

# Creating Valuable Class Web Sites



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Even those teachers with the best intentions of taking advantage of the Internet to support learning may have obstacles before them. In researching the problem, I've heard their complaints and understand some of the difficulties. Here are the typical laments:

"I know that my students would benefit from doing more with computers—but we don't have the time."

"We go to the school lab as often as we can, but it is not often enough."

"I created a list of Web sites for my students to use, but they only have access to my list when they use computers in our classroom or in the school building."

"We have only one computer in our classroom."

"I want to keep my students safe, so I avoid the Internet."

Sound familiar? Then follow the steps below to create a Web site for

your classroom. Don't panic. Even if you don't know where to begin, or consider yourself insufficiently savvy about technology to take on the task, you can do it. Creating a classroom Web site is not as difficult as you might think.

The methods listed here are incrementally more difficult. Thus, if you are tentative about the Internet (for example, if you are able to turn on your computer but not much else), you will want to use Method One: Web Site Providers.

If you are a little more comfortable with technology but lack the time to learn how to use Web development software, you will want to use Method Two: Blogs, Groups, and Wiki Web Sites. If you are willing to learn new software, have server space, and have funds for the software, you might want to use Method Three: Be Your Own Developer.

### Method One: Web Site Providers

Several companies publish Web sites for you (see Table 1). Some are created

for teachers (e.g., Scholastic.com), and some are available to anyone (e.g., FreeWebs.com). Often the free providers include advertisements on your Web site. Other providers are advertisement-free but charge a nominal fee (e.g., TeacherWeb.com/\$29 per year). The advantage of using Web site providers is that you can have a Web site in a few hours or less. The disadvantage is that you do not have as many options for design and content as you do with the other two methods. Furthermore, if you decide to change to another method you cannot take your site with you and will have to start all over. If this is of no concern for you, however, simply choose a site in Table 1, sign up, and begin creating your Web site.

### Method Two: Blogs, Groups, and Wikis

Table 2 lists several options to get started with blogs, groups, and wikis. The template approach common to Method Two provides a little more flexibility, and it allows multiple users to post to the site. If you want students

**Table 1: Web Site Providers**

If you ...	Providers	Online Tours, Tutorials, Tips, and Examples	Where to sign up
Want to get started as easily as possible	FreeWebs	<i>Examples:</i> <a href="http://members1.freeWebs.com/page.jsp?page=exampleSites">http://members1.freeWebs.com/page.jsp?page=exampleSites</a>	<a href="http://freewebs.com/">http://freewebs.com/</a>
Need server space for your site	Geocities by Yahoo	<i>Tour:</i> <a href="http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/geo/tour/index.html">http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/geo/tour/index.html</a>	<a href="http://geocities.yahoo.com">http://geocities.yahoo.com</a>
Are willing to have advertisements on your site or pay a minimal fee	Homepage builder by Scholastic	<i>Tutorial:</i> <a href="http://teacher.scholastic.com/chb_tutorial/tutorial.htm">http://teacher.scholastic.com/chb_tutorial/tutorial.htm</a> <i>Tips:</i> <a href="http://teacher.scholastic.com/homepagebuilder/monthly_tips.htm">http://teacher.scholastic.com/homepagebuilder/monthly_tips.htm</a>	<a href="http://teacher.scholastic.com/homepagebuilder/index.htm">http://teacher.scholastic.com/homepagebuilder/index.htm</a>
	Tripod by LYCOS	<i>Tips:</i> <a href="http://www.tripod.lycos.com/about/">http://www.tripod.lycos.com/about/</a>	<a href="http://www.tripod.lycos.com">http://www.tripod.lycos.com</a>
	TeacherWeb, \$29 USD/year (no advertisements; free 30-day trial)	<i>Tour:</i> <a href="http://www.teacherweb.com/intro.htm">http://www.teacherweb.com/intro.htm</a>	<a href="http://www.teacherweb.com/ldxStates.htm">http://www.teacherweb.com/ldxStates.htm</a>

**Table 2: Blogs, Groups, and Wiki Web Sites**

If you ...	Providers	Online Tours, Tools, FAQs, and Examples	Where to sign up
<p>Want a professional Web site appearance</p> <p>Want to facilitate interaction between students</p> <p>Want to empower students to post their own work</p> <p>Are willing to learn how to use blogs, groups, or wikis</p> <p>Do not want to spend any money</p> <p>Do not have server space for your site</p> <p>Are willing to have advertisements appear on your site (check for appropriateness)</p> <p>Want an RSS feed</p>	Blogger	<p><i>Tour:</i> <a href="http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g">http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g</a></p> <p><i>Examples:</i> <a href="http://search.blogger.com">http://search.blogger.com</a> &gt; click on Next Blog</p>	<a href="http://www.blogger.com/start">http://www.blogger.com/start</a>
	Ebn.Weblogger	<p><i>Tools:</i> <a href="http://www.ebn.Weblogger.com/directory/68/bloggingTools">http://www.ebn.Weblogger.com/directory/68/bloggingTools</a></p> <p><i>Examples:</i> <a href="http://www.ebn.Weblogger.com/directory/68/examplesOfBlogUse">http://www.ebn.Weblogger.com/directory/68/examplesOfBlogUse</a></p>	<a href="http://www.ebn.Weblogger.com/member/signup">http://www.ebn.Weblogger.com/member/signup</a>
	Livejournal	<p><i>FAQs:</i> <a href="http://www.livejournal.com/support/faq.bml">http://www.livejournal.com/support/faq.bml</a></p> <p><i>Examples:</i> <a href="http://www.livejournal.com/schools/">http://www.livejournal.com/schools/</a></p>	<a href="https://www.livejournal.com/create.bml">https://www.livejournal.com/create.bml</a>
	Google Groups	<i>Tour:</i> <a href="http://groups.google.com/googlegroups/tour/index.html">http://groups.google.com/googlegroups/tour/index.html</a>	<a href="http://groups.google.com">http://groups.google.com</a>
	Yahoo Groups	<i>Examples:</i> <a href="http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/Schools__Education/K-12">http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/Schools__Education/K-12</a>	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com">http://groups.yahoo.com</a>
	Wikispaces	<i>Tour:</i> <a href="http://www.wikispaces.com/site/tour#introduction">http://www.wikispaces.com/site/tour#introduction</a>	<a href="http://www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers100K">http://www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers100K</a>
	PBWiki	<i>Tour:</i> <a href="http://pbwiki.com/content/tour">http://pbwiki.com/content/tour</a>	<a href="https://secure.pbwiki.com/signup.wiki">https://secure.pbwiki.com/signup.wiki</a>

to be able to add their work to your Web site or want them to engage in online discussions, then you will want to use Method Two. Your students may already know how to create and maintain blogs, groups, and wikis. This in itself is a valuable literacy activity, giving them the opportunity to develop important literacy skills for the workplace. Research indicates employers soon will expect workers to be able to create, maintain, and use Web sites. If you choose Method Two, and then decide at some point to switch to Method Three, all you have to do is add a link to your site. Finally, Method Two lets you sign up for RSS, a system

that notifies you of changes made to your site. With RSS, you do not have to go to your Web site to see if anyone has made a posting; the RSS feed will e-mail you a notification. In addition, the feed will track revision authors and the time the revisions were made to the Web site.

You will be amazed how simple blogs are to create and update. Table 2 lists some blog sites that allow you to create a blog for your classroom at no cost.

Yahoo and Google are just a few of the many providers offering free group spaces (see Groups.Yahoo.com and Groups.Google.com). As with Method One, free group sites post advertise-

ments. Research the advertisements to make sure they are appropriate for your classroom before you select this method. You can give permission to any of your group members to change the site. That can facilitate student use of the Web site as they post their own publications and have online discussions. In addition, you can make the Web site password-protected so only those to whom you assign permission can see the site. Doing so allows parents (not the general public) to view student work, for example.

Wikis, by definition, are Web sites allowing users to add, remove, edit, and change the content. The most famous wiki is *Wikipedia*—an online encyclopedia with an informal, worldwide editorial team. Anyone can edit its content. To start your own wiki, try Wikispaces.com or PBWiki.com.



Research indicates employers soon will expect workers to be able to create, maintain, and use Web sites.

**Table 3: Be Your Own Developer**

If you ...	Providers	Online Tutorials, FAQs, and Examples	Download
<p>Are willing to have a simplistic Web site appearance</p> <p>Are willing to learn how to use a new software package</p> <p>Have no budget to purchase software</p> <p>Have server space to upload and store your site</p>	Nvu.com (Free)	<p><i>Tutorial:</i> <a href="http://nvu.com/Websitehelp.php">http://nvu.com/Websitehelp.php</a></p> <p><i>FAQs:</i> <a href="http://nvu.com/faq.php">http://nvu.com/faq.php</a></p> <p><i>Examples:</i> <a href="http://nvu.com/demo.php">http://nvu.com/demo.php</a></p>	<a href="http://nvu.com/download.php">http://nvu.com/download.php</a>
	Netscape Communicator (Free)	<p><i>Tutorial:</i> <a href="http://wp.netscape.com/browsers/using/newusers/composer/pagecreate.html">http://wp.netscape.com/browsers/using/newusers/composer/pagecreate.html</a></p> <p><i>FAQs:</i> <a href="http://www.netscape.com/FAQ/">http://www.netscape.com/FAQ/</a></p>	<a href="http://wp.netscape.com/ja/download/download_comm.html">http://wp.netscape.com/ja/download/download_comm.html</a>
<p>Want a professional Web site appearance</p> <p>Are willing to learn how to use a new software package</p> <p>Have a budget of \$100 USD for software</p> <p>Have server space to upload and store your site</p>	Dreamweaver by Macromedia, \$100 USD (Education Version)	<p><i>Tutorial:</i> <a href="http://www.adobe.com/support/dreamweaver/tutorial_index.html">http://www.adobe.com/support/dreamweaver/tutorial_index.html</a></p> <p><i>Tutorial:</i> <a href="http://studentWebs.coloradocollege.edu/~j_kuczmarSKI/pages/tutorials/ed1.html">http://studentWebs.coloradocollege.edu/~j_kuczmarSKI/pages/tutorials/ed1.html</a></p>	<a href="http://www.macromedia.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=dreamweaver">http://www.macromedia.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=dreamweaver</a>
	FrontPage by Microsoft, \$100 USD (Education Version)	<p><i>Tutorial:</i> <a href="http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/online/Website">http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/online/Website</a></p> <p><i>Tutorial:</i> <a href="http://outreach.missouri.edu/Webteam/fp2k/">http://outreach.missouri.edu/Webteam/fp2k/</a></p>	<a href="http://www.runaware.com/microsoft/frontpage2003/">http://www.runaware.com/microsoft/frontpage2003/</a>
	iWeb by Apple, \$79 USD (packaged with Macintosh or available as part of iLife)	<i>Tutorial:</i> <a href="http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/#iweb">http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/#iweb</a>	<a href="http://store.apple.com/1-800-MY-APPLE/WebObjects/AppleStore.woa/wa/RSID?mco=66BF062D&amp;fnode=home/shop_mac/software&amp;nplm=MB015Z/A">http://store.apple.com/1-800-MY-APPLE/WebObjects/AppleStore.woa/wa/RSID?mco=66BF062D&amp;fnode=home/shop_mac/software&amp;nplm=MB015Z/A</a>

**Method Three: Be Your Own Developer**

Table 3 provides a variety of software options for the more sophisticated type of Web site development. Free software (e.g., Netscape Composer, Nvu) is fairly simplistic to learn but also generates a site with a simplistic appearance. Purchased software (e.g., Dreamweaver, FrontPage, iWeb) will require an investment of time to learn, but that investment will be apparent in the more complex Web site fashioned using it. If the hard drive on your computer already has Microsoft products (e.g., Word, PowerPoint), you may already own FrontPage. If you own a Macintosh you may already have iWeb.

In addition, your school district or local college may provide classes to help you learn how to use commercial Web development software.

Developing your own Web site requires you not only to learn the software but also to upload your site to a server. In other words, you will need to determine whether your school can provide you with server space. If so, the technology coordinator at your school will need to tell you how to upload your site to the server. If your school is unable to provide server space or unable to tell you how to upload to the server, you may want to choose Method One or Two, as described above.

**Resources**

- Blog-Connection.com—contains information about what blogs offer to educators.
- Educational.blogs.com—maintains an index of educator’s blogs.
- For a list of resources for teachers regarding wikis, see <http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00001969.shtml>.



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