

Web 2.0 Tools: Wikis

What are wikis?

A wiki is a web page that can be edited by visitors to that web page. Visitors make changes to the wiki within their browsers (no special software or FTP programs are necessary) and every change to the wiki is recorded. This versioning of the wiki allows users to view and revert to previous iterations of the wiki.

What are the benefits of using wikis?

Wikis allow for easy collaboration among several users, without complicated software or technical skills required. Wikis fit within the constructivist paradigm, by allowing learners to create and manipulate concepts, cooperate to build knowledge, and reflect on their learning (Parker & Chao, 2007).

How might I use wikis in my courses?

- 1. Student notes** – You can task students with taking class notes on the wiki. Students can type or edit course notes during class (on-the-fly) or after class. You can also assign to students the task of adding to notes or critically evaluating the notes. Class notes on a wiki can serve as review guides prior to exams.
- 2. Group work** – Wikis are most commonly used for group work because wikis reduce the administration load felt by students in a group. Students can use wikis to plan, manage, or present group projects. Faculty may use wikis to collaborate with other instructors in writing articles, collect sources, plan courses, and manage meetings.
- 3. Resources for students** – Many instructors use wikis to provide resources for their students. You might post a course syllabus on a wiki or post a list of resources, with active links, related to a course topic. Further, students may use wikis to collect resources related to your class. For example, one class developed a vocabulary wiki, to which students could contribute definitions and resources.
- 4. Discussion/interaction** – You can use wikis to incite discussion on course content and allow students to interact with each other. For example, an English instructor may post a poem on a wiki and ask the students to discuss verses of the poem on the wiki.
- 5. Student presentation of work** – Students can present research or any other academic work using wikis. A student may create a wiki, add content, and share the wiki with other students or with the instructor.

Free Wiki Services

Seed Wiki

<http://www.seedwiki.com>

PBWiki

<http://www.pbwiki.com>

Zoho Wiki

<http://www.zoho.com>

WetPaint

<http://www.wetpaint.com>

WikiSpaces

<http://www.wikispaces.com/>

What about Wikipedia?

Though many instructors cringe at the very mention of Wikipedia, others have embraced it as a tool to teach critical thinking skills to students. Here are a few tips for using Wikipedia in your course:

- Ask students to critically evaluate a Wikipedia entry, checking sources and content currency
- Ask students to write a Wikipedia entry for a topic related to the course
- Ask students to conduct a meta-analysis of several Wikipedia entries (e.g. meta-analysis of all entries related to a controversial topic)

Resources

Academhack Blog - <http://academhack.outsidethetext.com/home/>

The Chronicle of Higher Education - <http://www.chronicle.com>

Learning Tools Directory - <http://c4lpt.co.uk/Directory/Tools/wiki.html>

EDUCAUSE Review - <http://connect.educause.edu/er>