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**DIGITAL TOOLS and STUDENT AGENCY**

Digital tools are great. Free digital tools are even better.

Truthfully, the number of digital tools available to faculty and students can be dizzying and trying to learn them all potentially mind-numbing. It is actually more important to understand the broader categories these tools primarily fall into, what they are good at doing, and then allow time to play and explore with the ones that seem interesting to you. The goal is not to become an expert in all of any of them. Instead, it is better to understand them, learn some functionality, and then introduce them to your students so that they may explore, practice, and create content with them. **Play is very important**. Understanding that you will not break these tools while playing, even more so.

Before we dive into an overview of some hand-selected digital tools below, we should also understand how and why these tools exist and what they ask of us as users. To best accomplish this, we should each (solo and with our students) ask and attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What assumptions does the tool make about its users? What kind of relationships does it set up between teachers and students? School and the world? Humans and technology?
2. What assumptions does the tool make about learning and education? Does the tool attempt to dictate how our learning and teaching happen? How is this reflected in specific design and/or marketing choices?
3. What data must we provide in order to use the tool (login, e-mail, birthdate, etc.)? What flexibility do we have to be anonymous? Who owns the data? Will others be able to use/copy/own our work there?
4. In an educational context, how could the tool be used in a way that puts the learning into student’s hands? Does the tool leave students agency or choice in how they use it?

Researching the answers to these questions may or may not discount a tool’s use, but it is important that we are clear on a tool’s intent and that of its creators and owners. So long as we are informed, we can then make decisions about the use or our digital tools and how they fit into our education and our lives.

Now, come along, as we dive headlong into a cavalcade of curated digital tools.

> the four questions above are sourced from the Digital Pedagogy Lab at the University of Mary Washington, VA

**ANNOTATION TOOLS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [eMargin](https://emargin.bcu.ac.uk/) | Free online tool | A collaborative annotation tool. You can highlight color-code, write notes and assign tags to individual words or passages of a text. |
| [Hypothesis](https://web.hypothes.is/) | Free online tool | Annotate the web, with anyone, anywhere. |

**AUDIO, MUSIC and PODCASTING**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Anchor](https://anchor.fm/) | Free online tool | Create and host unlimited podcast episodes, distribute your show everywhere, and make money. All in one place, all for free. |
| [Audacity](https://www.audacityteam.org/) | Free for MacOS, Windows | Free, open source, cross-platform audio software. |
| [Audio Archive](https://archive.org/details/audio) | Free online tool | This library contains recordings ranging from alternative news programming, to old time radio shows, to book and poetry readings. Many are free download. |
| [Free Sound](https://freesound.org/) | Free online tool | Collaborative database of creative-commons licensed sound for musicians and sound lovers. |
| [Garage Band](https://www.apple.com/mac/garageband/) | Free for MacOS, iOS | GarageBand is a fully equipped music creation studio right inside your Mac or iPad. |
| [Looperman](http://looperman.com/) | Free online tool | The ultimate pro audio resource and musicians community. Royalty free music loops, acapellas and vocals. |
| [Musyc](http://fingerlab.net/portfolio/musyc) | Free for iOS | Musyc is a fun and innovative music application where touch turns into music. No use of piano keyboard or partitions – draw shapes and listen to your piece of music while viewing sounds bouncing on the screen. |
| [Sound Cloud](https://soundcloud.com/) | Free online tool | Upload your first track and begin your journey. SoundCloud gives you space to create, find your fans, and connect with other artists. |
| [Tape Write](http://tapewrite.com/tapes/top) | Free to $11.36/mo. | The most advanced audio publishing tool, for podcasting and beyond. |

**CLOUD STORAGE**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [DropBox](https://www.dropbox.com/) | Free to $19.99/mo. | Dropbox is a modern workspace designed to reduce busywork – so you can focus on the things that matter. |
| [Google Drive](https://www.google.com/drive/) | Free to $99.99/mo. | A safe place for all your files. |
| [iCloud Drive](https://www.apple.com/icloud/) (Apple) | Free to $9.99/mo. MacOS, iOS | All your stuff — photos, files, notes, and more — safe, up to date, and available wherever you are. |

**COLLABORATION**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [DropboxPaper](https://www.dropbox.com/paper) | Free to $19.99/mo. | Paper is more than a doc—it’s a workspace that brings creation and coordination together in one place. Write and edit, brainstorm, review designs, manage tasks, or run meetings. |
| [Goose Chase](https://www.goosechase.com/) | Free online tool | Goose Chase is a platform that helps you organize team-based engaging scavenger hunt experiences. |
| [Padlet](https://padlet.com/) | Free to $8.25/mo. | Make beautiful boards, documents, and webpages that are easy to read and fun to contribute to. |
| [Quizlet](https://quizlet.com/) | Free online tool | Search millions of study-sets or create your own. Improve your grades by studying with flashcards, games and more. |
| [Slack](https://slack.com/) | Free online tool and for MacOS, iOS, Windows | Slack is a place where your team comes together to collaborate. |

**DATA, MATH and CODING**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Air Table](https://airtable.com/) | Free to $20/mo. | Part spreadsheet, part database, and entirely flexible, teams use Airtable to organize their work, their way. |
| [Codecademy](https://www.codecademy.com/) | Free to $19.99/mo. | Join the Millions Learning to Code with Codecademy. |
| [GitHub](https://github.com/pricing) | $7 to $21/mo. | From open source to business, you can host and review code, manage projects, and build software alongside 30 million developers. |
| [Grapher](https://support.apple.com/guide/grapher/welcome/mac) (Apple) | Free with MacOS | Visualize and analyze equations on your Mac. Found under Utilities. |
| [Infogram](https://infogram.com/) | Free to $149.00/mo. | Infogram is an intuitive visualization tool that empowers people and teams to create beautiful content. |
| [Numbers (Apple)](https://www.apple.com/numbers/) | Free with Mac OS | With Numbers, you can create beautiful spreadsheets that include impressive tables and images. |
| [Step Works](http://step.works/) | Free online tool | Stepworks turns just about anything into an embeddable digital instrument you can perform with clicks, taps, or keypresses. All you need is Google Sheets. |
| [Survey Monkey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/) | Free to $99.00/mo. | Create, share, and crunch data from surveys. |

**GRAPHICS CREATION**

|  |  |  |
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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Adobe Spark](http://spark.adobe.com/) | Free online tool and for iOS | Create impactful graphics, web pages and video stories in minutes with Spark’s free graphic design app. |
| [Canva](https://www.canva.com/) | Free to $12.95/mo. | Easily create beautiful designs and documents. Use Canva's drag-and-drop feature and professional layouts to design consistently stunning graphics. |
| [Da Font](https://www.dafont.com/) | Free online tool | Oodles of free and (mostly) good fonts for MacOS and Windows. |
| [Google Charts](https://developers.google.com/chart/) | Free online tool | Google chart tools are powerful, simple to use, and free. Try out our rich gallery of interactive charts and data tools. |
| [Omni Graffle](https://www.omnigroup.com/omnigraffle) | Free for MacOS | OmniGraffle is for creating precise, beautiful graphics: website wireframes, electrical systems, family trees and maps. |
| [Pikto Chart](https://piktochart.com/) | $39.99/year | No complex design software. No heavy designer fees. Just a simple, intuitive tool that helps you and your team tell stories with the visual impact they deserve. |

**MAPPING TOOLS**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [ArcGIS Story Mapping](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/app-list/) | Free online tool | Everyone has a story to tell. Harness the power of maps to tell yours. |
| [Coggle](https://coggle.it/) | Free online tool | Mind-mapping tool (brainstorming). The clear way to share complex information. |
| [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps) | Free online tool | Create your own custom maps by plotting locations. |
| [Google Tour Builder](Story%20Map%20JS%20%20Free%20online%20tool%09Create%20maps%20that%20tell%20stories.) | Free online tool | Tour Builder is a new way to show people the places you've visited and the experiences you had along the way using Google Earth. It lets you pick the locations right on the map, add in photos, text, and video, and then share your creation. |
| [Story Map JS](https://storymap.knightlab.com/) | Free online tool | Create maps that tell stories. |

**PRESENTATION TOOLS**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Google Slides](https://www.google.com/slides/about/) | Free online tool | With Google Slides, you can create, edit, collaborate, and present wherever you are. For free. |
| [Haiku Deck](https://www.haikudeck.com/pricing/pro?int=0&len=7&p=0&promo=0&utm_source=header) | $19.99/mo., Free Trial | Haiku Deck is the easiest way to create an amazing presentation on the web, iPad, or iPhone. |
| [Keynote](https://www.apple.com/keynote/) (Apple) | Free with MacOS, iOS | Beautiful presentations for everyone. By everyone. |
| [Prezi](https://prezi.com/) | Free online tool | Now creating, giving, and tracking beautiful interactive presentations is as easy as 1,2,3. |

**SCREENCASTING**

|  |  |  |
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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [QuickTime](https://support.apple.com/quicktime) (Apple) | Free with MacOS | QuickTime lets you view, record, and edit audio/video and personal media in a wide range of file formats – and in remarkably high quality. |
| [ScreenCast O Matic](https://screencast-o-matic.com/home) | $1.50/mo. | At Screencast-O-Matic, we don’t believe that video recording and editing should be difficult or cost a fortune. Our simple and intuitive tools help you get the job done easily. |
| [Snag It](https://www.techsmith.com/screen-capture.html) | $49.95 for MacOS, Windows | Snagit is the only screen capture software with built-in advanced image editing and screen recording. So you can easily create high-quality images and videos all in one program. |

**TEXT ANALYSIS**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Google Ngram Viewer](https://books.google.com/ngrams/) | Free online tool | Run your own experiment! Raw data from words. |
| [Google Trends](https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=US) | Free online tool | Explore what the world is searching. |
| [Voyant](http://voyant-tools.org/) | Free online tool | Voyant Tools is a web-based reading and analysis environment for digital texts. |

**TIMELINE CREATION**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Storyline JS](https://storyline.knightlab.com/) | Free online tool | Storyline is an open-source tool that enables anyone to build an annotated, interactive line chart. |
| [Tiki-Toki](https://www.tiki-toki.com/) | Free online tool | Tiki-Toki is web-based timeline software for creating beautiful interactive timelines that you can share on the web. |
| [Timeline 3D Education](https://www.beedocs.com/timeline3D/mac/) | $24.99 for MacOS | Timeline 3D is the simplest way to create beautiful multimedia timelines. No in-app purchases. |
| [Timeline JS](http://timeline.knightlab.com/) | Free online tool | Easy-to-make, beautiful timelines. |

**VIDEO EDITING and PUBLISHING**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [iMovie](https://www.apple.com/imovie/) (Apple) | Free with MacOS, iOS | It’s never been easier to make it in the movies. Just choose your clips, then add titles, music, and effects. iMovie even supports 4K video for stunning cinema-quality films. |
| [Apple Final Cut Pro X](https://www.apple.com/final-cut-pro/) | $299.99 for MacOS | Final Cut Pro combines revolutionary video editing with powerful media organization and incredible performance. |
| [Open Shot](https://www.openshot.org/) | Free for MacOS, Windows | We designed OpenShot Video Editor to be an easy to use, quick to learn, and surprisingly powerful video editor. |
| [Videvo](https://www.videvo.net/) | Free online tool | The home of completely free HD stock footage and motion graphics for any project. |
| [Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/) | $7.00 to $75.00/mo. | The highest quality, more control, unlimited inspiration, and everything else for your video. |
| [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/) | Free online tool | Create a channel and publish your videos online. |
| [FlipGrid](https://info.flipgrid.com/) | Free online tool | Engage and empower every voice in your classroom or community by recording and sharing short, awesome videos … together! |

**VISUAL MEDIA**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Creative Commons](https://search.creativecommons.org/) | Free online tool | Find content you can share, use, and remix. |
| [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/) | Free online tool | Publish and share your high-resolution photographs. Find your inspiration. Creative Commons search. |
| [Imgur](https://imgur.com/) | Free online tool | Is it GIF or GIF? Either way, we’ve got the best of them. |
| [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/?hl=en) | Free online tool | Publish and share your photographs. |
| [The Noun Project](https://thenounproject.com/) | Free online tool | Icons for everything. Over a million curated icons, created by a global community. |
| [Pexels](https://www.pexels.com/) | Free online tool | The best free stock photos & videos shared by talented creators. |
| [Pixabay](https://pixabay.com/) | Free online tool | Over 1.5 million royalty free stock photos and videos shared by our generous community. |
| [SmugMug](https://www.smugmug.com/) | $3.99 to $29.99/mo. | Publish and share your high-resolution photographs. |
| [Tin Eye](https://www.tineye.com/) | Free online tool | Reverse Image Search. Search by image and find where that image appears online. |
| [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/) | Free online tool | Beautiful, free photos. Gifted by the world’s most generous community of photographers. |
| [XPert](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/xpert/attribution/) | Free online tool | Image attribution tool. |

**WEB DESIGN, HOSTING and PUBLISHING**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Ghost](https://ghost.org/) | $29.00/mo. | Ghost is a fully open source, adaptable platform for building and running a modern online publication. |
| [Medium](https://medium.com/) | Free online tool and for iOS | Medium is an online publishing platform that taps into the brains of the world’s most insightful writers, thinkers, and storytellers |
| [Square Space](https://www.squarespace.com/?channel=pbr&subchannel=go&campaign=branded-united-states-squarespace&subcampaign=(search-global-branded_squarespace_e)&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI-4L5rePs3AIVSj0MCh3izAXXEAAYASAAEgJ1zPD_BwE) | $12.00/mo. | From websites and online stores, to marketing tools and analytics, Squarespace is the all-in-one platform to build a beautiful online presence. |
| [Wix](https://www.wix.com/) | Free to $25.00/mo. | Online website builder and publisher. |
| [Word Press](https://wordpress.org/) | Free MacOS, Windows | WordPress is open source software you can use to create a beautiful website, blog, or app. |

**WRITING**

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| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| [Draft In](https://draftin.com/) | $3.99/mo. | Easy version control and collaboration for writers. |
| [Expresso](http://www.expresso-app.org/) | Free online tool | Expresso is a little tool to edit texts and improve your writing style. |
| [Google Docs](https://www.google.com/docs/about/) | Free online tool | With Google Docs, you can write, edit, and collaborate wherever you are. For free. |
| [Omm Writer](https://ommwriter.com/) | $7.07 minimum donationware | OmmWriter is a tool which makes it easier for you to concentrate. Based on a natural setting, it effectively insulates your mind from distractions and sets up a direct line between your thoughts and your words. |
| [Pages](https://www.apple.com/pages/) (Apple) | Free with MacOS, iOS | Create and collaborate on documents that are beautiful beyond words. |
| [Penflip](https://www.penflip.com/) | Free to $10.00/mo. | Collaborative writing tool. Penflip helps you write better with others. |
| [Scrivener](https://literatureandlatte.com/scrivener/overview) | $38.25 edu pricing | Scrivener is the go-to app for writers of all kinds, used every day by best-selling novelists, screenwriters, non-fiction writers, students, academics, lawyers, journalists, translators and more. |

**TOOL ECOSYSTEMS**

So far, we have focused on free, open source, and inexpensive digital tools – and for many projects and all types of content, these are all you and your students will need. That being said, out in the “real world” many businesses and organizations rely on a collection of tools that operate under a shared ecosystem. The two most common of these are the [Adobe Creative Cloud](https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud.html) and [Microsoft Office 365](https://www.office.com/). While these options are certainly more costly, they do have the benefit of being highly collaborative amongst users. At minimum, they are worth exploring here.

**ADOBE CREATIVE CLOUD**

Adobe CC is a professional-grade collection of creative audio/video, art & design tools. They are the industry standard in the fields of graphic design, web development, photography, animation, and video editing. Access to them does require a monthly subscription ($52.99/mo. or $19.99/mo. [for students and teachers](https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/plans.html?promoid=NV3KR7S1&mv=other)). For your monthly fee, you get access to oodles of applications, frequent updates, online community building, tutorials, fonts, file storage, and stock photography. Here are some of the primary applications included:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT/BEST FOR |
| Photoshop | MacOS, Windows | Raster-based image creation and editing. |
| Illustrator | MacOS, Windows | Vector graphics and illustration. |
| InDesign | MacOS, Windows | Layout of multi-page print and digital documents. |
| Acrobat Pro | MacOS, Windows | Creation and editing of PDF documents and forms. |
| XD | MacOS, Windows | Design of web and mobile prototypes. |
| Dreamweaver | MacOS, Windows | Design and develop responsive websites. |
| Lightroom | MacOS, Windows | Edit and organize photos in a digital darkroom. |
| Premiere Pro | MacOS, Windows | Video production and editing. |
| After Effects | MacOS, Windows | Visual effects and motion graphics for video. |
| Dimension | MacOS, Windows | Create photorealistic 3D images. |
| Animate | MacOS, Windows | Interactive animations for games and the web. |
| Audition | MacOS, Windows | Audio recording, mixing, and restoration. |
| Illustrator Draw | iOS, Android | Vector drawing anywhere. |
| Photoshop Sketch | iOS, Android | Raster-based expressive drawing for mobile. |
| Comp CC | iOS, Android | Layout comps on the go. |
| XD Mobile | iOS, Android | Live, interactive prototypes of your mobile designs. |
| Spark Post, Page, Video | iOS, Android | Social media and web content for mobile. |
| Premiere Clip | iOS, Android | Video editing on the go. |
| Photoshop Mix, Fix | iOS, Android | Mobile image editing and retouching. |

**MICROSOFT OFFICE 365**

Office 365 is a collection of classic office tools, updated for the web, and ready for collaboration. While most folks are familiar with Word, Excel, and Outlook, 365 offers online-anywhere access to a whole host of productivity and collaboration tools. All 365 tools are available as online versions and many can also be downloaded for desktop access. A paid subscription is required ($69.99 to $99.99/year), but students and teachers are eligible for [Office 365 Education](https://products.office.com/en-US/student/office-in-education) (which includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, Teams, and Sway) for free. Here are some of the primary applications included:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| NAME | AVAILABLE | ABOUT |
| Outlook | Online, MacOS, Windows | Professional email client. |
| OneDrive | Online, MacOS, Windows | Store, share, and collaborate on files in the cloud. |
| Word | Online, MacOS, Windows | Classic word processing. |
| Excel | Online, MacOS, Windows | Spreadsheets and data crunching. |
| PowerPoint | Online, MacOS, Windows | Presentations. |
| OneNote | Online, MacOS, Windows | Collaborative digital notebook. |
| Sway | Online, MacOS, Windows | Modern, dynamic presentations. |
| Forms | Online, MacOS, Windows | Easily create surveys, quizzes, and polls. |
| Teams | Online, MacOS, Windows | Collaboration tools and workspace. |