

 in the classroom

How to get started with
Skype in the classroom

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Preface

Skype in the classroom is pleased to offer teachers this guide to enable you to run fantastic Skype lessons. The guide contains all the information you need to get started with Skype in the classroom: from how to arrange your first Skype call, to setting up your classroom and running your first Skype lesson.

In creating this guide, we worked closely with social and educational technologist, Josie Fraser. Josie's foreword is an inspiring look at using Skype in your classroom and is an excellent introduction for teachers who are new to Skype. We're pleased to have had her involvement in producing this guide.

Skype in the classroom team



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Foreword

Many educators are familiar with Skype, using it outside of the classroom to keep in touch with friends and family at distance, to organise events, hold virtual meetings, and to send messages to colleagues.

Skype is now also an everyday tool in the classroom tech repertoire of educators working with students of all ages, all over the world. Many teachers have shared online a wealth of examples of Skype being used as an application to engage students in influential and effective learning experiences.

I'm very pleased to have been able to work with Skype in the classroom by supporting the development of the Skype in the classroom Teacher toolkit – designed to provide educators with useful information about using Skype in the classroom, and Skype in their classroom, and to encourage those who haven't used Skype before to try it out.

The Skype in the classroom website provides teachers with a directory of examples of how they can use Skype. Teachers can use it to access and share activities, resources and lesson plans, to connect to other educators and organisations, and to spark even more ideas for using the instant messaging, voice and video calling for learning and teaching.

In the classroom, many teachers now have access to a projector, a computer and an internet connection. Video calling is a great way to encourage whole class interaction and participation in activities.

Like all technologies, using Skype will not magically improve teaching or make lessons more compelling or memorable. Effective use of Skype is dependent on the skill and imagination of the teacher. Connecting to educators who have learnt what works well is a great way to develop confidence and share great advice – on preparing for and framing activities, on running Skype sessions with learners, and in getting the most out of these with follow up activities.

Modern Foreign Language teachers have long been aware of the power of video calling to bring language learning to life for their students. Partnering with other schools can

“Connecting to educators who have learnt what works well is a great way to develop confidence and share great advice”

Foreword

enable all learners to broaden their horizons and knowledge, across all subject areas, by working together, and through exploring and understanding differences and similarities. Skype provides educators with a real way to enable learners to not only 'see in to' other classrooms, countries and cultures, but also to make meaningful connections through collaboration and conversation.

Video calling can also be used closer to home, to build and develop local connections, for example supporting transition by providing learners with additional opportunities to see their new schools and talk to current students. Skype can be used to connect to further education providers, universities and businesses, and to support careers advice or mentoring programs.

Skype can also be used to support a range of other approaches to progression. It can be used to connect to an audience for learners to present individual or collaborative presentations, to formalise and make final presentations. Presentations can augment and focus work by giving learners an external audience to communicate what has been learnt.

Performances don't just have to be presentations to an at-distance audience. Enacting scenes from plays and giving concerts with learners in different physical locations are an ambitious and fun way of making great use of the collaborative potential of Skype.

“Skype can support experiences that wouldn't otherwise be possible”

Skype lessons and activities can also be filmed and shared – with appropriate permissions from your class and their parents and carers.

It's important that teachers are able to make the most of all the opportunities to support and enhance learning that classroom technologies allow. Skype can support experiences that wouldn't otherwise be possible, enabling teachers to bring the world into their classroom, and to take their students into the world.

Josie Fraser, 2013

What is Skype?

Skype is a software that allows you to speak to, see and instant message other people who have Skype accounts wherever they are in the world.

It is an application you download which allows you to make calls and send messages via the internet. Many people use their computers for Skype, but you can also use a phone or even a TV.

Hundreds of millions of people are already using Skype; many people use it to stay in touch with family and friends. There's something special about seeing a face on Skype video call and it can be cheaper than making a phone call.

With Skype you can:

1. Make free Skype to Skype calls.
2. Make low cost calls and send text messages to mobiles and landlines.
3. Make video calls on Skype and Facebook.
4. Send free instant messages.

What you'll need to get started

To sign up for a Skype account and install Skype on your computer visit [Skype.com/download](https://www.skype.com/download)

You will be directed to the best download option for the computer you are using. It should only take a few minutes to download and set up.

Once you have everything up and running there are only a few more items you'll need to make the most of Skype in your classroom.



A computer with a microphone and speakers.



A webcam.



A broadband internet Connection.



What is Skype in the classroom?



Skype in the classroom is a free community that connects teachers with educators and guest speakers from around the world.

It is a website where teachers can find and run Skype lessons for their students. It enables teachers to find classes thousands of miles away, or just round the corner, to collaborate and learn with.

Skype in the classroom also helps teachers to connect to guest speakers who can offer their expertise during a Skype lesson with a class.

It provides schools with the opportunity to easily invite zoo keepers, mountain climbers, professional athletes and authors into their classroom for a chat.

All teachers that sign up to Skype in the classroom will also be given **free group video calling** to use in their classroom.

You can find Skype in the classroom at <http://education.skype.com>

With Skype in the classroom you can:

1. Connect and collaborate with other educators using Skype
2. Find and engage with experts from a wide range of fields
3. Share and promote your own Skype lesson ideas and resources

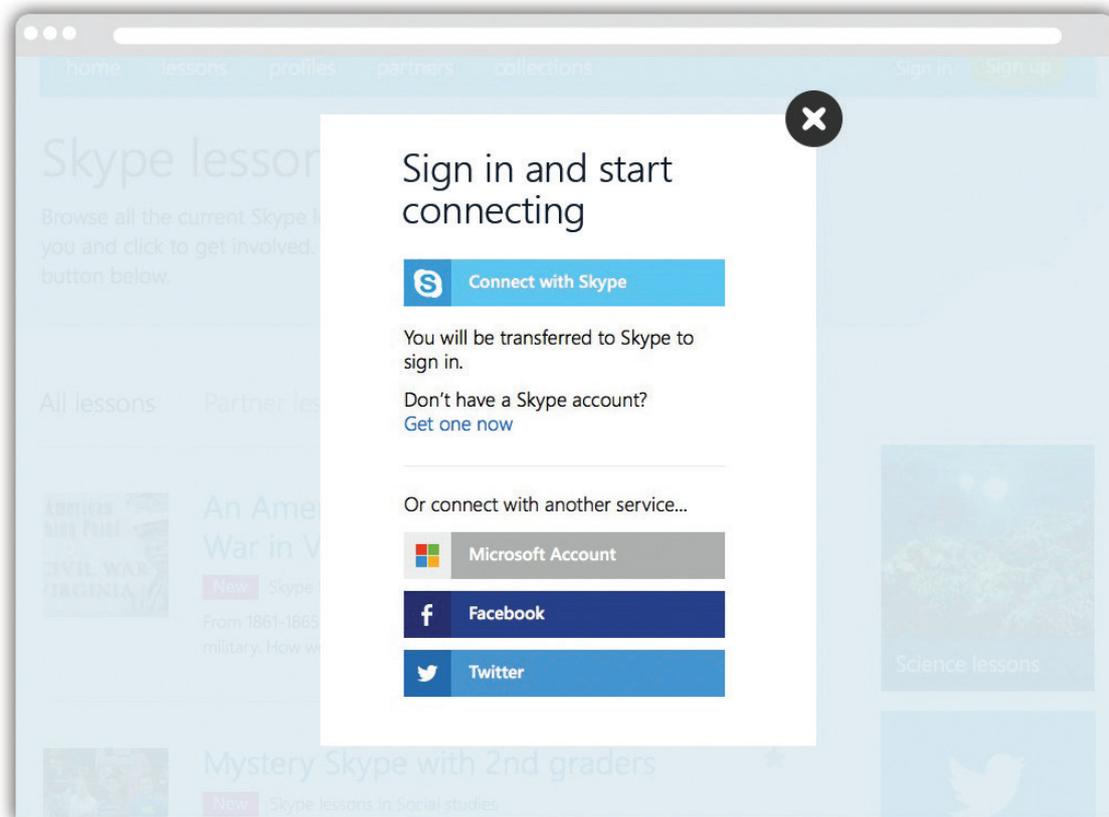
What are the benefits for your school:

- Access to free group video calling on Skype
- Collaboration on a global scale
- You can access interesting speakers, easily and for free



Using Skype in the classroom

1 Registering a new account



Getting started with Skype in the classroom is easy. Visit <https://education.skype.com> to join.

It is easiest to register with a Skype account. If you have one already, simply use your Skype username and password to log in. If you don't then you'll need to visit <https://login.skype.com/account/signup-form> to create one.

Once you have logged in with your Skype account you'll need to fill out some profile information such as the screen name you'd like to be known by, your location and your email address.

To help you connect with the most suitable classes and teachers you should also add your areas of interest, short bio, and upload a photo.

2

Finding a Skype lesson

Teachers have already created thousands of lessons on Skype in the classroom. Taking part in one of these is a nice way to start using Skype as part of your lesson plan.

If you have an idea of what you're looking for you can search for lessons by keyword – try 'Civil War' or 'Mystery Skype'. You can then filter by category, age group and language to find the perfect lesson for your class.

You can also browse our handpicked collections; from extreme weather to computer programming, music and language practice; you're sure to find something to inspire you.

Once you've found a lesson you like, simply click the 'Register for this lesson' button. We'll notify the person running the lesson and you should hear from them soon.

3

Connecting with other teachers and experts

Another way to start making connections is by messaging other teachers directly. It's easy to do – you will find a message button on lesson pages and on every profile page.

You can also add someone as a Skype contact on his or her profile page. It's important to connect on Skype so you can plan your lesson and have access to video calling. You can use instant messaging, or a Skype call, to chat once you've connected.

4

Creating your own lesson

If you already have a fantastic idea for a Skype lesson and can't find anyone else doing the same thing, then creating your own is simple.

The more detail you're able to provide to other teachers and classes in your lesson description, the more likely you are to make a fantastic connection. Include things like the subjects you'll be covering, the length of the lesson and what your objectives are. A great image or video will also make it easier for other teachers to find your lesson.

Once you've published your lesson using the simple form, other teachers will be able to find it, register to take part and get in contact with you.

Involving your learners

A Skype lesson is a fantastic way to engage your whole class. Students can be assigned different roles to keep everyone involved throughout the lesson. These can include greeters, inquirers, sharers, researchers, photographers, bloggers, timekeepers and scribes.

A few other ideas that can work well when preparing for your lesson include asking your

class to come up with questions, and letting them choose which to ask. Learners can also prepare presentations on the areas you know will be covered in the lesson.

A lot of teachers also find it helpful to set some basic ground rules before a Skype call, especially if it's the first time you'll be using it in your classroom.

Getting up to speed with Skype

The best way to make sure your lesson goes smoothly is to test your set up before the day of your Skype call. An easy way to make sure everything is working is to run some test calls.

These can be with colleagues in the building, and with other connections you have outside of school. This will give you confidence that your equipment and connection are working well.

Make sure you know how to:

- mute your microphone
- turn up the sound on your computer speakers
- switch your camera on and off in Skype
- search for a contact and add them to your address book
- accept or decline any invitations to connect.

You'll need to add the person you're connecting with as a Skype contact in order for video calling to work. It will also make planning for your lesson a lot easier if you can chat beforehand.



1

Speakers

If you're using Skype in a lesson with a large group you will probably want to amplify the sound. Make sure you have speakers connected to the computer and that they are working.

2

Webcam

Your computer may have a built-in webcam, if not you'll need to connect one. When setting up, you should make sure that as many students as possible are in the line of the camera and that the light in your classroom is providing good quality video.

If you don't want to use video, you can click the camera button within Skype while on a call to turn off your webcam.

3

Connecting to a projector

If you use an interactive whiteboard or projector in your classroom you will know that you can connect your computer to it. Using one of these for your Skype lesson is a good idea to make sure everyone in your class has a clear view and is involved in the lesson.

Checklist for your first Skype lesson

- ✓ Skype is installed on your computer
- ✓ You're connected to the internet
- ✓ You have a webcam, speakers and a microphone
- ✓ Your computer is connected to a projector or whiteboard
- ✓ You have added the person you're calling as a Skype contact
- ✓ You have run a test call
- ✓ You have spoken about and agreed a lesson plan
- ✓ Your learners know what to expect, and their roles.

Safety

Skype in the classroom supports teachers in using class based Skype calls, meaning that learners don't need to set up individual accounts or provide any of their personal data. Teachers manage the engagement on behalf of their learners, ensuring safe and productive lessons and connections.

If you already have a Skype account you may want to consider setting up a different account for teaching, rather than using your personal one. Doing this will mean that your personal contacts cannot initiate a conversation during your lesson.

When connecting your class to someone new, it's always a good idea to have a quick Skype call with them before introducing them to your class. If you're uncomfortable inviting them into your classroom, for whatever reason, you do not have to.

If you have any concerns about someone you have connected with via Skype in the classroom, please contact us at education@skype.net or use the flagging tool on the site.

What to do if Skype is blocked in your school

It is common for schools to have restrictions in place on the way they connect to the internet to stop students and teachers from accessing and downloading from certain sites.

You may find that you don't have permissions to download the Skype client to your work computer, or that Skype is blocked in your school.

If this happens, you can talk to your line manager about getting permission to get Skype unblocked. Your school technician will also be able to offer advice on how to take your request forward.

Requests to have Skype unblocked should be clear about how you'll be using Skype in your lessons to support effective learning, and enhance learners' experience.

Make sure that you run a test call well in advance of your lesson to ensure that you don't discover any issues at short notice.

Trouble-shooting while on a Skype call

If you have trouble with your video or audio during a call, let the person you are calling know by sending them an instant message. If, after a few minutes, the connection does not seem to improve try terminating the call and ringing back. We often find this helps.

If you don't have any video at all make sure that both you and the person you're calling have cameras switched on and connected properly. It's important that both you and the caller have accepted one another's contact requests, otherwise the video functionality won't work.

If the Skype application quits unexpectedly, relaunch the application and see if you can rejoin the conversation. You may have to call-in or, if someone else on the call seems to have dropped out, you may need to call them and add them back in.

If you're having ongoing issues with your Skype connection, you should check that your internet bandwidth connection meets the minimum requirements for Skype, you can find these in the Technical Appendix on this toolkit.

To get more support on using Skype you can visit: <https://support.skype.com>

Contact

home education.skype.com
email skypeintheclassroom@skype.net
twitter twitter.com/skypeclassroom
facebook facebook.com/skypeintheclassroom



Technical appendix

Download and install

Skype is an application which needs to be downloaded and installed on the computer you are going to make your calls from. The Skype application requires 28MB of space on your computer.

Visit [Skype.com/download](https://www.skype.com/download)

You will be directed to the best download option for the computer you are using. It should only take a few minutes to download and set up.

System requirements:

Windows:

- PC running Windows® XP, Vista, Windows® 7, Windows® 8, both 32- and 64-bit operating systems.
- Internet connection – broadband is best (GPRS is not supported for voice calls).
- Speakers and microphone – built-in or separate.

Mac:

- 1 GHz Intel processor
- Mac OS X v10.5.8 (leopard) or newer.
- 100 MB free disk space.
- Either USB or regular headset if your Mac does not have a built-in microphone.
- Download drivers if you are using an external webcam.

Download and install

Windows desktop

Step 1

Save the SkypeSetup file to your computer.

Step 2

Double click the downloaded file. When the Open File screen is displayed, click Run. When it is complete, Skype opens and the Welcome to Skype sign-in screen is displayed.

Step 3

On the Welcome screen, register as a user if you aren't already. You will need a Skype ID and password to login to use Skype.

Windows 8

To download Skype from the Microsoft Store, you'll need a Microsoft account

Step 1

In the Start screen, type "Skype" to open the search bar.

Step 2

Select the Store icon. Select the Skype application tile displayed on the left side of the screen.

Step 3

In the window that opens, select Install. The message "Skype was installed" appears in the top right corner of the screen.

Step 4

On the Welcome screen register as a user if you aren't already. You will need a Skype ID and password to login to use Skype.

Mac

Step 1

Save the Skype application file to your computer.

Step 2

Double click the download file then drag the Skype icon to your Application folder.

Step 3

Launch Skype from your Application folder and register as a user if you aren't already. You will need a Skype ID and password to login to use Skype.

Your principal might decide that the school should have an official account which can be shared by teachers. In this case, you might want to use the school name as your Skype username.



Download and install

Bandwidth needed for Skype video:

Call type	Minimum download / upload speed	Recommended download / upload speed
Calling	30kbps / 30 kbps	100kbps / 100kbps
Video calling / Screen sharing	128kbps / 128kbps	300kbps / 300kbps
Video calling (high quality)	400kbps / 400kbps	500kbps / 500kbps
Video calling (HD)	1.2Mbps / 1.2Mbps	1.5Mbps / 1.5Mbps
Group video (3 people)	512kbps / 128kbps	2Mbps / 512kbps
Group video (5 people)	2Mbps / 128kbps	4Mbps / 512kbps
Group video (7+ people)	4Mbps / 128kbps	8Mbps / 512kbps

The quality of your video call can be standard, high quality, or HD (high definition).

Video quality	Image resolution (pixels)	Frames per second
Standard	320x240	15
High-quality	640x480	30
HD	1280x720	30