

10 EASY WAYS TO USE TECHNOLOGY IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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1. Listen Up! Learning with **Audio Theater**

With so much emphasis on technology's appeal to the visual learner, we sometimes forget that some students need to *listen* to learn. They need the experience of hearing, processing, and *imagining*.

Audio Theater Project Ideas		
Type of Audio Theater	Example	Your Ideas
Nonfiction documentary	The implications of high-stakes testing on our school and community	
Creative nonfiction	An afternoon at the community center	
Creative fiction	Poetry slams	
Adapted fiction	A section from <i>The Giver</i> as a radio play	
Quiz show	Unit review as a game show (à la NPR's <i>Wait, Wait, Don't Tell me</i>)	
Other		

2. Constructing Knowledge with **Video Projects**

Much of today's technology helps students to construct their own knowledge—to learn by doing. The camcorder is an easy-to-use tool that can help students create a project in response to what they read in a fun, creative, and valuable way.

Sample Timeline for a Video Project	
Day 1	Brainstorm Remind students that you, the teacher, are the producer and, as such, you decide whether to “green light” an idea. Students must “pitch” their ideas in a way that convinces you of their worth. Typical projects include reenacting scenes, restaging endings, and putting characters into different situations.
Day 2	Review guidelines and criteria Discuss the project's scope and decide upon assessment criteria. When first starting out, keep projects relatively simple. Distribute a list of roles and responsibilities and ask students to consider how they may best contribute.
Day 3	Establish groups Ask students to volunteer for roles, but remind them that the producer may reassign people and tasks. Have students break into groups and discuss their responsibilities.
Days 4 - 6	Group work Individuals in groups design and complete tasks. Actors discuss motivation and practice how best to convey emotions. Writers and storyboard artists develop the script and staging. Equipment directors arrange for cameras and lights, prop hands secure necessary objects, and so on.
Days 7 - 8	Rehearsals Have several run-throughs and work through the bugs.
Day 9	Lights, camera, action! Shoot the project.
Days 10-11	Computer editing While editors put the finishing touches on the video, have students reflect on the experience in small group discussion and journal writing. Ask them to reflect on what they learned about the content and the process. Have them write suggestions for improving the project in the future.
Day 12	Screening Host a screening of the video for other English classes, for administrators, and parents.

3. **Television** and short stories: Building a bridge

Why should we, as teachers of the English language arts, embrace *television*? TV can be a bridge between the culture of the home and the culture of the classroom. If we can help students become critical viewers, perhaps we can help them become critical readers....

Critical Viewing of a Documentary		
Before You View: Predict	While You View: Question, Connect, and Clarify	After You View: Evaluate and Reflect
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the name of the show? How does the name cue me into what the show will be about? 2. What do I know about this show? What is it "about"? 3. From what I know about the show, I can expect to see the following: 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the main idea? How do I know? 2. What details or key events support the main idea? 3. From what perspective is the story being told? 4. Is the documentary unbiased? Or does it have elements of propaganda? How do I know? 5. Does the documentary rely solely on facts? Or are opinions present? 6. Does the documentary include charts and graphs? If so, for what purposes? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The documentary was about... 2. The purpose of the documentary was to... 3. The intended audience was... 4. Did the documentary achieve its purpose? How do I know? 5. If I had been the director of this documentary, I would have...

4. **Movies** and novels: A match made in Hollywood

Using film in our classrooms helps build a context for reading—and for writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. In essence, making use of a media students readily enjoy—movies—provides a means to really engage them in the skills of literacy and oracy.


5. **Keypals**: Toward a global understanding

Writing for real reasons and for real people helps students discover the joy of authentic communication. Keypal projects add immediacy to the excitement of real writing, and we all know immediacy is critical when working with kids. Believe it or not, the quick turnaround time may even help contribute to *better* writing: "If a sentence in a message they receive is not clear, they can shoot back a question. If they gather from a response that they have not made themselves clear in a message, they can shoot off a correction or an addition. Exchanging email can thus become a process of revision" (Brunner and Tally 1999, 149). The best place on the Web: ePALS.com!

Are you thinking critically? Do you...	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret written messages accurately? • Ask for clarification when necessary? • Reply appropriately? • Attempt to understand your keypal's perspective? • Explain your perspective rationally? • Try to be fair?
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misinterpret messages regularly? • Fail to ask for clarification? • Ignore your keypal's point of view? • Seldom explain your perspective? • Base your decisions on poorly conceived notions?
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismiss your keypal's perspective, opinion, or point of view as irrelevant? • Ignore facts because they counter preconceived notions? • Demonstrate close-mindedness? • Demonstrate prejudice or bias? • Respond to email messages in a hostile or arrogant manner?

6. **Interactive writing:** The simple wonders of word processing
Interactivity is a term much bandied about by computer geeks. Though it may suggest different things to different people, most agree that *interactivity* suggests an action on the part of a user. Writers, therefore, must understand *audience*.


The Adventures of Little Red Riding Hood


Double-click on the speaker icon to hear a wolf howl!

Wasn't that SCARY?

Now imagine that you're a little girl, only five or six years old. You have to walk through the deep, dark woods to take dinner to your grandmother. Off in the distance, you hear that sound. Pop quiz, hotshot: What do you do? What *do* you do?

Click [here](#) to run home and hide under your bed.



Click [here](#) to continue on through the deep, dark woods.

Sound clip and photograph down loaded from dgl.Microsoft.com

7. Real research: **WebQuests**
 WebQuests are inquiry-oriented activities that are teacher directed. In essence, the teacher decides on a path through the Internet. All WebQuests are modeled on the same template: Introduction; Task; Process; Evaluation; and Conclusion. The best site for WebQuests: webquest.org!

8. Organizing ideas: **Concept-mapping software**
 Key to critical thinking is the ability to distinguish between important and irrelevant facts. In order to *learn*, students need to be able to prioritize information and organize concepts. Visual learners process information in hierarchies of groups, or chunks. Hierarchies communicate the importance of ideas by the way they are displayed; they provide a path by which visual learners make meaning.

Concept Map Checklist	✓
The main idea is clearly identified.	
Relationships are signaled by descriptive words.	
Images clearly illustrate an idea or concept.	
Ideas are organized appropriately.	
Concepts are supported with concrete examples.	
The map presents a coherent idea.	
Details are explicit.	

9. Creating a Class **Web Site**

The potential contribution of the Internet to teaching and learning extends beyond its function as a virtual library. The Internet is, at its heart, a community. It offers you—and your students—a place to publish writing and to discuss ideas with people who live on the other side of the globe.

Web Wizard Worksheet: <http://wizard.hprtec.org/>

Project Poster (for kids): <http://poster.hprtec.org/>

Teacher's Net: <http://teachers.net/sampler/>

Ted Nellen's CyberEnglish site: <http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/>

10. Now Presenting: **PowerPoint** and Beyond

With so much information available at the click of a mouse, many English teachers now complain that students cut and paste their way through assignments. Requiring students to present ideas, with the help of software such as PowerPoint, authenticates learning and offers pupils the opportunity to express their ideas through multimedia.

If students are going to download material from the Internet, they *must* include this statement on their opening slide: "Certain materials in this presentation are included under the fair use exemption of the US Copyright Law and have been prepared with the multimedia fair use guidelines and are restricted from further use."

Compare the two slides below. Which would *you* rather read on a computer screen?

Ah, the 1970s.... It was the decade that saw an end to the war in Vietnam, and a national crisis stemming from an embargo of oil. It was the decade that brought us Earth Day and earth shoes, bell-bottoms, and mood rings. It was also a decade of change—of rising unemployment, inflation, and riots in the streets of our major cities. The seventies ushered in a new suspicion of government as a president resigned and the word "Watergate" became forever etched in the minds of a generation.

The 1970s

A Decade of Change

Changes in Society

- Rising unemployment
- Runaway inflation
- Riots in the streets

Changes in the Nation

- End to the war in Vietnam
- Watergate scandal
- Nixon resigns

