

# Productive use of mobile devices for classroom activities

March 2021

Teaching & Learning

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The dramatic increase in the student ownership of mobile devices, such as smartphones, over the past decade has changed the way in which many students interact with the learning content. As repeatedly highlighted by the [Horizon Reports](#), mobile devices have become a vital part of the entire learning experience that offer powerful possibilities for engaging students. The use of mobile devices to support teaching has become known as ‘mobile learning’ or ‘m-learning’ and has in the more recent years attracted the attention of educational researchers (e.g., discussion of good teaching practices for mobile learning by [Romero-Rodriguez et al](#)).

Here we share four types of educational activities that involve the use of mobile devices to enhance learning:

## Polls and quizzes

Get students to answer your poll or quiz questions with the use of their mobile devices through one of the interactive responseware platforms (e.g., TurningPoint, Kahoot).

Integrating such polling breaks into your lecture session can serve a number of purposes: 1. Provide a break in the flow of a lecture and activate students with a gamified experience. 2. Allow you to identify gaps in students’ knowledge and quickly address these. 3. Create a dialogue between students and teachers allowing you to quickly gather feedback.

CBS supports the use of TurningPoint for in-class polls, quizzes and surveys that can be integrated into your PowerPoint presentation. See [T&L Guides](#) for full details.

## Quick research

Instead of providing students with the content, ask the class - individually or in small groups - to do a quick research of a given topic (for example, a company's marketing behaviour) using the Internet. This task can be further extended with students critically reflecting on the usability of various search methods: ask each member of a group to choose a particular search method: e.g., Android phone / iPhone / specific search engine. This task can help students not only engage better with the content but also strengthen their understanding of what determines the search results they are getting online.

## Photos

With high-quality cameras built into many modern smartphones, it is now possible to turn picture taking into a classroom activity.

- During an online class, ask students to go on a short walk with an individual reflection task and take pictures that are directly related to the topic. When everyone is back, ask for the pictures to be posted in chat or on a dedicated 'wall' (e.g., Office365 Whiteboard).
- Give students an advance warning that the following session would be audio-only and they are expected to listen in from their mobile devices while taking a walk. Set the task to take pictures of businesses / ads / products that relate to the topic of your session and post these to the group chat or a dedicated platform in real time. After the class, curate the photographic material provided by students and address the main themes at the start of the next class.
- Encourage students to take pictures of the session (slides/educator only) as it proceeds (like academics do at conferences!). Encourage them to stitch these together in a photo editing tool with some annotations to create a session summary.

## Social media

Teach your students about the professional conventions of social media engagement. Dedicate a session that would introduce students to the most appropriate social media for professionals in your field - is it Instagram? Facebook? Twitter? Model netiquette for professional behaviour. Set students a practical engagement task that would rely on them using social media outlets correctly - this can also be done during the class in breakout rooms to enable groups of students to reflect on shared experiences across platforms and different user groups.

### References

Alexander B, Ashford-Rowe K, Barajas-Murphy N, Dobbin G, Knott J, McCormack M, Weber N (2019) EDUCAUSE horizon report: 2019 higher education edition. EDUCAUSE, Louisville

Romero-Rodríguez, JM., Aznar-Díaz, I., Hinojo-Lucena, FJ. et al. Models of good teaching practices for mobile learning in higher education. *Palgrave Commun* 6, 80 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-0468-6>