

Remote Learning via Student's Mobile Phones

**Based on the collective wisdom of the teachers and staff at
West Contra Costa Adult Education (WCCAE) - Richmond, California
Shared with NSC by CCC Consortium Director Lisa Gonzalves**

Many of our teachers at WCCAE have stated that the majority of their students 1) don't have a computer at home, and 2) don't have an email address. Furthermore, some teachers have reported that they have emailed their students, but only a few have responded, indicating that perhaps while students have email addresses, it's not a tool they regularly engage in.

So the question is, how do we engage students in remote learning using their cell phones, which is a more commonly accessible communication tool? This document is a collection of resources for remote learning, all which are cell-phone friendly (presuming they also have cell phone-based access to the internet). [Part I](#) of the document details [how to set up text-based systems for communicating](#). [Part II](#) discusses [various learning tools, assignments, etc. that can be texted to students' cell phones](#) (again, presuming internet access). All of these options are log-in free (on the student end), eliminating the need for student password management.

The resources are based on what some of our WCCAE teachers are already doing, what some of us have done in the past, plus some other ideas. Do note that this document is a work in progress. If you have any comments or feedback please email: lisa.gonzalves@wccusd.net. Feel free to pass along!

Part 1: Individual and Group Texting options (all free!):

WhatsApp.

This is an app that you first download onto your mobile phone. You will have to add in all of your student phone numbers initially, to then either text them individually or a group.

- Perks:
 - You can send attachments via WhatsApp (pictures, documents, etc.).
 - Once you have the Whatsapp application installed on your cell phone, you (the instructor) can then install WhatsApp on your computer, making texting a lot easier. Here's a [video](#) on how to set that up.
 - You can also make phone calls for free.
 - Your group message can contain over 200 contacts - big enough for the whole class!
 - Note: Do familiarize yourself with the 'settings' options, as you can control if students can reply to all, reply individually, etc.
- Downside:
 - Students will all have access to each other's cell phone numbers. In that case, ensure that students consent to this before 'outing' their phone number to everyone. During this time it is ok to get oral or text/email-based consent. If you do get oral consent, keep a log with time/day/how consent was obtained just in case.

Remind.

Download the app on your mobile phone or sign up here: <https://www.remind.com/>

- Perks:
 - Easy to use to send mass texts to all of your students.

- Students cannot see each other's numbers, eliminating any privacy concerns.

Google Voice.

To set up Google Voice you need a Gmail account (for WCCAE users: your district gmail IS a gmail account!). Here's [instructions](#) on how to set up a Google Voice Account.

- Perks:
 - Provides you a separate phone number to provide students, so they don't have your actual cell phone number. You can easily then have this number forward to your regular cell phone number if you want.
 - Easy-to-use web platform where you can text online.
 - Will transcribe any audio messages, and provide you with the option to download the audio file of the message. I (Lisa) have used this with ESL students as a way for them to practice speaking. *Example: have ESL students call Google Voice number and practice leaving a message that they want to make an appointment. As you can download these files, you can then compare students' speaking over time.*
- Downside:
 - In the free version, you can only text 7 people at once (there is the option of paying for a more premium account which allows you to text many more at once).
 - Like WhatsApp, students will all have access to each other's cell phone numbers. Follow the same protocol for WhatsApp to obtain consent.
 - You can make phone calls via Google Voice, but there is a charge.
 - While you can attach images in your Google Voice messages, you cannot attach other documents (.pdf, .doc, etc.)

Other ways to chat with or send messages to your students, if they have such accounts:

Facebook Messenger.

If you and your students are on Facebook, you can easily chat with them using the Messenger app (phone) or tool (web).

- Perks:
 - You can send attachments, etc.
 - You can also live video chat via Facebook Messenger, although it only supports 6 people at a time.
- Downside:
 - You do need an email account to set up. Again, best to pursue only if students are already on Facebook.

Skype.

If you and your students are on Skype, you can easily video chat with them, or simply use the message system to send individual messages. .

- Perks:
 - You can send attachments, etc.
 - Mobile app supports video calls and messages.
 - Can support up to 50 people in a group video chat.
- Downside:

- You do need an email account to set up. Again, best to pursue only if students are already on Skype.

Part II. Ideas for mobile-based learning (no student email required):

Our current situation provides an opportune time to start fiddling around with remote or online learning. To be safe, practice with another teacher or with a few students to work out the quirks.

1. Links to pre-existing online lessons.

Via text, send your students a link to a pre-existing ESL lesson or lessons. Note that multiple links may be better sent as multiple texts. Example:

Text 1: *Good morning! For today's lesson I'd like you to spend 30 minutes working on your pronunciation of the /th/ sound in English. First, watch these videos:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIKNo1TGALA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFXzo7Kh8gs>

Text 2: *Then, challenge your listening by taking this online /th/ sound listening quiz:*

<https://www.eslvideo.com/quiz.php?id=32895>

Text 3: *Finally, take this online quiz on /th/ pronunciation:*

[Written TH - Quiz - Authentic American Pronunciation](#)

Text 4: *Have fun, and let me know if you have any questions!*

2. Use a webtool to house all such links.

Google Docs

The easiest way to do this, is to create a **Google Doc** in your (WCCAE district) **Google Drive**, by placing all of the links into the document, and then share. Then, every day you can revise the content on that page, by either adding new links, or deleting everything and placing in new daily links. To illustrate, [here's the same homework assignment listed above but as Google Doc](#). I would then only need to send one text to students, containing the URL (link) to the page. Students do not need a Google account nor email account to access.

Here's a video on [how to get to Google Drive from your Gmail account, and then from there how to create a Google Doc](#).

If your Google Doc URL (link) is too long, consider shortening the URL using tools like [TinyURL](#) or [Bitly](#) (this is important when using text communication platforms with character limits, like Remind).

Padlet

There are other websites which allow you to house all of your links in one place. One that is easy to use is Padlet. You can sign up easily using your Gmail. Students only need the link to access your Padlet wall (no email, no password, no signing up). Here's that same [sample assignment as a Padlet](#). Here's an [expanded version of that assignment](#), where instead of just giving the links, I've actually embedded the links into a series of posts on my wall. Again, you can simply change the wall every day, eliminating the need to give your students a new URL link every day. Here's a good [tutorial on getting set up with Padlet](#).

3. Create your own assignments.

Creating worksheets.

This sounds daunting, but it's really not! For example, you can create a Google Doc with content that can be reviewed or graded. Or, you might create a Google Doc that has multiple choice or fill in the blank questions. Or you might have it be a writing prompt. How will students get you the answers? If it's multiple choice or fill in the blank, they can text you back their answers. Alternatively, they can take pictures of their work and text you the image of their answers. If you are using a text-based system with an online platform, say Google Voice or WhatsApp, you can easily retrieve and view these same images on your computer screen (as opposed to your cell phone, which is often too small!).

Creating online quizzes.

There are a wealth of options for creating online quizzes. One of the most popular is Kahoot, where you can either use someone else's pre-made quiz, or create your own. The only thing you need to provide your students is the link and an access pin to that particular quiz. If you've never used Kahoot, try this sample Citizenship quiz to get a feel - better yet, try it using your cell phone! Go to <https://kahoot.it/> and enter the pin: 0402533, then enter your name to play.

To create your own quiz, create a teacher account using your Gmail, then watch [this tutorial](#).

4. Have students record themselves speaking.

If you are using a shared texting platform like WhatsApp, students can use the record button to record themselves speaking in lieu of texting. That way, you can give them a prompt, say, 'What did you do yesterday?' (to elicit use of past tense for ESL) or 'What resources are you using to get information on Coronavirus?'. Students can then listen to each others' answers, engaging both speaking and listening. They can even ask questions of each other about vocabulary they used, or grammatical errors. Here's a quick [tutorial on how to send a voice message on WhatsApp](#). Google Voice and Facebook Messenger (as well as regular texting) all have this feature.

5. Host a live chat with your students.

[Zoom](#) is a great option for scheduling an online meeting, and you can automatically set up an account using your district Gmail account. Students do not need an email to participate; they only need the link to join the meeting, which you can send via text.

For an overview of how Zoom works watch this [video](#). For instructions on how to set up a Zoom account and start scheduling a meeting, use these written [instructions](#) or see [Zoom's YouTube channel](#) for step-by-step videos. They will need to download the app, though (which is free). During COVID-19, they have lifted the amount of participants in the free version to accommodate 100 participants, and for school districts have also lifted the 40 minute limit. (If you do get kicked off at the 40 minute mark, you can easily reignite by clicking the invite link once again - all invitees will need to do this too). Zoom also has a 'Whiteboard' feature that you can access when you are in Share Screen mode - that way you can write things on the board just as you would do in class! Here's a [brief tutorial on how to use the Zoom Whiteboard](#).

6. Videorecord yourself giving a lesson.

Use your computer's tools.

Most computers these days have a built in mic and webcam, as well as internal software which allows you to record yourself (usually as part of your camera function). Here's step by step instructions on [how to create a video of yourself using your computer's built in camera and mic](#) (instructions are for Windows 10, instructions are similar on older models as well).

Alternatively, you can record a video on your cell phone (the same way you would take a picture, except you record instead of taking a still image). Or, you can use a good ol' video camera!

Turn a PowerPoint into a Video - with you narrating!

If you like to make PowerPoint-type lecture materials, you can easily turn that into a video. Here's a [step by step video](#) on turning your PowerPoint into a video.

Videorecord a screencast.

In a screencast, the students hear you but don't see you; instead, they see your screen. A screencast is handy if you need to show students how to do something online. Many of the links in this document are to screencasts, where you watch the trainer provide a tutorial on how to use a certain website.

There are many options to do this: [Screencastify](#), [Screencast-o-matic](#), etc. If you have Windows 10, simply hitting the Windows key on your keyboard along with 'G' should launch an internal software which allows you to do screencasts. It's pretty simple: Clean up your screen to only show what you want students to see, hit the record button, and start talking and navigating. When you're done, hit the record button again to stop.

Here is a [sample video](#) that Lisa made long ago for her Berkeley City College students.

Here's an [OTAN training](#) on making screencasts.

7. How to upload your video post-production.

Google Drive.

If you create videos, you are going to need a way for students to view the videos. Generally, sending videos via email is not possible, as the file is too big. Your best bet is to put them on your Google Drive, and then send your students the link. If you are unsure how to [access your Google Drive](#), watch this video.

To learn [how to upload a file \(ie., a video file\) onto your Google Drive](#), watch this video.

Once your file is uploaded to your Google Drive, you will need to obtain the URL link to the file to then share (via email, text, etc.). Here's [how you retrieve that URL](#).

YouTube.

Another option for uploading videos is YouTube - you can place them on your own personal page. Yes, this requires setting up a YouTube account (note: YouTube is owned by Google, so the easiest way to do this is with your Gmail account). If you are concerned about privacy, you can mark the video as 'unlisted' (as opposed to 'public') which means that only people with the link can see it. Here's [instructions](#) on how to do that.

Vimeo.

If YouTube is not a preferred platform, there are other video hosting sites, such as [Vimeo](#) (the Basic plan is free). With Vimeo, you can password protect your videos (although this may be a premium feature, meaning there's a cost associated).