eTools: Using Public Panic Color-Coded Timer App in the Classroom

David Landes, American University in Dubai

Introduction

Students often struggle to manage their time when giving a speech or presentation. They may finish too quickly, exceed the maximum allowed time, or unevenly distribute the time they allocated to each part of the speech. Even while using a stopwatch or a timer, students tend to forget to look at it due to being nervous and not yet developing their time-checking habits. Public Panic is a mobile application that aims to help those students master their public speaking time management. The app was developed by Mostafa Magdy, a software engineering student in my public speaking class who made the app to solve issues that his peers were having.

What is Public Panic?

Public Panic is a mobile app that provides students with various methods to manage their time during a speech or a presentation. After the total duration of the speech is set in settings, the student can divide their speech into up to 10 different segments. Each segment has its own title, starting time, and color. As the student is giving their speech, the distinctive color displayed on their mobile phone, which corresponds to a particular segment, can constantly be seen in their peripheral vision. By occasionally glancing at their mobile phone, the student can see the remaining time for the current segment, the total elapsed time, and a descriptive title of what this segment is about (e.g. introduction, conclusion). In addition, when the time allocated for a segment finishes, the screen will

continuously flash for 1 second and the mobile phone will vibrate in order to undisruptively alert the student that they should move on to the next segment. The screen flashing, phone vibration, and screen contents are customizable in the settings.

How can I get Public Panic for the Classroom?

Public Panic is currently available for free for Android and iOS devices. For iOS devices (iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch) running iOS 10.2 or later, you can download it on the App Store here: https://goo.gl/dPk268. For Android devices running Android 4.1 (also known as Android Jelly Bean) or later, you can download it on the Google Play Store here: https://goo.gl/DHRyqt. A video demonstration is posted at: https://youtu.be/1SC4-42R4ks.

How can I use Public Panic in the classroom?

Public Panic can be used in several ways by students and instructors for sole practicing, giving speeches or presentations, creating student evaluation, and running skills-training games. More specifically, Public Panic can be used as:

1. *A visual time-management tool for students while giving a speech or a presentation*. The student can place their mobile phone anywhere in their field of view, such as on a podium, and start Public Panic at the beginning of their speech or presentation. As mentioned earlier, the student will be able to see the color displayed by the app in their peripheral vision, and they can occasionally glance at their phones in order to see the remaining time for the current segment, the total elapsed time, and the title of the segment.

2. *A non-visual time management tool for students while giving a speech or a presentation.* Instead of placing their mobile phone in their field of view, the student can start the timer, lock their phone, and put it in their pocket. Public Panic will then cause the phone to vibrate at the end of every segment while allowing the student to fully focus on the audience.

3. *A handy tool for group speeches or presentations.* If multiple students are giving a group speech or presentation, Public Panic can be used to evenly distribute the time among the students by assigning a segment to each one of them.

4. *A student evaluation tool for instructors.* Public Panic can be used by instructors to ensure that their students are properly allocating time for different segments of their speeches or presentations (e.g. introduction, the issue, the solution), or to ensure that their students are speaking for an equal amount of time in a group speech or presentation and evaluate them or give them suggestions accordingly.

5. *A basis for skills-training games and exercises.* Instructors may build exercises and class activities around Public Panic. The app can facilitate turn-taking among students who speak in continuous succession without interruption.

Conclusion

Public Panic is a handy and easy to use mobile application for practical public speaking time management. It can be used by students during a speech or a

presentation in various ways, as well as by instructors for evaluating their students and

designing interactive class activities.