Visual Classrooms

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Visual Classrooms

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Visual Classrooms

Visual Classrooms is a cloud-based discussion and collaboration platform designed to improve student engagement and support interactive learning and adaptive instruction in blended and online environments. Our web-based digital whiteboard encourages students to quickly capture, share, analyze, and improve their ideas together. The visually driven environment engages students of all learning styles, developing critical problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork skills.

Our tools combine the social learning pedagogies needed to transform teaching and learning with technologies that support a student-centered focus and an emphasis on peer interactivity and collaboration. Visual Classrooms provides continuous feedback and embedded analytics that help educators personalize learning and ensure that no one falls through the cracks.

For quick instructions on how to get started after creating an account, check out this PDF titled Creating Your First Activity. For more detailed information on all the features Visual Classrooms has to offer, continue reading this manual.

Accessing Visual Classrooms >>

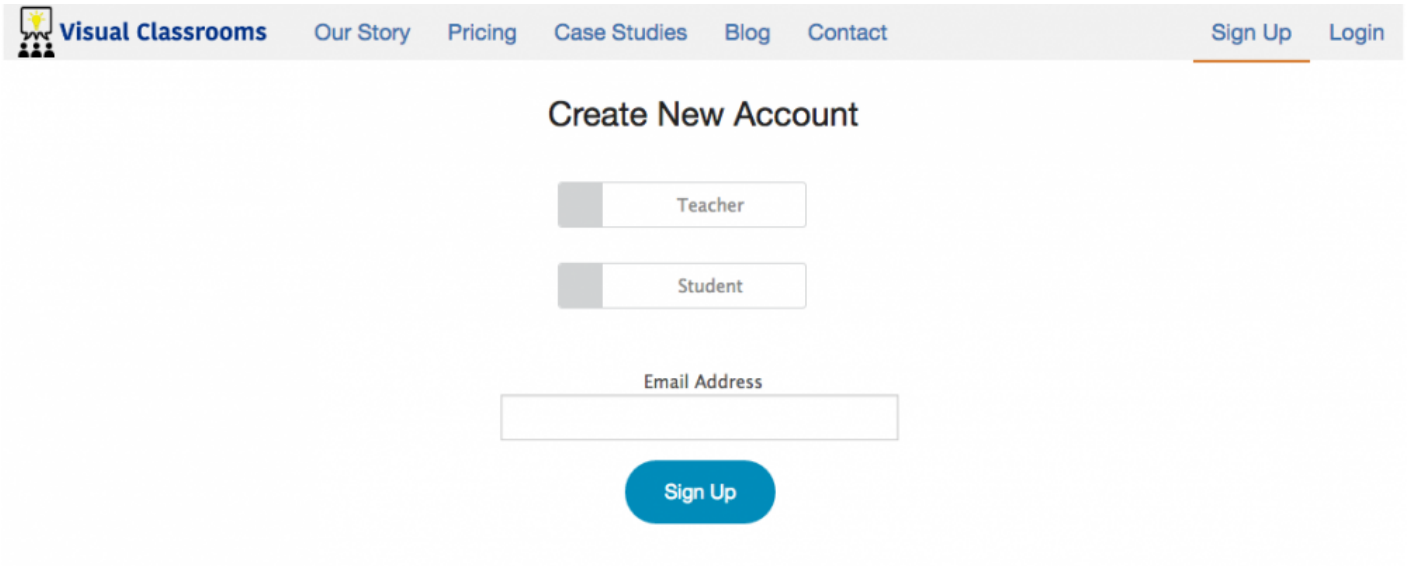
Accessing Visual Classrooms

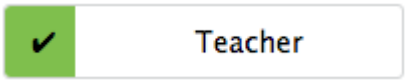
Visual Classrooms is designed for use in both blended and online learning. All you need is an internet enabled device – a laptop, phone, tablet, or iPad.

There are two ways to access Visual Classrooms: directly from the Visual Classrooms website or through your institution's learning management system. We have included instructions for both options in the next sections of this manual.

Direct Access to Visual Classrooms via Visualclassrooms.com

Direct Access accounts in Visual Classrooms are free. All you need to do is sign up for on our website for a TEACHER Account.



Select  and enter a valid email address.

Once you have signed up, you'll receive a temporary password via email. Then you're ready to start creating a wide variety of engaging activites – homework, labs, discussions and much more.

Students*

Student accounts require a subscription, as detailed on our pricing page. Many institutions will purchase student subscriptions in bulk and distribute an "Access Code" that allows students to join Visual Classrooms for free. Please send us an email at support@visualclasrooms.com if you want to discuss this option.

Students can also purchase a one year subscription with a credit card.

Both methods are explained in the following video:

Access Through an LMS

LMS Access your institution has a Learning Management System (LMS) like Blackboard or Canvas, Visual Classrooms can be integrated seamlessly as a tool within that system. Instructors and IT administrators need to contact us at support@visualclassrooms.com to get the launch url, secret, and key to enable LMS integration.

Much of the sign up process is automated, and if your school purchases student licenses, they are automatically applied to student accounts as they sign up.

Getting Started With Visual Classrooms using Blackboard

Instructions for integrating Visual Classrooms with Blackboard can be found here. You can also watch the following short video.

Getting Started with Visual Classrooms using Canvas

Instructions for using Visual Classrooms with Canvas can be found here. You can also watch the following short video.

Students

Student accounts require a subscription, as detailed on our pricing page. Many institutions will purchase student subscriptions in bulk and distribute an “Access Code” that allows students to join Visual Classrooms free of charge through their Learning Management System.. Please send us an email at support@visualclasrooms.com if you want to discuss this option.

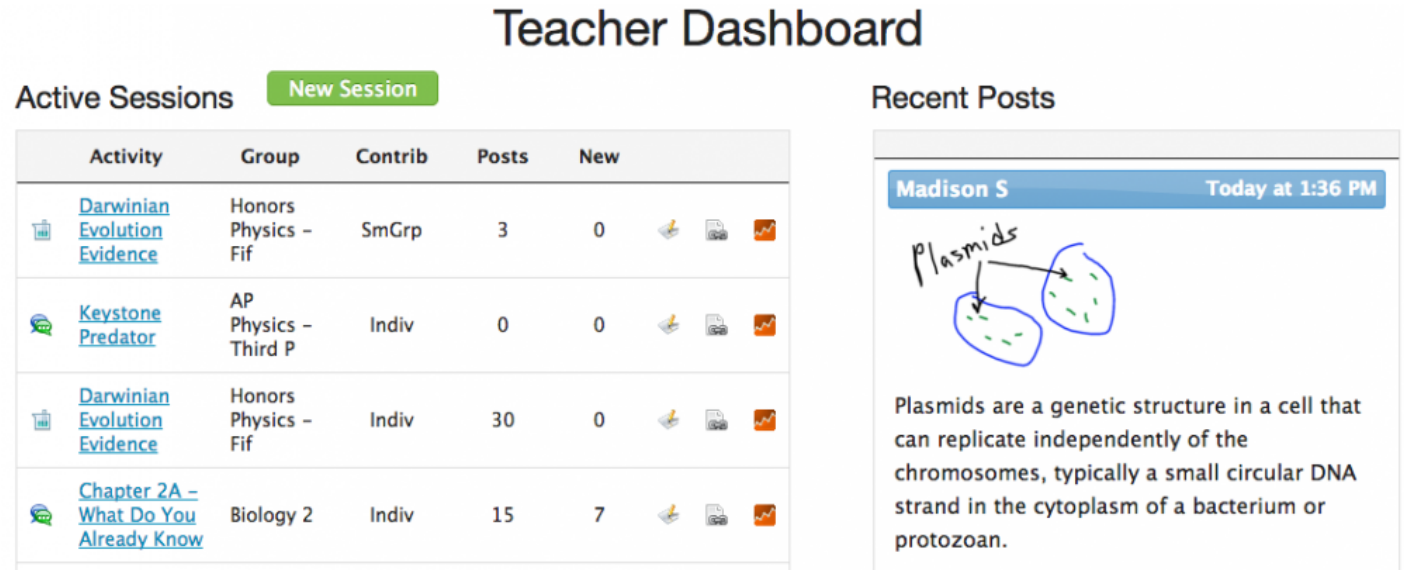
Students can also purchase a one year subscription with a credit card.

Both methods are explained in the following video:

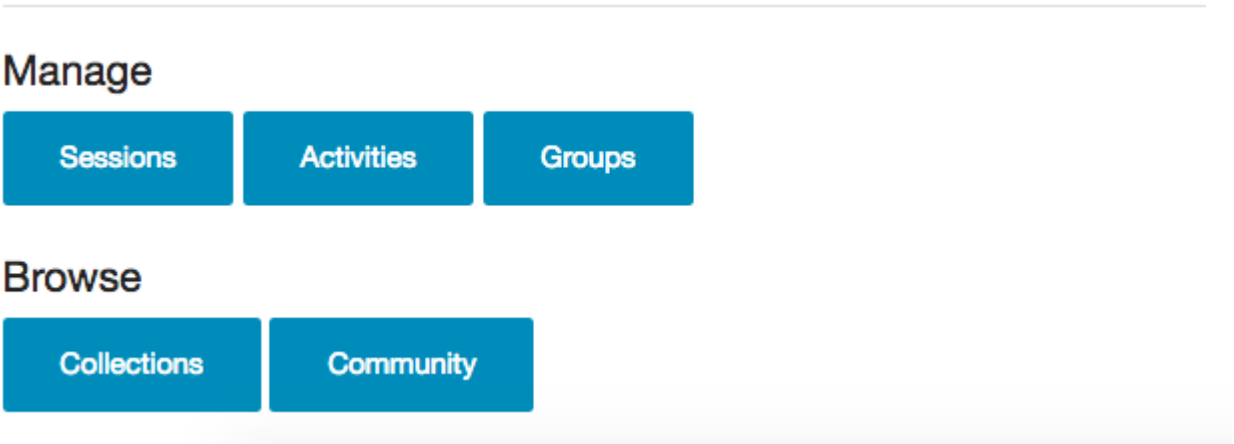
WE NEED A VIDEO AND PDF HERE

Teacher Dashboard

The Teacher Dashboard is where instructors can create and manage Visual Classrooms activities, assign them to one or more groups, and view usage reports.



From here, you can also manage **Sessions**, **Activities**, and **Groups**, and browse **Collections** and **Community**. This can all be found beneath the **Active Sessions** module.



[<< Access Through an LMS]

[Visual Classrooms Activities >>]

Visual Classrooms Activities

Visual Classrooms Activities can create new Visual Classrooms Activities and manage old ones by clicking **Activities** in the Teacher Dashboard dropdown menu. To view the process of creating a new activity, see Creating an Activity. Additionally, from the Manage Activities page, you can edit activities, assign them to a group, duplicate existing activities (in order to reuse an activity from a prior year), archive them, and publish activities to the Visual Classrooms Community . To view the process of editing an activity see, Editing an Activity.

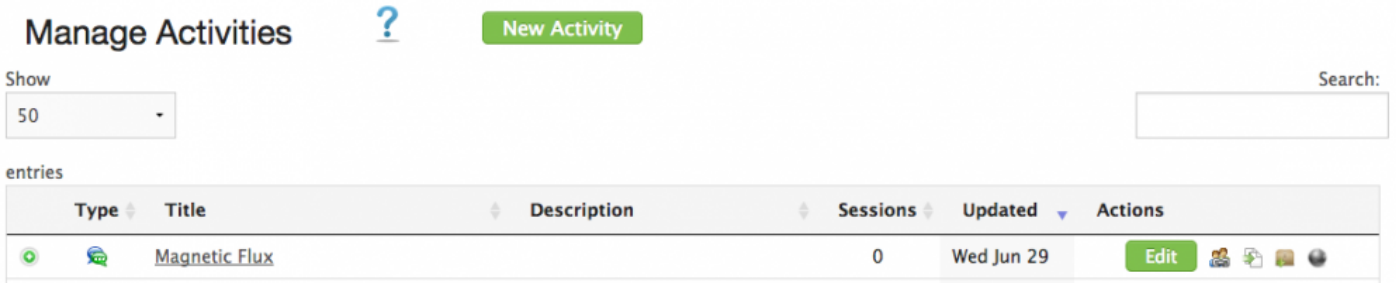
<< Teacher Dashboard

Creating a New Activity >>

Creating a New Activity

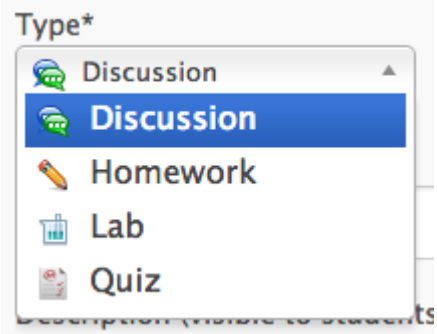
To create a new Visual Classrooms activity, click on “Activities” in the Teacher Dashboard drop down menu.

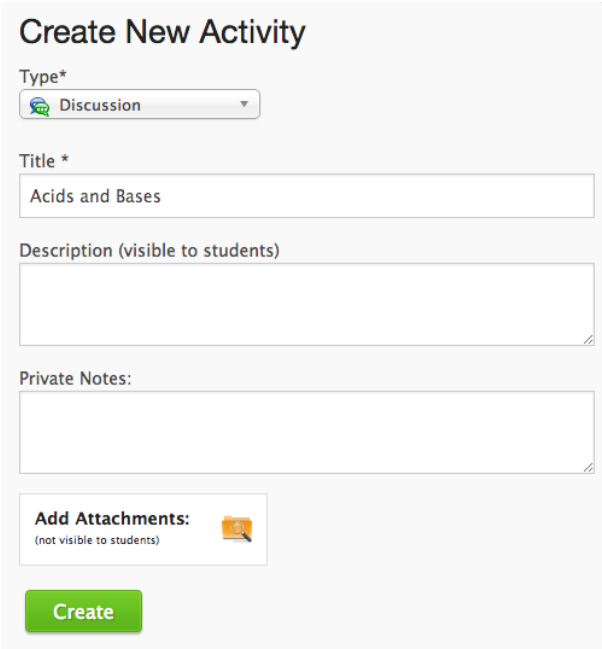
You should see a Manage Activities page similar to this.



1. To add a new activity, select the New Activity button.

2. Select the type of activity you are creating. You can categorize activities as discussions, homework, labs, or quizzes..





3. Create a title for your new activity.

4. Optional: Add a short description that will be visible to users. This could be anything from additional instructions to reminders to explain answers.

5. Optional: Add private notes or an attachment about the lesson. These notes and documents are not visible to students.

6. Select the Create button and your new activity will be created.

<< Visual Classrooms Activities Adding Prompts >>

The next step is adding the content to your activity – what we call “prompts” to guide students.The next sections will explain how to add various forms of content from text to videos to simulations and much more.

Adding Prompts

Activities in Visual Classrooms are made up of a series of what we call “prompts”. Prompts are instructions to guide students through the activity.

Here’ s how to add a new prompt to your activity.

1. To add a new prompt to your activity, select the

button.
2. You can then assign your new prompt a title and body.
3. Additionally, you can add customizing to your prompt’s format, customize the visibility of the prompt, add tags, and add a sketch background.
4. To add your new prompt, select the

button.

Prompt Visibility Settings

Unlike other collaboration tools, you can adjust when students see each others posts to prompts using the visibility settings.
There are three options: .

-

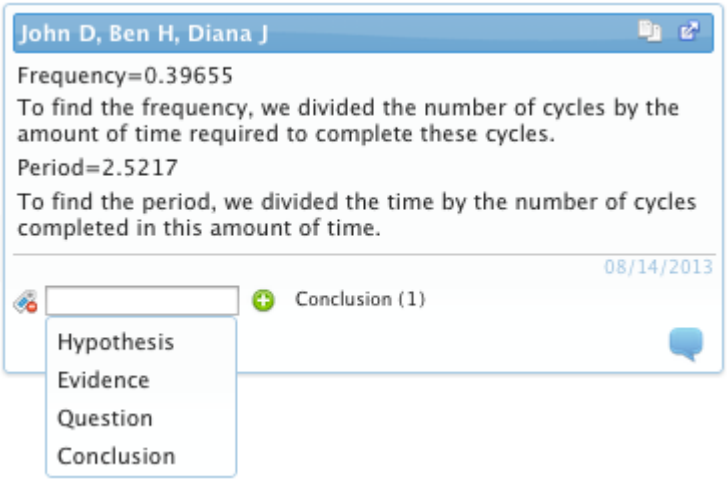
– All student posts are visible at all times
-

– Students answers are hidden until AFTER a user posts an idea. Once they post their idea, other responses become visible.
-

– Users will only see their response, not anyone else.

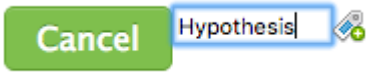
Knowledge Tags

Knowledge Tags (or “tags”) are labels that enable students to categorize posts using simple keywords. Tags can be used in a variety of ways – conceptual knowledge tags describe procedures, lessons learned, underlying concepts and reflections that are related to the ideas being expressed. Tags can also be used to answer multiple choice questions, express levels of understanding of others ideas or reference others ideas, and they can be used to indicate agreement (“thumbs up”). Tags make it easier to find and track ideas. In Visual Classrooms, users can choose from a list of pre-determined tags set by the instructor or they can add their own.



Here you will see how to create your own tags.

1. Make sure you have enabled tagging by checking the **Enable Tagging** box.
2. Select the

button.
3. Type in what you want to call your tag.


4. Click the button to add your new tag.

5. Repeat this process if you would like to add more tags.

Adding a Sketch Background

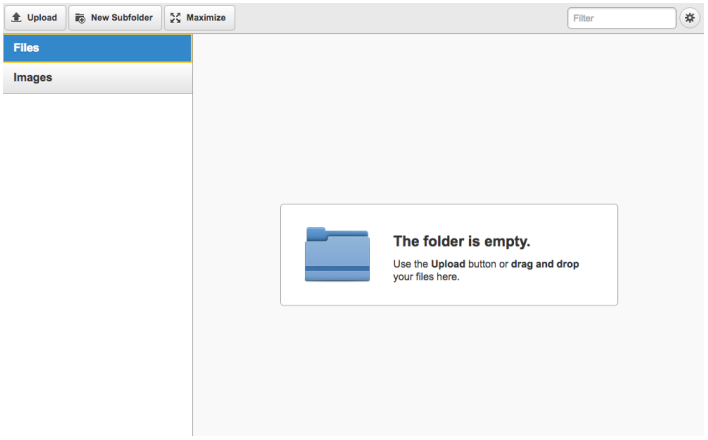
Our Sketch Tool allows both instructors and students to add a background that students can draw on. For example, if you students to create a graph or free body diagram you can add graph paper or a free body diagram template as your sketch background.

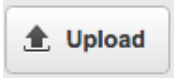
Here's the process of adding a background image to the sketch tool:

1. First, select the

button.

2. You will then see a pop up window with folders on the left. If it is your first time, create a new folder just for you. You can do this by right clicking on a folder and selecting "New Subfolder".



3. To upload the image to our server, select the 

button. The ideal height/width is 500 (h) x 800 (w).

4. After the image has been upload, double click on the image. It will then be selected for the background of the sketch.

<< Creating a New Activity

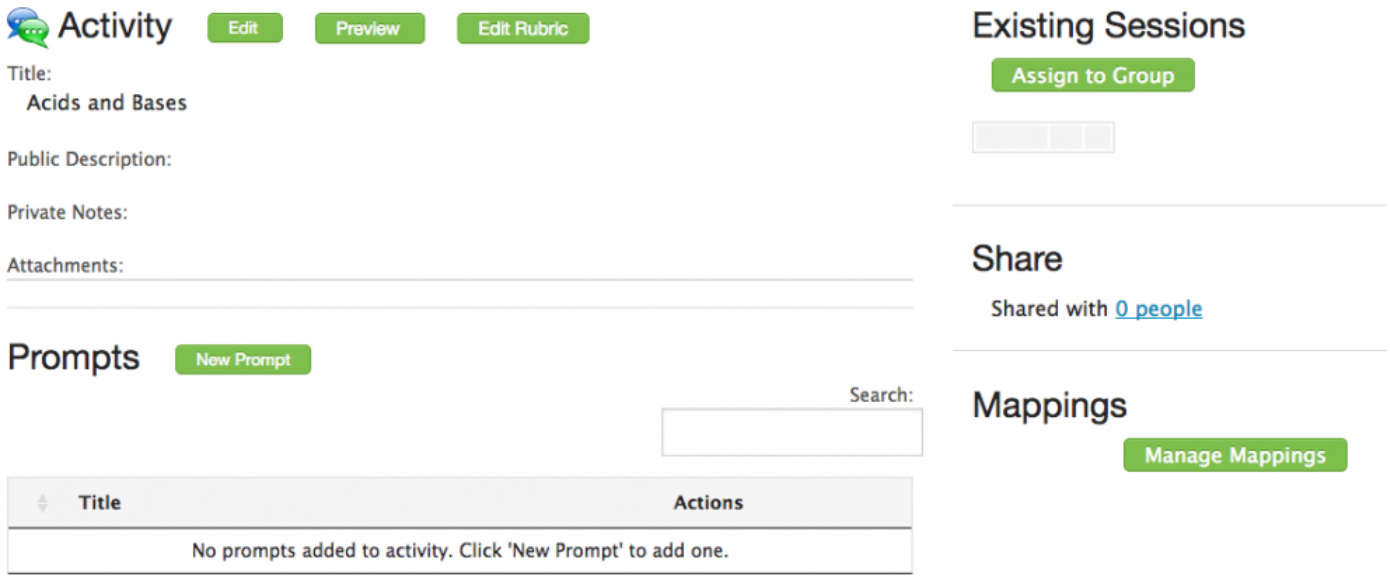
Editing an Activity >>

You can preview the image by clicking on “Preview in Sketch”

Editing an Activity

It's easy to edit your activity. Please note that editing an activity will change that activity for all of the groups that it is assigned to.

To edit an activity, select the Edit button in the Activities tab. Here, you can activate a session and add a new prompt. To view the process of adding a new prompt, see Adding a New Prompt.



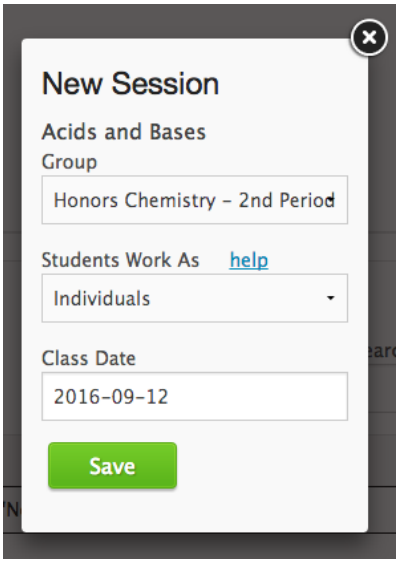
You can organize prompts.

Activating a Session

To make an activity visible to a group, you will need to assign that particular activity to a group. There are two ways you can do this: directly from the activity's page or from the **Sessions** tab in the **Teacher Dashboard**'s drop down menu. Here, you will learn how to activate a session from the activity's page. To find instructions for the other way, see Creating a New Session.

1. Click the Assign to Group button under **Existing Sessions**.

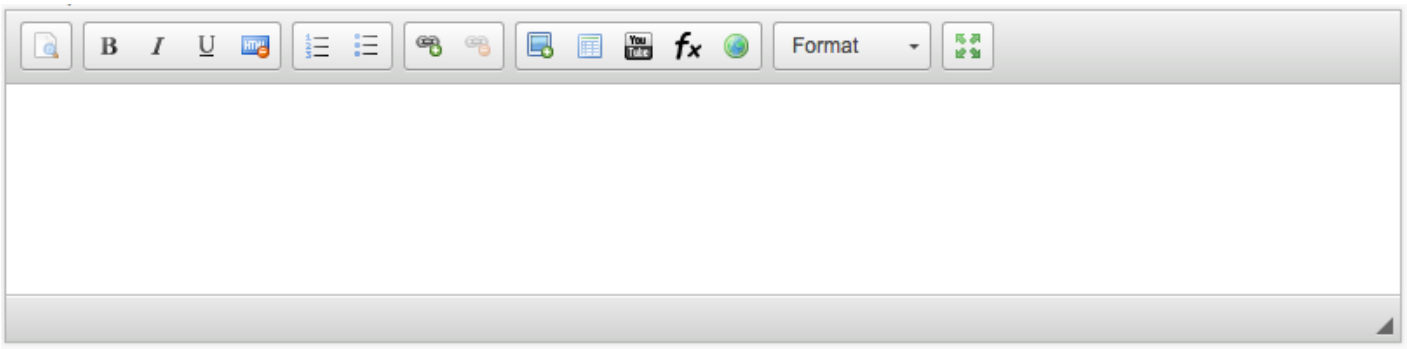
2. Select the group you want to assign the activity to, whether students can work as individuals or in small groups, and the date you would like the session to activate using the drop down menus. The activity will not be visible to students until it is activated.



[<< Adding Prompts](#) [Using the Text Editor >>](#)

Using the Text Editor

Here, you can learn how to use the different features of the text editor for everything from prompts to activities.



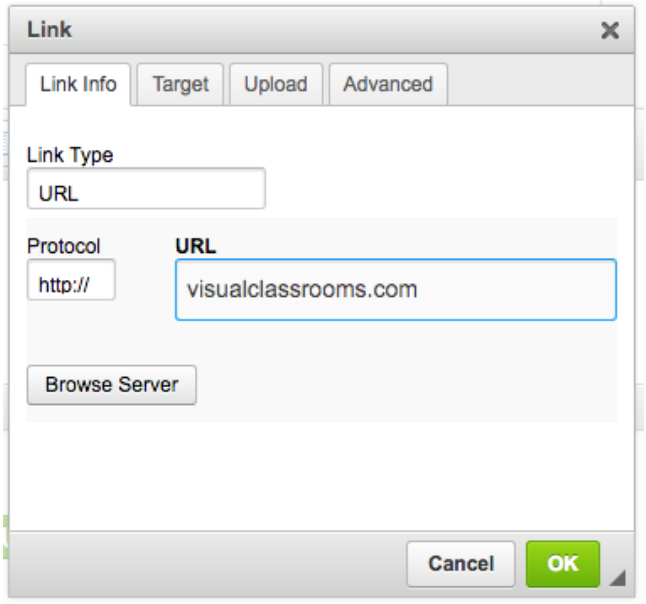
Adding Text

Click within the text editor and begin typing.

Adding a Link

Here you will learn how to add a link.

1. Highlight the text that you would like to lead to a link, and click the button. Then, paste your link in the **URL** box.

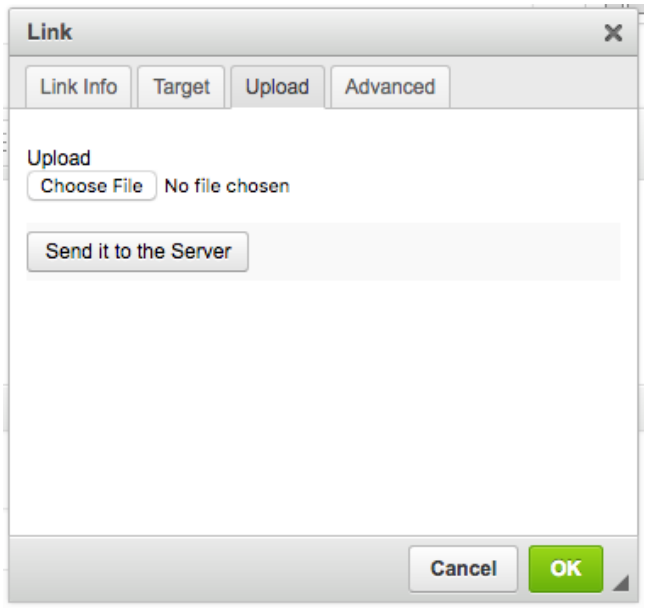


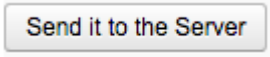
2. Click the OK button, then Create.

Adding a Document

Here you will learn how to add a document.

1. Click the button.
2. Select the **Upload** tab.



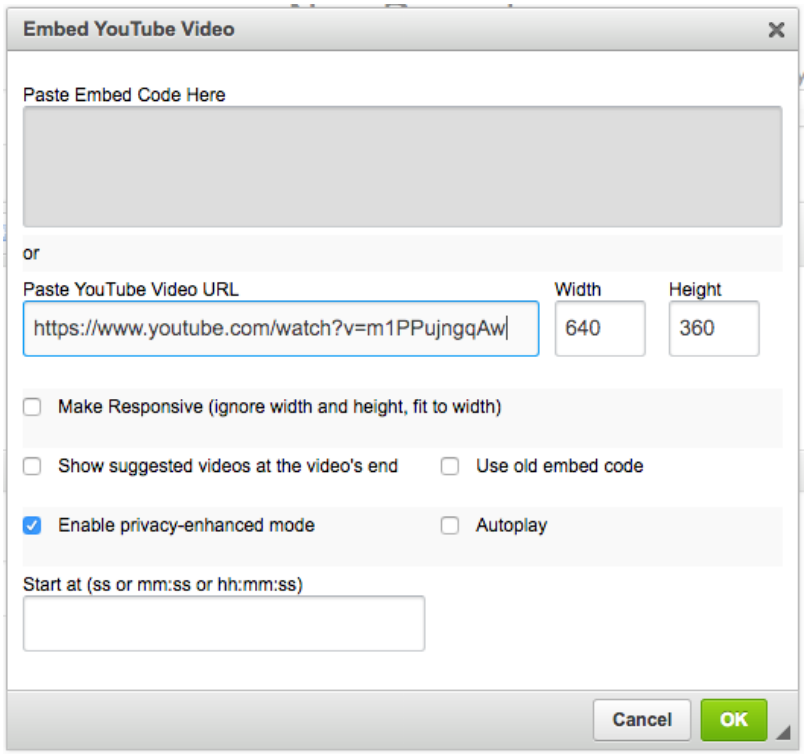
3. Choose the file you would like to upload from your computer.
4. Click the  button.
5. Click the button, then .

Embedding a YouTube Video

Here you will learn how to embed a YouTube video.

1. Click the button.

2. Paste the URL of your YouTube video into the text box.



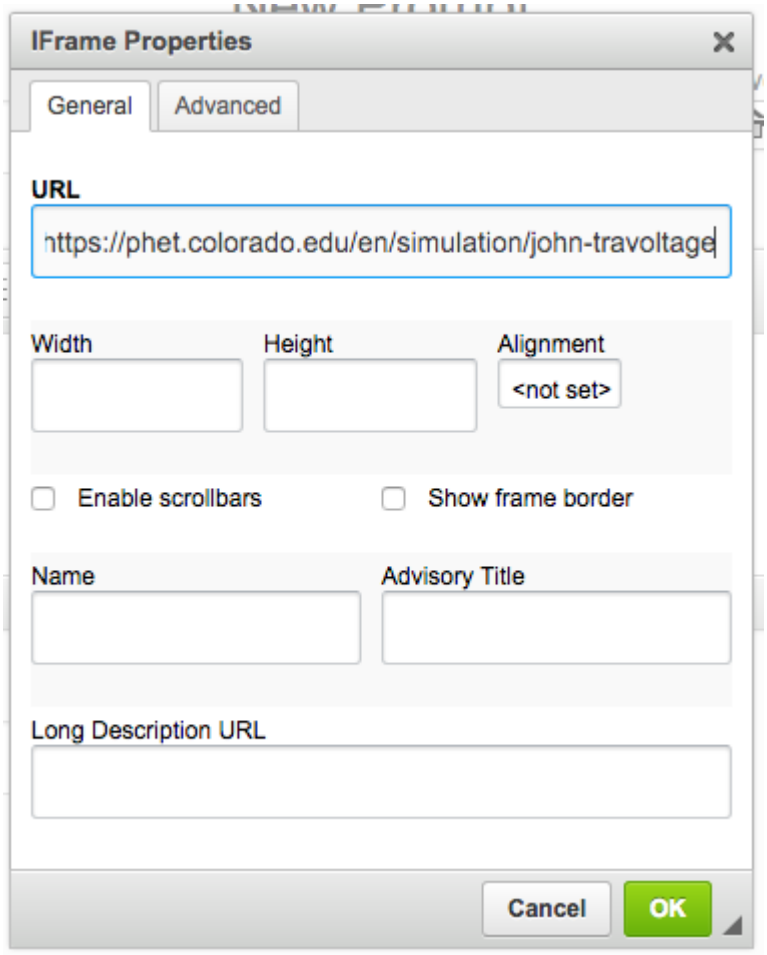
3. Click the OK button, then Create.

Adding an iFrame

An iFrame embeds an HTML page into the current page. You can use this feature for many different things, such as embedding PhET simulations. Here you will learn how to add an iFrame.

1. Click the button.

2. Paste the URL of the website you would like to embed into the text box. You can also set the **Width** and **Height** of the embedded website.



3. Click the button, then .

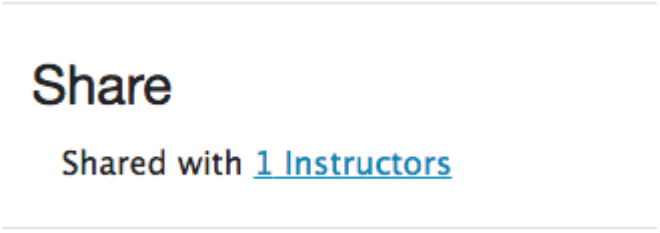
Collaborating on Activities

Teachers can collaborate on activities.

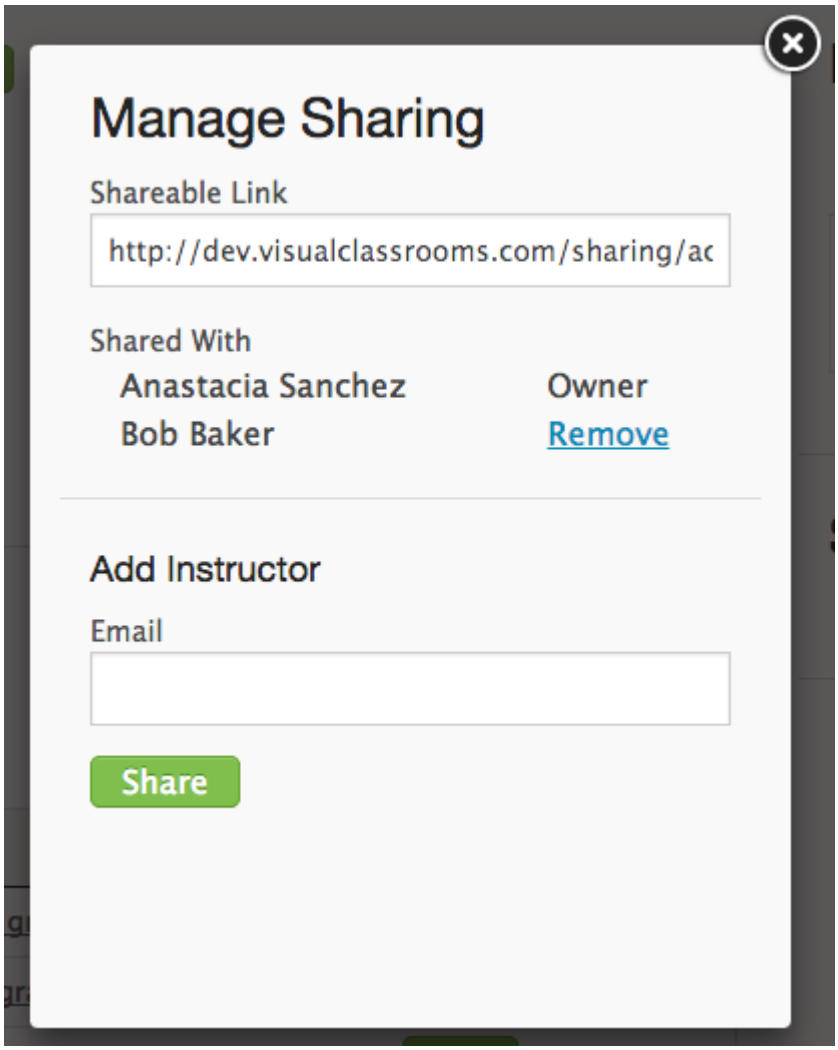
Sharing an Activity

1. Go to **Activities**, and select the activity you would like to share.

2. Find **Share** on the right and click the underlined blue link.



3. At this point, you can send the shareable link to another teacher, or add their email.



4. Click the Share button.

Rubric Builder

In an activity, you can build a rubric. You can access the **Rubric Builder** by clicking the

button.

To begin, click **Add New Condition**. You will then be prompted to select from pre-made conditions: total posts, new ideas, total responses, tags, saved arrangements, characters, files attached, viewed image, and page load. Descriptions of these conditions can be found in the

at the top of the page.

After you have chosen a condition, set the minimum amount a student much reach for that condition, and the grade that student would receive. Press the

button to continue assigning minimum values to different grades. The program will automatically grade according to your conditions. You can continue to add different conditions afterwards.

Once you are finished creating your rubric, save the rubric to your activity.

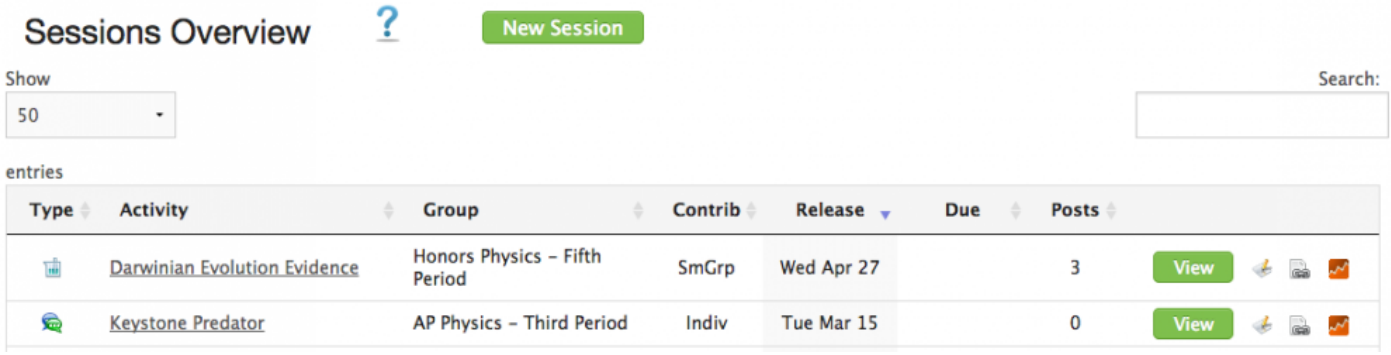
Visual Classrooms Sessions

Visual Classrooms Sessions are activities that have been assigned to a group. A teacher can assign the same Visual Classrooms Activity (i.e. Newtons Second Law Homework) to multiple groups (i.e:Tues – Thursday and 1pm Mon-Wed-Fri). Each combination of an activity and group is a separate session, meaning the Tues-Thursday section doesn't see what Mon-Wed-Fri section is doing, even thought they are working on the same activity.

Creating a New Session

Creating a New Session create a new session, click on “Sessions” in the Teacher Dashboard dropdown menu.

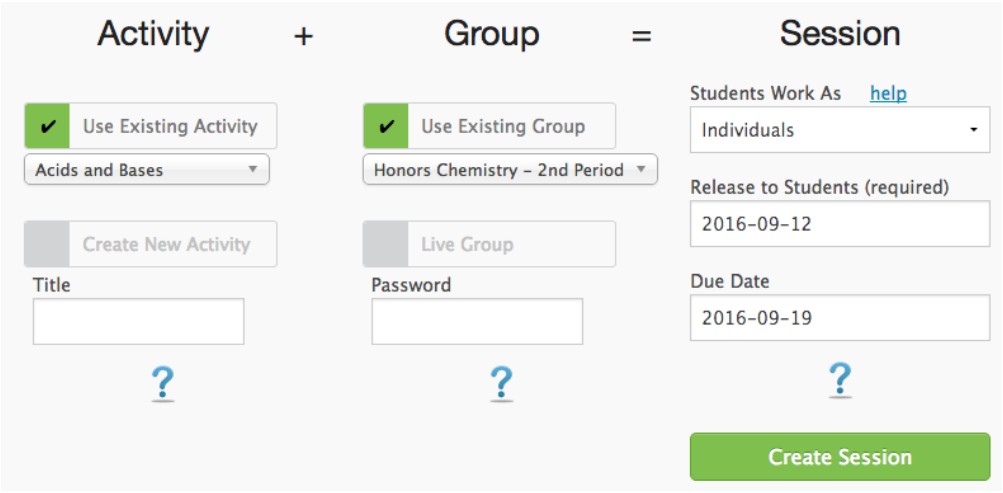
You will see a page similar to this.



1. To create a new session, click on the

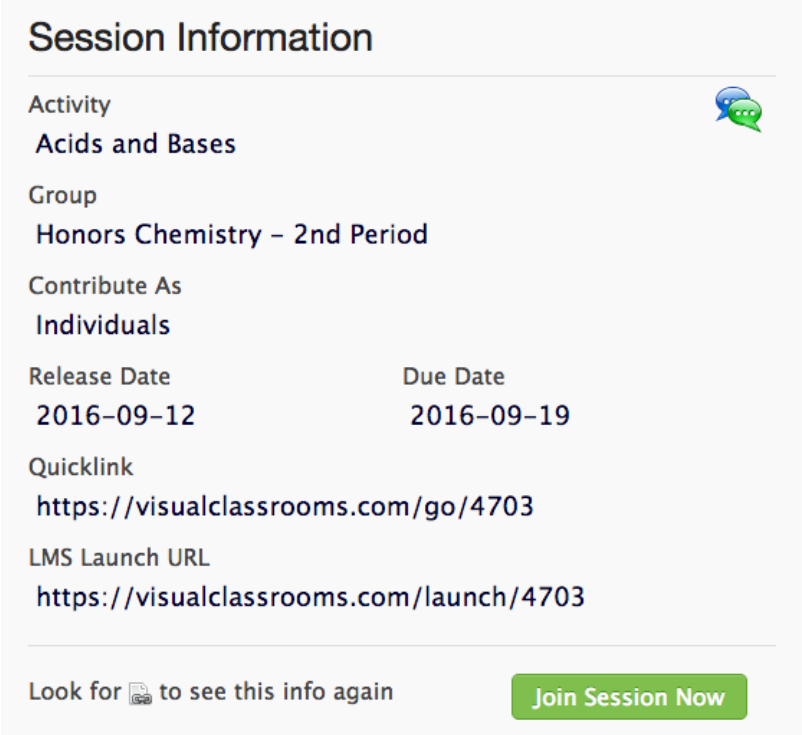
button.

2. From here, choose an activity to assign to a group.



3. Assign a publish date. This will be the day the activity becomes visible to students. You can also assign a due date.

4. Click the Create Session button.



The Session Information page includes links to the session both via the internet and the Learning Management System.

Student Notebook

The “Student Notebook” feature allows users to create a private workspace that only they and their teacher can see. It can be used as a scratchpad to formulate ideas and then move them to the collaboration space. As well the Student Notebook includes all of your answers across all of the prompts in an activity.

1. To access your Notebook, select the Icon on a session’s page.
2. Your Notebook will display all of the ideas that you have posted on the prompts in this activity.
3. Additionally, you can create a new idea in your Notebook and assign it to a prompt, where it will be posted. Unless this new idea is assigned to a prompt, it is only visible to you.
4. Teachers can view the notebooks created by all students in their classes.

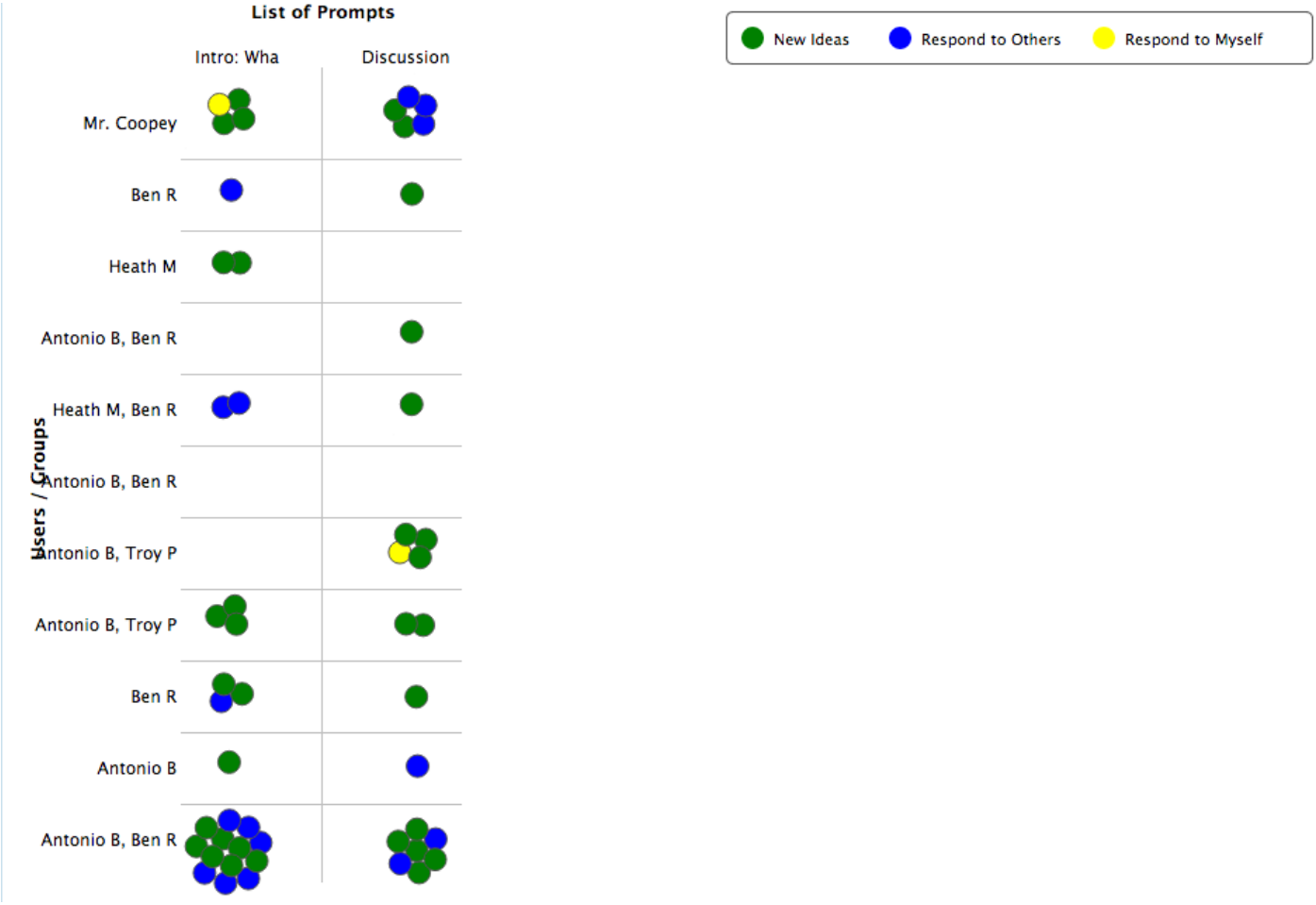
<< Creating a New Session Visual Analytics >>

Visual Analytics

The Visual Analytics function provides visualizations of data about activity and interactions taking place in a session. The visualizations are displayed in two ways. The first being an activity matrix, and the second, a word cloud.

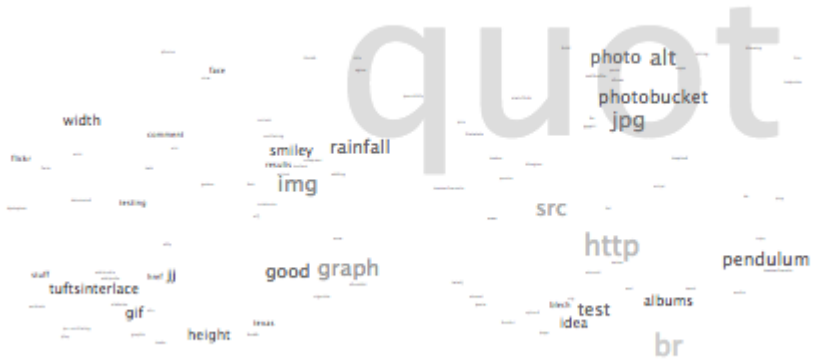
Activity Matrix

The activity matrix displays prompts in the columns and group members and/or an individual member in each row. The instructor will be listed in a row as well. A green dot represents a new idea, a blue dot represents a response to someone elses idea, and a yellow dot represents an additions to your own idea – what we call “idea improvement”,



Word Cloud

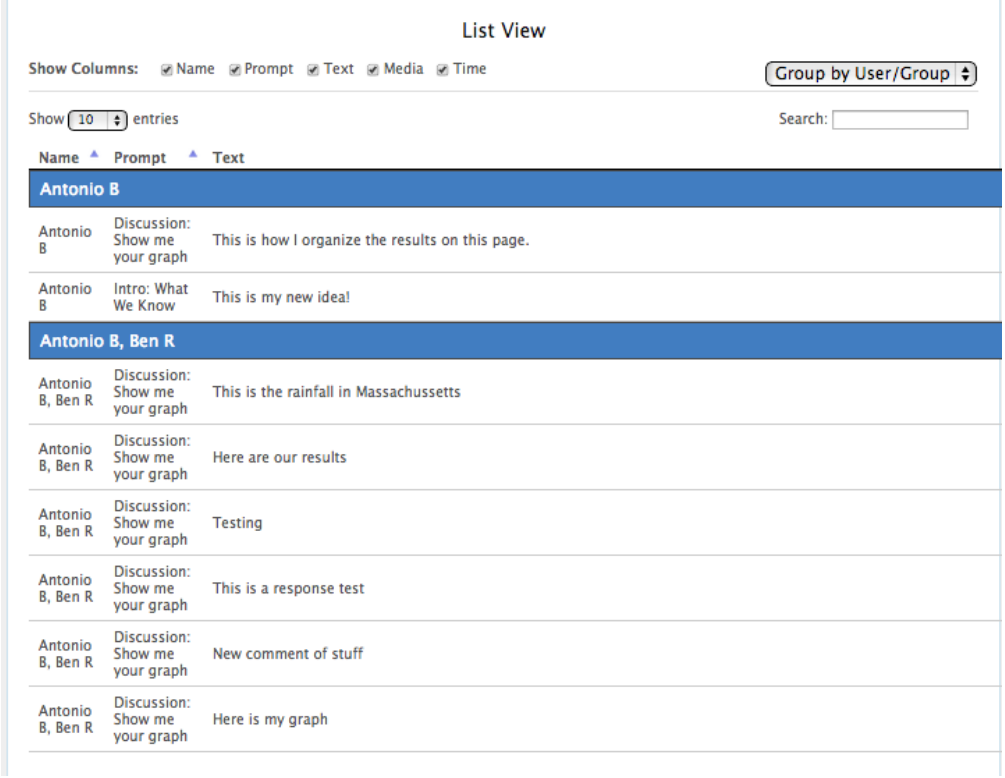
The word cloud that displays frequently used words as larger and slightly faded in color. Words used less frequently are smaller and darker.



<< Student Notebook List View >>

List View

The List View provides a list of posts by user/user group or prompt.



<< Visual Analytics Session Analytics >>

Session Analytics

Go to sessions. Click

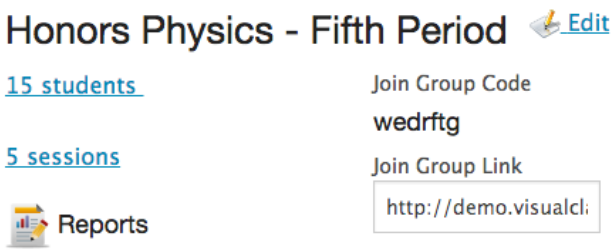
You can’t see analytics of live groups.

Groups — will be updated

The Groups Tab allows you to add new groups of members and manage your groups. You can also view the members within each group, edit your existing groups, and archive your groups. To see the process of adding a new group, see Adding a New Group.

Adding Members

1. To be added to a group, students must enter the **Join Group Code** directly on their own accounts. This code is randomly generated when you create a group, and can be found under the **Groups** tab in your **Teacher Dashboard**.



Editing Groups

1. To edit an existing group, select the

button.

2. You will be provided with options to edit the name, year, and semester of the selected group.

Archiving Groups

Archiving a group will remove the group from Groups Tab; however, reactivation can be requested from the system administrator.

1. To archive an existing group, select the

button.

2. Click

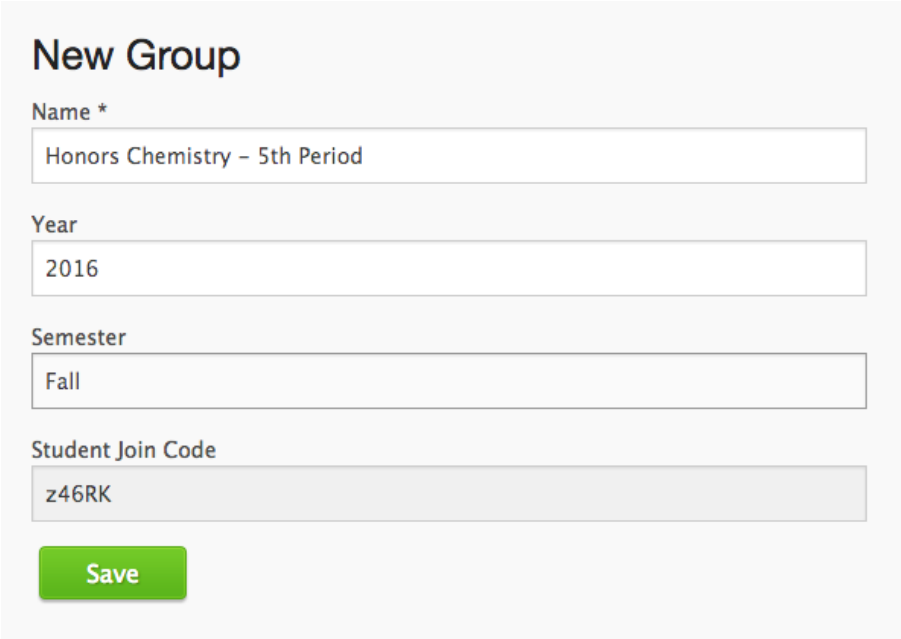
.

To unarchive a group, request reactivation from the system administrator. This can be accomplished by selecting **Contact** in the Navigation Bar under **About**.

Adding a New Group

Here you will learn how to add a new group.

1. Click the New Group button.
2. Give your group a name. You can also add the year and semester.



3. Click the Save button.

Live Groups

A live group is a group you can quickly assign activities to, creating a session. You cannot use all the features in this mode, though.

Unavailable Features

-Analytics
-Grading

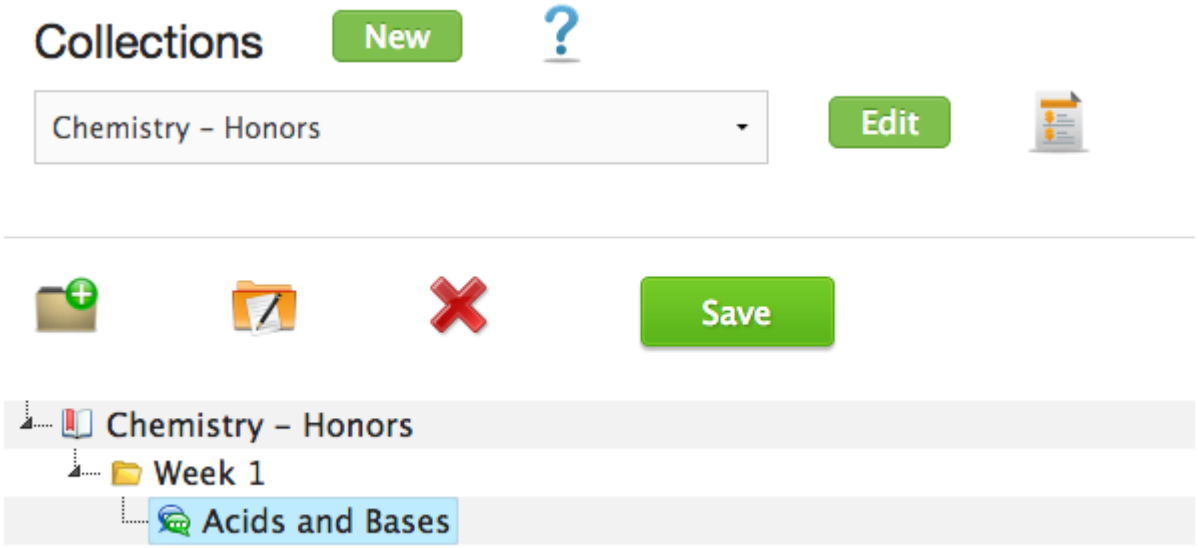
Collections

Collections are a way to organize your activities into a curriculum. You can organize these activities in any way you want. Some ways might include by week, topic, or chapter by book.

To add a new collection, click the New button. You will be prompted to give a title and description to your new collection.

Once your new collection has been created, add activities from the right of your screen by dragging it into your collection on the left of your screen. You can also create folders within your collection. Just select your collection so that it is highlighted in blue, then click the button. You can name (and re-name) your folder with the button and remove it from your collection with the button.

Click the Save button to finish your work.



Community

You can access activities shared either by the Visual Classrooms community around the world, or you can share activities with a private community related to your school.

As of now, you can’t create your own institutional community.

Using Visual Classrooms

Visual Classrooms offers a variety of collaborative learning activities.

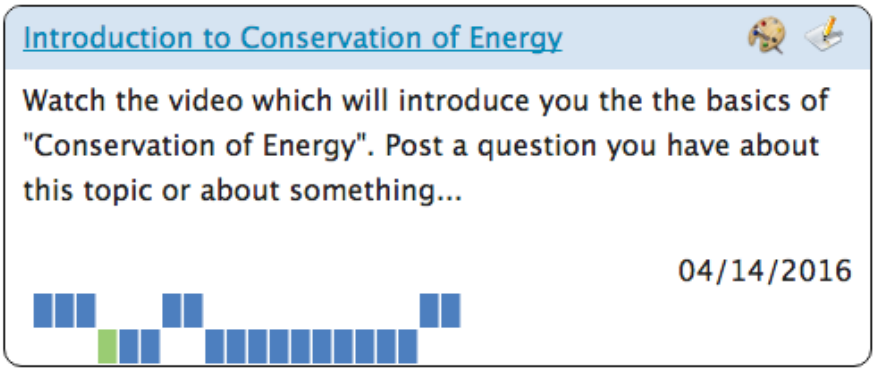
The activity page provides an overview of the prompts for each Visual Classrooms session, as well as the notebook page, visual analytics pages, and a list view page. This page also contains a “sparkline” visualization that displays where the action is happening – the number of posts and responses to a prompt by both the teacher and the students.

Screen capture of activity page and various elements associated with that page.

Participating in an Activity

Prompts in an activity are questions or challenges posed by the teacher that can be responded to by individual students, groups of students, and the teacher. To learn how to add a prompt, see Adding a New Prompt.

You can select a prompt within a session by clicking on the blue underlined text in each box. In the example below, the blue underlined text would be **Introduction to Conservation of Energy**.



Selecting a prompt will take you to that particular prompt's page.

You can add a response to a prompt and collaborate with your peers by clicking the New Idea button. For a more in depth explanation of all the features you can use when writing your idea, see Creating a New Idea.

Creating a New Idea

A “new idea” is like a post-it note where you can contribute your ideas. You can add a new idea in many different ways: typing text, uploading a file, taking a picture or making a video with a webcam, and creating a sketch with our sketch tool. Each of these are described in the sections that follow.

Everyone’s ideas will be posted and visible on Visual Classroom’s collaboration space..

To add an idea in response to a prompt, click the

button.

Your idea will appear on the Visual Classrooms whiteboard.

The refresh button at the top right of the page will retrieve the latest posts.

Adding Text

Importing a File

Adding a Sketch

Copy and Paste

Using the Webcam

Adding Tags

Additional Features

<< Participating in an Activity

Adding Text to a New Idea >>

Adding Text to a New Idea

To add text to a new idea, simply click within the text box and begin typing.

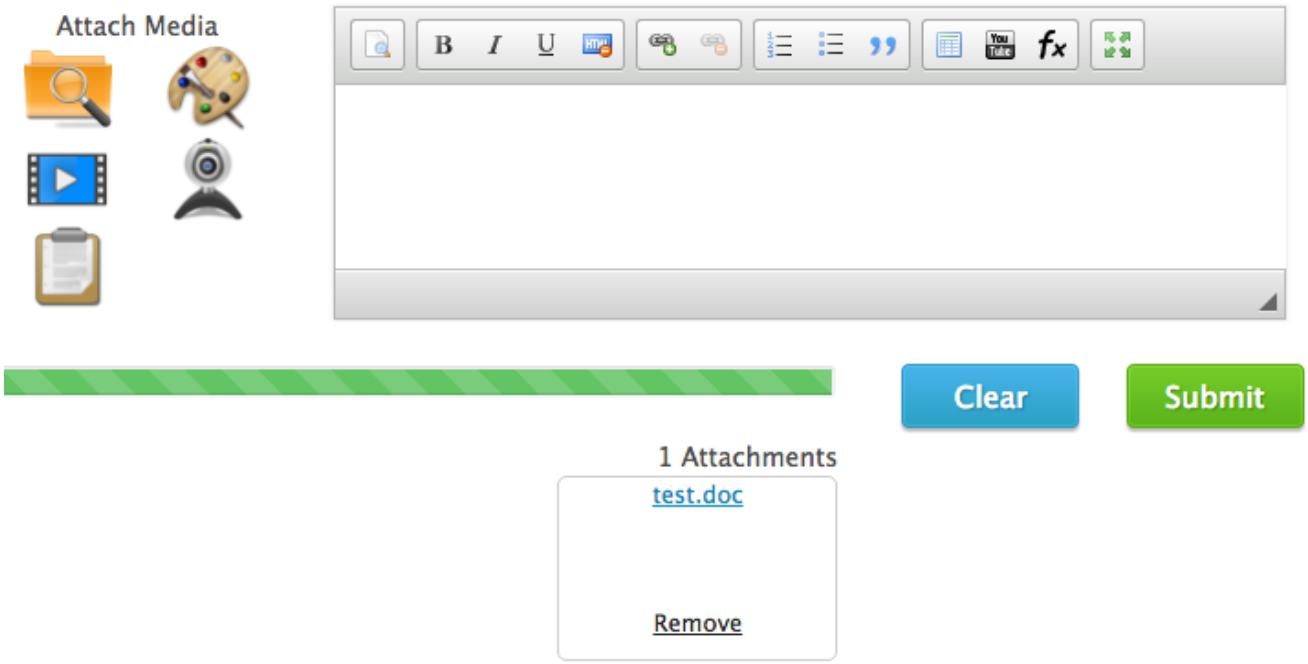
Uploading a File to a New Idea

Here you will see the process of uploading a file to a new idea. Multiple files or images of any file type can be uploaded to your new idea.

1. To upload a file, select the icon below the text box.

2. Select the file that you would like to upload.

   You will then see the uploaded file at the bottom of the Add Idea box.



3. Select the button to post your file.

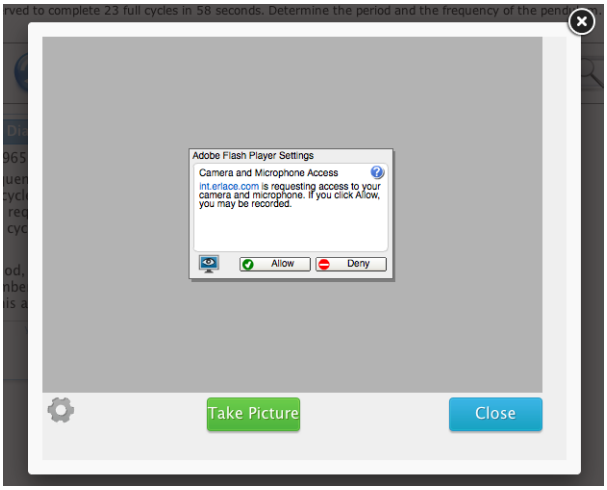
4. Your file will then be visible on the Prompts Page.

[<< Adding Text to a New Idea](#) [Using the Webcam >>](#)

Using the Webcam

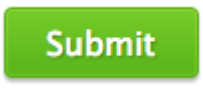
Here you will see the process of using your computer's webcam to add a photo to a new idea.

1. To begin using the webcam, select the Webcam icon under **Attach Media**.



2. Through your Adobe Flash Player, InterLACE will request access to your webcam. Selecting "Allow" will enable to use the webcam feature.
3. To capture your image, press the

button.
4. If you are satisfied with your captured image, select the

button.
5. After selecting to upload your image, you will see your image at the bottom of the Add Idea box.
6. Select the 

button to post your new webcam image.

7. Your image will then be visible on the Prompts Page.

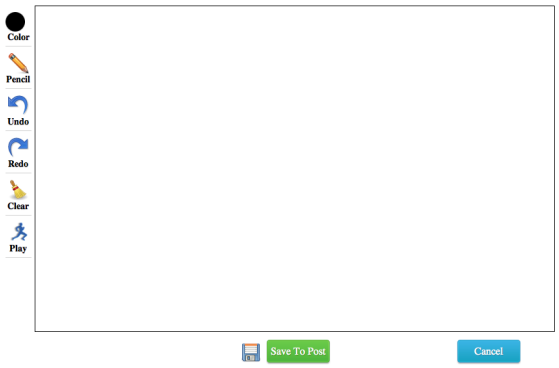
[<< Uploading a File to a New Idea](#) [Adding a Sketch to a New Idea >>](#)

Adding a Sketch to a New Idea

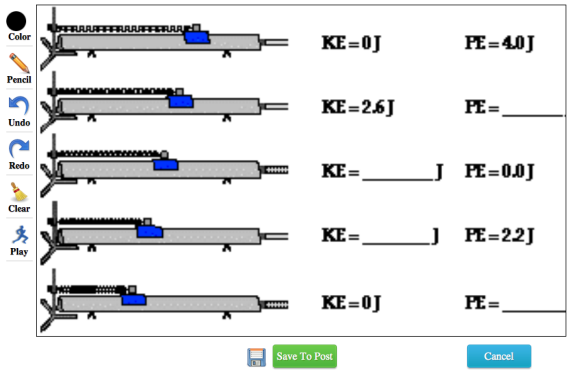
Here you will see the process of adding a sketch to a new idea. Use this tool to create drawings or sketches with our sketchpad.

1. To add a sketch, first select the sketch icon below **Attach Media**.

   - If your teacher has not selected a background for the sketch, you will see a blank display.



   - If your teacher has selected a background image, you will see that image as the background of the display.



2. To add your sketch, click the

button.

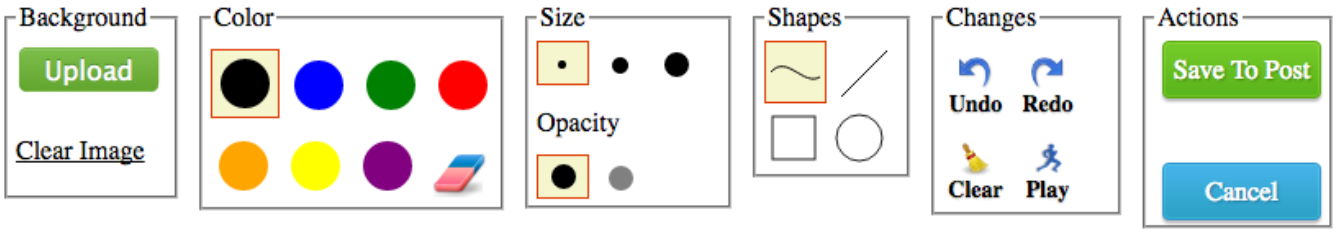
3. Select the

button to post your sketch.

4. Your sketch will then be visible on the Prompts Page.

Customizing Your Sketch

The sidebar on the bottom provides many options for creating and customize your sketch.



Editing

Select the Undo icon

to delete your most recent addition to the display. Select the Redo icon

to. Select the Clear icon

to erase the entire contents of the display.

[<< Using the Webcam]

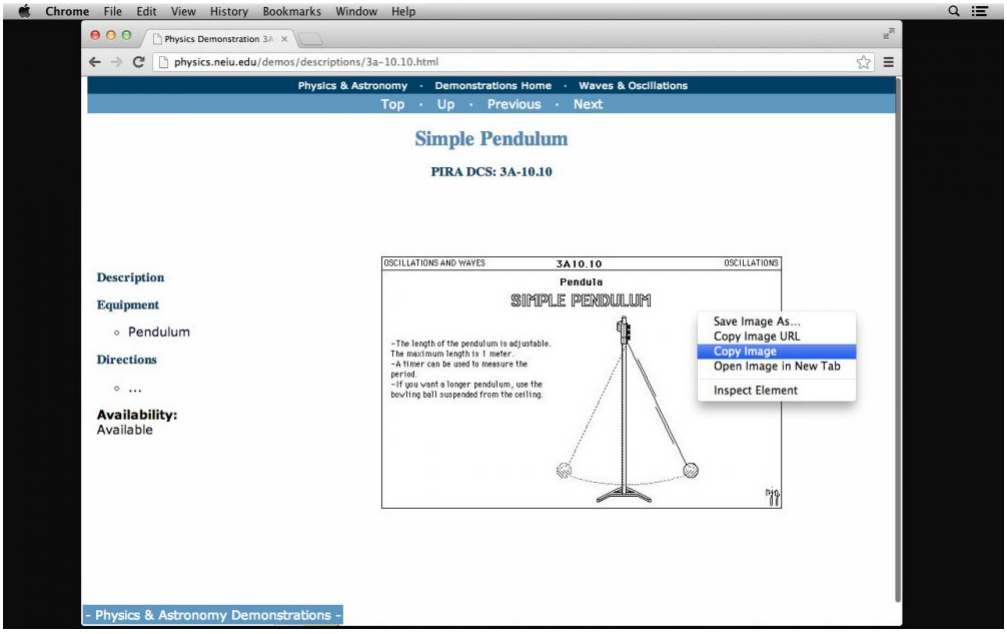
[Copy and Paste to a New Idea >>]

Copy and Paste to a New Idea

You can “copy and paste” an image or file into a New Idea. This feature will only work when using Google Chrome.

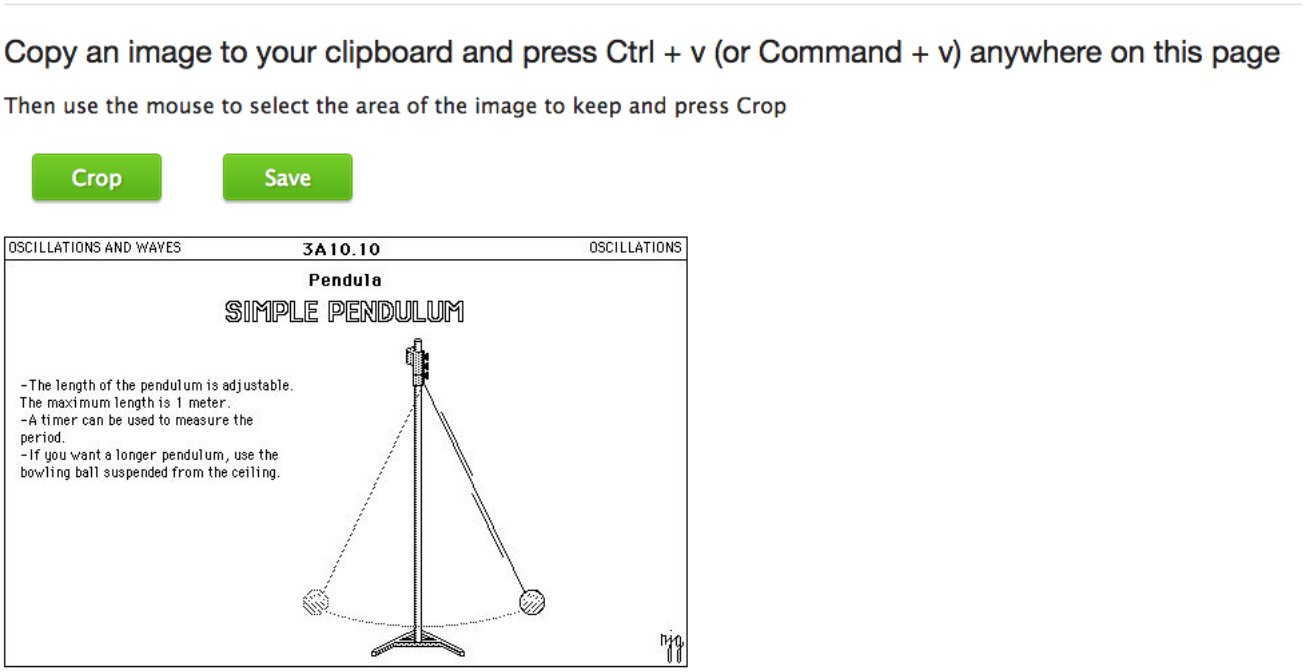
1. To copy and paste an image into your New Idea, first, select the under **Attach Media**. This will bring you to the Paste Display.

2. Then, copy an image to your clipboard. To copy an image, right-click on the desired image and select “Copy Image”.

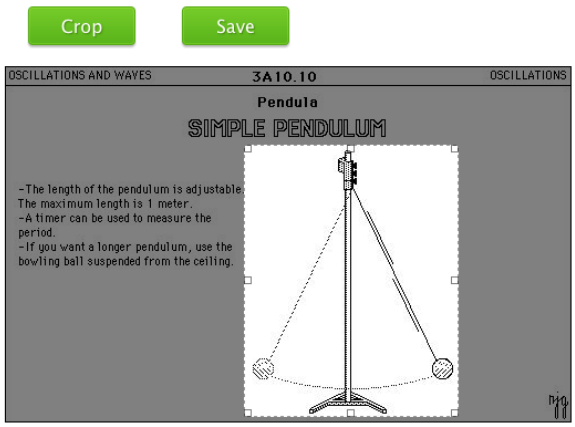


3. Once there is an image copied to your clipboard, return to the Paste Display and paste the image. To paste an image, either press Ctrl + v (or Command + v) on your keyboard or select “Paste” under

“Edit” in the Chrome menu bar.



4. To crop the pasted image, click anywhere on the image and select the area that you would like to crop.



5. When you are satisfied with your pasted image, select the

button.

6. Select the

button to post your new pasted image.

7. Your image will then be visible on the Prompts Page.

[<< Adding a Sketch to a New Idea](#) [Adding a Video to a New Idea >>](#)

Adding a Video to a New Idea

Here you will see the process of adding a video to a new idea.

1. To begin making a video, select the Video icon under **Attach Media**.
2. You will be able to see a **Live Feed** and **Preview**. When you are ready, click the

button.
3. You can also

or

4. If you are satisfied with your video, select the

button.
5. After selecting to upload your image, you will see your video at the bottom of the **Add Idea** box.
6. Select the

button to post your new video.
7. Your video will then be visible on the Prompts Page.

<< Copy and Paste to a New Idea Collaborating >>

Collaborating

1. Responding To and Tagging Ideas
2. Highlighting and Comparing Ideas
3. Arranging Content
4. Organizing Ideas

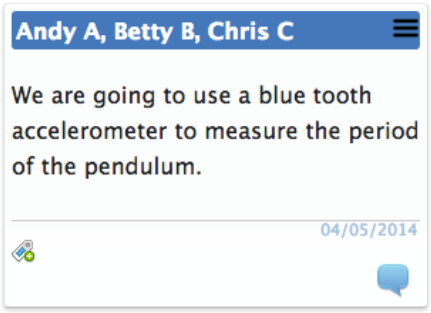
[<< Adding a Video to a New Idea](#) [Responding To and Tagging Ideas >>](#)

Responding To and Tagging Ideas

Responding To Ideas

Here you will see the process of responding to others' ideas.

1. To respond to the idea of a classmate or classmates, simply click the button in the bottom right of the desired Idea Box.



2. You will then see the idea of your classmate or classmates at the top of a new idea box. You may respond with text, an uploaded file, a webcam image, a sketch, and/or a pasted image.

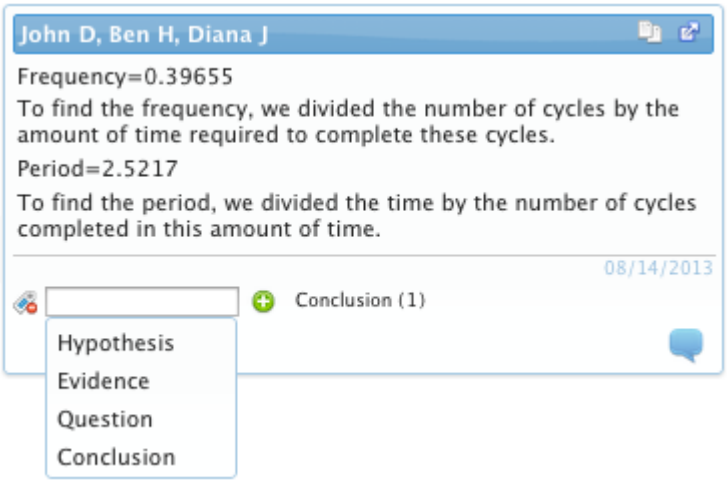
3. When you response is complete, select the

button.

4. Your response will then be visible on the Prompts page.

Tagging Ideas

Knowledge Tags allow users to create and manage labels (or "tags") that categorize their ideas using simple keywords. Tags can be used in a variety of ways – conceptual knowledge tags describe procedures, lessons learned, and reflections that are related to the ideas being expressed. Tags can be used to answer multiple choice questions, express levels of understanding of other's ideas, and reference other's ideas. They also make it easier to find and track ideas. In InterLACE, users can choose from a list of pre-determined tags and also add their own.



[<< Collaborating](#) [Highlighting and Comparing Ideas >>](#)

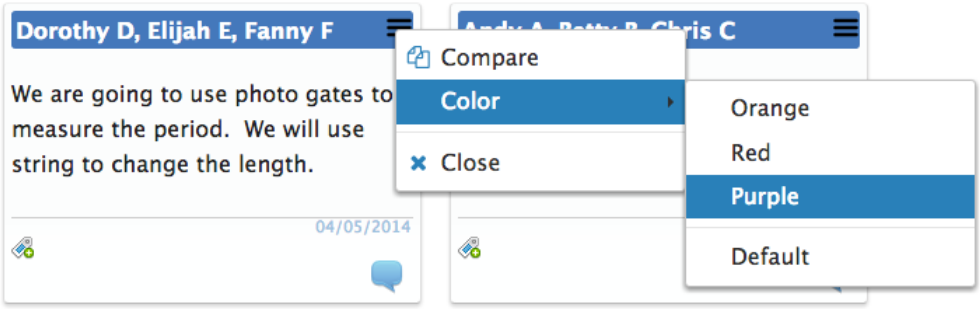
Highlighting and Comparing Ideas

The compare and highlight features – indicated by icons on the upper left hand corner of **New Idea** – allows users to enlarge one or two ideas to discuss.

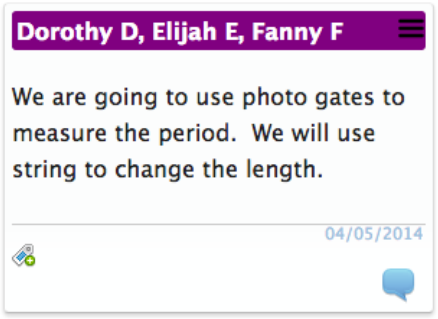
Highlighting Ideas

Here you will see the process of highlighting ideas.

1. To highlight an idea, simply select the icon in the top right corner of the Idea Box.



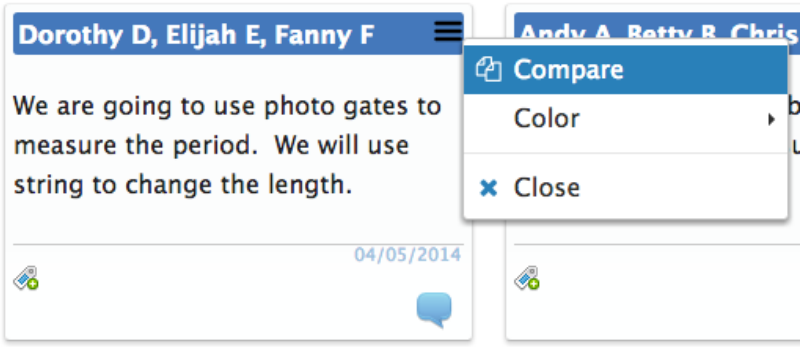
2. You can then choose from three different colors: orange, red, and purple. Select **Default** to set the idea back to normal.



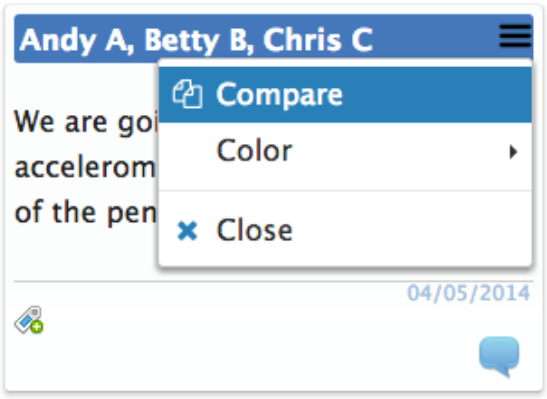
Comparing Ideas

Here you will see the process of comparing two ideas.

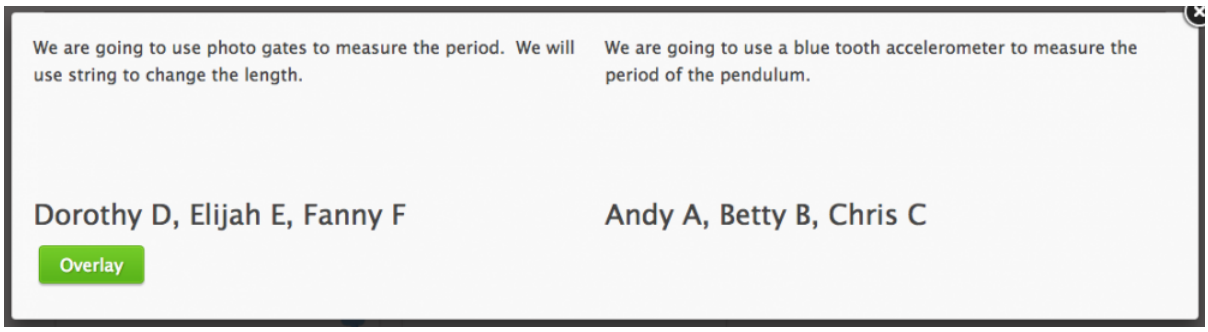
1. To compare two ideas, first select the icon in the top right corner of an idea, then the **Compare** button.



2. Do the same thing for the idea you would like to compare the first one to.



3. Your two idea will then be compared side-by-side.



[<< Responding To and Tagging Ideas]
[Organizing Ideas >>]

Organizing Ideas

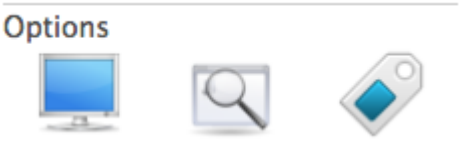
Users can individually and collaboratively arrange ideas to express relationships and connections. They can save their arrangements and annotate the arrangement with an explanation.

Rearranging the Layout

1. Each box can be moved around to create logical groupings of ideas. To do this, simply select the blue bar at the top of the Idea Box that you would like to move and drag it to the desired location.

2. Select the icon to save this arrangement for later use. Select the icon to return back to the original automatic arrangement.

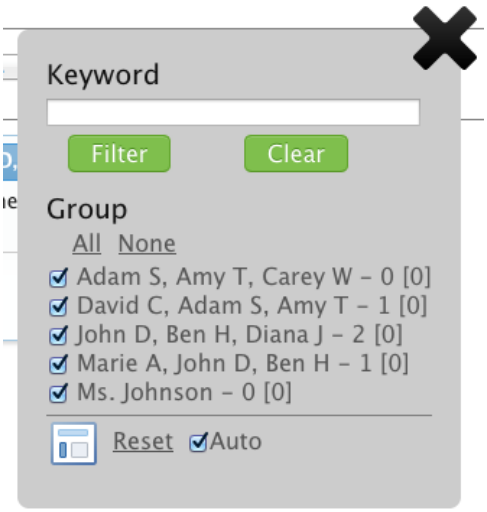
Display Options



1. Select the icon to see the Display Options.

2. With the Display Options, you can customize the font size of the text, choose the number of columns in which the ideas are presented, show/hide responses, display/hide names, show/hide the highlighting options.

Filter and Search



1. Select the icon to display the Filter and Search Options

2. With Filter and Search, show/hide the ideas of specific groups and show/hide idea based on keywords.

<< Highlighting and Comparing Ideas Student Notebook >>

Visual Classrooms Lingo

Visual Classrooms is an innovative computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) environment to enable a broad range of collaborative knowledge construction activities. It provides a shared interactive electronic white board where users can post, visualize, build on, reorganize, and comment on their own and/or others' ideas as they work together to solve problems or create solutions or knowledge. It supports collaboration by making it easy for users to recognize conflicting ideas, argue their position, negotiate meaning, think critically, and reflect on their work.

Using Visual Classrooms

- **Class Key**: Users need a "class key" which is a group password to join an activity.
  Join is the term used to indicate that users are entering an activity. You may join an activity as a single user, as a group, or you can rejoin as a member of an existing group.

- **New Idea**: In Visual Classrooms a "new idea" is like a post-it note that you can read or write down your ideas. You can add a new idea in many different ways – typing text, uploading a file, taking a picture with a webcam and making a sketch with our sketch tool. Each of these are described in the sections that follow. Everyone's ideas will be posted and visible on Visual Classrooms' public whiteboard.

- **Respond** allows users to respond to another user's new idea by adding a "sticky-note".

- **Comparing and highlighting**: The compare and highlight features – indicated by icons on the upper left hand corner of new idea – allows users to designate and enlarge one or two ideas to discuss.

- The **Notebook** is a private workspace where users can develop ideas before publishing them to the public Visual Classrooms' collaboration whiteboard. The only people who can view a notebook are the owner (either an individual or a group of users) and his/her teacher.

- The **List View** provides a list of posts by user/user group or prompt. This is available for both teachers and end users.

- **Knowledge Tags** allow users to create and manage labels (or "tags") that categorize their ideas using simple keywords. Tags can be used in a variety of ways – conceptual knowledge tags describe procedures, lessons learned, and reflections that are related to the ideas being expressed. Tags can be used to answer multiple choice questions, express levels of understanding of other's ideas, and

reference other's ideas. They also make it easier to find and track ideas. Users can choose from a list of pre-determined tags and also add their own.

- **Visual Analytics** is a page where teachers and students can see visualizations of data about activity and interactions taking place in Visual Classrooms. One visualization is a word cloud that displays frequently used words as larger and slightly faded in color. Words used less frequently are smaller and darker.

- **Organizing ideas**: Users can individually and collaboratively arrange ideas to express relationships and connections. They can save their arrangements and annotate the arrangement with an explanation.

Creating Activities

- **Teacher Dashboard**: The Teacher Dashboard is where teachers can create and manage activities, assign them to one or more groups, and view usage reports.

- An **Activity** is a based assignment – homework, lab, in-class discussion, review, etc. It includes a series of prompts – which are questions or challenges.

- The **Activities Tab** is where teachers create and manage your activities. This page is where you can create new activities, edit them, activate them for one or more user groups (e.g. you may want to assign an activity to multiple groups/classes/sections), duplicate activities (in order to reuse an activity from a prior year), and archive them.

- The **Activity Page** provides users with an overview of the prompts for an activity, as well as the notebook page, visual analytics pages, and a list view page. This page also contains a sparkline visualization that displays the number of posts and responses to a prompt by both the teacher and the students.

- **Prompts** are questions or challenges posed by the teachers that make up an activity.

- **The Groups Tab** allows teachers to can add new groups of users and manage existing groups. This can be done in two different ways – by typing in the group and user names or by uploading an Excel file with a list of the users first and last names. The system includes an excel template to support this function.

- **Sessions** are activities that have been assigned to a group.

Visual Classrooms on Mobile Devices

When using Visual Classrooms on mobile devices, there will be minor differences when adding or responding to an idea.

1. When adding text to an idea, the rich HTML editor is disabled.
2. The and buttons have identical functions, they will each access the Camera Roll. You can also take a picture or video.
3. The option to Copy/Paste an image is disabled.
4. When using small mobile devices (screen width <= 480 pixels), dragging/arranging is disabled.

Visual Classrooms Use Cases