

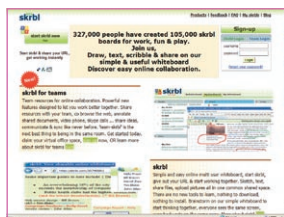
LESSON PLAN 22: USING SKRBL

Objective: To set up the 'online whiteboard' skrbl for student collaboration in the classroom

Age range: 10-18

WHAT IS SKRBL?

This is an easy-to-use 'shared' whiteboard but with a tech twist ... it's online. There's nothing to install or download. Students or colleagues simply log on to the site you have created and start collaborating on the shared space – everyone sees and works on the same page. Being Web-based, the board can be accessed from any computer with an Internet connection.



YOU WILL NEED

- ▶ Computer, Internet connection

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Collaboration, team-work, problem-solving, organisation, communication

METHOD

1. Sign up to use the Free Edition of skrbl (www.skrbl.com) – it's very straightforward. Simply provide a user name, password and email address. You can then start immediately. It's possible to use skrbl without registering but you will not be able to access certain functions, such as password protection or making sessions private.

2. To use, open a new 'board' (called a 'session' by skrbl), just click on the page and away you go.



The symbols and controls are very similar to using common packages like Word. Have a play and see what works.

3. To help you start, at the top left of the screen, the tool bar gives access to various ways of doing things – click on the 'red A' to display writing items; the 'pencil' is for drawing. 'My skrbls' accesses any boards you have saved. Right click your mouse on the whiteboard to cut, paste and delete. Likewise to insert an image or file, simply choose 'upload picture' or 'upload file'.

4. To invite someone to participate, click on 'File', select 'Email invite' and input the email address and any message. The email will ask the person to join your skrbl whiteboard. Check out the whiteboard we created for this lesson plan: www.skrbl.com/interface

5. You can choose to block access. There's 10MB of storage for free accounts and you can invite an unlimited number of guests.

6. If you need assistance, there's a comprehensive FAQ section (www.skrbl.com/faq.html), with an explanation of features and how to use the boards.

Once you're up and running, you may want to upgrade to skrbl Team Edition, a premium version designed for teams of up to five people working together. It costs \$10/month, has some enhanced features (including shared task lists and videoconferencing) and 250MB of file storage.

USING SKRBL BOARDS IN CLASS

Tuakau College's **Alison Cleary** uses skrbl boards in the classroom for collaborative essay writing, and brainstorming and planning activities. Here are three examples:



1. Students were directed to two skrbl boards, each with a general discussion question: 'What is fate, do we control our own fate?' and 'What cultural attitudes to fate do you know of?' The student responses showed a range of attitudes existed. www.skrbl.com/39392373

2. The class was studying *Five people you meet in Heaven* (Albom, 2003), which suggests a view of heaven based on five important incidents from the main character's life.

This was the first time that I had studied this text and I had anticipated reluctance to discuss ideas such as heaven, faith and the afterlife. The starting questions were: "What images or views of heaven have you seen or read about before?" and "Does the heaven in the book match this view?" Again, they provided a range of interesting responses. www.skrbl.com/51656985

3. Much has been made about students using 'text language'. I have always had a firm belief that most students know when it is or is not appropriate to use 'txt talk'. This task supported my views.

Here four students worked collaboratively, planning and writing practice essay tasks. They did use 'txt talk' when they were brainstorming but when they were writing the draft introductions and the essay, there's not one example of 'non-standard English' used. In fact, they chose not to plan a great deal at all! Instead they decided independently to discuss the topic and then take turns at writing. Though this was not exactly the task I asked of them, I accepted and respected their decision, as it still involved collaborative writing and a very valuable discussion came out of it.

While this may not have been the 'perfect' essay in terms of its language and structure, I believe the activity was perhaps one of the most powerful learning activities that this group had experienced with regard to essay writing. www.skrbl.com/54145531