

LESSON PLAN 48: FUN WAYS TO USE FACEBOOK IN YOUR CLASS

Objective: Utilise this online social networking service to assist teaching and learning

Age range: 12-18

Online social networking is a popular pastime with students. They're comfortable communicating this way – so why not use this to your advantage in the classroom?



WHAT IS FACEBOOK?

This is a social networking website. Its users create pages to 'network' with others. Many pages are personal profiles, however, some also represent groups, activities, companies, schools, etc. Users can apply to become 'friends' of other users, which enables them to send and receive information, and keep up to date with news and information.



www.facebook.com

DID YOU KNOW?

Facebook has doubled in size in the last year. It boasts nearly 400 million registered users, with half logging on every day.

YOU WILL NEED

Facebook account(s). Internet access.

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Communication, presentation, collaboration, research, literacy, general computer use.

METHODS

1. **Pass on information** – the site can be used as a virtual 'noticeboard' where you can leave messages, make announcements, post homework, remind students about deadlines, promote events, and so on.
2. **Share digital resources** – an account can be used as a virtual library. Course materials, class notes, documents, video, photos, as well as links to online resources, can all be easily posted and shared.
3. **Groups** – if you want to bring particular students together, the site allows for the creation of 'groups'. You could set up a page that acts as a class 'social club' where students can get to know each other better, especially in larger classes. Alternatively, groups could be made for assignments, sports teams, events, activities, etc.
4. **Create a page for a fictional character** – bring literature to life by asking your students to create a Facebook page on a character you're reading about in a book. Or perhaps create a page for an historical figure.
5. **Use a foreign language** – students learning a language can connect with native speakers. Check out Language Exchange (<http://bit.ly/languageX>), which is a service designed specifically to find language partners.

6. **Create your own news source** – try this great way for journalism students to practise their skills. Use the Facebook status update feed as a breaking news source, and write/post your own news stories.
7. **Keep in touch** – make contact (or stay in touch) with past students. It's not only fun to keep track of what they're doing but they could make an excellent resource for advice, information, or speak to your class about their careers and experiences.
8. **Teach online safety** – using Facebook in a controlled way is the perfect opportunity to teach students how to behave safely and responsibly online. It can teach them how to interact and communicate with others, and how to share information and manage personal details.
9. **Tools for teachers** – there are many applications that people have added to Facebook that you could use in your teaching, from calendars to course management programs. To get you started, you could try:
 - Make your own quizzes with Quiz Planet!
<http://bit.ly/quizplanet>
 - Share mathematical formulae with Mathematical Formulas
<http://apps.facebook.com/mathematics/>
10. **Connect with teachers** – there are a number of teachers and education groups on Facebook that could be used to share ideas, information and materials. For example:
 - Teachers – sharing ideas and resources for the classroom!
<http://bit.ly/teachershare>
 - Educators Network
<http://bit.ly/ednetwork>

A WORD OF WARNING

Unfortunately, using online social media does not come without its dangers. We looked at some of the potential problems in a recent article, *Who's your friend?* (Issue 21, February 2010). When interacting with students on sites like Facebook, always maintain the same personal boundaries that you implement in your classroom. Never use it to discuss personal topics that do not relate to your curriculum. And make sure you're 'friending' students for professional purposes.

TRY THIS PRIVACY TIP

Ask students to put you on limited access to their pages. This should help to keep you from having to seeing information that may compromise your professional working relationship.

