Choosing Digital Tools for Course Sites and Projects

This resource offers queries to develop and improve the digital pedagogy of your classes, focusing on the unique complexities and responsibilities that incorporating MiddCreate’s web tools into a curriculum may present. They are designed to encourage thought and discussion that will lead to good practices in support of student learning and digital literacy.

Assess Learning Needs and Objectives
- What are your and your students’ expectations for the course?
- How will this tool figure into your students’ existing inventory of tools? Is it required or just an additional way for the student to explore?
- Have you defined course/assignment objectives that specifically address the use of this tool?
- How will you communicate these objectives and instructions to students?
- What roles and responsibilities will you and your students have for using this tool?
- Have you created a rubric to evaluate assignments completed with this tool?
- How regularly will you evaluate the extent to which you are achieving the learning objectives?

Logistics
- If you are using this tool to create a course site, how will it fit into the course architecture?
- Is it intended to replace use of another tool (e.g. Moodle, Canvas, SITES dot, etc.) or supplement what you already have?
- If it is replacing something, does the new tool have all the features needed to support your class, or will you have to create new structures/processes to enable them (e.g. methods of communication, submitting and/or keeping track of assignments, providing material to students, etc.)?
- Do you understand how to configure this tool to create these structures/processes?
- What site organization model fits best with your learning objectives? Are you creating a site that will serve as a collective collaborative space, having students create their own personal sites, or syndicating content to a central site in a blend of the two?

Usability
- What degree of understanding do students already have of this tool?
- Do you feel comfortable using the tool and helping others to use it?
- How steep is the learning curve to become proficient enough to complete the given assignments with this tool?
- How much time and effort are you and your students willing to devote to learn it?
- How will you train students to successfully use the tool and prepare them for any challenges that may arise?
- Is it important to you that the tool have robust and easy to use support documentation?
Workload
- Are student and faculty roles structured to provide reasonable workloads and enough time to support the learning objectives?
- How can this tool be used to track student work for grading purposes?
- Will you utilize commenting for individual and/or group feedback? If so, what guidelines and codes of conduct will apply and how will you keep track of these discussions?
- Does the tool provide an RSS feed to track work via email or an RSS reader?

Engagement
- Does the tool allow students to explore their own ideas and demonstrate creativity during the learning process?
- Does the tool provide opportunities for different types of interaction (visual, verbal, written)?
- How would the tool increase participants’ perception of connectedness?
- How would the tool encourage collaboration?
- How would the tool remove limitations and connect students with new, useful content, skills, and experiences?

Privacy
- Are you aware of Reclaim Hosting’s privacy policy and how FERPA is implicated in MiddCreate projects?
- Do you want your course site/project to be publicly available and open for anyone to interact with, or only accessible to your students?
- Do you understand the privacy settings available for this tool and how to use them?
- Will you inform students that they are not required to use their real names, ID, or any other personally identifiable information while using this web tool?
- How will information on privacy and security settings and concerns be clearly conveyed and made accessible to students?
- If you decide to syndicate content to another location, are you aware that you must request permission from your students before doing so?