

ahrenfelt's Zine

11 iPhone and iPod Touch Apps for Enhanced Productivity

By admin on March 4th, 2010

The dedicated website owner, blogger or Social Media enthusiast used to be confined to their office or at the very least laptop and broadband dongle. Nowadays however, these creative individuals can run their online empires from the comfort of, well, anywhere. Cue devices like iPhone and iPod Touch.

Below follows my top 11 Apps that I use to keep track of trends in education, communicate with colleagues and other creative professionals and update my websites and blogs with text as well as files and graphics. This list is by no means exhaustive and only contains apps I personally find effective, some of which are free whilst others come with a modest price tag.

If you use other one which would be worth mentioning please add a comment.

1. Wordpress 2 (free)



This is a simple, fast and effective application that enables you to update your Wordpress blogs at the press of a button. It focuses on adding and editing posts, pages as well as handling comments but has left out other Wordpress features like changing themes, plug-ins and major administrative settings.

2. EverNote (Free)



I started using EverNote way later than most it seems and it's got to be said that it really does improve your workflow as well as your organisation. This app lets you save 'snippets' from your online as well offline experience including photographs, text (whatever you copy like hyperlinks and standard text) and you can record audio and save it on the EverNote app. After you press save it will automatically sync with your online (free or premium) account that you set up via the app. Similarly, it's a good idea to install the software on all the machines you use as it will sync with all. There's also a handy web widget to install for most browsers so that saving to EverNote becomes a breeze. Many productivity apps now allow you to save directly to EverNote (like Qipit below). Superb.

3. Documents ToGo Premium (£8.99)

A very handy app to have as it allows you to open, edit and create Word, PowerPoint and Excel files straight on your device. I have found it invaluable particularly when I really need to do last-minute amendments to a presentation or handout. A tad pricey for what it is but hey it's still under a tenner so won't break the bank and coupled with DropBox and FTPOntheGo you're invincible!

4. (Free)

To put it simply, DropBox is outstanding. It syncs all files saved on its server to all computers (PC and Mac) where you have the software installed. It's as if you saved the document to all of your computers in one go. There are also other powerful features which makes DropBox superb:

- File Sharing: share an entire folder or specific files on DropBox with friends and colleagues. A great way of using DropBox is to open a 'Public' folder which you can use to link to files from websites and emails.
- Back-up: use DropBox as your online back up. The free account allows you to upload 2G of data which is a pretty good start. If you need to backup all your music and video files then upgrading is very cost effective.

The app does not allow you to access all of these features from the handheld device, but you can still:

- Access media, photos and documents you can't fit on your iPhone
- Sync photos and videos from your iPhone to their secure online storage
- Download files from your dropbox to your iPhone for offline use (just select your favourites and they will be downloaded straight to your device)

5. FTPOntheGo (£3.99)

I love this tool! Upload your files straight to your server without any hassle. It will also allow you to upload using secure FTPS. Perhaps the best feature is the ability to edit files within the App and upload on save (Word/PowerPoint and any text file such as PHP/HTML) as well as take a photograph or video with your phone, resize it and upload, all within the App – clever.

6. Mocha VNC (£3.99 or Free)



I started using this app initially when my daughter was a newborn as it was difficult to access my Mac when she was sleeping (generally on me). I just launched Mocha VNC and controlled the Mac from the iPhone. Hmm a bit fanatic I know. However it will also allow you to use your machine from anywhere – very clever and immensely useful particularly if you need to send larger files and you haven't got access to a fast connection or PC/Mac.

7. Qipit (£1.19)

Qipit turns your iPhone or iPod Touch into a scanner! This handy little gem will turn any photographs of written and printed materials into scan quality digital documents so if you

are in a lecture theatre or workshop and want to save time, then take a snap of the Interactive Whiteboard, Flip-chart or handouts and QiPit will digitize the photo and tweak it until it's readable. Then just send it to EverNote or email, all within the app. Genius.

8. ColorSplash (£1.19)

Originally I wasn't going to add any design or graphics apps but the following two apps are too good to miss out.

ColorSplash is a stunning application for what you pay. You start by taking a photo with your device or import a photo from your Photo Album. ColorSplash will then convert the photo to black-and-white and it is your job to 'add a color-splash' which really does draw people's attention to the image. You can zoom in and out of the image which means that you can create very detailed and sophisticated images. Fantastic for your blog posts or department website.

9. Sketches 2 (£1.19)

Sketches 2 is the web designer, blogger, artist or doodler's dream. You can use it to just draw images using the various painting and drawing tools (very similar to PhotoShop), sketch ideas for webpages, prototypes, layout of your own iPhone app or whatever else you'd use the various backgrounds, shapes and icons for. You can also add your own images as backgrounds. Perhaps the most clever feature is the ability to add a background map (satellite, map or hybrid) based on your location! It also offers extensive export features of your amazing canvas to the Photo Album, Twitter, email, PDF as well as JPG/PNG.

10. EchoFon Pro for Twitter (£2.99)



I tried eight different Twitter clients before realising that EchoFon is the most efficient and easy-to-use of them all. The most significant features I use are:

- * Multiple accounts (Pro version)
- * Searching for people you follow auto-list their usernames for quick selection
- * Creating lists
- * RT your own Tweet menu
- * Who has RT you menu
- * and a lot more!

11. Skype (free)

I always question how this can be a free service everytime I speak to my friends and colleagues abroad. Even when there were 21 million users talking and VC:ing at the same time, the quality was still good. Skype is the ideal tool to stay in touch and signing up only takes a few seconds. All you have to do then us to search for your friends and colleagues and add them to your Skype list – if they haven't got Skype tell them to

download it ad it works on both PC and Mac as well as most mobile devices.

Assessment for Learning made engaging and purposeful

By admin on March 4th, 2010

Make assessment concrete

Visual Assessment

Using Active Learning techniques benefit students greatly as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, and creating opportunities for using this method with assessment really does produce excellent results. Students who work with assessments on this level eventually gain a concrete understanding about:

- the various components of an answer;
- how to build an ideal solution to a problem/question;
- how/where they 'hit' each Level;
- different versions of an answer to the same question;
- exploring links/categorisations, themes and trends.

Build the Answer

Type up an answer in your favourite word processor and place each paragraph on a separate page with the size big enough to be able to read from a few meters away. You could also use sentences in the same way of course. You could use an ideal answer but another way of getting them to really see how they could improve we use a 'C' or 'D' grade. Discuss the question with the class and what they think they ought to include in an ideal answer; note ideas down on the board.

Split the class into groups of three and give them the (laminated) jumbled answer. Now inform them that they are to construct or piece together an answer using the available material. Students place the answer on the floor and move the various components around until they have reached a possible answer. Discuss students' ideas and, this is crucial, ask them what they could do to improve it. Allow them a few minutes to return to their answer and give them a few sheets of paper to add details to. Finally get one group to show the rest of the class their example. Discuss.

Activate them!

An alternative to the example above is to involve the whole class (depending on size – max 20 works well). 'Extras' can play 'examiners'. Give each student a piece of the answer (about 12-15 students need to be involved here), give others possible headings or factor/theme cards (4-5 students) and another bunch 'GCSE Level' or A-Level criteria cards. Get them to construct the answer together as a group. This generally creates a lot of discussion and it might be easier if the teacher leads this together with the students. When the answer has been laid down on the floor, or students are holding them up, ask the 'factors/heading' students to decide which factor

is discussed in which paragraph. The final step is for the last group to level the piece.

It is important at this stage to ensure that the class is familiar with peer-marking and comfortable with GCSE Levels or A-Level criteria. Get them to decide as a group where each Level ought to be placed. When they have completed their marking ask them to justify their decisions and then get feedback from the rest of the class. Some students may disagree with the judgments of the marking group so allow the changes to be made if necessary.



Great challenges

Assessment for Learning made Easy

Students become very nervous and frightened by the mere term 'assessment'. Although some students will rise to the pressure, a large number may actually under perform because it is deemed an assessment.

- Tom, NQT

This example shows how simple Assessment for Learning (AFL) techniques can make students more focused and confident about how to improve. This approach will enable the class to see concrete progress within the lesson as well as across lessons. This is a History example but can easily be modified for any subject.

I taught a mixed-ability year 10 class about protest through history and this particular lesson investigated the key question: What impact did [different protests]...have on law-making and law enforcement in England?1 Some of these protests included Poll tax riots and Conscientious Objecting during WWII.

The Starter:

The starter got students on their feet and students assessed the severity of some protests using an Active Protest continuum2. After discussing the outcome of the task we moved straight to the assessment task which involved analyzing a range of historical sources. We discussed the source material together as a class first, and then the class explored what they needed to do to answer the question successfully. Students annotate the sources in pairs after which an exemplar answer was given to them.

Task 1: Speed AFL!

In pairs, students faced each other and were informed to mark the exemplar answer using the criteria/mark scheme. The first

one to find one of the top levels would win. We then discussed students' responses and they highlighted where the 'exemplar student' had achieved a certain Level on the Interactive Whiteboard. There were some disagreements about how the answer moved up the levels.

Task 2: Towards progress!

The class now moved to a more challenging question and the skill had also changed. We treated this question in the same manner as the previous one and then compared the differences between the two questions. As a class we then analysed the mark scheme for Q4 and what they would need to do in order to reach high levels.

Students then answered question four on their own and a time limit was set. In pairs, students marked the other person's answer using the criteria/mark scheme. Students discussed how their partner's had reached a certain level and what they thought was particularly good about their answer as well as setting them a target for improvement. We then examined an answer, which was quickly scanned for students to see, and comments were made about the strengths and weaknesses of this particular response. Questions were taken in to mark for the next lesson.

At the start of the following lesson the class peer-assessed, using mark schemes, three responses from grades A-C, starting with grade C. After discussing the answers, assessments were handed back and students were asked to read teacher's comments and try to meet their targets – examples of meeting the target were either given by the teacher or the student's answer showed evidence so this area was highlighted.

This way of using assessments is simple, structured and engaging as students feel they can move forward in that lesson and beyond. When a class has experienced this process they enjoy taking assessments because they know that improvement will be concrete and real.

Extract from [Exam Class Toolkit: How to Create Engaging Lesson That Ensure Progression and Results](#)

Engaging WEB 2.0 Tools to use in the classroom

By admin on March 4th, 2010

Create living maps with sound, stories and images

One way of creating meaning and relevance behind stories is to use illustrations and photos of various kinds. An even more powerful way is to add sound to a story to really capture a particular moment or event. Imagine including all of these features and then being able to add them to the exact location on a map. This is what MapSkip offers its users: create stories around a particular place.

After registering with the website find a location you wish to write about, for example the Normandy landings in 1944 or examine coastal erosion on the North Norfolk coast, add a 'marker' in the shape of a hand and a small box with a form will appear where you can give the place a name. Now

you can also upload a photo or drawing, and why not include an MP3 file which captures the fierce fighting during D-Day landings? Another good idea is to create longer investigations with a class and keep adding to the map as you work through a unit, for example as they discover more about an individual's journey, they can create a very detailed, meaningful and relevant story about this person. Imagination is everything with this tool and students tend to think of 100s of ideas about how they can demonstrate their understanding of a topic or unit. This is a superb educational tool.

Perhaps one of the ingenious things about [MapSkip.com](#) is the fact that you can use it with students as you can set up additional accounts for classes using your email. There is a similar tool called [VidMap.com](#) which allows you to add, yes you guessed it, videos to exact locations on a map, also a very innovative tool.



Sophisticated and Imaginative polls

Another poll tool? Not quite. It would be too simple to describe [Ask500People.com](#) as yet another poll service. The premise behind this WEB 2.0 tool is based on New Yorker columnist Surowiecki's argument that we tend to trust experts and distrust the wisdom of the masses but "under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them." His book [The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few](#) is a real gem. Sorry losing track...anyway, the idea behind the website is to provide real people's opinions about real issues ranging from questions such as '[Do you ever turn off your hot water heater to save electricity?](#)' to '[Is it possible to look sane with a knife in your hand?](#)'. Voting happens in real-time so you can see answers appearing whilst browsing the site.

It is simple to register and set up questions. It took no longer than 30 seconds to add the question below and use the embed code to add it to this post. You can also add the results bar if you want as well. It's possible to create a range of different questions e.g. Yes/No, a question based on an image, text answers added by you as well as ranking answers (1-5, stars, Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree etc). One of the real strengths behind Ask500.com is the possibility to check statistics based on location, gender, age, income, education and country.

What do you think?

Ask500.com is a truly effective and innovative tool which is very useful at both departmental level to use for Student Voice purposes but also at teacher level where you could get students thinking of a good question about the topic or unit that they are studying to really get them involved more deeply in the subject matter and make them see that learning, attitudes, opinions and interests about issues will never cease. You can also add a brief description or fact box to give voters an idea about the topic before the vote by adding a comment to your own post. By adding a comment you can also include hyperlinks to an external website which could provide more in-depth information.

The Art of Arguing

aMap is short for 'Argument Map' and the idea behind the website is very straightforward: to encourage the art of arguing by producing complex debates in a sophisticated visual format. [aMap](#) is based around the theory of 'informal logic' – the structure of arguing by ordinary people in everyday life. Chris Quigley, who led the team that set up this website has written a brilliant post about the theory behind [aMap](#) which is worth reading: [How to win arguments and influence people](#). In a nutshell, the structure of 'informal logic' looks like this:

1. Your position: what you think overall
2. Propositions: reasons that support your position
3. Argument: supporting arguments that back up each of the propositions
4. Evidence: supporting evidence to back up your arguments

This process is of course ideal for classroom use as it helps students develop their Thinking Skills, reasoning and critical thinking in a highly visual format – great for demonstrating understanding. [aMap](#) is also a particularly useful tool for exam groups such as GCSE, A-Level and graduate students as it provides them with a map of ideas to use in their own writing. It is also beneficial for teachers for use in the classroom as you can easily print your maps and it provides a good writing frame to structure an argument for essays or extended pieces of writing as well as class debates.

Here's an example from the website:



Creative and Effective Mind-Mapping

I simply love [this tool](#). I think it's even better than [Bubbl.us](#)... don't take me off your [delicious](#) bookmarks just yet (!) ... MindMeister offers something a little different which Bubble.us, at least for the time being (see their [blog](#) for updates about the new version), does not.

These are the features I particularly love:

1. **Work on your mind-maps off-line:** with [Google Gears](#) off-line library, you can work on all your maps wherever you are. Although Bubbl.us maps can be added to even if off-line (as the main flash files have already loaded) you cannot save the work without going on-line again.
2. **Add ideas to your maps on-the-fly:** Insert ideas into your default mind map on MindMeister directly from your Mac Dashboard or Windows Sidebar.
3. **Easy images into mind-map:** Insert images from the default library, have MindMeister insert an image based on the key word of a node or just upload your own photos or illustrations – fantastic!

[And many other tools...](#)



Key word example



Intro from Innovate with ICT - enhance learning through the curriculum

Hopefully you found some of these WEB 2.0 tools to be a useful and interesting addition to your teaching repertoire? If you have come across other tools that you have used successfully with your students then please share your experience and explain how you used it in the classroom :) .

Johannes.