**Tool Name:** TitanPad

**URL(s):** [**http://titanpad.com**](http://titanpad.com)

**Recommended flipped/inverted educational use(s):** TitanPad is a free, web-based collaborative writing tool. Similar to other collaborative writing tools, such as Google Docs (http://docs.google.com/), TitanPad provides a word processing area for users to compose papers, participate in group work, and share ideas without needing to be face-to-face. Among its word processing features, TitanPad offers users the ability to share their “pads” (shared documents) with anyone. Collaborators can identify which individual is contributing which text using “authorship colors.” This feature highlights an author’s text in one of eight unique colors chosen by the author.

TitanPad users do not need to create an account to begin a public pad, however users have the option to create an account, which permits creating private-access pads, should they need or want longer-term access to collaborative documents. Using an email address, students can create an account, assign a password for their account, and choose a unique URL name. The benefit of the unique URL is that it can be easily shared with collaborators without needing to send a direct link to each pad created. The private pad option may be of more interest to teams who will be collaborating on more than one document at a time. Similar to public pads, private pads can be shared with any number of collaborators, however these collaborators must also register an account with TitanPad.

As a collaborative writing tool, TitanPad can be used for bothreal-time and asynchronous learning situations. As a real-time tool, it can allow students to work on a common document or list of questions together, and educators can ensure that everyone is contributing to the learning process by assigning different text colors to different group members. Users can provide a link to a public pad in an email message or can send the link to interested readers using a text message.

Similar to what is possible with Google Docs, students also have the ability to work on projects outside of class. Once students have completed a pad (for instance, if they were using a pad to write a collaborative paper), they can export the document into Microsoft Word to format it. Since TitanPad’s authorship colors do not appear in several of the exported document options (i.e. Word, PDF, Plain text), educators who want to ensure that all students have contributed to a project may request that students also export the pad as a bookmark file, which includes authorship colors. Also similar to Google Docs, TitanPad features a comments pane in which students and/or educators can ask questions and provide feedback.

**URL(s) of sample educational uses:**

1. [**http://www.sophia.org/tutorials/collaborative-writing-tools**](http://www.sophia.org/tutorials/collaborative-writing-tools)(Webpage that introduces web-based collaborative writing tools, as well as YouTube videos on how to use them)
2. [**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative\_writing**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative_writing)(Helpful introduction to strategies for collaborative writing)
3. [**http://evasimkesyan.com/2012/01/04/some-fine-collaborative-writing-tools/**](http://evasimkesyan.com/2012/01/04/some-fine-collaborative-writing-tools/)(Links to a blog post containing other collaborative writing tools, including TitanPad)
4. [**http://teachweb2.wikispaces.com/TitanPad**](http://teachweb2.wikispaces.com/TitanPad) (Links to a wiki page detailing pros and cons of TitanPad – also a helpful site for similar reviews of other software/programs)
5. [**http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/04/titanpad-etherpad-clone.html#.UlHCbRz8fjg**](http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/04/titanpad-etherpad-clone.html#.UlHCbRz8fjg)(Introduces TitanPad and its predecessor EtherPad; introduces educational uses of TitanPad and links to the next URL’s blog post)
6. [**http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/02/using-technology-to-find-students.html#.UlHC\_Bz8fjg**](http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2010/02/using-technology-to-find-students.html#.UlHC_Bz8fjg)(Linked to previous blog page, but talks about EtherPad – the API on which TitanPad is based; shares students’ “in-class” reactions)

**Other information:** TitanPad offers eight distinctive colors for collaborators to use, which would suggest that groups working on a single document should include up to eight students. A considerable advantage to using this tool in real-time and/or in the classroom is that students do not need to log in to use the tool. The public pad version of TitanPad allows anyone at any time to access a pad with no logins required. Unlike Google Docs, however, TitanPad does not automatically save work as it is being typed. Therefore, it is important to emphasize liberal use of the “save” feature so that collaborative work using this tool is not lost.

**Comments/reflections upon possible flipped/inverted use of this tool:** Higher education’s need to produce graduates who can work collaboratively should be a driving factor in determining college-level classroom activities. Developing these skills can be challenging when students get caught up in learning to use complex tools instead of learning how to collaborate effectively. Although web-based tools may be conducive to completing writing tasks outside of class, educators also have the opportunity to structure activities *within* the classroom to write collaboratively or organize group thoughts into one document. This creates virtual spaces for individuals to collaborate in a low-stakes environment, where students can freely contribute without feeling bullied, pressured, or hurried in their responses. This may include students who may be not as orally expressive, but are able to type their thoughts, as well as students who are extremely reserved in their communication styles.

While this tool is *very* similar to Google Docs, I think there are a few bonuses (for use in both higher education and K-12 education):

* Students do not need an email address to use TitanPad.
* Educators can create pages that are monitored and contain pre-designed questions (e.g. worksheets) for a group to answer – and check to make sure that everyone contributed to this particular writing activity.
* Educators can more easily identify the students who might be having trouble using the color-coding feature of the software.
* Students can be more aware of who is contributing in their group. Seeing which students have written what may encourage students to take ownership of the thoughts they are contributing and foster group discussion about individual participation expectations. (This kind of discussion may require guidance from the educator to be maximally productive in troubleshooting disagreements.)

Unfortunately, there are also a few drawbacks to using this tool:

* Short of saving a new copy of a pad each time that text is deleted, the deletions won’t show up in a color, meaning users won’t necessarily be able to tell when something was deleted or by whom. Students and educators would need to rely on the time slider function, which shows a history of each saved edition. But, in order for the time slider function to show each deletion, students would need to save the pad *after every deletion* they make.
* Pads do not save automatically like a Google Doc. Encouraging and reminding students to frequently save their work will be necessary, particularly when students may be deleting work as they edit.
* Public pads are only accessible through a web link. Unlike Google Docs, where documents are stored under a familiar file name until you delete them, a TitanPad user would have to remember a complex web link in order to access a public pad at a future time.
* Private pads are tied to free accounts that must be set up using an email address. Although a private pad would solve the problem of storing pads for future use, this feature may not be conducive to use of TitanPad in K-12 settings, where students may not have a readily accessible email address.
* There is a maximum of eight contributors with unique text colors to each pad, and if the educator wishes to be one of those contributors, then there can be only seven students in a collaborating group. Otherwise, the colors will be repeated and there might be confusion about which student made a particular contribution.