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## Eight reasons for teachers and students to get on the Web

### Reason #1: To reinforce Writing Skills

- Forums and message boards provide interesting ways for students to reinforce spelling, punctuation and writing skills. Two English teachers created Great Ex-it, a message board for students to respond to ideas inspired by the study of Great Expectations.
- Buddy Systems: older students can help first and second graders correspond with a penpal.
- Students can write reports summarizing the results of webquest searches and share those results with classes around the world.
- Many Web sites offer poetry and writing contests, or students can publish their own poetry.
- Students can interview scientists or other students from throughout the world and then write and print the interviews; several Web sites offer on-line mentors in a wide variety of academic areas who offer their knowledge in their field and communicate with students
- Students can create a blog, wiki, or Web page based on their writings and research.

### Reason #2: To understand other cultures

- Students can have penpals or create surveys for children from throughout the country or another country. They can use Skype to chat with other students anywhere in the world.
- Students can stage forums to express their views on a current issue or any areas of interest or concern and then teleconference with students from all over the world or create a joint wiki project. See <https://burell9english.wikispaces.com/>

- Students can take an imaginary trip through the country, learning about the culture and geography as they follow their itinerary, a Tele-Field Trip. Use Google Earth and Flickr Maps ([www.flickr.com/map/](http://www.flickr.com/map/))
- Students can create Web pages and blogs to share information about their community with others to compare and contrast their lives with the lives of other students.

### **Reason #3: To facilitate hands-on Science and Math Projects**

- Web sites allow students access to weather databases and services, so students can chart daily weather, compare their climate with weather throughout the country through e-mail, analyze weather data, and forecast the weather. Google Spreadsheets allows for collaboration on data entry and data analysis.
- NASA at [quest.arc.nasa.gov](http://quest.arc.nasa.gov) offers up-to-the minute photographs, videos, teleconferencing with scientists and astronauts, weather and space data
- Ask Dr. Math at [www.mathforum.org](http://www.mathforum.org) provides math lesson plans, links and homework help.
- National Library of Virtual Math Manipulatives at <http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html> provides a treasure trove of math java applets for all ages.
- There are many Web sites that provide stock market quotations and advice and even have investment simulations. Try [www.younginvestor.com](http://www.younginvestor.com)

### **Reason #4: To facilitate Social Studies and Literature projects**

- Online newspapers provide current events and headline news. Students can be reporters and use the up-to-the minute news stories to create their own newspapers. Or students can compare the presentation of news items with local and national coverage of the same items. Use Google News and RSS feeds. Try [newseum.com](http://newseum.com) for Front Pages from around the world.
- Many teacher resource Web sites offer lesson plans, activity sheets, and curriculum suggestions for using the current events information.
- Students have access to extensive databases to use as inquiry tools to understand demographic, cultural, political, and economic information. Many sites offer an extensive array of primary source documents.
- Several webquests offer simulations on current events, where students take the roles of various real-life people and enter into electronic dialogs to achieve world peace. Students predict the outcomes of their negotiations, stage panel discussions, and research current events.
- There are many social action projects on-line including learning about the rain forest, ecology, politics both local and global, women's issues, health issues, ad infinitum.
- YouTube is a vast resource for video clips about modern history and a gold mine for election coverage.
- Take an online tour of famous sites. Use Google Earth to explore the world.

### **Reason #5: To Keep Abreast of Technology and Education Issues**

- Teacher-created blogs are exploding throughout the web. Subscribe via an RSS feed to keep up-to-date. A good starting point is [weblogg-ed.com](http://weblogg-ed.com) or [www.infinitethinking.org](http://www.infinitethinking.org) for discussions of technology in the classroom. You can also find subject-specific blogs about teaching English, Math, Science, Lower School, etc. Blogs are an amazing resource. Create your own.

### **Reason #6: To provide equal access to an increasingly important tool for all of our students**

- If we are passive in not using the Web in our classrooms, then there is no equalizer for all of our students. The same “short boys wearing glasses” who convinced one capable math student in 1979 that mathematics was not her territory now have taken over the world of java programming, downloading files, web searching and so on. If we don't provide web activities for all of our students, then this situation is likely to be exacerbated. But even if we do, it is not enough. Only by appropriating this new technology and requiring all of our students to use it do we set in place a common denominator of skills and techniques. The My Space generation stills needs guidance; girls who create social networking sites still need to be encouraged to go beyond Facebook.

### **Reason #7: To provide practical applications to theoretical problems**

- One of the great strengths of the internet is the wealth of real world data available; students can learn about weather patterns and then view weather maps and chart weather throughout the world to see their theoretical knowledge of weather fronts and highs and lows applied in actual terms. Similarly the study of economics and the stock market can be supplemented by following stock quotes and analysis. Webquests are extremely helpful in guiding these projects.

### **Reason #8: To have some fun**

- Book flights, hotels and check out a vacation destination.
- There are infinite numbers of sites on a huge variety of sports, hobbies, crafts, museums, music.
- There are a vast number of online auction and shopping sites where you can buy books, CDs, clothes, gifts, flowers, furniture, etc.
- Almost every new movie has a Web site, and many movie database sites provide info and reviews, so that you won't rent a clunker at the video store or have to rely on the advice of the sixteen year old cashier.

## **What is the World Wide Web?**

There is always confusion about the differences between the World Wide Web, The Internet, Safari, Firefox, and Explorer. The Internet is really the cabling that allows millions of computers throughout the world to communicate with each other. It is simply a giant network that allows you to log on, i.e. connect to, millions of other computers and to the information that is stored on the hard drive of those computers. The World Wide Web-WWW-is a subset of the Internet, those computers that have information stored on their hard drives that is in a multimedia format, a format that incorporates text, music, sound, video, graphics and a special kind of text called hypertext. Firefox, Safari and Microsoft Explorer are software applications that allow your computer to access and then display the information available on the WWW.

### **Some Terms You Need to Know from A to Z:**

- **Browser (or Web Browser):** Software that lets your computer display computer information that includes multimedia. The most popular are Firefox, Safari (for both the Mac and PC), and Microsoft Explorer, but there are many others: Flock, Opera, etc. The term browsing the web has become synonymous with surfing the web or simply spending way too much time on-line.