

## USING SKYPE IN THE CLASSROOM

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[Skype in the Classroom](#) is an online platform with several free tools that connect students to international experiences that they may not otherwise get to have. These experiences not only can expose your learners to new information and ideas, but with your guidance, they can help your students develop a global perspective and think critically.

This week in the Teacher's Corner, we will present some of the free educational tools available from Skype and ideas about how to utilize them to build global citizens in your classroom. To use the free tools, you will need to register in the [Microsoft Educator Community](#) and create a Skype ID.

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### LEVEL

High beginner to advanced

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### LANGUAGE FOCUS

Speaking, listening, reading, writing

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### GOALS

Throughout these activities, student will be able to do the following:

- Practice listening comprehension and speaking proficiency
- Learn information about other people and places throughout the world

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### ACTIVITY 1: EXPLORE THE WORLD BEYOND YOUR CLASSROOM WITH VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS

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Skype's [Virtual Field Trips](#) allow students to see parts of the world that they may have never seen before. Field trips are organized by topic, including animals, art and architecture, history and culture, ecology and conservation, and more. Field trips are live and are conducted in English by a professional from the organization that hosts the trip. Students even have a chance to ask questions during the session.

On the website, you can view all available field trips and register for your class to participate. Skype will take into account your local time zone and let you know which dates and times are available for the virtual trip.

### **Before the Field Trip**

- Before the field trip, have students brainstorm what they know already about the topic or place. Their ideas can be based on personal experiences or on information that you have studied in class leading up to the trip.
- Create a list of questions to ask the host of the trip. During the field trip, the class may not be able to ask more than one question because other classes may be participating. Therefore, students may want to vote for their top three questions ahead of time. Then, if they are able to ask a question, they will be prepared with the questions that are most interesting to the whole class.

### **After the Field Trip**

- Ask students to reflect on the trip in small discussion groups or as a whole class. Some possible questions are below, and you may think of more to ask. Encourage students to think about how this experience relates to global problems or their own lives.
  - Can you think of a place in our city/country that is like this?
  - What did you learn about \_\_\_\_\_ by going on this virtual field trip?
  - What questions do you still have? How can you find the answers?
  - How do you think this type of place/career helps people with \_\_\_\_\_?"
- As an extension activity, students can continue to research questions they have and present what they learn to the class. Another option is for students to write thank-you notes to the host of the field trip and tell the host about something interesting that they learned or a part of the trip that they particularly enjoyed.

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## **ACTIVITY 2: MYSTERY SKYPE**

[Mystery Skype](#) is a game where classrooms in different locations around the globe are paired together to play and learn together. During the game, the locations of both classrooms are not revealed. Students (or pairs of students) must ask each other yes/no questions in order to guess the location of each other's classrooms. This game helps students learn about geography and different cultures while practicing English, developing critical thinking and reasoning skills, and working collaboratively.

### **Before the Game**

- Explain to your class how Mystery Skype is played and how they will need to ask yes/no questions to guess the location of the other class in the game. Have students work in pairs to generate questions they could ask the other class. Ideas for questions include:
  - Is your country large/small?
  - Do you speak \_\_\_\_\_ (name of language)?
  - Does your country border an ocean?
  - Is the weather in your country hot year-round?
- The class also needs to plan a short introduction for the beginning of the game, such as, "Hello. We are a class of grade 8 students studying English." The first pair of students to ask a question in the game will provide the introduction for the class.
- Review students' ideas for questions and plan for each pair of students to ask a particular question during the game. Tell students that they can change their questions during the game based on the information they are learning.

### **During the Game**

- If possible, use a projector or have your class gather around a computer so that everyone can see, or at least hear, the Skype interaction. As each pair of students asks their question and gets an answer from the other class, your class should try to identify where the partner class is located.

- To help them identify the country, provide atlases or display a world map, if available. Give students some time between questions to analyze the information they receive and to begin to eliminate places where the other class could not possibly be located.
- Students will also need to answer questions posed by the partner class. Monitor the interactions and help as needed. If someone in your class thinks they have a reasonable guess, let the other team know and see if the guess is correct.

### **After the Game**

- Students can create a Venn diagram to illustrate the similarities and differences of their own country with the country of the partner class.
- Have students talk about the facts they remember about the partner class and their location. This discussion can be done as a whole class or in small groups. Students can share things they enjoyed about the game and things they will remember about the students or their country.

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### **ACTIVITY 3: MEET STUDENTS AROUND THE WORLD WITH SKYPE COLLABORATIONS**

[Skype Collaborations](#) is another option for helping students to explore cultures beyond their own. This tool allows teachers and students to post online to share an idea for a collaborative project or to get help with a problem. Classrooms anywhere in the world can choose to collaborate with another class that has posted a project or problem.

This tool is particularly useful in building global citizens because it allows students to interact with other students around the world to find solutions or develop ideas. The interactions in these activities vary and can range from more simple interactions, such as students reading aloud to each other during video calls, to more complex interactions, such as collaborating to complete whole projects together online.



Regardless of which tools from Skype you choose to use in your classroom, the ability to interact with peers from different parts of the world can encourage your students to consider the ways in which we are all connected.