

E-Book Excitement

By Lorrie Jackson

WHY A TECHTORIAL?

What will I learn today?

You will learn what e-books are and how to use them in the K-12 classroom.

What hardware and/or software does the techtorial apply to?

All you need to learn how to download and read e-books is a computer with Internet access!

Which National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers does the techtorial address?

The techtorial will help teachers accomplish standard 1b in particular.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed a set of National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers. Standards or Performance Indicators are included for each techtorial to help teachers and administrators improve technology proficiency. For a complete description of the standards indicated, go to [NETS for Teachers](#), click Standards in the menu bar on the left, and then click the arrow to the right of Standards and Performance Indicators for Teachers.

ALL ABOUT E-BOOKS

E-books are simply books that are available online or are stored on your computer. Most e-books are digitized versions of traditional print books, although some e-books are available *only* in a digital format.

Anything that can be contained in a traditional print book -- and more -- can be contained in an e-book, including

- text.
- graphics.
- sound.
- links.
- other multimedia elements.

The following are examples of the kinds of e-books that might be used in K-12

classrooms:

- textbooks.
- literature; most often classic works for which the copyright has expired. (Usually works published before 1923.)
- white papers, reports, and so on. (Especially for use in social studies classes.)

E-BOOK PLUSSES

With the increased availability of classroom PCs, laptops, handhelds, and mobile carts, more and more teachers are using e-books in their K-12 classrooms. Should you? According to teachers who have used them, the benefits of e-books include the following:

- E-books can energize and motivate students and thus improve student learning.
- Many texts now in the public domain are available free online. Those texts can vastly increase information -- particularly current information -- available to students.
- After e-books have been downloaded and saved as Word documents, students can highlight and comment upon information just as they can with print texts.
- E-books can offer opportunities for multimedia and interactivity. For example, an electronic encyclopedia can include, in addition to facts about sea lions, sound clips of sea lions barking, a zoo cam of sea lions at a distant aquarium, a video of sea lions in the wild, links to wildlife rescue organizations, an interactive quiz, and more.
- E-books can be updated quickly, even daily, if necessary -- which is especially helpful when studying social studies, current events, science, or other subjects that events or discoveries can change literally overnight.
- Some students prefer a digital format and are more motivated to read.
- Students with disabilities can enlarge font size or use accessibility software to read and work with the text.

E-BOOK MINUSES

Using e-books in the classroom also presents challenges:

- Many students (and teachers!) find it difficult to read large bodies of text online.
- Internet connection problems, broken CDs, and other technical "glitches" can prevent access to e-books.
- Recently published fictional works generally are not available free online, and the cost of purchasing the rights to use them may be prohibitive.
- Surprisingly, many e-books -- both texts and fictional works -- are unappealing visually, using "vanilla text" (typewriter-like font on a white background and no graphics).
- Parents and educators might be hesitant to invest in online textbooks -- an intangible and unproven educational format.

LOCATING E-BOOKS

E-books can be located at a variety of online sources:

- **Textbooks:** Almost every textbook publisher now offers at least some of textbooks online or on CD. Ask the company's local sales rep or search [Google](#) for the home page of your textbook's publisher. Even if the entire textbook is not available in digital format, often such materials as interactive quizzes, activities, and related Web sites *are* available free -- sometimes even to those who haven't purchased that company's textbook.
- **Copyright-free e-books:** [Project Gutenberg](#) is one of the largest and oldest e-book libraries, with more than 6,000 e-books available for free downloading. The University of Virginia's [Electronic Text Center](#) makes more than 1,200 free texts available to those using Microsoft Reader. A more eclectic collection of free e-books, including many recent nonfiction selections, is available at [Free eBooks](#).
- **Copyrighted e-books:** A simple search at [Yahoo](#) or [Google](#) for "e-books" or "e-texts," or for the title of a specific book can help locate more recent e-books. Although many of those will have to be purchased, contacting a book's author or publisher to request permission to use an online version in your classroom is always worthwhile.

HOW TO DOWNLOAD AN E-BOOK

Downloading an e-book can be almost as easy as grabbing a book from the library shelf. As an example, let's download Edgar Allen Poe's short story, "The Black Cat".

- Log on to the Internet and go to [Project Gutenberg](http://promo.net/pg) at <http://promo.net/pg>.
- Type "Poe" in the Author window on the right, and click Search.
- Scroll the alphabetic list to find "The Black Cat," and then click that title. A page much like a card in a library card catalog will appear.
- Next to DOWNLOAD, you will see two choices: a "zip" file (poe2v10.zip), which requires you to have or download a program -- such as WinZip -- that will "unzip" the compressed file; and a text file (poe2v10.txt), which is larger, and therefore slower, to download, but also is usually easier to download as well.
- For this exercise, click poe2v10.txt to download the e-text of "The Black Cat." (Note the "vanilla text!")
- Read the legal or editing comments that precede the story.
- Click Edit>Select All and then click Edit>Copy.
- Open a new word processing document and click Edit>Paste.
- Save the document to a convenient location, so it will be available the next time you want students to read this short story!

Be sure to check out the techorial on [Editing with Microsoft Word](#) for ideas on highlighting or commenting text, so students can better interact with what they read.

IDEAS FOR USING E-BOOKS

So you've downloaded an e-book but you don't know what to do with it? Try one of these suggestions.

- Use the online or CD version of a textbook for remediation or to assist students with special needs. (Some versions even read aloud the text and highlight each word as it is read.)
- Have students compare two essays or poems by downloading both, copying them

into Word documents, and highlighting the similarities.

- Find online versions of local or national political candidates' position papers and have students read them and check online sources to determine the accuracy of the candidates' statements.
- Copy a nursery rhyme into a Word document and have younger children insert clip art into the pages to create their own custom storybooks.
- Record students narrating a short story, poem, essay, or novel and save both the sound and text to a PowerPoint presentation.

What's next? Next week's tectorial will explain how to: Summer-ize Your Computers!
