eTools: Using Remind.com in the Classroom

Julie L. G. Walker, Southwest Minnesota State University

Introduction

Every other week I seem to forget to mention something in class: a reminder to complete a quiz, a reminder to check in with group members about a project, or a reminder to submit drafts for feedback. Although I can e-mail students or post reminders on a Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as D2L, Brightspace, Blackboard, or Moodle, reaching students through these media does not always work. Because students typically spend hours each day interacting with others through their devices, I have found a tool to communicate with students where they are. This tool is Remind.com.

What is Remind.com?

Although designed initially for use in the high school classroom, Remind.com is an eTool that connects instructors and students through brief messages sent directly to students' phones. Administration of Remind.com requires that you use a smartphone or a laptop, but all your students need is any phone capable of receiving text messages. What is brilliant about Remind.com is that phone numbers are not shared. Instead, you create a course space on Remind.com and you share an invitation (either through a PDF shown in class or an e-mail message sent to students) to participate. When students register for the service and sign up for your course, they appear in your roster, but you

do not see their phone numbers and they do not see yours. Throughout the semester, you then can send announcements to students about upcoming projects, reminders about assignment dates, or helpful tips on how to complete a project. Communicating through Remind.com is as simple as sending a text message in that you enter a message and hit send.

You also have the option of two-way communication, which allows students to text messages to your phone. A short text message interaction can save time and messaging is less cumbersome than an e-mail exchange. Although you do not have to enable the texting tool, when students have a problem (such as a LMS-based tool not working), you are notified instantly and you can fix the problem, or you can quickly alert other students about the problem.

How Can I Get Remind.com for the Classroom?

Access to Remind.com is done through the website (http://www.remind.com) or through the smartphone app available for both iOS and Android phones). After creating a free account (which can be linked to your Google account), you create a classroom space for your students and a course code will be automatically generated. (You can always alter the code to be something related specifically to your course or name). You then will be prompted to select how you want to invite students to participate through three options: (1) an e-mail sent to students, (b) a PDF you can post to a LMS or display during class, or (3) a link. Students text your course code to the number on the prompt

and they will be "enrolled" for free in your Remind.com class. If a student "enters" your class who should not be receiving your message or if a student drops your course, you can remove the student from your roster.

How Can I Use Remind.com in the Classroom?

Remind.com can help students succeed in many ways by extending the communication interaction possibilities and the limits of the classroom space. Specifically, you can use Remind.com to:

1. *send short announcements you forgot to mention during class*. During a long day of teaching, you may forget to remind students about a specific example the book mentions or a detail about an assignment. Students can be reached through Remind.com quickly and easily. Instead of e-mailing students multiple times each week, you can text brief reminders as needed, increasing the likelihood that students actually receive and read your messages.

2. *schedule reminders for uncommon events or notify students about unexpected events.* One helpful feature of Remind.com is the scheduling messages function. You may need to get messages to students about meeting in a computer lab or attending a library session instead of coming to the classroom. When you offer these out-of-the-ordinary events, you can schedule a reminder text to be sent to your students on a specific day at a specific time. Instead of walking to your classroom to write a message on the board reminding students of a change, you can schedule to send a text several

weeks in advance to be sent 30 minutes before your class begins, reminding them of the

change. Communicate with students about unexpected events through Remind.com,

sending updates as situations unfold.

3. *reminders for assignments*. Large projects often have multiple smaller

deadlines throughout the semester. Students may not be thinking about a large

assignment looming in the near future, but a quick reminder text sent a week prior to

the due date might spur action. Schedule reminder texts to be sent out in conjunction

with upcoming due dates.

4. *chat with students about brief assignment questions*. Whether working on a

speech outline or writing a press release, students may have questions they believe are

too simple to communicate through e-mail, such as a question about speech length or

paper formatting. If you enable the texting function, students can get answers to these

simple questions as they work on the assignment without having to wait for a longer

response. Remind.com also allows you to quickly contact students while you grade

assignments. If a student submits a document in the wrong file type or was in class

working on an assignment but did not submit the work, you can text the student and

resolve the issue quickly.

5. *extend your classroom reach*. Presidential debates or news coverage about

nationally relevant events may be related with your course content, so use Remind.com

to synchronously communicate with your students about these experiences as they are

occurring. When doing so, encourage them to communicate their concerns or ask

questions. Although you may only meet with your students 150 minutes each week,

through Remind.com your reach is extended.

Conclusion

Remind.com is a useful way to interact with students. This free, web-based

application connects faculty members with the devices students use on a daily (and

sometimes hourly) basis. While other technology exists to communicate with students,

the convenience, simplicity, and effectiveness of Remind.com makes the tool a valuable

addition to your teaching arsenal.