

Social Media for Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication: A Guideline for Teachers and Educators

Social media platforms facilitate communication in quick and convenient ways. There are various social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Telegram, etc. that are being used worldwide by people of all ages. These platforms have quickly reached even the remotest places on earth and help people access various kinds of information without having to travel and at a very cheap price.

We can communicate with individuals as well as with groups through different media – text, image, audio, and video. This communication is either synchronous – which means that all participants send and reply to each others’ messages in real-time or live; or it can be asynchronous – which means that one sends a message and the others reply at their own convenience. Synchronous communication includes individual or group audio and video calls, chatting through instant messaging apps. Asynchronous communication includes emails, messages or chats that may not be replied to instantly.

Precautions for using Online Learning Tools and Social Media: Safety of Students is our Priority

With the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, we are using a variety of web tools and mobile apps for synchronous and asynchronous communication with school students and pupil teachers for teaching-learning and assessment. Video and audio (JITSI, Telegram, WhatApp) calls are used for synchronous communication and emails. SMS, MMS, audio-video clipping, text chatting are used for asynchronous communication. Many teachers are also teaching with Learning Management Systems (LMS) like SWAYAM, MOODLE, GOOGLE class etc. and Content Management Systems (CMS) and Open Educational Repositories like NROER, DIKSHA, NDL, CLIX, OLABs, etc. All of us know very well that the learners with whom we are dealing are young, energetic and keen to explore new knowledge in a proactive manner. Mostly, they use electronic gadgets (mobile phone, desktop, tablet and laptop) of their parents and other family members as well as use Internet connections (both satellite and cable connections as well). Knowingly or unknowingly, they may share vital security information like passwords or may use an unsecure website and put themselves and others in trouble. Therefore, it is the responsibility of us teachers and teacher educators to keep learners and their parents safe and secure while using the online learning facilities.

Given the unprecedented social distancing measures and home quarantine due to COVID-19, social media platforms have immense potential to contribute to teaching-learning processes. When physical access to schools and colleges is not possible, we can leverage these platforms to effectively carry out academic activities in innovative ways. In the following section, 12 different social media platforms are identified and their possible usage mentioned. Teachers and educators are at liberty to choose any of these tools as per their convenience for reaching out to learners and pupil teachers to provide online support for facilitating learning. Also, teachers and educators are advised to inform learners below 14 years of age to seek permission to share and use gadgets (Smartphone, iPad, tablet, laptop and desktop) owned by their parents, grandparents and elder sibling(s). Guidance of elders at home is necessary for accessing learning materials from home.

The following tips can help all of us protect ourselves from cyber threats

- Don't invite or accept friend requests from unknown persons.
- Don't share personal information (name, date of birth, address etc) with strangers.
- Never download unwanted and pirated software, games and apps.
- Don't reply to a call or reply to a stranger and be aggressive on social media.
- Inform your parents and elders immediately in case of any issue.
- If required and if elders in the family feel they can lodge a complaint of any misbehavior and breach in security in online mode or inform the local police and resolve the issue.
- Don't over use technology; rather use it judiciously.

Also, pursue physical activities and relaxing exercises for your eye, neck, back and hand etc. while and after using devices. So be safe, practice social distancing and learn from home online.

Please read detailed cyber safety and security tips and guidelines from the following

link: <https://ciet.nic.in/pages.php?id=booklet-on-cyber-safetysecurity&ln=en&ln=en>

1. WHATSAPP

It is a mobile application which has to be downloaded on a user's mobile phone. It can also be accessed on a computer (laptop or desktop) if a user registers on the official site with their individual mobile number. We can send messages and make audio and video calls using WhatsApp if we have access to the Internet. We can also share a wide variety of media like photos, audio, video, and other documents on it. We can communicate one-to-one or in a group in the above-mentioned ways. Up to 256 people can join a group and interact with each other on WhatsApp. One can create any number of groups (e.g., one group for each class or subject or course) on WhatsApp.



Use case: A teacher or educator can use WhatsApp group call to organise a virtual class and post an assignment on a group. Later learners can post their completed assignment. A teacher can share the link for learning resources in a group or share a downloaded document/ own recorded voice/ a self-created document on a topic. The teacher can also help parents with tips on how to engage learners at home. The School Head can form a WhatsApp group to interact with and mentor fellow teachers.

2. FACEBOOK

Facebook can be accessed on a laptop/desktop computer as well as through a mobile application. One needs to create an account to log into Facebook. Facebook allows us to share or post information consisting of text, image, audio, video and other documents. It gives a sense of community as we can add and connect with other users as 'friends'. Facebook also provides options to have closed as well as open groups. Creators and users can control who can contribute, comment, join, etc.



Use case: Teachers can create subject or class wise groups and share content in various forms. In addition, they can interact with learners, deliver live lectures, organise a watch party etc. Personalised feedback can also be

given to learners via Facebook chat/messenger. Facebook for education (<https://education.fb.com/>) is a dedicated platform of Facebook for educators to collaborate and innovate.

3. TWITTER

Twitter is a micro blogging and social networking service on which users can post and interact through messages known as 'tweets'. It can be accessed on a laptop/desktop computer as well as through a mobile application. It allows users to write and share their ideas and opinions in real time (instant messaging) within 280 characters. We can also upload and share images, audio, video and other documents through Twitter. While sharing, one can mention another person or group through a feature called hashtag (#) or @followed by the user's account name on Twitter. Twitter can be used for self-expression, social interaction, and information sharing.



Use Case: Teachers can use it as an effective pedagogical tool to gain information, engage students, follow interested communities, share their insights on specific topics, conduct quick polls on specific themes, etc. It can enhance engagement and collaboration among peers, learners and teachers. The teacher can tweet assignments, link to other resources or web pages. Learners can work collaboratively on assignments using Twitter. Teachers and learners can subscribe to relevant and important hashtags for further learning.

4. EDMODO

Edmodo is a free and secure online educational learning network. It is a social network to interact with others. Teachers can use it to create and manage an online classroom community, and learners can connect and collaborate with their peers. It helps to schedule homework and assignments, network with other teachers, and monitor learners' progress.



Use Case: Teachers can manage their classes and consolidate all of their activities in one place. Teachers can create a digital classroom space for learners to work together and share ideas and resources. Edmodo's quiz builder or poll feature can be used to assess learners' learning during or after a unit of study. Teachers can divide a class into smaller groups and have them post their work to their group for peer review and feedback. Teachers can further use Edmodo Badges to help motivate learners to advance their learning and increase their practice time on new topics. Badges let learners show off their accomplishments and motivate others. Administrators can use the platform to coordinate and collaborate with fellow teachers. Planning professional development seminars is easy, especially with SchoolTube, Edmodo's video service.

5. INSTAGRAM

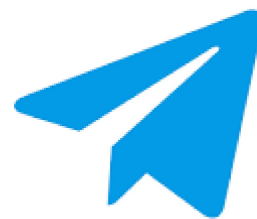
Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social networking service that has millions of active users all over the world. It can be accessed on a laptop/desktop computer as well as through a mobile application. It can be used to share short videos, pictures, audio, quotations, write-ups and much more. Teachers can also make groups on Instagram and post photos and other media to these groups. They can either keep a group open for all or make a closed group.



Use Case: Through Instagram, teachers can effectively engage in visual storytelling. One can use hashtags (#) that are relevant and often searched to be discoverable. There are other features as well, which teachers and learners can use, such as video recording from 3 up to 60 seconds for a post and 15 seconds for time bound stories. Other features such as unlimited story additions, direct messaging within stories and IGTV gives users the ability to share videos that are up to an hour long – like a TV episode.

6. TELEGRAM

Telegram is a mobile application-based communication tool. It has the capability to enable users to share a wide variety of media, be it photos, audio, video, and even documents. It supports one-to-one communication as well as group communication. Subject groups can be created, and each group can have even 1,00,000 members. It provides various kinds of administrative support that facilitate collaboration. Groups can also be controlled to have only one-way or two-way communication. Telegram can also be used for making audio and video calls. Group conference calls are also an additional support that will help teachers take online sessions and encourage interaction by learners. Every time when someone accesses their mobile phone, they just need click on the telegram icon, it will start working. Telegram channels can be helpful for providing the desired information to an unlimited number of learners and teachers.



Use Case: Teachers can create large groups of teachers and learners and continuously interact on various themes. During NISHTHA training many states like Assam, Karnataka, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan used Telegram for sharing of information and best practices.

7. BLOGGER

A blog can be considered an online journal or an informational website. Individuals setup a blogging website and regularly post articles called blogs. Users can subscribe to blogs to receive notifications about new articles through their email or they can directly go to a blogging site and read the articles.



Blogger is a blog publishing service provided by Google. A user with a Google account (Gmail ID) can freely use the blogger facility to create a blogging website of their own and start writing articles on a topic or area such as travel, experiences, marketing, product description, education, etc.

Use Case: Teachers and learners can create accounts on Blogger through their Gmail accounts. Teachers can write and share blogs on difficult topics related to the subject areas they teach, for instance, Science, Mathematics, Language, etc. They can display teaching-learning material on blogs by adding pictures, videos, audio, PPTs, etc. A common classroom blog can also be created using WordPress, and a community of teachers and learners can together post and discuss about concepts and ideas.

8. SKYPE

Skype is generally used to communicate through video conferencing either one-to-one or in groups. It can be accessed on a laptop or desktop computer as well as through a mobile application. Users are required to create an account and then log in. Skype group calling includes conference calling and group chats. It can be used to host a group video chat or conference call for up to 50 people. Adding people who already have Skype is free.



Use Case: Skype provides an excellent way for teachers to introduce the world beyond the classroom to their learners. Through video calling, learners can connect with teachers, educators and other learners for live discussions and solving their queries. We can also use Skype to explore virtual field trips, organize guest speaker sessions with two-way communication between the presenter and the audience. Special events can be conducted like live discussion with authors, celebrities, technology experts, doctors, artists, etc. Sharing of screens, files, resources and other information with learners, teachers and parents can also be part of an e-learning process through Skype.

9. PINTEREST

Pinterest is a visual social network in a multilingual format available on the web as well as a mobile application (both android and iOS). It is like an open bulletin board in which communities, teachers, learners and parents can interact, share and post or pin on a



single forum. It enables posting, saving, blogging and discovery of information using images, GIFs, interactive videos, documents and blogs etc. The resources which are pinned get segregated into various categories. There are a lot of categories to choose from, including diversified fields of learning. These categories or boards are displayed on the user's Pinterest profile. Since these pins can be shared and are easily searchable, they have the potential to become a very useful educational tool.

10. YOUTUBE

YouTube is an online video sharing platform wherein the users can watch, upload, edit and share videos. They can also like or dislike the content and comment on it. The platform allows users to create free of cost YouTube channels in which they can upload videos created by them. Also, users can sort videos and create their own playlists. Video lectures, animation videos, 360 videos are useful resources to engage learners and help them learn difficult concepts.



Use Case: Teachers, for example, can create 'Geometry' as a playlist containing all the videos related to it for a Mathematics class. Teachers can search and share with learners' videos on various topic which are correct both conceptually and pedagogically. The videos can be auto-translated in local languages, making them useful for everyone. Subtitles, which can also be in a local language, can be added to the videos to promote inclusion. Teachers can also Live Stream the lectures wherever they are to the selected group or public.

11. LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is mostly used by professionals for social networking. Companies use this platform for posting jobs and job seekers posting their curriculum vitae. It's a social media exchange platform for employers and employees. LinkedIn allows members (both workers and employers) to create profiles and can establish



connections to each other in an online social network mode which may represent real time professional relationships. Members can invite anyone (whether an existing member or not) to become a connection on this platform.

12. GOOGLE HANGOUT

It is a unified communications service that allows members to initiate and participate in text, voice or video chats and communication, sharing content either one-to-one or in a group. Hangouts are built into Gmail, and mobile Hangouts apps are available for iOS and Android devices. A Gmail account is all you need to use this application. Up to 150 people can participate in a Google Hangout, though a video call is limited to 25 participants.



Use Case: Teachers can use hangout to live stream classes from their homes. Learners can join the live class from their respective homes. Smaller groups can be formed within a class for group discussion and peer learning among learners through audio or video chats.