

Cool (FILT) Tool
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Tool Name: Blendspace (formerly Edcanvas)

URL: <https://www.blendspace.com/>

Recommended flipped/ inverted educational use(s):

Blendspace is Web-based software for organizing a variety of different types of content into a single “lesson” that is visually appealing and allows for user interactivity. The lesson is presented as a series of tiles that a user moves through. Blendspace can incorporate material from YouTube, Google, Vimeo, Flickr, Educreations, Gooru (a search engine for educational resources), Dropbox, and Google Drive directly, as well as files uploaded from your computer.

The main use of Blendspace for FILT (flipped/inverted teaching/learning) is for class instructors to create interactive lessons that students can complete individually, outside of class time. The lesson comprise a series of materials and activities arranged sequentially that the student views one step at a time. The instructor creates the Blendspace lesson by adding the materials and activities she wants the student to access and arranging them in sequence with headings.

For example, if an instructor has created video lectures explaining major concepts for a curriculum unit and uploaded them to YouTube for students to review outside of class, she can collect them in a Blendspace lesson with other related materials to reinforce concepts, provide guidance, and/or assess learning. The instructor uses Blendspace to guide students from video to video (or other types of documents) in a planned sequence, with breaks for reflective questions, discussion, or quizzes. The lesson can be used to simply collect a variety of resources on a topic or to take students through a lesson step-by-step. The student can give immediate feedback on each part of the lesson as they encounter it with embedded tools: a “thumbs up” button to show understanding, a box to check requesting help, and a comment section. There are separate comment sections for each step of the lesson. The students can use these sections to discuss the activities with each other, ask questions, or respond to a guiding question. The lessons are self-paced and allow students to easily work on just part of a lesson and then return to it at a later time.

As students use Blendspace lessons, the instructor who created them receives detailed data, including how much time students spent on each section of the lesson and question-by-question analysis results from multiple choice quizzes. Blendspace creates a summary chart of students’ responses to each section of the lesson indicating understanding (“thumbs up”) or a request for additional help from the teacher. Teachers can view the data on a student-by-student basis or as whole-class summaries.

A secondary potential use of Blendspace is for students to create their own lessons to demonstrate their learning about a topic as an alternative to writing an essay or creating

a PowerPoint presentation. The students could use the software to organize their ideas into each section of the lesson.

URL(s) of sample educational uses:

This is a Blendspace lesson that is about Flipping the Classroom:

<https://www.blendspace.com/lessons/n2TJCG9XpSABUQ/flipping-the-classroom>

This is the introductory video for Blendspace and how it works:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQ_Mg3lSoew

This is a teacher explaining the basics of how to use Blendspace to his students. In this case, the students will have to create their own Blendspace lesson as their end-of-chapter assessment.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAg-7oRRrmA>

Here is a sample Blendspace lesson created for student learning. The students are asked to use the resources linked to try to answer the guiding questions provided.

<https://www.blendspace.com/lessons/512/research-on-graffiti>

Here is another sample Blendspace lesson that includes an embedded teacher-made Prezi so you can see how the two pieces of software work together.

<https://www.blendspace.com/lessons/BJVZLr9hrFnUrQ/theory-of-evolution>

This is a Blendspace lesson that I made as an introduction to a professional development workshop for teachers. The participants completed the Blendspace lesson prior to attending the workshop.

<http://edcvs.co/11gLDsF>

This is a Blendspace lesson that I helped to construct for the W&M Educational Review, a student publication from The College of William and Mary School of Education (<http://wmedreview.blogs.wm.edu/>). It is a training module for students who have volunteered to do peer reviews of other students' manuscripts. It includes an example of the quiz function that Blendspace offers.

<https://www.blendspace.com/lessons/uFH6ubtVKMCJZA/wmer-peer-review-training-modules>

Comments/reflections upon possible flipped/inverted use of this tool:

Blendspace is an effective tool for presenting content to students in a user-friendly medium that can also work as a means of Multiple Forms of Representation (UDL Principle 1). A frustration with the traditional flipped instruction method is that watching the same video multiple times may not help a student who does not understand the way the content is being explained or represented in that video. Watching it again will not help if there are cultural or language barriers to understanding, for example. Blendspace offers a platform for the teacher to use to collect multiple ways of representing that content to help students

understand it, which could include videos made by other educators or experts and/or other forms of text, images, and/or sound. Because the Blendspace lesson is self-paced, the student could move quickly through or skip segments they do not need and focus on the sections that are helpful to them, if the Blendspace lesson is designed to enable this type of learner action. The Blendspace lesson format can also support students who have limited attention spans because it can be divided into shorter chunks with multiple types of texts, including video, visual, auditory, and print based.

Affordances:

- One link brings students to all of the materials they need for a learning activity. The Blendspace lesson can also be embedded within a class website or learning management system, like Edmodo. This is very helpful for teachers who are trying to organize a large volume of content for their students.
- Blendspace lessons can be printed as portable document files (PDFs). If students do not have Internet access or have a slow connection, this may be preferable to viewing the lesson online. The PDF includes direct links to all of the resources that the designer included, so a student with a slow connection could load and watch the videos individually rather than trying to load and perform all of the tasks online.
- Students can sign up and be a part of an instructor-created “class” (a private group within Blendspace) without having to provide an email address. There is a class code (like in Edmodo) that students can use to join a class.
- There are no advertisements in the margins on the Blendspace page. This makes it user-friendly for teachers to use in their classrooms because they do not have to worry about inappropriate or distracting content.
- Multiple users can collaborate on creating a Blendspace page. This is useful for students who may want to use Blendspace to create a product from a group project.
- Blendspace offers free live half-hour webinars for educators. The topics that were addressed in October 2013, for example, were Collaborative Presentations, Digital Storytelling, and using Blendspace for online and blended learning.
- Blendspace is a tool that both teachers and students can use. If a teacher uses Blendspace to create a lesson, the lesson could also act as a model for students about how to organize content in a multimedia format, encouraging them to similarly create a lesson.

Constraints

- As of late October 2013, there was not yet a Blendspace mobile app for any mobile device, but the Help pages say that this is currently being addressed. For now, mobile device users can view the Blendspace lessons within a Web browser on mobile devices (including iPads).
- The Blendspace creator cannot moderate and approve individual comments at this time. Blendspace is planning on upgrading this feature in the future. This could be crucial for a teacher who is hoping that students will use the comment function to have a discussion with each other as they work through the lesson, but wants to screen for potentially inappropriate or off-topic conversations.
- The Blendspace platform is very easy to use, but to create a lesson that takes full advantage of many of the options available could be very time-consuming for

teachers. I do not see a time-efficient way for Blendspace lessons to be created on a very frequent basis, especially if the teacher is trying to create her own videos, too.

- When I used Blendspace to create a module for a professional development workshop, some participants commented that the YouTube videos did not always load while they were using the lesson. Blendspace does offer a link where the viewer can view any linked material on the original website outside of Blendspace; however, when the platform does not allow content to load smoothly and quickly, users can be quickly frustrated.