume/portfolio wiki to explain the site to potential employers/ collaborators. I have also used Voki as part of a sub plan; if I'm going to be out for the day, I use my avatar to send a message to students with goals for the day's class. [Could also] be used for reading instruction (record students reading aloud) and world language pronunciation exercises.”

Chapter 11 - Screencasting



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The creation of instructional videos is one of the many technology-enabled capabilities that the 21st century teacher has at their disposal. Instructional videos can be a wonderfully engaging element in teaching.

Screencast-O-Matic

Screencasting, or capturing what you do on your computer or tablet in a video format while you narrate your actions, is one of the many benefits modern computer technology has provided to today's educators.



There are numerous free screen casting tools available, and one of the longest standing mainstays is [Screencast-O-Matic](#). You can use it as a web app, or download a version for your PC or Mac. The free version of the tool limits you to 15 minute videos and does not permit editing (but you can get editing and unlimited video length for a meager \$15 a year!).

Jing

Jing lets you capture screen shots or capture screen motion (a.k.a. “screencasting”), and record audio at the same time. Captured images can be annotated with text, arrows, and highlights. This makes it pretty easy to make a brief presentation to demonstrate how to do something on the computer.



Jing is limited to 5 minute videos. Click over out <https://www.techsmith.com/jing.html> to explore it further or give it a try.

Screenr

I tested [Screenr](#), which is a web based tool that creates MP4 files which can be left on their site and accessed via a URL or embed code, and can also be downloaded. Screenr markets itself as a tool for creating screencasts for Twitter, and they make it quick and easy to capture screencasts and tweet them, but these files can certainly be shared elsewhere.



The quality of videos created using Screenr is excellent, and I appreciate the simplicity of the app, and the fact that there is no need to install anything on your local computer to use it.

More Free Screencasting Tools, With Comparisons

Back in 2010, I compared a dozen free screen casting tools (*some of the above and others*) and wrote about it [in this article](#).

When I wrote the article, I had a goal of trying to identify a free tool or set of tools to use to create stand-alone tutorials by combining screen images and screen motion with audio. I also wanted some editing capabilities, so I could combine multiple captures and rearrange the order of these pieces if needed, and to be able to re-record audio annotation if possible, as well as screen annotation capabilities, at least for the screen captures.

I did some web searching and learned a little about a lot of different tools, which I summarized in table format (*my apologies if any of these have become unavailable since the original publication of this article*).



Dozens of Tips & Techniques for Creating High Quality Engaging Screencasts

So having free screencasting tools is all well and good, but most folks can use some pointers on how to get the most out of them. All the free or low cost tools in the world do not inevitably yield good quality results. There is an essential element of technique to be considered. If one is going to invest time and energy (and budget dollars) in tools for the creation of video content, it is highly advisable to learn a bit about how to do what you are doing well.

With this in mind, I searched the web and selected ideas from a handful of good web resources and articles on the subject. These tips and techniques can help anyone create good quality, engaging screen casts. (Note that I have embellished many of these tips with some comments of my own, in parenthesis).

Here's a few of these tips and techniques:

From "[Making Quality Flipped Class Videos](#)" by Jasper Fox:

- **Keep them short** (lots of these sources emphasize this – 3 to 10 minutes max is general range recommended).
- **Embellish the slides** (leverage the screencasting application's capabilities to add notes, use highlighters, etc. Don't do it just for the sake of doing it, but use these functions judiciously to help make a point, emphasize key terms, etc.)

From "[Beginning to Flip your Classroom with Screencasting](#)" on [21things4teachers.net](#) (sorry, link no longer works, but the tips are still good! – KW 5/11/15):

- **Microphone techniques:**
 - Use quality equipment (a good mic)
 - Position the mic away from your mouth, slightly below and to the side (this helps to eliminate 'pops' and sibilance)
 - Place the cord and mic so it doesn't rub against your body or clothing
- **Planning process:**
 - Storyboard your project
 - Use graphic organizers, index cards, prompts...
 - Script it out, talk it through
 - Gather and prepare your Media Resources
 - Walk it through it
- **Other tips:**
 - Cursor or not? Do you want it visible in the recording? Choose the 'effect' desired (enhanced or none).
 - Close all other running programs and windows while recording
 - Be sure to watch for spelling or grammar mistakes on printed text!
 - Music mystro – add a short fade in beginning and ending fade out

Access all of these tips and techniques here:

<http://www.emergingedtech.com/2013/03/dozens-of-tips-techniques-for-creating-high-quality-engaging-screencasts/>

Chapter 12 – Social Networking Applications and Social Learning



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Social Networking applications have played a growing role in education since their inception, and this has only expanded as they have evolved to become some of the most popular destinations on the Internet. Facebook, Twitter, and applications that extend on their functionality are more popular in education than many might guess. I experienced this firsthand in 2010 when my posts about Twitter became my first ‘anchor’ content – consistent sources of high traffic. I was similarly surprised when posts about Facebook drew far more readership than I expected, particularly given it’s seeming “taboo” nature – I never expected that teachers would actually be open to using Facebook in an instructional context, but they are!

We'll start with a look at some of the reasons and research that indicates that social networking can be a powerful educational aid that facilitates “social learning”.

7 Reasons To Leverage Social Networking Tools in the Classroom

Instructional uses of social networking software can provide opportunities for learning, connecting, and engagement.

I've written frequently about popular social media tools, and education-specific social networking apps. I've also noticed increasing coverage of this topic in the media recently. Maybe it's just me paying more attention to it ... or maybe it signals an increasing acceptance of these types of tools as legitimate and effective resources for the classroom.



Social networking tools aren't going away any time soon, they appear to be here for the long term. But do these kinds of applications really belong in the classroom? I think they do, and here are a few reasons why:

7 ways in which “social learning applications” can play an impactful role in education:

1. **Engagement:** Using social media and networking tools obviously has a *social* aspect to it, and it requires proactive effort on the part of the user. In other words, using these tools to communicate and interact requires a student's active engagement. Socialization also provides opportunities for

2. emotional engagement ([this article](#) from The Chronicle discusses the importance of emotional engagement as part of the social learning process).
3. **Social Learning:** [Bandura's Social Learning Theory](#) posits that “people learn from one another, via observation, imitation, and modeling”. Of course, the type of socialization that occurs via “social” computer tools is certainly different than face-to-face social interaction, but it still offers opportunities for social learning.
4. **Use time outside of class better, so you can use class time better:** Social learning tools also position instructors to deliver content outside of the classroom, and then “flip” the classroom – working on what would have been homework during class sometimes. (*And yes, this is the same idea I loved from [Salman Khan's recent TED talk](#) the other week.*)
5. **It provides opportunities for writing and writing assessment:** While tools like Twitter lend themselves to abbreviated “texting” style uses of language, there is no need for this in most other forums. Teachers can choose to include grading of writing quality as part of the rubrics they develop for grading social media based assignments and class work.
6. **Encourage dialogue, reach more students:** It's social! “Let's talk”! Sometimes anything that can draw out reluctant teens and pre-teens is a good thing when the goal is to communicate. One clear advantage of socializing across the Internet is that it is seen as less intimidating than face to face contact, and can allow shy students to express themselves more comfortably.
7. **Help students get ahead of the professional curve:** One of the fundamental goals of education is to position young people for enjoyable, successful careers. Social media is becoming more important to business with each passing year. Many organizations have moved from just discussing “social media awareness” and “social marketing” to including actually social media business planning as part of their strategic planning efforts. An increasing number of professional positions desire or require social media awareness, and it seems likely that more positions will call for this skill in the future.

8. **Build connections:** Using social networking tools to deliver social learning experiences in the classroom provides opportunities to meet other students and have access (depending on the tools being used) to other educators and professionals. Maintaining connections and communicating with these new colleagues has never been easier, thanks to these Internet based applications.

Of course, it's a pain that many of these tools are also blocked on school's networks (*hopefully this list can help you make the case for unblocking some of these sites at your school!*). I do also realize that these tools can be used in a distracting way, and expose kids to inappropriate content, so there must always be an appropriate level of guidance, selection of tools, and oversight.

Check out, [*Can Social Media Play A Role in Improving Retention in Higher Education?, Research Says in Can*](#), to learn more about social learning and retention in Higher Ed.



A Social Learning Tool designed for Education

Edmodo.com

Edmodo positions itself as a “private communication platform built for teachers and students”. When I first checked it out in 2010, I signed up for an account, and had my 8th grade son sign up, and we spent some time trying the application out. I came away feeling good about the application's potential for instructional use. Its education-specific orientation, and group-focused approach position it as a uniquely suited application for educational use, and it is very much worth checking out. The site has evolved considerably since then, and has millions of users.



Edmodo is covered further back in Chapter 2 re: Classroom Web Tools.



Facebook as an Instructional Technology Tool

Can the wildly popular social network be used constructively in the classroom? This student's story says it can.

In August of 2011, student Kristen Nicole Cardon submitted a comment in response to the post [5 Reasons Why Educators Need To Embrace Internet Technologies](#) in which she explained how she used [Facebook](#) in a course she took. I really appreciated her well stated discussion of how Facebook was used in the course and how the approach succeeded (*slightly edited in the following excerpt*).

“In my British Literary History course last winter semester, my professor created a class Facebook group which we all joined. We’d finish our reading for class and then get online and write a paragraph about what we’d read, focusing our comments on the specific course aims that my professor had created for the class. We would then go to class where my professor would note the ways in which we’d covered the material well and he’d teach anything we missed as well as anything else he wanted us to know.

This way of conducting class was effective because:

1. We were socially motivated to complete the reading and contribute to the online discussion.
2. We didn't spend class time going over that which we already understood.
3. We were able to benefit from insights from peers who generally don't participate in class discussion.
4. We all learned to focus the vast amount of reading required for such a course to the specific course aims of our professor.
5. Through contributions from our classmates, we understood how each distinct text related to the others and to the class focus, and so on.

We shouldn't discount Facebook when it has proven to be a worthwhile classroom tool. I should also note that a class Facebook group doesn't require the professor or students to "friend" each other to participate."

So Facebook was basically used to facilitate a discussion group, which can certainly be done with an LMS like Blackboard or Moodle or with various other tools, but the nice thing about Facebook is that many students are already familiar and comfortable with it – it's a "known entity" to them. Another positive thing, which addressed a concern of mine in this environment, was that there was a 'wall' between this academic use and the personal uses students have for the tool – by being in the group you didn't have to friend anyone or expose your personal information.

There are so many ways in which today's Internet based tools can play a creative, constructive role in the educational process ... even those tools that we shy away from because they seem more like 'pop culture' throw-aways than academic tools.

Here are a few other examples of Facebook playing a productive role in the classroom:

- **University of South Florida teacher uses Facebook in class:** I recently came across [this article](#) about USF graduate student Alessandro Cesarano, who teaches a Beginning Spanish class, and uses Facebook for homework assignments and class discussions in lieu of Blackboard. Cesarano says, “I like the Facebook page better than Blackboard because students have more access to authentic cultural material, and I don’t have to waste class time teaching them how to use a new program because many of them already use Facebook.”
- **Texas Kindergarten Teacher communicating with Parents via Facebook:** Kindergarten teacher Matt Gomez wrote a couple posts on his blog, mattgomez.posterous.com, about his use of Facebook as a tool to communicate with parents. In [this post](#), he explained that he had, “been toying with the idea of the page for several months. The main reason is Facebook has 500 million+ users. This is a tool that most parents know how to use and use on a consistent basis. Why struggle to make parents visit your website or blog when you can meet them in a place they already visit online?” In [this post](#), he provides some observations about how it worked out.
- **Classroom 2.0 Discussion Forum:** [This discussion thread](#) has a number of comments from educators who have used Facebook in the educational setting, such as these comments from ...
 - [Jason Graham](#): “I’ve been using Facebook with grade 1yes grade 1. Most of the parents are on FB so its a convenient way to communicate with them, and they can send private messages as well. Most of the parents are busy on the go people who use their Blackberries and FB, Twitter etc to communicate. Its convenient for all. Plus it provides a digital record.”
 - [Anne De Manser](#): “I use Facebook with my students in several ways. I find it is a great way to provide positive role modeling in an online

environment by making positive comments on their Facebook walls and by providing them a window into the way my 'public' face looks online. It's just another way of communicating and building relationships with our school community.”

Setting Up a Facebook Group for Your Class

If you wish to learn more about how best to configure things in Facebook for use in a course based application, here are a few resources that provide guidance.

First, there is [this document](#) from Elon University, which offers details on how to set up profiles and course content, following this basic approach:

1. Create a teacher profile separate from your personal profile
2. Ask students to create a limited profile with controlled settings, and to friend your new teacher profile
3. Create Lists & Groups for your classes
4. The document then goes on to discuss how to use various Facebook tools as part of the instructional process

You may also want to watch these YouTube videos from “[JayDsfu](#)“, which illustrate “[The Basics of a Facebook Page for Educators](#)“, “[Privacy on Facebook for Educators](#)“, “[Setting Up a Facebook Group for Your Class](#)“, and more.

5 Fun Ways to Use Facebook in Your Lesson Plans and Teaching

Collaboratively written with guest author Heather Green, a mom, freelance writer, pet lover and the resident blogger for [OnlineNursingDegrees.org](#).

The most popular site on the Internet can be leveraged in the classroom in engaging and useful ways. Facebook has become such a ubiquitous part of our lives that it has evolved to be much more than a way to find out what happened to that guy you had Bio with back in high school or to share pictures of your baby. Many people use Facebook to communicate and network with both friends and

professional colleagues, and to learn about products, services, organizations and events.



Facebook is also a handy tool for teachers. Since so many students in High School and college are now Facebook natives, it makes sense to use the social network to connect with students and offer them a new way to learn and access learning content. If you are a teacher with a personal Facebook account, it is advised that you create a professional Facebook account (*you'll need a separate email address*

in order to do this), to keep your teaching related uses of tool entirely separate from your personal account. Students should consider doing the same (*they could use their school email for the new account and associate their personal account with a personal email address*).

Here are a few ideas for incorporating Facebook into lesson plans and course work:

Create Fictitious Profiles or Fan Pages

Who among us did not have to do a biography report on a famous author or historical figure? Think about how much more fun that project would have been if you could have created a Facebook fan page or profile for that person instead.

Teachers of all subjects can use this idea to help their students learn more about significant figures in the field. Students can create complete pages for their figures, including biographical information, “Likes”, photos, and even status updates to show they have a thorough understanding of the material. Check out the post,

“[Facebook Summit 2011, an Excellent Academic Use of the Popular Internet App](#)” for a great example of this approach.

Conduct Surveys or Opinion Polls

Classes that study social studies, media, film, religion, politics, and more can make good use of the social connections on Facebook to conduct surveys and opinion polls for research. Want to study family traditions? Conduct a poll amongst friends. Want to discuss cultural beliefs? Host a survey on the network. The [Facebook Questions](#) feature allows you to do this.

Of course, some surveys or polls may be limited based on how many people students are able to reach through the network. However, the exercise will offer some insights, and it can also teach students about concepts such as the scientific method and statistics (based on instructions for conducting proper surveys).

Create a Group specific to your course/class

A Facebook group is a great way to leverage the power and popularity of this application to distribute learning content and create a central place for communication for a course or class. Check out this YouTube videos to learn more about how to do this: “[Setting Up a Facebook Group for Your Class](#)”. You might also want to check out “[The Basics of a Facebook Page for Educators](#)”.

Tap into information about specific topics

Chances are there are some groups and pages out there that are focused on issues relevant to your course. Type the name of your academic subject in Facebook’s search window and you’ll automatically get a list of related content. For example, type “Algebra” and you’ll get Wikipedia’s definition, but you’ll also get a handful of pages with related focuses such as books, ‘Interest’, Groups, and more. Get creative and the possibilities are unlimited. Teaching Social Sciences? Try a search for “2012 presidential election”.

Teach students to differentiate real news from hype and hysteria

In many ways, Facebook is like a giant game of telephone. People sometimes hear about news, events, and products on Facebook first. Of course, rumors have a way of going viral before misinformation is corrected, and there is a challenge here to

be able to differentiate legitimate information from assumptions, gossip, hype, etc. There is opportunity here to leverage this in a critical thinking context. For example, students can search other sources to validate information they come across in Facebook. The way news spreads on Facebook also offers a unique opportunity for study by students of journalism or mass media.

Facebook offers many opportunities for use in the classroom. However, its applications may not always be obvious, and some creative thinking is required. Try a few of these strategies or adapt them for the unique needs of your classroom.

Other ideas for using Facebook in the classroom

For those interested in giving Facebook a shot as part of their instructional process, here's a few more sources of ideas about thing you might want to try:

- [100 Ways You Should Be Using Facebook In Your Classroom](#)
- [15 Facebook Apps Perfect For Online Education](#)
- [How To Use Facebook Questions In The Classroom](#)



Using Instagram in an Educational Context

Original blog post contributed by Jason Phillips.

If you are active on social websites, or have young tech users in your life, then you've probably come across [Instagram](#). This application works in hand-in-hand with Facebook and has grown to be one of the most apps on the Internet.

What is Instagram?

Instagram is an online photo sharing and social networking service. It enables users to take pictures and apply digital filters to them and then share them on social networking sites. Instagram was launched in October 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mark Krieger. The service has been immensely popular with people active on social networking. At present, Instagram has over 90 million users worldwide. Instagram supports all Apple products like iPhone, iPad, iPod and all camera phones having the Android operating system.



How can Instagram deliver educational benefits?

As per Instagram's usage Terms & Conditions, children up to 13 years of age are not allowed to own an Instagram account. However, these students can still view the uploaded pictures. Instagram allows the followers of a user to view photographs and these can also be geotagged. By "geotag" we mean that the person uploading the pictures can also share the location where the picture was taken with his friends and followers. There also exists an option to keep such information private.

Here are some of the ways in which the use of a tool like Instagram can benefit the educational process:

- **Instagram & Spatial Intelligence**

Spatial intelligence is a mental process through which the brain attempts to interpret certain types of incoming information. This information is basically anything visual – pictures, maps, plans etc. This intelligence is used very effectively in Instagram exercises. The mind judges the distance, size and other aspects of an object before clicking a picture or when viewing them, and also when editing pictures.

- **Instagram & Linguistic Intelligence**

Linguistic intelligence is all about honing students' language skills. When a user uploads pictures, his friends and followers can view them. Likewise, teachers can upload pictures and share them with their students and ask them to make observations or provide specific types of feedback. This encourages students to use their language skills.

- **Instagram & Logical Mathematical Intelligence**

Logical Mathematical Intelligence is basically detection of patterns, the ability to evaluate problems and think logically. This intelligence can be put to use when teachers share some pictures with the students and ask them to work on them - like cropping an image or improving its look using Photoshop. A very interesting exercise can be cropping a picture into various pieces and creating a puzzle out of it.

- **Instagram & Interpersonal Intelligence**

The ability of a person to comprehend desires, motivation and the intentions of others is referred to as Interpersonal intelligence. Teachers can engage the students in group Instagram activities like "all about my classmate" to exercise this form of intelligence

- **Usage of Instagram and iPhoneography in Art & Photography Classes**

The [iPhoneography application](#) helps the students understand the basic fundamentals of photography very easily. At this age understanding the camera settings is not all that easy. iPhoneography eliminates the process of doing camera settings and students are better able to focus on creating marvelous pictures.

- **Instagram & Intrapersonal Intelligence**

The ability to understand oneself and appreciate one's fears, feelings and motivations is known as Intrapersonal Intelligence. This intelligence is

addressed through the act of allowing students to work independently and reflect on some of the pictures they capture and create.

I wish we had interesting tools like Instagram when I was in school. Education has become a lot more technology driven, and more fun. It is surprising how a simple thing like a photo sharing application can play a very effective role in education.

Three Ways Pinterest is Getting Used by Teachers

Original blog post contributed by Jason Kane.

When most of us think of [Pinterest](#), we probably think of young people sharing links to web pages, photos and videos with their friends – just another social network for people to show off things they like, what's going on in their lives, favorite video's, and so on. But how often do we consider Pinterest as a tool to aid in teaching and learning?

Here are a few ways in which Pinterest can play a role in the classroom.



Using Pinboards to encourage Group Collaboration

Group collaboration is essential for completing some school assignments. Pinterest is excellent for group projects because all students in a group can share a pinboard

on which they will pin all photos, videos and resources that have to do with their projects. Being able to share content in this way takes a lot of hassle out of completing tasks as a team because the group does not have to work out a meeting schedule to share their resources.

Taking Advantage of Lesson plans and Printable Games Found on Pinterest

Pinterest has an overabundance of lesson plans (*try a [search for "lesson plans"](#)*) and printable games that teachers can incorporate into their curriculums. This makes the process fun and easy for both the teachers and the students. All teachers have to do is choose the plans and games that are most appropriate for the ages of their students and the subject matter they are trying to teach, and then they pin them to their pinboards.

Using Pinterest to share Assignments

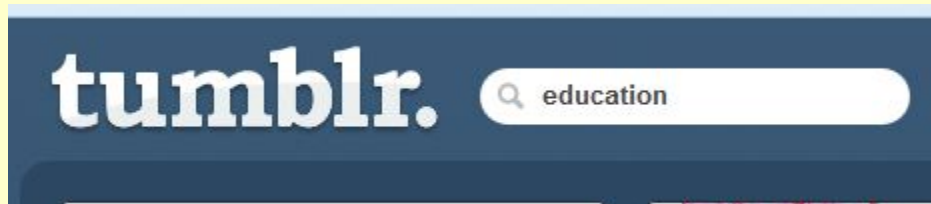
Teachers can create assignments on web pages for their students (*find some examples [here](#)*). This is done so students will have the chance to easily refer to the instructions during the entire course of completing their work. This way, they do not have to worry about keeping track of worksheets or a syllabus. When a teacher invites all of his or her students to use Pinterest, he or she can share the links to these assignments with ease. Rather than having to spend time making sure every student copies down the URLs to their assignments correctly, the teacher can just share it with one click of the mouse and be done. All students will have the correct URLs.

As teachers discover the power of using Pinterest as a teaching tool, we are seeing an increase of this site being used in the classroom and for homework assignments. Students are happy that this tool is being used because it makes learning fun for them. Students are using a social networking site that they are already familiar with and love, and they find school enjoyable as a result.

How Teachers are Using Tumblr in the Classroom

Original blog post contributed by Sam Peters.

Tumblr is a web based social media platform that was designed to make it easier for people to share digital media with each other. Unlike Facebook and Twitter, where conversation is a common mode of communication, [Tumblr](#) is more about sharing content. It is a great resource and tool for people and professionals of every stripe. Teachers are finding it useful too. Here's some of the ways they're using it.



As a Course Web Site

Here's an example of a Creative Writing teacher who uses Tumblr as a course web site: writerblockparty.tumblr.com. She set up this Tumblr page for her course and has her students follow it. She made separate sections for the Syllabus, Assignments, and so on. Students can get to the content from any web browser and she can communicate and deliver materials by posting them in one place.

Sharing (and Locating) Resources

Tumblr doesn't just make it easier for teachers to educate their students, it can be used as a resource sharing tool. There are tumblr accounts dedicated toward the curating of resources for teachers to use in their own classrooms and courses, like classroomcollective.tumblr.com. One can also search Tumblr for tags (here's a search for "teaching resources": www.tumblr.com/tagged/teaching%20resources). One can just as easily share resources with students.

As a Lesson in Content Credibility

Tumblr can also be used as a lesson on using the Internet for research. Today's students do not know what it is like to grow up in a world without the Internet and some have the same "if it's on there it must be true" philosophy that the generations before them had about television and the radio. A teacher can pull up easily proved false reports, faked photos and videos, etc., to teach her students about the value of research and checking sources.

Make a Pitch for Classroom Supplies

Teachers are often responsible for funding some or all of their own classroom materials. Now a teacher can use Tumblr to share and maintain a list of classroom supplies that are in short supply. Students, parents, and others can choose to contribute as they can and help defray some of these costs and keep the classroom stocked with needed materials.

There are lots of reasons to use Tumblr as a teacher. These are just a few of them.



Over 100 Ways To Use Twitter In The Classroom

These resources actually provide over 110 ideas for, and examples of, using Twitter in the classroom.



I've come across a lot of articles containing examples and suggestions for using [Twitter](#) in instructional applications. I've combed through many of these and tried to boil down the redundancies to create a rich set of idea-laden resources. While there's still going to be some overlap in the concepts presented in these articles, they clearly meet the goal of providing a thorough set of ideas and examples for leveraging Twitter in the educational process. (*I follow this new listing with the original set of articles cited in my June '09 post*).

- Here we have [25 Ways to Teach with Twitter](#) from Sonja Cole.
- Here's [10 great ideas on how to use Twitter in the classroom](#), from blogger Steve Wheeler.
- This extensive list provides [50 ways to use Twitter in the College Classroom](#).

- This [Twitter for Academia](#) post suggests 13 different ways to use Twitter in the classroom.
- In this post, teacher “Fernando” offers his [Top 10 Uses of Twitter for Education](#) (*sorry, looks like this link may no longer be fully functional – KW, 5/11/15*).
- Lastly, [this PDF file](#) discusses the experience of teacher Ana Dominquez using Twitter in the Kindergarten classroom.

I also want to mention these [100 Serious Twitter Tips for Academics](#), which are worth reviewing to learn more and plan your approach to using Twitter in (and out of) the classroom.

Additionally, here 6 additional example that I published in a popular post in 2009:

- I'll start by providing links to two articles ([here is one](#), and [here is the another](#)), about teacher Monica Rankin using Twitter in instructional application at the University of Texas at Dallas. These are a few of many stories about Professor Rankin's efforts (*this highly covered case is what really triggered my perception that there were a lot of articles about Twitter in the classroom in recent weeks*).
- [Here is a video](#) about Twitter (and other technologies) being used at Roosevelt HS in Minneapolis.
- [This article](#) from The Chronicle of Higher Education discusses instructor Cole Campese's use of Twitter, streaming Tweets from students on screen during lectures, as part of the instructional process.
- [In this Vlog](#), Christine Morris explains how she experimented with the technology with her higher ed students, tapping into Tweetdeck to get the most out Twitter.
- [In this blog posting](#), David Silver explains how Twitter replaced three other technologies he was using in the classroom.
- Last, but certainly not least, [here is one of countless articles](#) about Professor David Parry's work with Twitter, from early 2008. This is the first Twitter in the classroom story that I came across and it has been discussed and posted about many times on the Internet.

Intro to Twitter

Just to round this posting out, for anyone who is new to Twitter, here's a nice introductory video on how to use Twitter (*a short ad may play before the video, but it's worth the wait – this is a nicely done 4 min. video from "Howcast"*):

<http://www.howcast.com/videos/149055-How-To-Use-Twitter>

Great Twitter Applications for Teachers Using Twitter In The Classroom

Teachers are finding new ways to use Twitter to engage their students, build stronger academic and professional relationships, and to share information in a richer learning environment, and they are using tools like these to bring more fun and functionality to the process.



It's easy to get started with these applications. Users can sign up using their Twitter accounts (*although GroupTweet does get a little more involved*). Each of these tools has the benefit of being web based – you don't have download anything to your computer to use them, and you can access them from anywhere via a web browser. Lastly, they all have free versions that provide robust functionality.

Twtpoll (twtpoll.com)

Polling and survey tools provide teachers so many capabilities. Poll students about their thoughts on class materials and subjects, use a poll as a quiz, allow the poll itself to be an educational tool about voting and democracy, or reach out to colleagues and put new ideas through a peer-reviewed test phase before investing time and energy into implementing them in the classroom. The possibilities are endless.

The polls or surveys people create on Twtpoll can be shared with Twitter followers, Facebook friends or email contacts, giving the tool more dynamic reach than if it relied on Twitter responses alone. Twtpoll comes with four different pricing options – a free version with plenty of power, and three paid options that provide increasing functionality.

GroupTweet (grouptweet.com)

GroupTweet enables teachers to create a classroom Twitter group, where anyone who is authorized and has a Twitter account can contribute. This can be a great way to tie class related tweeting together and create a course-specific presence on Twitter.

Check out the [GroupTweet Examples Page](#) to get a sense of how the tool works and what it lets you do, or dig into the [FAQs](#) for further details. A GroupTweet classroom account can be focused specifically on students, or it could be used to help to keep the conversation and the lines of communication open between educators, students and parents. The tool is easy to set up and use, and can be kept private by allowing only members of the group to tweet and see tweets.

FollowerWonk (followerwonk.com)

FollowerWonk is the ultimate Twitter Follower data tool, allowing for analysis of Twitter users and follower trends. The free functionality in FollowWonk provides summary information for any Twitter user's followers (*except for yourself – you have to pay for that*), and it lets you compare information about different Twitter users. There are a variety of paid plans that provide additional analytics capabilities.

Educators can collect all sorts of useful data from the Twitter analytics tool about what’s trending among their peers in specific locations, across age or student groups, by topic or even by a “cloud” search of similar terms found in bios – like ‘teacher’ or ‘education.’

This is a powerful tool that allows teachers to compare what is being learned and what is being taught within the entire Twitter community, which had 200 million registered accounts as of January 2011!

All of these Twitter tools can enhance teachers and students ability to communicate and share ideas. Used together, they create a new, dynamic set of learning and information sharing tools.

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore more about social networking applications in educational uses:

[Facebook Summit 2011, an Excellent Academic Use of the Popular Internet App](#)

[10 Beneficial Facebook Pages For Educators To Check Out](#)

[8 Great LinkedIn Groups for Educators](#)

[More than a third of Higher Education Faculty are on Twitter](#)

Chapter 13 – Mobile Learning & Smartphones



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<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/963135-say-ahh-to-let-your-smartphone-check-for-parkinsons-disease/>

In 2012, I interviewed college staff and faculty at The College of Westchester as part of our information gathering process while working through the development of a 3 Year Strategic Technology Plan. One instructor passionately shared his perspective regarding how vital it is that we understand and embrace the world the student lives in and how they communicate. We frequently discuss how we can do the best job of communicating with students, yet at the same higher education often ignores or avoids the use of texting, a communication technique that is a part of most American high school and college students' daily lives. Surely it's time for that to change. This inspired the next two articles.

Embracing the Smart Phone in the Classroom With Text Messaging Assignments

The importance and prevalence of text messaging is certainly undeniable. This 2008 [study](#) placed the monthly volume at over 75 billion. A [2010 Pew Research](#) report indicates that teens use texting on cell phones to communicate more than they use the voice calls or face to face communication, with 54% using text messaging to contact friends versus 38% calling, and just 33% communicating face-to-face.

But where does this fit into academia? A Spring 2011 study, “Using Text-Messaging in the Secondary Classroom” (*no longer online – KW 5/11/15*), conducted by two professors at Bellarmine University, found text-messaging to be beneficial for increasing course-related interaction. Students liked the versatility that mobile phones and text-messaging provide, enabling them to access course materials and communicate with peers and teachers while riding on the bus, waiting to be picked up, or during other ‘down’ time. Since interactivity in (and out of) the classroom can “promote an active learning environment, facilitate the building of a learning community, provide feedback and increase student motivation”, surely the idea of embracing the cell phone and text messaging is an idea worth investigating further.

TEXT MESSAGING CAN ..., “PROMOTE AN ACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, FACILITATE THE BUILDING OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY, PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND INCREASE STUDENT MOTIVATION.”

“Using Text-Messaging in the Secondary Classroom”, by Kevin Thomas, Ph.D. and Corrie Orthober, Ph. D., in *American Secondary Education* 39(2) Spring 2011

Using Text Messaging in Class Work and Assignments

There are plenty of articles on the Web discussing the use of cell phones and smart phones in an academic setting. I combed through many of these to find those

containing useful suggestions and ideas specific to leveraging text messaging in assigned course work.

- The NY Times article, "[Teaching to the Text Message](#)", by teacher Andy Selsberg offers a variety of ideas for using text messaging in assignments.
- Here we have an eHow article, "[Text Messaging Classroom Activities](#)" that offers 4 different assignments based on text messaging.
- This article, "[Text Messaging Brings Assignment to Life](#)" discusses an assignment in which students wrote a new scene or rewrote an existing scene Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*.
- Here is a [video](#) by Dr. Phillip Anderson from The Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation at the University of Toronto, in which he discusses "Text Messaging for Classroom Q&A".
- The article "[Promoting Literacy Through Text Messaging](#)" encourages us to "get excited about text messaging as a form of communication, and encourage your students to write often through email, instant messages, text messages and blogging. Students will soon begin to understand that any type of writing is essential." There are a number of ways to use text messaging in assignments in the "Activities" section.
- Here's [a simple text messaging assignment](#) from "Read Write Web", focused on *The Lord of the Flies*, easily adaptable to other books.
- While the article, "[Text messaging & e-Learning in Schools and Colleges](#)", is trying to sell a product, it offers some useful concepts for text messaging applications in classroom assignments.
- Another great way to leverage text messaging in the classroom is through the use of text message based polls. [This page](#) from PollEverywhere.com offers insights and into doing this with their tool, which has free functionality.

Another interesting finding I came upon while researching this article was a 2011 poll from Edutopia (no longer online) which asked, "Does text messaging harm students' writing skills?" With nearly 3000 responses, the results would certainly have some merit. 54% of respondents indicated that they do feel it harms writing

skills, but 46% responded otherwise. I thought it was pretty interesting that almost half of the respondents did not say 'Yes'. I have participated in a number of conversations with friends and colleagues who seem to feel that texting is encouraging bad writing habits. A surprising number of people who took this poll seem to feel differently. I'm starting to think that this probably isn't the last time I'll be surprised by text messaging and its relationship to academics.

QR Codes

I've culled a bunch of ideas from different teachers who have shared their approaches to using this simple but powerful construct in the classroom. Once your students are equipped with a device that can read QR codes and they know how to scan them, you're ready to use ideas like these in your classroom!



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If you're not already familiar with it, scroll down to the bottom of the article to learn how to easily create QR codes, and find QR Code readers.

Ideas, Ideas, and More Ideas!

The article, [Ways to use QR Codes in the Elementary Classroom and Using Google Docs to Create Them](#), by Jill Thompson, offers these uses:

- **Library Book Add-On:** Put QR codes on classroom library books, linking out to information about the author and or book. “You can also have students create ‘book trailers’ and turn them into QR codes using iMovie!”
- **Scavenger Hunts:** “Create scavenger hunts and/or webquests for your students that get them moving around the room. Scanning a QR code makes is easier for the younger students so they don’t have to type the long urls.”
- **Inform Parents:** “Place QR codes around the school informing parents ... about different places around the school.”
- **Access Help:** Add QR codes to homework sheets that link out to sources of help. “For example, if the student forgets how to solve a math problem or gets stuck, they can scan the QR code for help. The QR codes can be linked to a ‘how to video’ such as a [Khan Academy](#) video or a [ShowMe](#) video you created yourself. “
- **QR Stations for self-directed learning:** “... have the students become self-directed learners by creating QR stations. The students scan the QR code to reveal the task and the students must work together to get the task complete. This builds on the 21st century skills of communication, collaboration and critical thinking.”
- **Cite Sources:** Have students use QR to link out to sources they use for research for paper writing, etc.

These ideas come from the web page [QR Codes – What are they and how can I use them in my classroom?](#) by Greg O’Connor.

- **Assistive Technology:** “Provide an alternative access format for students who need additional support in reading and writing.” Students can quickly access information while using their own literacy support apps or software.
- **Classroom Hot Spots!** “Provide information ‘hot spots’ throughout the classroom to access online videos, websites, text that is related to curriculum and instructional material.”
- **Interactive Classroom Calendar:** “Attach QR Codes to the classroom calendar / timetable to point to information about upcoming class events, assessment reminders, etc.”
- **Website access from IWB:** “Take students to a website you are browsing on an interactive whiteboard. Using the Mobile Barcoder add-on for the Firefox web browser, quickly generate a QR Code and have students scan with their own hand held device.”

These ideas were published by Diana Rees in [QR Codes: Augmenting Augmented Reality](#).

- **Link handouts to resources:** Turn a handout into a “dynamic, interactive resources by linking them to interactive update-able websites”.
- **Link to the Campus Map**
- **Add information to artwork:** “To link artwork ... to information about the artwork, the artist, the historical period, etc.”
- **Nutritional Information:** “To link nutritional objects to calorie counters (and other health applications)”
- **Online Manuals:** “link equipment to online how-to-manuals”

I found these sources on [this Pinterest page](#) from Elizabeth Mills. These are geared towards younger elementary grade students.

- **Easy Audiobook Access:** [This web page](#) discusses *75 Story Time Read Aloud Picture Books with QR Codes Cards*, an app that could be purchased and placed on a shared iPad, enabling students to scan a QR code and then listen as popular children's books are read aloud!
- **Check Work:** Create QR codes that students can use to check their work
- **Award Prizes!** Use a QR code to award a prize for good work or good behavior! The code can simply link to web page or image that informs them what their reward is (a new pencil or marker, a cool eraser, etc.).

Next we have a set of ideas from [Edutopia, via Andrew Miller](#).

- **Provide a Service:** “If students helped create awareness around spreading germs, for example, they might put the [QR] codes around the school or in a parent newsletter.”
- **Go Green!** Rather than giving students the time-worn paper handout, provide a QR code that accesses instructions, announcements, or assignments. Use one page of QR codes to displace multiple handouts, or use codes on-screen to eliminate paper entirely!
- **Provide Optional Activities for those “Go-Getters”:** “A great way to provide optional activities for students who want to excel is to simply put the code on the class assignment and let them follow it to the extension activity or question.”

- **Vote:** “QR codes can be a great voting tool allowing students to vote by simply scanning the code as they enter or exit the classroom.”

Finally, here's a few other fun ideas that I came across that are worth sharing:

- **Skills Posts for PE:** [Create Skills Posters](#)
- **Create QR Code Dice!** [Roll The Dice on QR Codes](#)
- **Rhyming Words:** [Rhyming Words QR Code Fun](#)

Creating and Reading QR Codes

Creating QR codes is super easy when you have a web tool that works well for it. The hardest part is really having appropriate content to access. The idea of the QR code is that it is a simple a way to access a URL (i.e. a web address). A QR code is an image file (it can be a png, jpg, etc.) that when scanned by a QR Code reader will access the URL it links to, which typically means it will open a web page.

Once you have found content you want to share, or created content and made it available online, you just use a site like “[QRstuff](#)” to create a QR code that works for the URL you created. Open QRstuff, paste in a URL (under “2 Content”) and the site provides a QR code image (on the right side of the screen, under “QR Code Preview”) that you download, save, and use however you want.

As for QR Code Readers, they are typically free. [This site](#) offers good ones for popular Operating Systems.

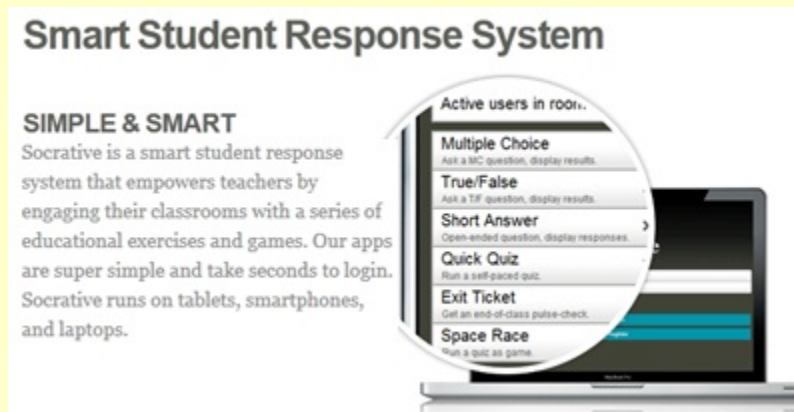
So go for it – create your first code, just to familiarize yourself with the process, then scan the dozens of ideas above and come up with some creative approaches to use these in your classroom!

More Resources For Getting the Most Out of Smart Phones and Smart Phones in School



1. “[Smartphones in the Classroom](#)” is a rich resource from “RoxannNys” PBWorks Wiki page.
2. Here’s an insightful [Mobile Learning “Free Info Kit”](#) slide show from [mblearn.blogspot.com](#).
3. This article offers a dozen of the “[Most Useful iPhone, iPad and Smartphone Apps for College Students](#)”.
4. For Android-based phones, here’s a great topic-specific article just published last week: “[Best Android apps for teachers, tutors, and educators](#)”.
5. For iPhone apps for education, check out these “[Top iPhone Apps for Teachers and Students](#)” and “[7 Brilliant iPhone Apps for Teachers & Bloggers](#)” from Johannes Ahrenfelt.
6. When it comes to the Android platform, 101BestAndroidApps has one [here](#) and [Android4Schools.com](#) is worth checking out.
7. I thought it was worth noting that Wiley publishes a book titled “[Teaching Generation Text: Using Cell Phones To Enhance Learning](#)” by Lisa Nielsen Willyn Webb (*\$13.94 on Amazon.com as of this writing*).
8. Finally, don’t forget about the natural marriage of Twitter and mobile phones. Then go check out “[100 Ways to Teach with Twitter](#)” for ideas!

Chapter 14 - Student Response Systems & Surveys and Polls



Here I provide brief insights into variety of tools for capturing feedback from students ... a couple traditional survey and polling tools, and a couple free “Student Response Systems”. SRS’s can be a blast and teacher really loving them (*check out the feedback we received on our “Try-a-Tool-a-Week” Challenges for [Socrative](#) and for [Plickers](#)*).

Student Response Systems

Socrative

Socrative is a simple yet powerful Student Response System that lets students respond to ‘quick questions’ or full quizzes using smart phones, tablets, or computers. Teachers and Students love it!

Check out this [3 Minute Teaching with Technology Tutorial](#) video for a quick introduction to Socrative.

When it comes to using Socrative in your classroom, you’re only limited by your

imagination! Since this is basically a quizzing/question/feedback tool, teachers won't need an awful lot of guidance on what to do with it once they realize how easy it is to use. Here's a few ideas nevertheless, as food for thought: Instructional Technology Specialist Bradley Lands offers [*13 Ways to Use Socrative as a Formative Assessment*](#) on his blog *The Landscape of Learning*.

Even if you're students don't have access to computers or devices where they respond in class, you can still use Socrative in various creative ways. Here's some ideas:

- Create a poll, questions, or a quiz that students can answer at home, maybe with their parents help (if your students in elementary grades levels for example).
- Use Socrative to ask parents a question (email them or put info about the questions on your class web page, or send home a flyer to inform them)!
- Use Socrative to gather information or feedback from your colleagues!

Socrative also has the advantage of not requiring students to create accounts. It's super easy to use once you get the hang of it, and it can be used from just about any device. While it will not let students interact directly with each other, with a little creative thinking Socrative can facilitate interactivity and collaboration.

Plickers

"*What the heck is a Plicker?*", you ask. Plickers are a wonderful free alternative to device-based Student Response Systems (like Socrative). The word "Plicker" is a concatenation of the words "paper" and "clicker". Each student is given a paper "plicker" (*you set these up on plickers.com*) that contains a QR code that represents a unique identity for them, and by turning the plicker design in a different direction, they can provide a response to an "A, B, C, or D" type question. The teacher easily scans all the students with a smart phone or tablet, and quickly collects the responses.

Plickers are perfect for young students and for situations in which it is impractical for all students to have a device. Check out the video and articles for a deeper dive, and explore Plickers today!

Brittany Goff has put together this great brief introduction to how to get started with Plickers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xa12TwrGFlU>.



Polls & Surveys

Doodle – a quick, easy, and free resource for creating polls

[Doodle.com](https://doodle.com) allows you to send a link out to users where they can easily and quickly click and make a selection from a range of choices you lay out. I just used it to have users self-select from a range of training dates. It took about 10 minutes to set up, and produced a self managed process that required very little administrative effort. If I did this the way I used to – by sending out an email and then having people email me back first and second choices, and then setting these up in a worksheet and responding to users to let them know which dates worked and which didn't and so on, it could have taken hours to administer, versus very little time with Doodle. Very productive! A great way to take quick polls in the classroom. If this sounds useful, give it a shot – for the right application, it is spot-on.



SurveyMonkey

I am a big a fan of [SurveyMonkey](https://www.surveymonkey.com) – I use it frequently to create high quality web based surveys for free. This page provides their pricing plans – as you will see, their free basic plan provides for surveys with 10 questions and 100 responses per survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/pricing>.



Chapter 15 – Tablets and Apps for Education: *iOS, Android, and More*



Selecting the Best Apps for Teaching and Learning – Use a Rubric!

In November of 2012, I had the privilege of providing a keynote address at a regional education technology conference in North Carolina focused on [Teaching and Learning with the iPad](#). This two day gathering was coordinated by Franklin Academy Principal David Mahaley and Assistant Administrator and teacher Tim Hall. Over 120 educators came to learn, share, and discuss ways in which the iPad can be used effectively in the teaching and learning process.

One of the most valuable sessions I attended covered methodologies for determining which elements of an app make it most useful in the classroom. This session, offered by David Mahaley, addressed the question, “How can instructors

maximize the effectiveness of apps used in the learning environment?” We learned about how to evaluate, test, and assess apps for the iPad and their potential for the educational setting.

EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR IPOD/IPAD APPS				
DOMAIN	4	3	2	1
Curriculum Connection	Skill(s) reinforced are strongly connected to the targeted skill or concept	Skill(s) reinforced are related to the targeted skill or concept	Skill(s) reinforced are prerequisite or foundation skills for the targeted skill or concept	Skill(s) reinforced are not clearly connected to the targeted skill or concept
Authenticity	Targeted skills are practiced in an authentic format/ problem-based learning environment	Some aspects of the app are presented in an authentic learning environment	Skills are practiced in a contrived game/simulation format	Skills are practiced in an isolated fashion (flashcards)
Feedback	Feedback is specific and results in improved student performance	Feedback is specific and results in improved student performance (may include tutorial aids)	Feedback is limited to the correctness of student responses and may allow students to try again	Feedback is limited to the correctness of student responses
Differentiation	App offers complete flexibility to alter settings to meet student needs	App offers more than one degree of flexibility to adjust settings to meet	App offers limited flexibility to adjust settings to meet student needs (e.g., few levels such as easy/medium)	App offers no flexibility to adjust settings to meet student needs

We've all experienced the initial excitement that can come with a new technology like the iPad. It's not too hard to find apps that we think might be useful in the classroom (*check out [this post](#) for more on that*), but we often find in practical use that many of them are too single-purpose or have other limitations that make them less useful than we might have originally envisioned. How can we evaluate apps in a consistent, straightforward manner, so that we spend our time and money (for paid apps) wisely?

Use a Rubric!

One of the resources that David mentioned is [Kathy Schrock's "iPads in the Classroom"](#) web page, which contains links to a wealth of information related to teaching with the iPad, in various sections. If you scroll down the page a bit, you'll find a section titled "iPad App Evaluation Guides". Here you will find various rubrics that can be extremely useful in determining whether an app will be a good fit for your classroom.

Let's examine one of these in particular – the [Evaluation Rubric for iPod/iPad Apps](#):

- Curriculum Connection
- Authenticity

- Feedback
- Differentiation
- User Friendliness
- Student Motivation
- Reporting

A quick read through the criteria for the highest weighted ranking for each of the domains helps to clarify what each one is addressing. For example, to score a 4 for Differentiation, the app must “offer complete flexibility to alter settings to meet student needs.” To score a 4 for Feedback, the app must provide feedback that “is specific and results in improved student performance.”

An Example

Let's assess the app [Times Table Quiz](#) (from Koalapps) using this rubric. We'll assume we are using this in an elementary grade level where the multiplication tables up to 12 x 12 must be learned. Times Tables Quiz is a simple free app that provides random multiplication questions and four multiple choice answers to select from. Questions will keep coming until you get one wrong, and however many the student gets correct is their score. If you get an answer wrong, it shows you the right answer, and that run of the game is over.

My ranking for the Times Table Quiz app for each of this rubric's domains is as follows:

- Curriculum Connection: 4 (*“Skills reinforced are strongly connected to targeted skill of concept”*)
- Authenticity: 4 (*“Targeted skills are practiced in an authentic format/ problem-based learning environment”*)
- Feedback: 2 (*“Feedback is limited to the correctness of student responses and may allow students to try again”*)
- Differentiation: 1 (*“App offers no flexibility to adjust settings to meet student needs (settings cannot be altered)”*)
- User Friendliness: 4 (*“Students can launch and navigate within the app independently”*)
- Student Motivation: 3 (*“Students use the app as directed by the teacher” – this is an imagined ranking, as I have not had multiple student actually use*

it and provide feedback)

- Reporting: 1 (*the only feedback is the student's score, which only they see, so I thought this was the best match to the ranking criteria offered*)

Total Score for Times Tables Quiz: 19 (not bad for a free app). If we wish to improve on this app, we know how to focus our search – look for an app that is stronger in the lower ranked areas. If we could find an app that ranks well in all the other areas but improves on Feedback, Differentiation, and/or Reporting, it should be a better fit. Perhaps an app that lets us select specific times tables to drill, offers tips on how to work within different multiplication sets (*like 'the digits in multiples of 9 add up to 9', that sort of thing*), or provides summarized performance feedback from the teacher.

Wrap Up

This is an excellent tool for examining different software applications for student use in general, not just for the iPad – but for any tablet or other computing device. This logical, methodical approach can enable a teacher or a group of teachers to bring an informed perspective to selecting apps for student use. By having a number of teachers use different apps and then use this rubric to assess their applicability and rank them, schools can bring efficiency and uniformity to app selection and teaching.

Kathy Schrock's "iPads in the Classroom" web page also contains links to many tutorials, lists of apps & related materials, a section "Especially for Special Education", and much more. It is definitely worth spending some time with this resource site if you are an educator using the iPad in the classroom.

Teaching and Learning With the iPad

The iPad has proven to be one of the quickest-to-catch-on technologies in education that I have ever come across. With the release of the iPad 2 at the start of 2011, it was undeniable that Apple had raised the 'tablet' niche of computing

device from wannabe to contender – tablets had been discussed for years, but in 2011, the iPad became a game changer.

A growing number of schools have launched programs to provide iPads to students. There are many great applications available for free for the iPad. I have written many posts about these types of apps, and I work to focus on apps that provide truly useful functionality for free (as opposed to the many apps that use limited free functionality as ‘bait’ to encourage you to purchase a paid application).

In 2012 more information began to surface about the impact of the iPad and how to make the best use of it in the educational context, so we'll start off with a few of these pieces. These will be followed by several listings of free iPad apps useful for teaching, and then a list of additional free resources focused on using the iPad in education.

Using The iPad As A Digital Whiteboard: 4 Cool Free Apps To Try It Out

ScreenChomp

This TechSmith app was rated (an average of) 4.5 by hundreds of users. [ScreenChomp](#) provides 9 colors but just one pen size. You can import pictures to use as your background. Mostly importantly, you can record your whiteboard session for play back, and the recording will include audio. Recordings can be saved to the ScreenChomp app, and can be shared via email, Facebook, Twitter, and accessed through a URL.

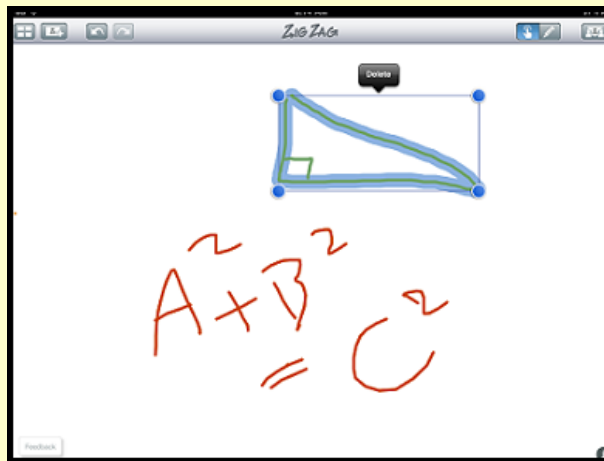
This app is a great example of combining a few simple features to make a tool that is very useful. Here's an example ScreenChomp video I created:

<http://www.screenchomp.com/t/Z2xnmkfS>.

ZigZag Board

[ZigZag Board](#) had one unique offering among the free tools I looked at, which is the ability to select and resize things you draw (as well as move or delete them). It

is similar to some of the other apps in that it has a small selection of pen colors and the ability to adjust the thickness of the pen (but no ability to pull a pic to draw on). ZigZag also allows users to have a "meeting" with the app. The meeting functionality was easy to use – I started a meeting from the iPad app and then joined on my laptop, but I was only able to view the whiteboard session there, I could not actually participate in it (*not sure if this works differently when you join from an iPad, we had a network issue and couldn't connect from another iPad*).



Unlike most of these other tools, Zig Zag requires the user to create an account. Once you sign up, there's a nice page-by-page tutorial on how to use the drawing tools and how multi-touch gestures work within the app.

SyncSpace

[SyncSpace](#) allows for a choice of 9 colors, 4 pen thicknesses, and 2 pen styles (solid or dashed), which was more than the other apps provided. Two unique features the app has are its ability to scale the screen to any size (it seems that you can shrink or expand your whiteboard indefinitely), and its synchronize capability, which allows for **true collaboration**. My son and I tried this and it was easy and worked well. You can also export files as PDFs, post them to Facebook, Twitter, or Campfire (a collaboration app), or email a link to other iPad users.

One down side of SyncSpace is that it did not work in landscape (horizontal) mode, making it a little less ideal for projecting.

Jot!Free

The [Free version of Jot](#) has a pretty nice set of functionality including: 4 colors and 4 pen sizes, the ability to move a drawing and to add a background, and to add text. You share your drawings via email or save them as a photo. There's a premium app available for \$4.99 that provides more colors, more line widths, 5 fonts to select from, and live sharing.

The other four apps shown in the search results I eliminated for the following reasons:

- Show Me Interactive Whiteboard: Show Me seemed like ScreenChomp without the audio recording capability.
- Docreri Remote: Required the installation of an additional application in order to use it, and it appeared that I would probably have to pay that app at some point.
- Sign+: This should not have been in the list as it for creating a “digital sign”, and does not have the interactive nature of a true digital whiteboard.
- SMART Bridgit Conference: This requires you to have a SMART board and applicable server in place.

Connecting the iPad to a projector or HD TV

This seems pretty straightforward if you have the right components. I can't wait to try this, and I'll be sure to share my results here.

- You will need the [Apple Digital AV Adapter](#) (\$39) and an [HDMI Cable](#) (under \$10).
- Your projector or TV will have to have an HDMI interface.
- [This eHow article](#) explains the basic process of connecting your iPad to your projector.

15 Favorite iPad Apps As Selected By Teachers

In early 2012, EmergingEdTech ran a survey asking teachers to tell us about two or three of their favorite iPad apps that they use in an education-related context. Here we share the apps that were listed most often, and include some feedback from teachers regarding why they like them so much.



As it turns out, free apps really outweighed paid apps in our survey responses. Here I list eleven free apps that rose to the top of the list when ranked by numbers of votes, followed by four paid apps that performed as well as the lower ranking free apps. Evernote and Dropbox easily rose to the no. 1 & 2 spots in the ranked list, with about 1 out of 3 respondents recommending at least one of these two popular applications.

First, we list the Favorite FREE iPads Apps that teachers indicated they use in their roles as educators:

1. **Evernote**
2. **Dropbox**
3. **Neu.Notes**
4. **Screen Chomp**
5. **TED Videos**

6. **EduCreations**
7. **iBooks**
8. **Skitch**
9. **Twitter**
10. **Zite**
11. **Science360**

Following is a little information about each of these apps, and some feedback on why teachers like them.

1. Evernote (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

Evernote allows you to easily maintain sets of notes and access them from just about any device, along with additional functionality. Here are some of the teacher's comments about why they love this app:

- "It makes my life simpler! Who couldn't use an app that allows you to clip information from the web, connect to a drawing tool, (Skitch), take notes, has its own email AND syncs all your information seamlessly with your computer, phone and ipad!"
- "I don't even know where to start. I love this App. I know it was on last year's list but it is my top App. I use it to store job related info, ... snapshots, urls, and mainly just keep me organized!"
- "I save all kinds of resources for myself and to share. I am able to organize them and file them."

2. Dropbox (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

Another highly popular app, teacher's love this one too. Dropbox allows you to synch files between multiple devices so you can easily get to them regardless of which device you're on, and provides 2GB of storage for free.

- "It allows me to keep all my files in one secure place. When necessary I can share a specific folder with a class and allow for a quick and secure transfer of files."

- "I use it to transfer/access files between my computer and iPad. I love it because it is an easy way to access files – using email can clutter my inbox and make it difficult to organize."

3. Neu.Notes (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

Take hand written notes and drawing on your iPad with great free app for sketching, note taking, mind mapping and more.

- "I use this to write all my notes in class every day. Love it—just like writing on a whiteboard."

4. Screen Chomp (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

This teacher's comment explains Screen Chomp, and why he or she likes using it in their teaching role:

- "This is a whiteboard that allows you to record what you do, and narrate at the same time. It's great for anything you want to show students. The file is saved online and you can play it on their site or download the mp4."

5. TED Videos (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

Access TED Talks here, "talks from some of the world's most fascinating people".

- "I use the videos from TED to spark discussions in my class, as well as to gather information on subjects I'm getting ready to teach. Awesome information here!!"

6. EduCreations (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

Educreations turns your iPad into a recordable whiteboard.

- "The ultimate screencasting app for teachers AND for students—teachers can flip classrooms and students can build demonstrations of thinking/knowledge. GREAT app!"

- "I can draw and create lessons on my iPad and I can find other user's lessons."

7. iBooks (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

Apple's electronic books app is included with iOS 5 (already installed on new

iPads). I thought this teacher's comment showed an interesting approach to the use of this tool, and this can be done more easily for a PDF – you can open a PDF in iBooks once you have it open on the iPad and it will be saved there until you delete it (*when you have a PDF open on the iPad, click the 'send to' icon and you should have an 'Open In ...' iBooks option if you have iBooks installed*).

- “This is a perfect app for a classroom teacher. If you want kids to share their writing with one another, all you need to do is take their Word document (or PDF), upload it to a site like 2epub.com, convert it, put it in your Dropbox and then open it in iBooks. Think of the power of all those books on the iBooks shelves... and they're all written by your students!

8. Skitch (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

“Mark up photos, screenshots, maps, and webpages then share them with anyone you like” (*from iTunes store description*).

- “It is great for annotating pictures, maps, or screenshots. Simple to use and syncs with Evernote.”

9. Twitter (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

The insanely popular microblogging platform offers it's own free iPad app.

- “I use this app to stay up to date on new educational technology, trends in education, trends and ideas in gifted education, and am researching and brainstorming how to incorporate Twitter with my students next year.”

10. Zite (*link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)*)

“Zite is a free personalized magazine for your iPad that automatically learns what you like and gets smarter every time you use it” (*from iTunes store description*).

- “Gathering web articles on many different topics for educational professional development.”

- “Keeps me up to date on news and blogs—love the easy set up and format.”

11. Science 360 (link to app in US iTunes store [here](#)).

“The National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Science360 for iPad provides easy access to engaging science and engineering images and video from around the globe and a news feed featuring breaking news from NSF-funded institutions” (from iTunes store description).

- “I like to use these videos to reinforce ideas of what my students are learning. This helps me pull them up quickly and use apple TV to watch them.”

- “The app has a good visual field when you open it so you have a good idea what the topic is and if you can tell if it’s a video. I use it with my 3rd grade reading group mostly as a behavior modification.”

So there you have the top free apps chosen. To round out survey results, there were also a handful of paid apps that ranked the same as the lower entries in the top listing above.

Fun Free iPad Apps for Elementary School Teachers And Students

Times Table Quiz

<http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/times-tables-quiz!-multiplication/id441001315?mt=8>

This is a rudimentary, but very useful app that tests students skills with math times tables. The app presents random multiplication questions from the spectrum of times tables from 2×2 to 12×12 , providing 4 possible answers in multiple choice format, and you keep going to see how many you can get right in a row. When you guess an incorrect answer, it stops and tells you the correct answer and you start over. This is geared towards later grades, as it does not allow for setting the level of the times tables – it just mixes the full range.

Trainyard EX

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/trainyard-express/id348724199?mt=8>

This application is great for the younger grades, as it guides the student slowly through a smooth learning curve with an increasingly complex task of designing a path for one or more trains to get point A to point B. As you progress through successive successful completions of the game it gets more complicated, working it's way up to some pretty involved challenges!

BrainPop's Featured Movie

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/brainpop-featured-movie/id364894352?mt=8>

BrainPop is a powerful application, with a wide range of functionality in its relatively inexpensive paid versions, but they provide the Featured Movie feature on their iPad app for free, and elementary school teachers might find it worth using. Students can watch a different animated movie each day, then test their knowledge with an interactive quiz. The movies are well done short animated clips on a wide variety of subjects, providing a fun, engaging way to learn.

Amazing Shape Puzzle Lite Version

<http://itunes.apple.com/app/amazing-shape-puzzle-lite/id469339346?mt=8>

This app has three free puzzles that can be fun and educational for younger elementary school students. The app works in English, Spanish, French, and German and provides Word Learning opportunities in addition to developing concentration, memory, and cognitive skills.

Fun Free iPad Math Game Apps

My Math App Flashcards ([link here](#)): This is a great application, providing flash card style testing for multiplication, subtraction, multiplication, and division, with “Starter” and “Advanced” versions for each function, making it useful across a wide range of grade levels.

Math Puppy ([link here](#)): This app has 2 games and a calculator. Math Bingo is a simple bingo style game (complete a row of correct answers and win) and Math Challenge prompts the user through consecutive sets of questions, up multiple levels, with difficulty increasing along the way.

Factor Samurai ([link here](#)): This is better geared towards higher grades than the apps above, as it requires awareness of prime factors, but it was so much fun to play I wanted to include it. There are three levels, and the lowest level is worth trying for students learning multiples of 2 or 3. As numbers fly on to the screen, you tap on those that are not prime, to break them into factors. If a number breaks into a factor that can be broken down further, click on it to break it down again. Give it a try (*older students or adults, try the "Apprentice" or "Master" levels!*).

8 Great Free Web Resources Focused on Using the iPad in Education



1. Apple's Education Resources for the iPad

It should come as no surprise that the iPad's maker has done a good job of putting together pages dedicated to education related applications and uses for it's popular tablet.

- <http://www.apple.com/education/apps/>: Here Apple has put together links to

- apps grouped by Academic Subject. For each subject section, they provide a few specific app examples, plus one or more links to applicable subsets of apps in the iTunes store (e.g. “See the Apps for Learning Astronomy and Earth Science Collection” or “See the Apps for Learning to Write Collection”).
- <http://www.apple.com/education/ipad/>: A number of additional resources and more information about using the iPad in education.

2. The “Apps in Education” Blog (<http://appsineducation.blogspot.com/>)

Reg Swanson runs this popular blog (*with 750 members/subscribers and over 1.5 million page views*) where he has published hundreds of helpful and insightful articles about iPad apps for teaching and learning. Articles are organized by academic subject for easy access, with links to these groupings right up at the top of the home page. I highly recommend this blog.

3. iPadCurriculum.com (<http://www.ipadcurriculum.com/>)

This is a unique site, in that it has a great side bar for searching for content. This search tool provides drop-down selectors for “Bloom’s Taxonomy”, “Device”, “Grade level”, “News”, “Price”, “Student reviewed apps”, and “Subject”, and these categories can be mixed to narrow right down to a targeted topic. For example, combine Price = ‘Free’, Grade level = ‘Elementary’, and Subject = ‘Grammar’ to find articles covering free grammar apps for elementary grades. Well done!

4. iPadinSchools.com (<http://www.ipadinschools.com/>)

This site is a blog and resource listing, and a set of resources worth being aware of are their collections of apps organized by grade level. Specifically, there are pages that list a good number of “Apps for Elementary School”, “Apps for Middle School”, and “Apps for High School”. These links are found towards the top of the site’s home page.

5. The “iPads in Education” Social Network (ipadeducators.ning.com)

This Ning-based social network, created by Sam Glicksman, is dedicated exclusively to this topic. There are a variety of resources here, organized into Blogs, Discussion Groups, Videos, and News & Views. One resource I found particularly interesting here is [this Tips & Tricks](#) discussion section.

6. The “iPads in Education” Scoop It Page (and a few similar pages)

(<http://www.scoop.it/t/ipads-in-education>)

This is one of a few such a pages on Scoop It. These types of pages provide listings of articles about the subject. This particular page, curated by John Evans, has hundreds of articles and is added to on a daily basis. Also check <http://www.scoop.it/t/ipads-and-tablets-in-education> (from Sam Glicksman, referenced in No. 5 above) for more articles.

7. iPadagogy YouTube Channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/iPadagogy/>)

This is the only YouTube video channel we found that is dedicated specifically to “videos of useful apps for education”. Of course, a quick YouTube search for “iPads in the classroom” or a similar phrase will return hundreds of videos, so it’s pretty easy to find more video content focused on this topic.

8. “iPad for Education and Training” LinkedIn Group

(www.linkedin.com/groups/IPAD-Education-Training-2713512)

When considering resources focused on a specific topic, a large group on a popular social network is a great way to locate one of the most valuable resource of all, a community of professionals interested in the topic. This group is just such a community when it comes to using the iPad in education, and at has over 700 members. Recent discussion topics include, “[How do you use your iPad to teach music at the elementary age level classroom?](#)” and, “[iPads in the high school math class?](#)”.



100's of Android App Recommendations for Kids and Education



Creative Commons Image Source: <http://photos.idhancock.com/photo/>

We combed and curated the Web to find the best apps for students and for teaching and learning, specifically for Android-based tablets and smartphones. Following are a hundreds of recommendations from expert sources across the web:

The 50 Best Education Apps For Android from TeachThought:

<http://www.teachthought.com/technology/the-best-education-apps-for-android/>

Best Android Apps for Kids from CommonSenseMedia

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/best-android-apps-for-kids>

11 best Android learning apps from Android Authority

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/7-best-educational-apps-android/>

30 Of the Best Educational Android Apps for Kids from Parent Map

<https://www.parentmap.com/article/20-educational-android-apps-for-kids>

10 of the best Apple and Android apps for education from eSchoolNews

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2013/04/26/new-10-of-the-best-apple-and-android-apps-for-education-in-2013/>

Best kids' apps 2015: 42 best free and cheap apps for kids, toddlers and teens from PC Advisor

<http://www.pcadvisor.co.uk/test-centre/google-android/3464905/42-best-kids-apps-2015-best-apps-for-children/>

30 best Android apps for kids in 2014, from the Guardian

<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/mar/10/best-android-apps-for-kids-2014>

19 top free apps for college students, from Consumer Reports

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2013/08/best-apps-college-students/index.htm>

When you're done perusing all of these recommendations, here are a few more useful resources:

Good Resources for Learning More About Android Apps for Education

Google Play for Education:

<https://developer.android.com/distribute/googleplay/edu/about.html>

"Google Play for Education is an extension of Google Play designed for schools. Here educators can discover Android and Chrome apps approved by teachers for teachers, as well as educational videos and a collection of classic books for their classroom."

The Education Apps Category on Google Play:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/category/EDUCATION>

Android4Schools: <http://www.android4schools.com/> Richard Byrne of FreeTech4Teachers maintains this informative site.

Chapter 16 – Using YouTube Videos as Lesson Materials

In Chapter 7 we explored a wealth of sites offering free learning resources, many of which are in video format. In Chapter 1 we learned about tools for creating your own videos (screencasting). In this chapter, we'll look at a few powerful applications that can help you turn YouTube based take video content (yours or content created by others) and kick up a notch to turn it into a more powerful lesson element, or a stand-alone lesson. We'll also look at some related useful utilities.

Ed.ted.com



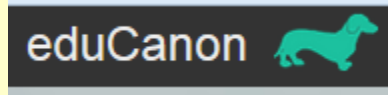
‘Flip’ A Video To Create Your Own Customized Lesson!

A great idea they've added to the TED Ed site in recent years is a wonderful “flip this video” function that lets you to turn any YouTube or TED video into a customized lesson.

You can add your own context, and select from pre-configured quizzes or add your own questions and follow-up suggestions. You can then share the custom lesson with students through e-mail, Facebook, or Twitter – it will have its own unique page on TED Ed, and you decide who gets to see it. You can see who viewed the lesson, review how many questions they attempted and the answers they provided, see the number of questions they got right and more.

Check out this [3 Minute Teaching With Tech Tutorial](#) to see how easy it is to create your own video lesson with ed.ted.com.

Educanon



Have you ever wished you knew how to easily add questions into a video to create lesson content or to help ensure that students are engaging with video content?

Well, you can, for free!

Check out this [3 Minute Teaching With Tech Tutorial](#) to see how easy it is to insert questions into a video with Educanon.

Share YouTube Videos Safely and Privately (Without the Distractions)



YouTube is a powerful, sure bet for delivering video content, but what can you do about all the distractions, and privacy? Read on ...

Do you want to be able to use YouTube in your class, but are concerned about exposing students to the distractions that surround it? Worse yet, inappropriate content may be displayed, which is a huge concern for younger students in particular.

Well I am here to provide a few approaches to solving that problem. You *can* use YouTube to host and deliver videos safely, *without* the distractions.

Concerns about this come up whenever I teach [Flipped Class techniques](#). Using YouTube to deliver content is easy and helps to ensure that students will be able to watch the content. But it's easy for them to get distracted or to be exposed to the wrong kinds of content, unless you take a little extra precaution (and know how to).

Another consideration that is also often voiced is privacy. If you've created the content yourself, or if content is created by or features students, you may want or need to be able to deliver content in a way that is not publicly accessible.

The following tools and techniques offer a mix of privacy and safe delivery approaches that should help you meet your needs.

Technique Number 1: Unlisted and Embedded

One approach to providing some level of privacy and limiting distractions is to deliver a YouTube video in a private tool like an LMS or other member-based environment where you can embed YouTube code (*if you aren't sure how to use embed code, [this video](#) will help*).

If you set your video to "Unlisted" when you upload it, no one will be able to find it through searches, and it won't display on your channel or playlists (the only way anyone can access it is if they have the URL). If you then use the embed code to deliver the video in a separate, private site, only those who have access to that site will see it and they will only see the video and none of the 'visual clutter' that typically surrounds YouTube videos.

Unfortunately, there are still a couple downsides to this approach. It is not 100% private, since viewers could click on the video link at the top of the embedded video and this will open it in YouTube, where they could then copy the link and send it to someone else. It is also not 100% distraction-free, because at the end of the video, a bunch of related videos will be displayed in a tiled format (I wish Google/YouTube offered an option to turn that off for selected videos).

Technique Number 2: SafeShare

An alternative that solves one of the limitations of the above approach is SafeShare (safeshare.tv).

SafeShare lets you deliver any YouTube video with zero distractions – there are no suggested videos at the end. It is super easy to use ... you just paste in a YouTube video URL and click on “Generate Safe Link” and you get a SafeShare URL where it can be watched with no distractions (here is an example of a video delivered using SafeShare: <http://safeshare.tv/w/rUfRCaMGwK>).

Note that you cannot see or access the original video URL. However, you have to provide the SafeShare URL, which can obviously be shared, and you can't embed SafeShare content, so the privacy issue isn't really addressed through this tool. However, there are a couple other cool things it let's you do though that are worth knowing about.

Crop Videos is a couple clicks! Another cool feature of SafeShare is that it let's you easily crop videos before you deliver them. You can cut off as much of the beginning and/or end of a video as you want, and what remains is all students will see. It's easy to use ... after you paste in a URL and click “Generate Safe Link”, use the Customize Video function, then click on “Full” (next to “Play Length”) it you will get an interface where you can play some of the video and click to tell it where you want to to start, and then also tell it where to.

Download: SafeShare also lets viewers download videos as either mp3 or mp4 files, which can be very useful, but it's important to comply with copyright laws. I wish they would allow this function to be turned off (like they do for the social media 'share' function).

Technique Number 3: TubeChop

I really like this one – it may be the best of all. Much like SafeShare, [TubeChop](#) lets you cut off as much of the beginning or end of a YouTube video and deliver it in a custom mode. But it also let's you embed the result! Here's an example – I cropped an existing video down to just about 10 seconds of it:

Notice that not only are there no distractions, and you also can't find or share the original video URL or the TubeChop URL! So if you deliver this in a private tool like an LMS, Edmodo, a members-only Wiki or Website, etc., it is truly private. Awesome. I would note that TubeChop is really best when it can be embedded, since if you just share the TubeChop URL for the edited video ([example here](#)), the delivery is still a bit cluttered, and not private.

Technique Number 4: YouTube for Schools

YouTube does provide special functionality for schools, with a focus on keeping content "school-appropriate", but you must be a Google EDU customer to use it. Click here to learn more and sign up: www.youtube.com/schools. *(Note that as of the publication date of this article, Google has had a banner up for some time stating that they realize there are issues with the sign up process "flow" for this service and they intend to fix it. I am not aware of the specifics of this.)*

YouTube for schools shouldn't be confused with YouTube EDU or YouTube.com/teachers, which are separate functions. [Click here](#) (and then click on the second item in the list) for clarification.

I should also add that Google is constantly tweaking the layout of YouTube and a zillion other things about it, so this guidance may become obsolete pretty quickly.

Technique Number 5: QuietTube

One last option that looks interesting is [QuietTube](#). QuietTube is an add-on that provides a button you can use to easily create a custom QuietTube URL for any YouTube video, which then let's it be played without distractions. Unfortunately, dragging and dropping the button that provides the functionality didn't work for me in Moodle or IE. The tutorial video they provide on the home page shows them using Chrome, so maybe it only works in Chrome.

Which Option is Best for You and Your Students?

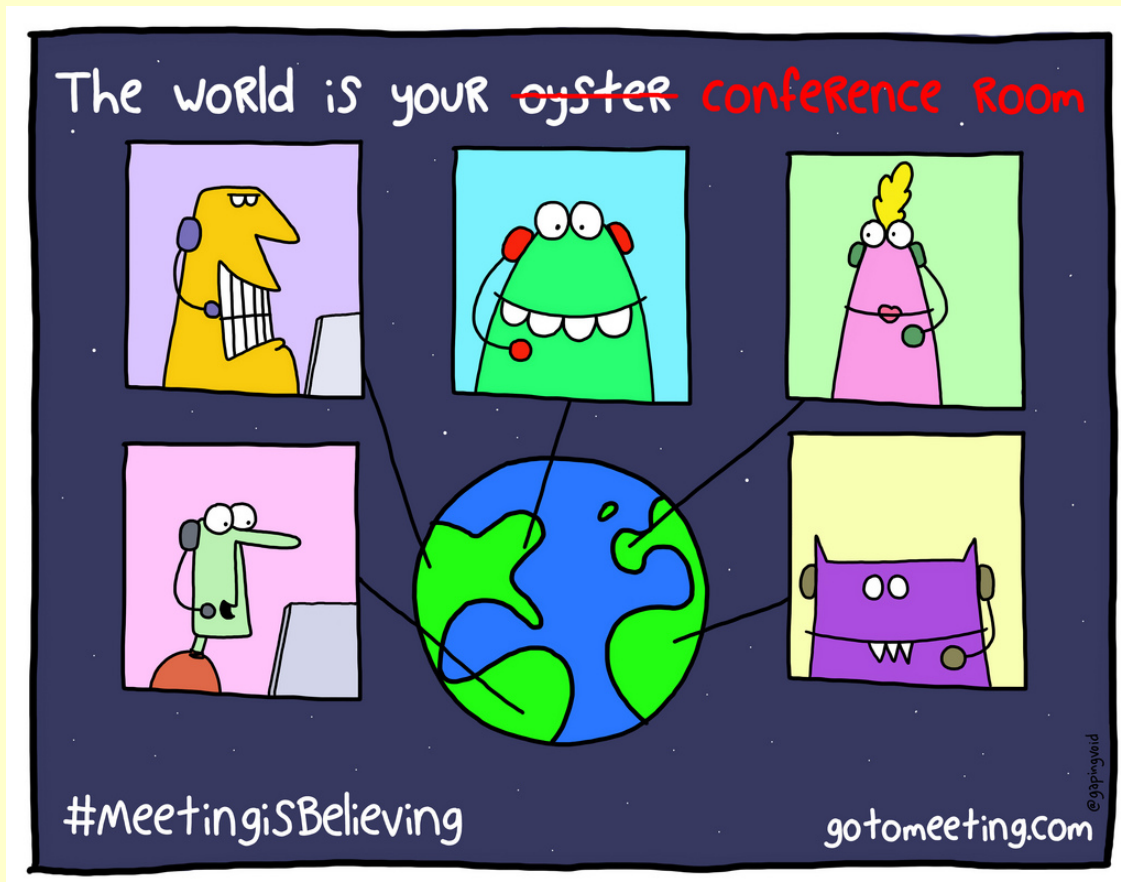
The answer to this question really depends on your specific circumstances and your needs.

- If you aren't concerned about privacy, all of these tools can result in reduced or eliminated distractions (SafeShare and TubeChop are great for that).

- If you are a Google Education customer already, it is presumably worth exploring YouTube for Schools.
- Lastly, if privacy is a concern and you have the ability to embed content in a private content delivery vehicle for your students, TubeChop is probably perfect.



Chapter 17– Video Conferencing and Video Chat Tools



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Video conferencing and chat tools can be a wonderful instructional resource, as most educators know. You can bring the outside world and guests into your classroom, enable a sick or disabled student to present from home and interact with the class, get to know online students better and have more constructive conversations than voice alone permits. The possibilities are endless!

Skype

Skype has been a powerful and popular classroom tool for years. Microsoft bought Skype back in 2011. Here's their education-focused Skype page on the web:

<https://education.skype.com/>.

There are lots of good articles on the Web covering many great instructional uses of Skype (and other video platforms). Here's some focused specifically on Skype:

- [Cool Ways to Use Skype in the Classroom](#) by Annie Condron
- [50 Awesome Ways to Use Skype in the Classroom](#) by Jillian Terry
- [The Complete Guide to the use of Skype in Education](#) from EducatorsTechnology.com

Google Hangouts

[Google Hangouts](#) are much newer to the tech world than Skype, but with the power of this leading tech company behind it, they've become quite popular quickly. An added bonus – Google owns YouTube and they added a nice value to Hangouts by making it possible to broadcast them via YouTube, as well as record them for long term storage and access in YouTube.

Here's some resources that teachers and schools have written to help other educators learn more about using Google Hangouts for teaching and learning:

- [Google Hangouts Guide for Teachers](#) from the Lee's Summit R7 School District
- [How Educators and Schools Can Make the Most of Google Hangouts](#) by Mary Key Hertz on Edutopa
- [4 Ways to Enhance Your Class with Google Hangouts](#) by Jennifer Carey on Edudemic

Oovoo

I first learned about [Oovoo](#) from my kids – my son was using it to talk with friends and classmates. Here's a couple pieces from educators discussing how they use Oovoo in their classrooms:

- [How to Video Chat on OoVoo](#) by David Neal
- [Baruch College Uses Innovative Video Calling Service Oovoo to Enhance Student and Faculty Engagement](#)

FaceTime (and Android alternatives)

If you're a fan of the iPad, you know [Facetime](#). Of course, the downside to Facetime is that it only works with other iOS devices or a [Mac](#). But if you're in a 1-to-1 iPad school, you and your students are quite likely to be putting it to use!

In addition to Skype and Google Hangouts, this article, [The 5 best alternatives to FaceTime for Android](#), recommends Viber (<http://www.viber.com>), Tango (<http://www.tango.me/>), and Zoom (<http://zoom.us>). We use Zoom under a paid plan at The College of Westchester, and we love it!

More Tips for Getting the Most out of Video Conferencing in the Classroom

To round this post out, I scoured the web for some good resources offering smart tips and techniques for getting the most of these free tools in the instructional setting.

- [5 Best Practices That Will Maximize Video Conferencing's Value in the Classroom](#) from EdTechMagazine

- This video may be low in resolution quality, but it offers some interesting ideas for using video in lessons: [Classroom Management : How to get the most out of video clips](#)
- [Faculty Guide to Teaching through Videoconferencing](#) from Allan Gyorke at Penn State U.
- [Using videoconferencing to connect your class to the world](#) from the UNC School of Education

Chapter 18 – OTHER Topics & Resources



I still have some great free tools I want to share with you, but they didn't seem to belong anywhere in the previous chapters, so here we have a 'hodgepodge' of cool tools to round out this eBook!

Mashing Up Digital Lesson Materials With LESSON PATHS & BLENDSPACE





This is a 2-for-1 bonus with two excellent, somewhat similar tools that make it super easy to combine different forms of digital content into a fun, easy to use lesson!

Both [LessonPaths](#) and [Blendspace](#) are awesome free web apps that make it a snap to combine web content and your own content into a set of organized lesson content. Different teachers may prefer one tool over the other for any number of reasons (or maybe you like to use both, to change it up from time to time!). For example, LessonPaths provides a more linear presentation, while Blendspace presents content in a more of grid layout. Which you prefer, they are both easy to use and produce impressive, slick content that's easy for students to access and consume!

Here are our famous 3 Minute Teaching With Tech Tutorials for LessonPaths and Blendspace:

- **Lesson Paths:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9SgkBUM8OQ>
- **Blendspace:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsONWnbYGnM>

Deliver Digital Content Along With a “Video Note”: MOVENOTE



Movenote is a rather unique tool. How would like to be able to deliver an

assignment and explain it with a quick video or audio clip? Movenote makes it a snap! [Movenote](#) is a great free web app for creating a video or audio note to 'attach' to one or more digital resources. One of the coolest functions of Movenote is the ability for students to respond via video as well. This is such a good way to bring more social interaction and teacher presence to digital assignments, online course work, flipped content delivery, blended learning, etc. So go for it – give Movenote a try today!

Here's a 3 Minute Teaching With Tech Tutorial for Movenote:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHHJa9EQLb0>

Sending Text Reminders With REMIND



Its 2015, and for students of an appropriate age, the smart phone rules. Ever wish you could take advantage of being able to text message them (without having to use your personal phone!)? And how about being able to send information and reminders to the parents of the younger students? Or maybe to fellow teachers? Well, you can, and it's free and easy with Remind.

Remind (formerly known as Remind101) is a free one-way texting tool that teachers just love. And that "one way" thing is a real bonus as far as many teachers are concerned, since they don't have to deal with the time consuming mess that replies can produce. Think of it as the 2015 version of the take-home flyer or note (they can't reply to that either, right?). Quick, convenient, and far more likely to be paid attention to than pieces of paper or emails.

Here's a 3 Minute Teaching With Tech Tutorial for Remind (formerly known as Remind101): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aikSQ2hFY4s>.

Positive Reinforcement With CLASS DOJO



This tool can work well in K-12 (although older high schoolers might find it a bit 'below' their age level). I love the positive reinforcement approach ClassDojo provides. Check out this tutorial by Thomas Grodek that introduces the tool and shows you how it works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f23bnZaWHNE>.

Here are some articles other teachers have written about using ClassDojo:

- [Using Class Dojo to reinforce positive behavior](#) by Amanda Killough
- [Techspired Tuesday: Using Class Dojo for Classroom and Behavior Management Tool](#) by Celiza Mas (the "Pinspired Teacher").
- [An apprehensive teacher's guide to... ClassDojo](#) by Siobhan Buchanan

How Cool is GOOGLE IMAGE SEARCH? You Can Even Use a Picture as a Search Parameter!

Google Image Search is a pretty fascinating tool with plenty of possibilities for teaching-related uses.

One day last year my son told me that he had learned who painted a picture we have hanging in our home (*it had no readily discernible signature*) by taking a picture of it and doing a search for it using Google Image Search. What?! You can search using an image as your search criteria? I wanted to learn more about Google Image Search. I finally got around to it this weekend.

This video illustrates what I learned about this intriguing search tool:
<http://youtu.be/DA48UqcClgQ>.

Here's a few key takeaways from the video:

- You can upload an image and use it as your search criteria. If the image is a published one (a painting or other work of art for example), it may return an exact match. It will also return “visually similar images”, which can open up a world of interesting possibilities. I have to imagine there would be a number of ways that teachers (and students) in the arts and even in the sciences could envision leveraging this functionality.
- Google Image search is a great tool for searching for images based on textual criteria, and the Advanced Search features can allow you to focus or narrow your search in a variety of useful ways, such as image size, aspect ratio, file type, region and more. One of the most useful features in Advanced Search is the ability to search based on usage rights, which will allow you to find content that is acceptable for reuse, or modification – something many instructors often seek when developing learning materials.
- The Google Safe Search function will give you some control over the appropriateness of returned content. By default, this is set to “medium”, but you can set it to “strict” to get the highest level of protection (or you can turn it off entirely). [This page and video](#) from Google explains more about this.

- Another related tool I discovered, thanks to Richard Byrne's great [FreeTech4Teachers](#) site, is something that is labeled as [Google's Unofficial Search by Drawing](#) tool. The video above shows an example of this tool in action.

Online Resources For FINDING GRANTS For Educators

Original blog post contributed by Carolyn Knight.

A selection of excellent sites to check out if you're looking for education grants.

Searching for grants can sometimes feel like a wild goose chase. Grants are a great way to fund education projects and classroom needs, and reward teachers and institutions that are pushing the education process forward, but they can be hard to find (and often have rigorous application processes). The world of grant applications may be challenging to crack into — but there are a few good resources out there for educators looking to find one. Here's a selection of them.



Grant Wrangler

[GrantWrangler.com](#) is a resource that aggregates grants that are available for teachers. The site divides grants by category such as Arts and Humanities, Health & Phys. Ed, Libraries, etc. There are currently over 200 articles on the site, most of which are available grants with application information.

eSchoolNews' Grants & Funding Pages

This monthly online publication that provides users with information about a wide

EmergingEdTech's Free Education Technology Resources eBook

variety of education technology information, but also has [a section devoted to grants](#).

U.S. Department of Ed Grant Listings

A listing of open discretionary grant competitions from the US DOE:

<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps/index.html>.

Grant Select

[GrantSelect](#) is a powerful online database which lists over 13,000 grant programs from over 5,800 unique sponsors. Funding opportunities range from pure research grants to arts programs, community services programs, youth programs, K-12 funding, and more.

TeachersCount

“TeachersCount is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to raise the status of the teaching profession and provide resources to the education community. Using a national ad campaign and related initiatives, TeachersCount is working to create a permanent culture of teacher appreciation in the United States.”

[This page](#) lists grant opportunities.

Donors Choose

[DonorsChoose.org](#) is a grant finding web site that allows anonymous donors to fund classrooms and educators all over the United States. In one 7 day period in January 2012, nearly 44,000 donors helped more than 166,000 students all over the country.

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