

PBWorks Tip Sheet: Creating your own Wiki as a Classroom Collaboration Tool

What is a wiki? A wiki is a website that allows users to edit or add their own content to the pages on the site. Wikis support a graphical interface that allows you to create a wiki site in just a few minutes – no need to know HTML or related markup codes. Think of Wikipedia - a collaborative online tool written and edited by anyone. **Why PBWorks?** One of the free online tools available to educators to build knowledge collaboratively. Easy-to-use interface & PBWorks educator support. Define your users, set-up the basic structure, and invite people to contribute & create. Share with individuals and/or the public. Excellent tool for coordinating & monitoring group work. Collaborate with colleagues on projects, research, papers & syllabi. Potential to act as a storehouse of knowledge across semesters.

Pros of PBWorks? Free, easy-to-use interface & PBWorks support. Reliable access: students, faculty, TAs, and other instructional staff can create, access and participate from any location with internet connectivity. Direct & immediate access to sites content for collaborative activities. Develops student's transferrable problem solving skills and builds collaborative knowledge that might not otherwise occur in the classroom. Student sense of responsibility and ownership. Promotes multimodal creativity (print & digital media). **Cons of PBWorks?** No UCM-IT support. Users can add to, edit, and/or delete materials on the wiki. Site requires monitoring for appropriateness & can be time consuming in initial set-up. Overwhelming to grade numerous entries. Let students know which assignments will be graded or commented upon. Potential to reflect a collaborative bias over time. Lacks dedicated discussion forum and blog. Plagiarism & copyright concerns. Be sure to cite everything written by you.

Sample PBWorks Collaborative Assignment: Students assigned teams and asked to perform research with a specific problem and to provide a final plan in the form of a 5- to 7-page report (at least 1800 words) that includes carefully presented and closely engaged data. Each team also collaborates on a digital media presentation for their plan. One person from each team is responsible for linking their final presentation in the "comments" section. The teams present their plan for the essay assignment in 6-8 minutes. Teams have the option of creating a presentation with the following: a [Prezi](#) presentation (minimum of 12 different visuals/zooms), an iMovie Video, a Quick Time Video, a video using Windows Movie Maker, or a YouTube Video. All presentations must have in-text citation(s) as needed and include a Works Cited. Finally, each student is responsible for grading group presentations with a rubric designed for digital media presentations (rubric is available upon request).

Sample student team presentation plan: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx4w47vytpw>

Where can I find more information and tutorials on wikis & PBWorks?

7 Things You Should Know about Wikis: <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7034.pdf>

PBWorks Education Edition (free): <http://edumannual.pbworks.com/w/page/58006553/My%20PBworks>

Wikis in Plain English: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmlY>

What technical conundrums can I expect from a free wiki? Unfamiliar computer programs will present learning-curves. Students and other users may feel overwhelmed, initially. One more user ID and password to remember, one more site to check. However, over the course of the past year, most students have expressed their preference for collaborative multimodal projects on PBWorks. UCM-IT support for PBWorks is limited or not available. Wiki provider and colleagues may be only system of support. Potential that free software may be discontinued or a charge implemented.

