

Great Websites for Education

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This Best Practice is a staff development presentation. The Great Websites for Education presentation was originally written for Summer Intensive Training at Breezy Point. It was created to inform ABE instructors of the resources available to them on the Internet. Great Websites for Education can be presented as an in-service in a computer lab so instructors can both practice different types of searches, and explore the many sites included in the presentation.

The goals of the presentation are to:

- Get instructors familiar with the lab and use of the Internet
- Explore websites that are relevant for the teaching of ABE
- Share experiences with Internet use in teaching ABE
- Share websites that participants use in their ABE teaching.

A common problem with searching the Internet for information is how to go about finding it in the nearby infinite number of websites worldwide. Based on this problem, the presentation should begin with a discussion on steps to use when searching the Internet.

- 1) Try a variety of search engines, then pick the one you feel comfortable with to start, and add others as you learn. The most popular search engines are: AltaVista, Hotbot, Ask Jeeves, Google and Yahoo.
- 2) Learn to use the search engine. All sites have search boxes, but they are not all the same. Some features make it easier to navigate the web:
 - a) Related Searches: A related search feature is designed to help a user narrow in on what he/she is looking for.
 - b) Results Clustering: This allows only one page per site to be represented in the top results. This means that you get more variety and a better chance of finding something of interest.
 - c) Stemming: This is the ability of a search engine to search for variations of the word based on its stem (e.g. swim may also find swimming).
 - d) Dates: Using dates for searches can be useful when searching for the latest news topic.
 - e) Search Within: This allows you to search through the matches you have, thereby narrowing your search further.
- 3) Choose your words carefully. Think of the clearest word or phrase for the job. Using a phrase instead of a word will greatly increase your chances of finding what you want.
- 4) Remember that there can be a variety of ways to spell certain terms; for example, some may spell email while others, e-mail. In addition, determine any synonyms or variant word forms.
- 5) Know how to widen your search. Adding the term "or" can really help.
- 6) Narrow your search with terms like "and" and "not." Try using a plus (+) or a minus (-) directly in front of required words or to exclude words from your search results.
- 7) Keep trying. There are many search engines on the web. If the one you have chosen does not have the information you seek, try others.

8) Reuse the sites you find on your search. Bookmark or add to your “Favorites” list to use again.

In addition to the discussion on searching, learners should have an opportunity to begin searching for information on the Internet. Eventually, the learners will have lists of websites that can be shared. A list of sites follow and can be used as a starting point for the lesson. They are broken up into topics of interest.

Education

National Institute for Literacy (LINCS) – www.nifl.gov

The goal of LINCS is to be a resource for adult literacy needs, with links to organized information presented in differing formats.

GED Practice Tests Online – www.gedpractice.com

The Steck-Vaughn company has a website for learners to take practice tests in all five areas of the GED.

Employment

Minnesota Career Center – www.mnworkforcecenter.org/jobseekers.htm

Minnesota’s Career Center is a collection of the latest in online Career Management tools. There is quite a bit of helpful information at this site including: information about public transit, child-care listings and a link to MN job bank.

Iseek – www.iseek.org

ISEEK – The Internet System for Education and Employment Knowledge—was created to help users make smart choices by providing information in five main areas: career planning, education and training, class listings, employment and information.

Job Bank – www.mnjobbank.com

Minnesota Job Bank lets the user search quickly for job openings. The user can search by job category, job position, or enter a key word to search for job openings.

ESL Websites

The Human Languages Page – <http://www.ilovelanguages.com/>

This site has links to language lessons, translating dictionaries, literature and other linguistic resources for more than 100 languages.

Dave’s ESL Café – www.eslcafe.com

Many activities are included in this site. Some popular activities include: quizzes, idioms, slang, ESL news and the Idea Cookbook. It also includes a link to the Global English website.

The ESL Center – <http://members.aol.com/eslkathy/esl.htm>

The ESL Center has a long list of activities and links to other websites.

Global English – www.globalenglish.com

Global English is a website that emphasizes speaking and listening comprehension skills to help learners improve reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension skills. Foreign language personal editors and online ESL instructors are available to users as well as online discussion rooms, instructor hosted chat rooms and learner chat rooms. This site offers ten hours of free instruction, but signing up for the courses does cost money: \$20.00 per course. The learners gets approximately 25-30 hours of online instruction plus live support from E-instructors 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Informational

Atlademia – www.atlademia.com

Atlademia online contains full-color physical and political maps as well as key facts and statistics on countries of the world. The “Countries A to Z” section provides facts, figures and statistical data for each individual country.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary – www.m-w.com

The Language Center includes access to a collegiate dictionary and a collegiate thesaurus. This site also includes word of the day, word games and “Word for the Wise” plus other word activities. “Word for the Wise” is a popular radio program broadcast daily on public radio stations nationwide. The site also lists the stations that carry the program.

Ask Jeeves – www.askjeeves.com

This website is useful because it will lead you to websites that may have the information you are looking for. Type in a question and a list of websites dealing with that subject will be listed.

News

Newspapers and Magazines Worldwide – www.newsdirectory.com

NewsDirectory.com is a guide to English language media online. It provides links for easy access to periodicals worldwide. Over 8,400 newspapers and magazines are listed, all of which are maintained by paper printed publications and provide English language content online.

African News – www.allafrica.com

Africa News Online is a network of more than 40 African news organizations from across the African continent.

BBC World Service – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/us/languages.shtml>

This site features all the latest news around the world from the BBC World Service in 43 languages. For the ESL learner, this site includes a “Learning English” site under the “World” heading that has different ESL activities as well as information in other languages.

Travel

American Park Network – www.americanparknetwork.com/activity/kids.html

This is a good website for planning trips with families. It lists most national parks and the activities offered for kids there.

The White House – <http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/life/>

The White House is an exciting tour for a class to take without leaving the building. The tour includes pictures of the many historic rooms in the White House.

The Minnesota Zoo – www.mnzoo.com

This site has tours of different exhibits along with sounds, live cams and information.

Expansions on this practice includes a monthly newsletter published by the Mankato lab staff that includes articles on a variety of websites that ABE instructors and learners may find helpful. A bulletin board has also been created where ABE instructors and learners can post any website they feel may be of interest to others.

The main benefit of the *Great Websites in Education* presentation are that ABE instructors have an opportunity to share information on using the Internet as a tool for expanding their own knowledge about ABE learners through the wide variety of information accessed on the Internet.