

# Online Projects

## What are online projects?

Online projects are activities for your students that allow them to collaborate with other people.

- The other people could be students from different grades, schools, cities, or countries. Or they could be experts in some field who are willing to share their experiences.
- The collaboration could be sharing data, writing stories, creating and solving problems, and more.
- The method of sharing will usually be email, but could also include electronic bulletin boards, video conferencing, and regular mail.

## What is good about online projects?

Online projects provide many benefits such as:

- **Real data** – Instead of making up information for your students to use, they can get real information from other cities, countries, or cultures.
- **More data** – Since online projects can reach many people, the amount of data collected can greatly increase
- **Authentic experience** – Online collaboration also allows your students to work with people directly involved in what they are studying.
- **Motivation** – As engaging as we are as teachers, the simple truth is that students are excited to know that their work will go beyond your desk. When they are interacting with other students or experts, they take learning more seriously.
- **Affordable** – Usually there is no cost involved at all, and the technology needed is rarely more complicated than a normal computer with email access.

## How do online projects work?

Although each project has its own details, the general process is like this:

1. You find a project you would like to join. Where to find these projects is discussed below.
2. You contact the organizer of the project, often by email, expressing your desire to participate.
3. You are accepted (hopefully) into the project.
4. You are given more specific information about the project.
5. Over the next few days, weeks, or months you and your students participate in the project by gathering data, sending email, creating products, writing, drawing, etc.
6. You stay in the project until it is complete, or until you finish what you have set out to do.

## Where do you find online projects?

There are many great sites that organize existing projects, and often accept new projects that you create. Several of the best examples are below:

- **The Global Schoolhouse**

<http://www.gsn.org/>

This is the largest collection of online projects. You can search through the project registry to view all available projects, or sign up for the **Hilites mailing list** to get the project announcements emailed directly to you. This site also hosts perennial favorites like the GeoGame and Online Expeditions.

- **NickNacks Telecollaborate**  
*<http://telecollaborate.net/education>*  
This site offers links to a very large number of projects, but also provides excellent information on how to successfully participate in such activities.
- **Virtual Architecture's Web Home**  
*<http://ccwf.cc.utexas.edu/~jbharris/Virtual-Architecture/index.html>*  
Here you will find very detailed instruction and published papers about online projects including planning, assessing, and participating in such activities. In addition there are links to many ongoing projects.
- **Houghton Mifflin Project Center**  
*<http://www.eduplace.com/projects>*  
This site offers online projects arranged by subject area (language arts, math, science, and social studies).
- **ePALS Classroom Exchange**  
*<http://www.epals.com/>*  
This site allows you to search for “keypals” from all over the world, so your students can find partners to communicate with.

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*Questions, comments, concerns? Email me at:  
[ecurts@neo.rr.com](mailto:ecurts@neo.rr.com) or [tech@viking.stark.k12.oh.us](mailto:tech@viking.stark.k12.oh.us)  
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