




Communication & Messaging Tools

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Elementary

NOTE: This icon means the Web site has no age restrictions, and the tool is appropriate for younger students. Other tools may be appropriate for elementary grade use with the teacher's facilitation.

Instant Messaging (IM)


Name	URL	Strengths	Weaknesses/Considerations	Ad-Free	Student Privacy Maintained	Educator Version Available	Available for All Ages	Does Not Require Student E-mail
Chatzy 	http://chatzy.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No registration steps—collaborators can join instantly. • Does not require any installation on your computer. • Works on all major browsers, with any language and through firewalls. • Simple and easy to use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chat rooms are considered private and are not monitored. 	✓	✓		✓	✓ Teacher can "invite" him- or herself and then provide the URL to the students; otherwise, e-mail is required.

Name	URL	Strengths	Weaknesses/ Considerations	Ad-Free	Student Privacy Maintained	Educator Version Available	Available for All Ages	Does Not Require Student E-mail
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Room properties (access control) can be further tightened when a "virtual room" rather than an "instant chat" is created. A "Virtual Room" can be used as an active blog or message board. 						
Google Talk*	www.google.com/talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a user already has a Google account, no extra registration is necessary. Can send and receive files, as well as chat. Can chat directly from the Gmail interface. Can choose to save chat history, but not to continue the conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires download and installation of software. Text chat is only available on PC. 	✓	✓		Of "legal age to form a binding contract."	

Name	URL	Strengths	Weaknesses/ Considerations	Ad-Free	Student Privacy Maintained	Educator Version Available	Available for All Ages	Does Not Require Student E-mail
Skype Chat *	www.skype.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides simple chat capabilities. Applet available for some mobile phones. Can bookmark and save group chats (chats with more than 2 people in it). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires download and installation. Students must be told to not put personal information in public user profiles and to update settings so only identified contacts can contact them. 	✓	✓		✓	
Yahoo! Messenger*	http://messenger.yahoo.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Besides chat, can also provide video calling with full video and voice. Can be used through the Web, mobile phones, and iPhones. No downloaded software necessary when using it on the Web. Can IM in any language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chat rooms are also available in Yahoo! Messenger, which may be distracting and/or dangerous for students. 		✓		Of "legal age to form a binding contract"; under 13 allowed under a "family account."	Creates an e-mail account at time of Yahoo! registration.

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Microblogging

Name	URL	Strengths	Weaknesses/ Considerations	Ad-Free	Student Privacy Maintained	Educator Version Available	Available for All Ages	Does Not Require Student E-mail
Twiducate* 	http://twiducate.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for classrooms. • Teacher is in control of a private network of invited participants. • Separate teacher and student log ins. • Can use mobile devices and computers. • Can add dates and class bookmarks to discussion page. • All conversations can be archived. 		✓	✓	✓ Designed for education.	✓	✓
Twitter*	http://twitter.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most used microblogging site. • Useful for eye-witness "tweets" on breaking-news events. • Useful for professional development and networking. • Can "protect" messages so only accepted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible access to inappropriate content on "public" Twitter conversations. 	✓ No ads currently, but terms of use state they could be used in the future.	✓ As long as the account is set up as "protected."		✓	

Name	URL	Strengths	Weaknesses/ Considerations	Ad-Free	Student Privacy Maintained	Educator Version Available	Available for All Ages	Does Not Require Student E-mail
		users receive them.						

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Video and Audio Conferencing

Name	URL	Strengths	Weaknesses/ Considerations	Ad-Free	Student Privacy Maintained	Educator Version Available	Available for All Ages	Does Not Require Student E-mail
Google Video* (plug-in)	www.google.com/talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video or voice chat in an existing Google application. • Available for Mac or PC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires download and installation. • Must have Gmail*, iGoogle*, or orkut*. 	✓	✓		Of "legal age to form a binding contract."	
Skype* 	www.skype.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Skype-to-Skype video and voice calls, and easy, low-cost calls to landlines and cell phones around the world. • Applet for some mobile phones. • World's largest provider of long-distance communication (Beckert, 2010). • Need a 3rd party solution to record/save calls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires download and installation. • Students must be told to not put personal information in public user profiles and to update settings so only identified contacts can contact them. 	✓	✓		✓	
Tokbox*	http://education.tokbox.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not require download. • Allows creator of a video chat to invite unregistered users to the call via e-mail, IM, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not offer a way to communicate via text in the event problems arise with the video or audio. 	✓	✓	✓	Must be at least 13 years old.	✓

Name	URL	Strengths	Weaknesses/ Considerations	Ad-Free	Student Privacy Maintained	Educator Version Available	Available for All Ages	Does Not Require Student E-mail
		URL. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free education version allows video chat with up to 20 people. Can also prerecord a video message and send by e-mail. 						
Yahoo! Messenger*	http://messenger.yahoo.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to chat, offers video calling with full video and voice. Can be used through the Web, mobile phones, and iPhones. No download necessary when using it on the Web. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chat rooms are also available in Yahoo! Messenger, which may be distracting and/or dangerous to students. Yahoo makes it easy for people to pinpoint the location of someone if using Yahoo Messenger on their cell phone 		✓		Of "legal age to form a binding contract"; under 13 allowed under a "family account."	Creates an e-mail account at time of Yahoo! registration.

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References

Beckert, S. (2010). International phone traffic growth slows, while Skype accelerates. *TeleGeography's CommsUpdate*. Carlsbad, CA: PriMetrica, Inc. Retrieved from www.telegeography.com/cu/article.php?article_id=31718.

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