

Using Blogs in the Classroom



What is a Blog?

A blog is an online website on which one person or a group of people record opinions, thoughts, information, questions, and much more on a regular basis. People sometimes use blogs as an online journal of their day-to-day lives. Others use blogs to share ideas, opinions, and comments about a variety of topics.

In the classroom, teachers use blogs in order to integrate technology and communicate with students on numerous educational topics. Blogs are highly motivating to students and provide excellent opportunities for them to participate in reading and writing activities. Blogs also serve as an effective way to spark collaboration and discussion on many school related topics.



How to Use Blogs in Class

Here are some ways blogs may be used in classrooms:

1. **Classroom Management**

Blogs may be used to inform students about class requirements, provide handouts to download, notices, and homework assignments.

2. **Collaboration**

Blogs provide a space where teachers and students can work to further develop writing or other skills with the advantage of an instant audience. Teachers can provide instructional tips and students can practice and benefit from peer review. They also make online mentoring possible (e.g. a class of older students can help a younger class develop more confidence in their writing skills). Students can also participate in cooperative learning activities that require them to relay research findings, ideas, or suggestions.

3. **Discussions**

A class blog opens the opportunity for students to discuss topics outside the classroom. Everyone has an opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions. Students have time to react to one another and reflect. Teachers can also bring in experts to network and conference with students through the blog.

4. **Student Portfolios**

Blogs may also be used as an online collection of students' work. Students may also be motivated to produce better writing knowing that their work will be published in a classroom blog.

My Classroom Blog

These are the various ways I plan to use my classroom blog with my students. Please note that students may be given time during class to respond to posts on the blog or it may be assigned for homework.

- **Reading Response**

Post questions about literature we are reading in class and ask students to post their answers, opinions, and questions as part of an extension from class learning. Students may be asked to complete this during class or it may be assigned for homework.

- **Writing Enrichment**

Post information about a writing skill we learned in class and have students provide their own example of that writing skill. For example: If I'm teaching about using stronger verbs in their writing, I might write a sentence using weak verbs and have students reply to the post with a revised version of the sentence using stronger verbs. Another example would be to have students practice writing a great beginning to a given topic.

- **Math Practice**

Post a review of a skill learned in math during and have students reply by writing their own problems with solutions using that skill.

- **Science and Social Studies Extensions**

Post notes on a scientific or social studies topic learned in class and have students reflect through their posts.

Sample Classroom Blogs

Here are a few examples of classroom blogs teachers are using with their students:

Room 18's Sharing Space: <http://room18space.blogspot.com/>

Mr. Avery's Classroom Blog: <http://mravery.edublogs.org/>

Mrs. Buller's Fourth Grade Blog: <http://mrsbuller.edublogs.org/>

Mrs. Daugherty's Fifth Grade Blog: <http://mrsdaughertysclass.wordpress.com/>

Denton Dynamos Discussions: http://classblogmeister.com/blog.php?blogger_id=88116

East Denton Den: <http://eastdragonden.blogspot.com/>

The Electronic Pencil: <http://epencil.edublogs.org/>

Ms. Kreul's Class Blog: <http://mskreul.edublogs.org/>

Risks to Consider

It is important to review your school district's guidelines and acceptable use policies regarding the use of school-wide computer networks and the Internet. Within these, you should pay close attention to what your district's guidelines say about displaying student work online. You should also take the necessary steps to secure parental permission before using the blog in a participatory manner.

Remember that blogs may be viewed publicly, just like any other website. Teachers must teach students about issues regarding access, privacy, security, and free expression. Students must carefully consider the content of their postings to avoid anything defamatory, disrespectful, or an infringement upon the rights of others.

How to Prepare Students for Blogging

- Determine that all students' acceptable use policies are in place and up to date
- Inform parents of procedures and secure parental permission
- Teach students safe, acceptable, and sensible behavior as online authors and readers
- Review policies and guidelines pertaining to student access
- Teach the non-posting rules of no complete names, e-mail accounts, or references to reveal location
- Set clear expectations regarding tone, respect, and consequences

The following page contains some blogging rules to review with students. You may also choose to post these somewhere in your classroom.

Source: *Using Blogs to Integrate Technology in Classroom* www.glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/educationupclose.phtml/47

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Blogging Rules

1. Do not use your last names, home address, or any other personal information in any of your posts.
2. Do not link your personal blog or web pages to our classroom blog.
3. When writing your opinion, make sure you are not going to hurt anyone else's feelings as you write it.
4. Never disrespect someone else in your writing, whether it's a person, an organization, or a general idea.
5. Don't write about other people without their permission and NEVER use last names.
6. Make sure your responses are focused on the educational question, problem, or activity ONLY!
7. Before posting, check for spelling, grammar, and use language appropriate for school.

Adapted from Bud the Teacher's Wiki: www.budtheteacher.com/wiki/index.php?title=Blogging_Rules

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Blogging Permission Slip

Adapted from Cheryl Terry: www.slideshare.net/cherylterry/blogging-permission-slip-isb

Dear Parents,

I am excited to announce that this school year our class will participate and collaborate through an online blog as a way to promote enthusiasm and excitement about reading, writing, and learning in general.

What is a blog? A blog is a special type of online journal, in the form of a website, where people come together to share ideas, post questions, and provide feedback on a variety of topics. Our classroom blog is dedicated to educational use only. Students will be able to read and comment on various classroom related topics posted on our blog by the teacher.

Please note that students may be asked to access our classroom blog outside of class. All that is required is a computer with an Internet connection. Students may also access the blog via our classroom computers when instructed by the teacher. Having a real audience is one of the key components to using a blog. Please note that comments placed on our blog will come from students but parents are also invited to visit and respond to posts when prompted.

Online Safety and Responsibility

Please note that absolutely no personal information about your child will be shared in our classroom blog. We will use only first names or nicknames to refer to any student. Students will be taught and reminded about online safety when using the blog throughout the year. Please refer to the next section on Blogging Terms and Conditions for more information about the expectation from students when using our classroom blog.



Blogging Terms and Conditions

1. Students using our classroom blog are expected to act safely by keeping personal information out of their posts. You agree to not post or give out your family name, last name, password, username, e-mail address, home address, or other information that could help someone locate or contact you in person. You may share your interests, ideas, and preferences but nothing more.
2. Students using our classroom blog are expected to treat the blog space as a classroom space. Language that is inappropriate for class is not appropriate for our blog. While we encourage you to engage in debate and conversation with others, we also expect that you will conduct yourself in a manner reflective of a representative of this school.
3. Students using our classroom blog are expected to respect other people's privacy and rights. You agree to not hurt other people's feelings in any opinions you may share in our blog. This also includes disrespecting someone else in your writing, whether it's a person, organization, or a general idea. You also agree not to write about other people without their permission and NEVER use last names.
4. Our classroom blog is to be a forum for student expression. However, it is first and foremost a tool for learning, and as such will sometimes be constrained by the various requirements and rules of our classroom and school. Students are welcome to post comments on any school-appropriate subject.
5. Students using our classroom blog take good care of the computers by not downloading or installing any software without permission, and not clicking on ads or other inappropriate, non-school related websites.
6. Students who do not abide by these terms and conditions may lose their opportunity to participate in our classroom blog.

Thank you for your support and cooperation!

I have read and understand these blogging terms and conditions. I agree to uphold them.

Student's Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____