GCFLearnFree.org Curriculum Guide

Technology

Contents

- How to Use our Tutorials 2
- About our Technology Curriculum 3
- How to use this Guide 4
- Learning Plans 6
- Tips for Creating Assignments and Examples 10
- Tutorial Descriptions 13
How to Use Our Tutorials

This guide was created to give teachers and service providers a starting point for using our computer and technology tutorials. You may already refer the people you serve to our site for self-paced, independent learning. This guide will help you use our content to supplement your own programs, tutorials, and courses.

How you use our tutorials will depend largely on your organization’s capabilities and the needs of the population you serve. We’ve found that there are as many ways to use our content as there are organizations using it. Some organizations take a largely hands-off approach; others choose to integrate our tutorials into their own instructor-led classes. Here are some examples of ways a group could use our tutorials to provide instruction:

- **The Textbook Method**: Instructor-led classes that include original curriculum but use our site as a textbook for both the teacher and students.
- **Self-Paced Group Study Method**: Students follow a particular course of study at their own pace. At class meetings, the instructor checks assignments and offers help to students who need it.
- **Independent Study with Assignments**: Independent study classes or meetings where the students read our tutorials and complete original assignments, all on their own. At an instructor-led “lab time,” students ask questions and get help starting new topics.

These are just a few examples, but the possibilities are nearly endless. Let us know how you use our site by contacting us at www.gcflearnfree.org/educators/share.

Terms of Use for Our Tutorials

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Still have questions? Check out our Educators’ FAQ!

www.gcflearnfree.org/educators/faq
About Our Technology Curriculum

Our technology curriculum is suitable for learners with a wide variety of skills and experience—from those who have never touched a computer before, to those who know the basics and want to learn more. The learning plans here only cover a small fraction of the topics we offer. Topics not fully addressed here include:

- **Apple**, with tutorials on OS X Lion, iPad, and iTunes ([http://www.gcflearnfree.org/apple](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/apple))
- **Google**, with tutorials on the Google Chrome browser, Google Docs, Gmail, and more. ([http://www.gcflearnfree.org/google](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/google))
- **Digital Photography** ([http://www.gcflearnfree.org/digitalphotography](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/digitalphotography))

As we develop these and other topics further, we will update this guide with new learning plans and other suggestions for making use of our curriculum.

Teaching our Technology Tutorials

How you teach our technology tutorials will largely depend on the resources you have. All of these tutorials work best when learners can actually practice with computers as they learn. As differences between computer operating systems and web browsers can greatly affect the learner experience, we recommend that you have all your learners use computers with the same operating system and browser during class time, if possible. Which browser or operating system you choose to use matters less—the important thing is that your learners have a consistent experience.

Some of the learning plans include operating system and browser tutorials. For these, select the tutorials for the operating system and browser available to your students.

Our current operating system tutorials:

- Windows 7
- Windows XP
- Windows 98
- Mac OS X Lion

Our current browser tutorials:

- Internet Explorer 8
- Mozilla Firefox
- Google Chrome
This guide explains how you and your students can use multiple tutorials to build the fundamental computer and Internet skills needed today. The guide includes 4 distinct learning plans that you can follow and adapt for instruction in a classroom, with a small group, or with individuals. Each plan addresses a specific set of skills a student may be interested in learning.

The plans are:

- **Introduction to Computers**: This plan is intended for absolute beginners who’ve had very little experience with technology and want to get started.

- **Connecting Online**: This plan is ideal for learners who may have some experience with computers and are interested in connecting with friends and family over the Internet. An emphasis is placed on communication, rather than social networks.

- **Getting Started with Email**: This plan is for learners who may not have a computer or Internet at home, but who need email and certain online services for professional and personal reasons.

- **Introduction to Social Media**: This plan is for learners who already feel comfortable with some technology, but who are curious about Facebook, Twitter, and other social tools.

Each plan has three components:

1. **Objectives**: The goals learners have entering this course of study. The objectives can help you identify the best plan for your class.

2. **Outcomes**: The end skills the learners should have gained after successfully completing the plan.

3. **Learning plan**: A potential sequence of our tutorials. You can find summaries and links for each tutorial on page 13 of this guide.
Using the Learning Plans

To get started, choose the learning plan that best suits your students’ needs. Once you’ve found a plan, you can customize it to make it more relevant to and appropriate for your learners. This could include:

• **Adding your own content.** To get the most out of our tutorials, we strongly encourage you to develop assignments and assessments that are suitable for your students. (You can find more information about creating these on page 10 of this guide.)

• **Removing redundant or unnecessary content.** Not every course or lesson will be useful for every situation. Read the tutorials, and then assess your students’ knowledge and needs. You can then omit any content that is obvious, irrelevant, or unnecessary for your learners.

• **Selecting additional tutorials.** In addition to the core tutorials that make up the main sequence, most learning plans also include related optional tutorials that may be useful to students who need additional background or would like to take their learning further. Optional tutorials are marked with a gray dashed outline, as in the key below:

  ![Core Tutorials](Solid black outline)  ![Optional courses](Dashed gray outline)

You may also choose to integrate tutorials from any of the other curriculum guides, or from the site as a whole. You can find a complete list of our curriculum guides here: [http://www.gcflearnfree.org/educators/guides](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/educators/guides).
Introduction to Computers

Objectives

- To become familiar with the way computers work
- To understand what the Internet is
- To be able to use the Internet
- To be able to list computer proficiency on a resume

General Outcomes

- Learners will know how to operate a computer.
- Learners will be able to use the Internet to communicate and find information.
- Learners will feel safe and comfortable online.
- Learners will have access to email.
Connecting Online

Objectives

- To understand what the Internet is, and how email and social networks fit into that
- To use online tools to keep in touch with family and friends
- To be able to use the Internet without help
- To feel safe and comfortable online

General Outcomes

- Learners will be able to use the Internet to communicate and find information.
- Learners will be able to get in touch with existing and new contacts through a variety of methods, including chat, video calls, and more.
- Learners will have an email account and understand how to use it.
- Learners will be connected to Facebook and understand its features.

Computer Basics

Optional, depending on students’ level of knowledge

How to Use our Tutorials

About our Technology Curriculum

How to Use this Guide

Learning Plans

Tips for Creating Assignments and Examples

Tutorial Descriptions

Internet 101

Internet Safety

Email 101

Gmail

Facebook

Browser tutorial

Chrome OR Internet Explorer OR Firefox

Optional supplement to “Browser Basics” section of Internet 101

Chat

Skype

Optional, depending on webcam/microphone availability
Getting Started with Email and Online Storage

Objectives
- To obtain an email address for work or personal use
- To be able to use email when useful, including in a job search
- To be able to maintain an email account and online file storage, even without regular access to the Internet

General Outcomes
- Learners will have access to email and be able to use it for a variety of purposes.
- Learners will understand the concept of online (Cloud) storage.
- Learners will be able to use Google Drive as a personal file storage system.
Introduction to Social Media

Objectives

- To learn about various social networks and how they are used
- To sign up for Facebook and other social media accounts

General Outcomes

- Learners will understand how social media fits into the landscape of the Internet.
- Learners will have a Facebook account and understand how to use Facebook to connect with others.
- Learners will have other social media accounts (depending on the chosen curriculum sequence)

Email 101 / Gmail

*Optional*—for learners who don’t already have email

- Internet Safety
- Beyond Email
- Facebook 101
- Twitter 101
- Blog Basics
- Chat
- Pinterest 101

Optional—choose depending on learner interest
Tips for Creating Assignments and Examples

While we can’t provide assignments and example files for all of our tutorials, the following tips from our instructional designers can help instructors create these things for their own classes.

**General Advice**

- **Don’t be afraid to use available resources.** Most of our lessons contain Challenge questions on the last page, and many include example files students can use to practice. Feel free to use or adapt these things.

- **Pay attention to details.** Learners respond with more motivation to clear, high quality instructions, examples and scenarios.

- **Don’t try to demonstrate too many tasks within one example or assignment.** You will get stuck and end up having to undo procedures or accomplish procedures in an illogical way.

**Creating Assignments**

- **Use a consistent, easily readable style.** Bulleted or number procedures are best. Use consistent language and bold key actions.

- **Break down instructions for assignments into easy-to-follow tasks.** These tasks should be always presented in a logical order. For instance, don’t ask students to do tasks in an order that wouldn’t make sense in real life. (e.g., applying a complicated change to a document, then immediately undoing it)

- **Don’t be afraid to create simple assignments to test basic knowledge.** For instance, at the beginning of a course, you may want to test students on their knowledge of the software’s interface.
• **Avoid evaluating assignments based on design, unless you are specifically teaching design techniques.** For instance, if a learner is asked to create a document that shows properly aligned lists and tables, don’t evaluate the document on unrelated factors, like font style or color.

• **Make sure assignments are possible to complete within a reasonable amount of time.** Double-check the instructions to make sure that each step is clear and can’t be interpreted incorrectly. If possible, test your assignments on a colleague or friend.

• **Assignment questions and instructions should always be easy to understand.** Don’t attempt to make an assignment more difficult by making the questions themselves more complex.

• **To make assignments more difficult, create questions and tasks that involve critical thinking.** Challenge your students to use tools in a way that wasn’t explicitly covered in the lesson, but still makes logical sense.

### Creating Examples

• **Example documents, scenarios, and situations should be applicable to real world tasks and relevant to your learners’ needs.** In making assignments “meaningful”, learners will be more likely to retain their knowledge and apply the skills they have learned.

• **You may need several versions of your examples.** Start with a document that is fully complete, then move backwards and create versions of your examples that are in various stages of completion. Use the incomplete versions to show procedures and create assignments.

• **When possible, create well-designed, professional looking examples that will inspire your students to aim high with their own work.** When producing examples for Microsoft Office or Google Docs, consider creating some customized themes and graphics to demonstrate creative uses of the available tools.
Tips for Teaching Social Media and Online Application Topics

• **Safety first.** Make sure learners demonstrate knowledge of privacy and safety before you assign them to sign up for an account or enter any personal information.

• **Understand your students’ learning goals, and adjust assignments appropriately.** Initial assignments should be based on reflection and contemplation of how the learner might use the service based on their needs.

• **Pay attention to learners’ privacy concerns.** Some assigned tasks may need to be optional depending on what the learner is comfortable sharing.

• **Consider setting up “dummy” accounts for examples.** This can help the instructor avoid sharing his or her own personal accounts. Make situations and characters realistic and relatable.

• **Consider providing resources for learners to practice sharing and posting.** For instance, for an assignment on uploading a photo album, you may wish to provide a folder of sample images.
Tutorial Descriptions

Below are the links to all the tutorials mentioned in this guide. For a complete list of our tutorials, go to [www.gcflearnfree.org/alltopics](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/alltopics).

### Computer Basics

Computer Basics is an introductory tutorial designed for learners who have little to no experience using computers of any kind. Students will learn the basics of how computers and their operating systems work. They'll also learn how to set up and take care of their own computers.

**URL:** [www.gcflearnfree.org/computerbasics](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/computerbasics)

### Internet 101

This introductory tutorial guides learners through the basics of using the Internet, while providing up-to-date information on the latest online tools and technologies. Students will become familiar with the various ways people use the internet, and learn how to connect, search, and browse on their own.

**URL:** [www.gcflearnfree.org/internet101](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/internet101)

### Internet Safety

This tutorial offers strategies for staying safe and secure online. Students learn how to avoid the most common threats and protect their computer and privacy.

**URL:** [www.gcflearnfree.org/internetsafety](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/internetsafety)

### Email 101

This tutorial is intended for learners who have never used email. Students will learn how email works and how to use it safely.

**URL:** [www.gcflearnfree.org/email101](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/email101)

### Gmail

This tutorial is an introduction to Google’s webmail service, Gmail. Students will learn the basics of how to set up an account and compose, send and respond to emails. They’ll also explore more advanced features, like managing and organizing email and accessing it from your mobile devices.

**URL:** [www.gcflearnfree.org/gmail](http://www.gcflearnfree.org/gmail)
Facebook 101

This tutorial teaches learners how to create a Facebook account and use its many features. Special emphasis is placed on explaining Facebook’s complex privacy policies and settings.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/facebook101

Chrome

This tutorial is an introduction to Chrome, Google’s browser. Topics covered include navigation controls, privacy settings, security features, and web apps.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/chrome

Internet Explorer 8

This tutorial introduces students to Internet Explorer 8. Topics covered include navigation controls, bookmarks, and security settings.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/internetexplorer8

Windows 7

This tutorial teaches students how to upgrade to and use Microsoft’s Windows 7. Students will learn about how to use Windows 7’s new features and how to customize Windows settings to best fit their needs.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/windows7

Mac OS X Lion

This tutorial covers Apple’s latest operating system, Mac OS X Lion. Students will learn how to upgrade to Lion and use its features.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/macosxlion
Google Drive and Docs

This tutorial covers the basics of Google Drive, a cloud storage service that lets users store documents, photos, videos and other files online. The tutorial is also an introduction to Google Docs, a service that lets users create and edit documents, spreadsheets, and presentations. Topics covered include creating documents, managing and sharing files, and syncing files to a computer or mobile device.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/googledriveanddocs

Beyond Email

This tutorial introduces students to various forms of online communication, including chat, instant messaging, video and voice chat, and blogging.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/beyondemail

Twitter 101

This tutorial introduces learners to Twitter, a popular service that lets users publish their own short updates and subscribe to the updates of others. Students will learn how Twitter is used, and how to set up and maintain their own account.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/twitter101

Blog Basics

This tutorial is an introduction to blogs and blogging. Students will learn what a blog is and why blogs matter. They’ll learn how to subscribe to blogs they find interesting, and how to develop and start their own blog.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/blogbasics

Chat

This tutorial covers the basics of using chat ad instant messaging with popular services like Messenger, Facebook and Skype.

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/chat

Pinterest 101

This tutorial introduces students to Pinterest, a website that allows users to organize links, photos, and more into virtual “pinboards.”

URL: www.gcflearnfree.org/pinterest101