

Technology for Academics

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Technology for Academics Blog

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Most of these tools are free. Some have a 'pay for services' upgrade.



Mobile	Sharing/Annotating	Managing Email	Testing
 QR Codes    	    	 SimplyFile EZDetach  YouCanBook.Me	     
Providing Feedback	Managing Files	Online Whiteboards	Polling
    	   	 	   
In-Class Presentations	Web Conferencing	Creating Webpages	Managing News
 	   	    	  
URL Shorteners	Task Management	Printing	Web Browser Experience
 	 	 	 
Automation			
			

Mobile

QR codes can be created for any content with a web address. Use a smartphone's bar code reader to scan the code, and the phone's web browser will open the web page. **QRStuff.com** is a free QR code generator. If you use Firefox, get the QRLink Maker add-on. Right click on any webpage, and select QRCode to generate the code for that page. **Today'sMeet** allows students to ask questions or make comments during class that other students and the instructor can see, sort of a private Twitter. **Socrative**, with its easier-to-use interface, is an alternative to Polleverywhere. Students use any device that has internet access to respond to multiple choice, true/false, or short answer questions. Socrative is optimized for mobile devices. Use **Cel.ly** to send text messages to your students, individually or as a class. They don't see your phone number and you don't see theirs. **Splashtop** turns your tablet (Android or iPad) into a smartboard; control your computer (and draw on it) with your tablet.

Sharing/Annotating

In social bookmarking, you set up a free account on a web-based service, then when you bookmark a site, you give it a little description, add a few tags for easy sorting later, and then save it for the world (or your students or just yourself) to see. You can also use RSS feed technology, called 'linkrolls' in this context, to put the links on your website. There are several social bookmarking tools, but **Delicious.com** is one of the more popular. Try the "stacks" feature in Delicious to bundle several links together. You may also want to try a similar service, **Diigo.com**. Bookmark the web and share it with others. **Scribble** is a combination webpage highlighter annotator, and bookmarker. **Eyejot** lets you add a personal video message to a webpage. With **Highlighter** you create a private class space where you and your students highlight and add comments to PDFs. It is essentially a discussion board inside a PDF.

Managing email

Xobni (xobni.com), Outlook add-on, allows you to quickly find email messages, attached files, and contact information for anyone who has ever emailed you. With the large number of students each term as well as various committee responsibilities and other collaborative projects, Xobni has made managing the onslaught of email much easier. **Simply File** (www.techhit.com/SimplyFile/), another Outlook add-on, allows you to quickly file messages in folders. Once it 'learns' what messages tend to go where, a click of the button will file your message. If you frequently receive email attachments, **EZDetach** (www.techhit.com/ezdetach) is another must-have. Select all the messages that have attachments you would like to save, and EZDetach will rename them according to the criteria of your choosing, and save them in the file folder you designated. All with just a few mouse clicks.

Testing

Akindi.com is a Scantron replacement. Print out the answer forms, scan the completed forms, and Akindi scores them. Download the data to compile your own test stats. **Socrative's** premade quizzes turn any internet-enabled device into a testing machine.

Scheduling

If you need to get several people to decide on a time to meet, **Doodle.com** is the tool to use. Create a poll where you provide the time choices, then email the link to your invited attendees. Doodle's new "Meet Me" function allows others to see your busy times by accessing your Google calendar and request a meeting during the free times they choose. **YouCanBook.Me** also accesses your Google calendar and shows the times you are free. Visitors can click on an available time to schedule an appointment with you. The site adds the appointment to your calendar. Visit YouCanBook.Me to see additional functions.

Screencasting

Jing, a downloadable program, will upload screen captures and recordings (5min limit) of your screen to screencast.com. **Screencast-o-matic** is a web-based screen recorder. Recordings (15min limit) can be sent to their website, YouTube, or downloaded to your computer. With **Epic Pen** you can draw on your Windows screen.

Providing feedback

Phrase Express (PC) [**Typelt4Me (Mac)**] allows you to create keyboard shortcuts for commonly used phrases. If you use the 'comments' feature in Word to leave comments on student papers, this tool is a must have. Imagine typing '#pv' and having the words 'passive voice' appear. This program will also let you use keystrokes to run programs, open folders and files, open websites, and do web searches. And much more. Tired of typing or handwriting your comments on student papers? Provide audio feedback instead. **Audacity** (audacity.sourceforge.net) is an easy way to record your comments. "Page 1, paragraph 2... What are you trying to say here?" You can go the video route and use **Eyejot**. Using a web-based interface, record your message and email it from your browser.

Want to provide feedback to students about their grades in your course? Create a form letter in MS Word and do a 'mail merge' with the Excel spreadsheet where you keep your grades. Visit this website for an explanation on how to do it: <http://goo.gl/ByJEE>. Through Google Forms, students may submit short assignments. Download the form as an Excel spreadsheet, add your comments, then mail students their graded assignments using mail merge.

Managing files

File sharing tools make it easy to access and share your files from multiple computers. **Dropbox** (dropbox.com) puts a folder in your My Documents folder. Anything you put in there automatically syncs with your other computers that have the same Dropbox account. You can also choose to share some of your Dropbox folders with other people. With both services, any change made to a shared file immediately triggers an update for everyone who shares that file. If you use Dropbox, try **DropItToMe**. It provides a website where others can upload to your Dropbox account. **CloudConvert.org**, a free file conversion service, will save your converted files directly to Dropbox or Google Drive. Use **KeepVid** to download and save online videos.

Online whiteboards

Online whiteboards allow you to share drawing space with one or more people. Just invite others in via email. All participants can control the board. Chat, audio, and video allow you to conference as you write. If you would like, you can save your work when you are done. **Scriblink.com** is a good choice. If you just want an easy interface for a group to edit text, use **TitanPad.com**.

Polling

If you need to get several people to make a decision, **Doodle.com** is the tool to use. Create a poll where you provide the options, then email the link. Want to put your students' cell phones to good use? Try **Polleverywhere.com**. Create a poll, and students can text in with their responses (or use a computer to respond), in real time. It integrates easily with PowerPoint. Also see **TodayMeet** and **Socrative** under "Mobile" above.

In-class presentations

If you don't like the linearity of PowerPoint, **Prezi.com** may be your answer. Create a map of your presentation, and zoom in to any area on that map, then zoom back out to see the big picture. You can access your prezis online or you can download them to your computer. Use **JeopardyLabs.com** to create a web-based Jeopardy game.

Web conferencing

Join.me allows you to share your desktop with other people. Just give your participants the code assigned to your desktop (no login needed). Use the built-in chat feature or the teleconference number to communicate. **Google Hangouts** allows you and 9 others to meet simultaneously, speaking through your computer's mic, seeing each other via webcam, and screen sharing if you'd like. **Screenhero** allows you to share your screen with one other person where both of your mouse pointers are on your screen simultaneously. **Speek** is a free conference call service that allows participants several ways to join, including computer mic or landline.

Creating webpages

A wiki is a website that can be edited by many people. Wikipedia is the most well-known example. There are many wiki builders out there. **PBWorks.com** is very user friendly. For webpages that are a little more sophisticated, try **Google Sites**. Another option is to create a site using Wordpress.com. While designed as blogging software, Wordpress.com makes it easy to add static pages. **SpiderScribe.net** is for those who prefer concept maps. Drag elements (text, images, files) onto the map and connect them to each other. Keep it private, make it available to a select group, or make it completely public. Add others as editors if you'd like. **Weebly** with its drag and drop interface is the easiest way to create and design a website.

Managing news

RSS feed readers, like **Feedly** have made managing the onslaught of information more manageable. A feed reader checks websites for new content. If there is something new, it retrieves the new content and drops it at your feet in an easy-to-read format. That includes mainstream news sources like the NY Times and NPR. It includes blogs. It includes academic journals. (Check with your librarians for how to get their databases to talk to your feed reader.) Use **RSSInclude.com** to put RSS feeds on a webpage. Use **Google Alerts** to create custom searchers and be informed via email or RSS when Google has something new for you.

URL shorteners

A URL shortener takes a long URL and shortens it. This is very handy for sending links via email or converting to a QR code. **Goo.gl** just shortens. **Bit.ly** shortens and lets you bundle several URLs together into one URL.

Task management

Use **NudgeMail** to send yourself reminders. For example, send, forward, or bcc a message to 1mo@nudgemail to have your message returned to you one month from now. Or 2pm@nudgemail to have your message returned to you at 2pm today. Dec19@nudgemail will get your message sent back to you on December 19th. **FollowUp.cc** works the same way as NudgeMail. For a small fee, they will add your tasks to a Google Calendar.

Printing

Use **PrintFriendly** to turn webpages into neatly formatted PDFs. No ads, no navigation menus, just the essential content. Also allows you to delete some content. **CleanPrint** works in a similar way, but has a few more features.

Web Browser Experience

Use **Shortmarks.com** to create keyboard shortcuts to quickly navigate the internet. **Lastpass.com** is a web-based password manager. Remember one password to access all of your passwords – anywhere you have internet access.

Automation

IFTTT connects web services in just about any way you'd like. See "Providing Feedback" for PhraseExpress and Mail Merge descriptions.

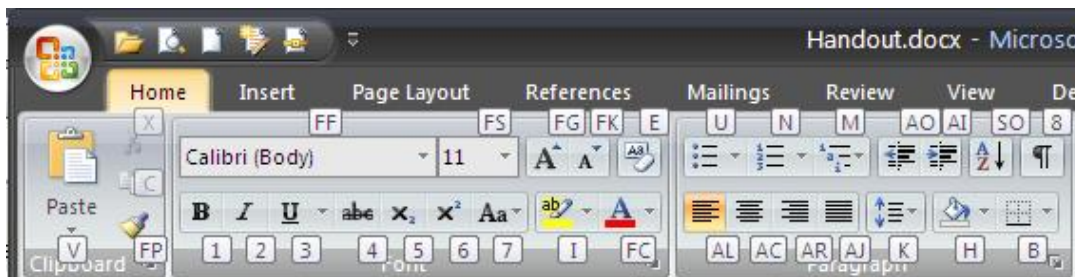
MS Office 2007/2010 Shortcuts

Use the **Quick Access Toolbar** for your most frequently used commands. You can either click on these with your mouse, or you can use the keyboard shortcut ALT-1 to select the first icon, ALT-2 to select the second icon, and so on. To customize this toolbar, select the down arrow to the right of the toolbar, and select from the options given or click “more commands.”



On my Quick Access Toolbar, I have the following commands: Open document, print preview, new document, track changes, and print to PDF.

Use **keyboard shortcuts**. ALT will show you the shortcuts on the ribbon. For example, ALT-H will show you all the shortcuts for the Home tab. Install **KeyRocket** to help you learn shortcuts faster.



Common keyboard shortcuts.

Home Tab	Simultaneous	Sequential
Copy	CTRL-C	ALT-H-C
Paste	CTRL-V	ALT-H-V
Select all	CTRL-A	ALT-H-S-L-A
Bold	CTRL-B	ALT-H-1
Italics	CTRL-I	ALT-H-2
Underline	CTRL-U	ALT-H-3
Clipboard		ALT-H-F-O
Close file	CTRL-W	ALT-F-C

Review Tab	Simultaneous	Sequential
Insert comment	CTRL-ALT-M	ALT-R-C
Track changes	CTRL-SHIFT-E	ALT-R-G-G
Research	ALT-Click	ALT-R-R

Other		
Undo	CTRL-Z	
Redo	CTRL-Y	
Print	CTRL-P	ALT-F-P
Save file	CTRL-S	ALT-F-S

To help you learn keyboard shortcuts for MS Office and gmail, check out **KeyRocket.com**

Tool	Notes