

## **eTools: Using Trello in the Classroom**

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### **Introduction**

Working in teams involves a shared effort that requires coordination, organization, planning, and meaningful member contribution. But incorporating teamwork and dealing with the dynamics of teams in your classes can be a challenging, time- and energy-consuming, and even frustrating experience for students and the instructors. Students usually object to team projects because they involve accommodating schedules, exchanging and sharing resources, and coordinating information and knowledge in a timely manner. All these are tasks which, if poorly handled, can impact outcomes negatively due to the conflicts generated. *Trello* facilitates teamwork by helping members coordinate, organize, and collaborate, facilitating peer communication.

### **What is “Trello?”**

*Trello* is a free collaboration tool. It allows you to create, visualize, and organize your team projects by using boards. All team activities and communication are accessible in one location. Each board can be compared to sticky notes posted on your refrigerator. You can add as many boards and invite as many members as needed. The innovative side of *Trello* is that you can add not only comments to your board(s) but also attachments, pictures, labels, cards, checklists, and you can invite as many members as needed. And, you can even add discussions to your team boards. Boards can be

prioritized, and you can integrate your *Trello* account with your Apps. Keeping all members connected is easy because when boards are updated with new comments, *Trello* sends notifications that are synchronized with all your devices.

### **How can I get Trello for use in the classroom?**

You can create a Trello account for free at <https://trello.com/>. It is easy and user-friendly. Once logged in, you can add a new team from the "Home" page by clicking the "+" button located on your *Trello* header. Once you create your team, you can start adding boards and members to your team. With your free account, there is no limit to the number of teams you can create, to the number of boards or cards, or to the number of members you can have in a team. You can get upgraded to *Trello Business Class* for 9.99 dollars per user/per month. Some of the most innovative features of Business Class are that you can integrate your favorite apps into your boards, and save and export all data and history (even if you deactivated former members). You can grant observer-only status in case you have collaborators who are not part of the team, or add members from your Google Apps. For further instructions and guidelines on how to use Trello, users can visit <https://trello.com/tour>.

### **How can I use Trello in the classroom?**

*Trello* is mostly recommended for face-to-face, traditional and hybrid classes, as well as online classes. Its collaborative nature generates an opportunity for all members to utilize their learning styles and personalities to contribute to the project.

Mostly, *Trello* can be used as:

1. *a team progress report and evaluation program.* Students often complain that team members do not collaborate or work. You can ask your students to set up a *Trello* account and request that they give you access (observer access if you have *Trello* Business). This way students can hand in team assignments to *Trello* and you can track team work flow, their progress, and the input from individual team members.
2. *A place collect audience perceptions/feedback on team class presentations.* You can add a team called "Team presentations" and add a board per each class team. Students should post their perceptions and feedback after each presentation. You can add an evaluation rubric as an attachment and/or guidelines on how to evaluate teams. Since the whole class will have access to *Trello*, all teams can see feedback from peers right away. This activity also allows instructors to assess effectiveness of class assessments and further discuss results with students.
3. *An exam review.* You can set up a *Trello* account for each exam in your class to review for class exams. After adding a Team called "Exam #," you can add a board for each exam topic, and ask students to post summaries, notes, comments, and/or questions about each topic. You can add comments or

- further explanations to students' submissions. You can preview a topic that need to be covered further and students can use *Trello* as a review source.
4. *As an ice-breaker, to start a discussion, or to wrap up a class topic.* You can create a team called "Discussion for Unit 4" and post a question before or after class lecture day. You can ask students to brainstorm or add comments to the questions added. In your question, you can post pictures, videos links, and/or even attachments to your discussion question. Instead of questions, you may post a case and/or scenario and add questions to the team boards. Students will have and resolve the case/scenario in connection with class content already discussed or to be discussed.
  5. *a place to keep class updated on assignments due.* You can easily keep the class updated on what's next by creating a team called "Class News" and add a board for class assignment/tasks. Assignment boards can display informal instructor notes, due dates, reminders, etc. This tool allows students to access all notes from the same assignment/task in one place while also viewing other assignment boards.

## **Conclusion**

*Trello* is an easy to use tool that helps you visualize your team collaboration and organization and generates opportunities for engagement by assisting with the organization, contribution, and coordination of teamwork. Most importantly, *Trello*

supports the link between participation, collaboration, and communication. Teams that succeed effectively manage organization, communication, and contribution in a timely manner.