Getting Started

There are a number of different ways to bring VoiceThread into the classroom and a few minutes spent understanding the basics will be amply rewarded.

VoiceThread is an application that runs inside your web browser (no software to download, install, or update) and it allows you to transform collections of media, like images, videos, documents, and presentations, into a place for a conversation. These conversations are not live, but take place whenever it's convenient for the people to participate. They are also secure, with simple controls that let you dictate who can participate and what they can do.

Educators use VoiceThread for many different reasons, from extending and documenting classroom conversations, online tutoring, virtual class spaces, professional development training, and a thousand things in between.

Student participation

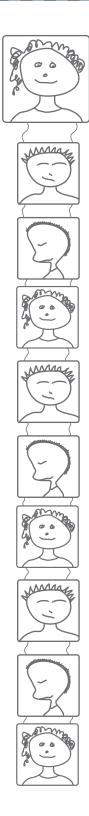There are three basic ways for K-12 students to participate

Have your students sign up for free accounts at VoiceThread using valid email addresses. Then add them as contacts and invite them to the VoiceThreads that you make. Students can comment by microphone and text an unlimited number of times for free.

Have your students work under your Educator account using our Identities feature. Make sure you fully understand how it works and directly supervise your students when they are logged in under your account. Review the Identities description on the next page for complete details.

Purchase your students their own account without the requirement of a valid email address by getting a subscription to ed.VoiceThread. Besides providing an accountable environment, the students can create more, have more features, and you can oversee and manage their work. See our About and Pricing pages at http:/ed.voicethread.com for more details.

The latest version of this document can be found at http://ed.voicethread.com/help/manuals/

Creating an Identity is like making an extra 'face' for your account and you can make as many as you want although after about 50 it gets a bit unwieldy. Here's a visual tutorial on how to make and use them.
http://ed.voicethread.com/share/240771/

You can very quickly make extra identities and assign one to each of your students so that when they sit down to comment they don't need to login or logout because you can simply 'click and switch' to their own avatar. Identities are an extremely convenient way of making it 'seem' as though your students have their own accounts, but they do not in fact have their own accounts and it's critical to understand the drawbacks to using them in the classroom setting.

When your students are using an Identity created under your account:

1. Comment Moderation does not work. Identities are simply a different 'face' for the educator account, any and all new comments will be immediately shown to all of your students.

2. Direct Supervision is required. The students are logged in as you, they must be directly supervised as they work and record their comments. Every identity can delete any comment made by any other identity, including the educators, and they can even permanently delete entire VoiceThreads with just two clicks.

3. Archiving work is more difficult. When you delete an identity you will delete all of the comments and content that the identity has made in the past, which means that next year you will either have to delete all of your prior years students identities and the work they made, or create a brand new account each year.

* In summary, Identities are really convenient but if you use them you must directly supervise the student while they work. (directly supervise means watching and helping them as they work)

The Basics

Here are some basic tips to help you get the most out of your Educator account

Start slow and be project based. Don't register for an account and the next day introduce VoiceThread to a Lab filled with 26 students (or educators) Instead, find a simple project that lets them learn the basics at their own pace, e.g. a book discussion, a language photo biography, a mathcast, a discussion of a video etc.

Great VoiceThreads are made before the computer is turned on. Have the students prepare, create, and edit long before they sit down to 'publish' their ideas. Even if the VoiceThread will never be shared outside of the class the students should take their commenting and their work seriously. We do encourage publishing when possible because it provides the students added incentive to perform well and take ownership of their work. Here's a great resource of prepatory practices. http://digitallyspeaking.pbwiki.com/Voicethread

It's worth watching all of the tutorial VoiceThreads. These 'mini-lessons' give you visual instructions for using the features at VoiceThread, and will enhance your experience and the quality of your projects! http://voicethread.com/?#c28

Help is always just a click away. VoiceThread is an application that works inside your web Browser and is constantly communicating back and forth with our servers. If your connection is poor you might experience some strange behavior. When you do have trouble, first refresh your web page, if that doesn't clear up the issue then try deleting your Browsers cache and signing out and then in again.

If your having consistant trouble with anthing at all, e.g. recording, or your email invites don't seem to be getting through, make sure to send this link on to your local network administrator. http://voicethread.com/help/forum/comments.php?DiscussionID=31

If you need help with file types or uploading make sure to view this article, http://voicethread.com/help/forum/comments.php?DiscussionID=554

Network with other VoiceThreaders. Very nice folks can be found in our forum and in other great communties as well, e.g. http://voicethread.ning.com/ **and** http://voicethread4education.wikispaces.com/ **and an excellent resource of best practices can be found** at http://digitallyspeaking.pbwiki.com/Voicethread

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