

# Tech Toys for Teaching

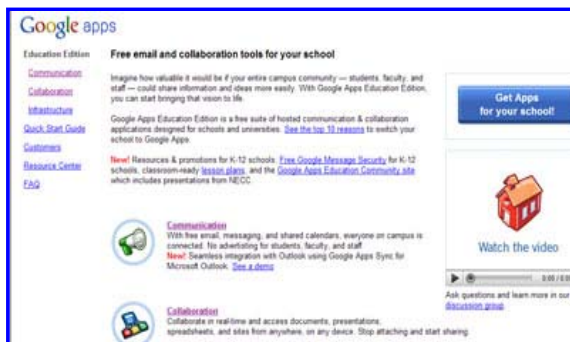
## Classroom technology that won't cost you a dime!

There's a whole wide world of Web tools for teaching. Here are a few of our picks.

### Google

Once upon a time, the verb “google” meant to bowl a googly in the game of cricket. (It's true—Google it!) Today, it's hard to recall how we found anything on the Web before we started Googling. Does anyone remember AltaVista?

Well, neither do your students. Even if Google seems to be taking over the world (have you seen Google Earth?), at least the forward-thinking company offers free tools for educators and their tech-savvy students in its “[Google Apps Education Edition](#).” You're already familiar with some, but others are less-known, and together they make a very useful package.



### Communication

**Gmail** — Yes, it's email, but the cool factor here is that you can search your folders the same way you'd use Google Search, by entering a word (or multiple words) that appears anywhere within the message you want to locate.

**Google Talk** — Teachers and students can call or send instant messages to their contacts for free — anytime, anywhere in the world.

**Google Calendar** — Organize schedules, assignment deadlines, events, and test dates.

## Collaboration

**Google Docs** — Students and teachers can create documents, spreadsheets, and presentations, and then collaborate with each other in real time, right inside a Web browser window.

**Google Sites** — Create a class Web site and edit it the same way you'd edit a document— no alphabet soup of HTML, CSS, or any other programming language necessary!

## Google Grab Bag

Have you heard of Doodle for Google, where K–12 students are invited to reinvent the Google homepage logo? How about Google News Timeline, where users can view recent and historical news in a browsable, graphical timeline? [Here's a list of more cool Google tools.](#)

## SchoolTube

Part of the Google empire is the video sharing site YouTube, but many educators have been leery of using it in the classroom because of its Wild West, anything-goes nature. Some districts block it altogether to prevent students from accessing inappropriate content.



Enter SchoolTube, the only educator-moderated video sharing site where every video is screened by a classroom teacher before it goes live.

Created by father-and-son team Carl and Andrew Arizpe, SchoolTube launched in 2007 after the duo conducted hundreds of educator interviews. They discovered that safe content was the first priority, with free access following as a close second.

The site hosts about 35,000 videos on just about any topic you can imagine—from arts to weather and everything in between—organized into more than 100 categories.

It's easy to get started, says Carl Arizpe. “All you need to do is register with an email address, then let your students do the rest,” he says. “Once they create and upload their videos, you’ll receive an email notice. After logging in to review it, you can approve a video with the click of a button.”

## Wikipedia for Schools

Educators have long questioned the reliability of Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia that anyone can edit. The breadth of content can't be beat, but the problem is determining how much of it is reliable. Now there's a solution: Wikipedia for Schools, a site offering thousands of articles that have been individually checked for accuracy and appropriateness.



The site is updated each academic year by volunteers from the English Wikipedia and SOS Children, a British children's charity. Topics are selected from an array of academic categories and then "tidied up" for use by students.

It offers the equivalent of a 20-volume printed encyclopedia, and can be downloaded for free onto a DVD or browsed online at <http://schools-wikipedia.org>. The idea for a downloadable version (which is about 3 GB) was to make it available for children in rural, remote areas of countries like India and Africa, where there's little or no Internet access. A bonus for teachers in the U.S. is that students can't click off to other sites that may not be safe or appropriate for school.

## Twitter

The rockin' robin isn't the only one going, "tweet, tweet, tweet." Millions are flocking to the micro-blogging site Twitter, where they send or receive short messages called "tweets." Some call it a frivolous waste of time, especially for those following the every move of celebrities like Ashton Kutcher. But Twitter can be a powerful communications tool, as we saw this past June in Iran, when thousands of election protestors turned to Twitter to distribute news after the government shut down traditional media.



A bit less revolutionary, Twitter is also helpful in the classroom. Some teachers have discovered that by following the tweets of colleagues, they receive lesson plans, classroom management strategies, and other teaching tips. To find twittering teachers, visit Twitter for Teachers at <http://twitterforteachers.wetpaint.com>, or Twitter 4 Teachers, at <http://twitter4teachers.pbworks.com>.

As with any new technology, especially social networks, educators should first find out if their school or district has a policy on Twitter before proceeding.

Keep up with your Association news. Follow us at [www.Twitter.com/NEAToday](http://www.Twitter.com/NEAToday) to get news stories and updates to help you plan for your school year.

## [NEA GroupSites](#)

We've created an online meeting space where NEA members and other educators can share ideas and opinions and create professional profiles. There's a shared calendar, discussion forums, member profiles, a photo gallery, blogging tools, and file storage.



NEA Members also have access to a password-protected members-only area, reserved for our members to discuss NEA issues and business.

Upload a photo, complete a profile, and start participating!

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