

IT Workshop for tutors at The Park: 4th September 2013

Course content

General tips/organisation

Use your own laptop if possible, so that you are familiar with it and the programmes it has installed.

Web browsers: there is nothing wrong with having several web browsers installed on your computer. In addition to Internet Explorer (which is my third choice) you could install **Google Chrome** and **Mozilla Firefox**

Use **flash drives** (aka memory sticks) to transport files between home and your teaching location. For this purpose, CDs, DVDs and floppy discs are now historical relics.

If you want to use your own photos to illustrate PowerPoint presentations or handouts, it is worth learning how to improve their appearance using a photo editing programme. My favourite free editor is **Google Picasa**.

If you want to show video that you have taken on your phone or camera, you will probably want to improve it by cutting off the beginnings and ends, chopping bits out of it, joining clips together etc. Although it has some drawbacks, you could start learning these skills using **Windows Movie Maker**. This is a free download from the Microsoft site, part of Windows Live Essentials. Note that you probably do not want the other programmes bundled with it, so read each window carefully when you are downloading it.

Make sure you are familiar with **downloading pictures** or clipart from the Internet. I use Google search for this. There are a number of search tools (filters) that can be useful when searching.

If you use **BBC Bitesize** for languages, you should know how to download audio clips and how to open zipped files.

Using your own audio.

There is an audio recorder pre-installed on Windows Vista/7. It is called **Windows Sound Recorder**. This is a very rudimentary programme, though.

It is usually more convenient to record audio on your phone, a digital Dictaphone or on an audio recorder. My current favourite recorder is the **Zoom H1**.

You then need a means of transferring the audio files to your computer. You will probably want to edit your files to improve them, and lastly play them back on good quality equipment.

Many phones and recorders use **Micro SD cards** for file storage. A good way of transferring these files to a PC is to use a **Micro SD to SD adapter**, which you should insert into the SD slot on your computer. If you do not have an SD slot, you can buy an **SD to USB adapter** cheaply.

There are many programmes available for editing audio. Most of them you have to buy. My favourite is still an old programme called **Cool Edit**, now owned by Adobe and called Audition. Of the free programmes, you could try **Wavosaur**: It is a small download. It does not install in the computer's registry. As with Free Studio, it tries to get you to install third party software. During the installation it offers a trial of PlusHD, and an Amazon desktop icon. Download it carefully to avoid these options. (Wav is the name of an audio file format)

The sound quality on a laptop's speakers is pretty poor. In order to play audio to a class, you will probably need a set of external speakers. These days, speakers draw their power from a USB slot. You can pay almost any price for speakers, but even a cheap set will greatly improve the volume and quality of your laptop's sound.

Costs of messing about with audio:

Windows Sound Recorder	None (installed as part of Windows Vista, 7 etc). Note this outputs a wma (windows media audio) file that is not compatible with Wavosaur. A solution is to use a free online audio file converter, such as media.io, or install a programme such as Free Studio Manager from DVDvideosoftware.com
Zoom H1 sound recorder	£79
Micro SD to SD adapter	Approx. £2
SD to USB adapter	Approx. £2
Wavosaur	None (free download)
Speakers (external)	Start at about £14. Typically £20-£30

Consider making a simple website for distributing support files such as handouts.

You can make a very simple website to support your teaching. It can contain downloadable files, as well as learner information, homework, etc. There are a number of companies that give you the chance to create a free website online. My first favourite was Yola, but it has now tightened its free offer to a maximum of 3 pages. Even this would be good for a start – you could make a support website on a single page. Since Yola's change, I have been experimenting with Weebly.

You can see my Yola sites at **keithburrows.org**, and **barlearyechoir.org**.

You can see my Weebly sites at **reclaimedtimberprojects.weebly.com** and **annesdraft.weebly.com**

These types of websites require no coding ability – everything is drag and drop. You can therefore build up a site quite quickly. My best advice would be to try to **stay organised** – get all the files you want to use sorted into a folder so that it is easy to find them when you want to upload them.

Convert your digital handouts to PDF

If you make your handouts using MS Word, you cannot rely on your learners being able to open them – they may not have Office on their computer. If you use unusual fonts in your handouts, your learners' copy of Word may not display them accurately. Businesses and the government avoid these potential problems by distributing information using PDF files (portable document format).

If you are working in Office 2007/2010, you can save your file as a PDF, but this is not possible in Office 2003. You can instead use an online pdf converter. I have tried **freepdfconvert.com** which worked well, although it is limited to converting one file at a time.

Download video or audio from Youtube using Free Studio

If you want to show **Youtube video** in your class, and you have a fast, reliable internet connection in the classroom, you can confidently stream the data direct from the internet. If your connection is less reliable, or you want to insure against the video being removed from Youtube, you can try downloading it onto your computer. Note that merely saving the webpage will not be good enough. The best solution I have found is a programme called **Free Studio** from **dvdvideosoftware.com**

Free Studio is in fact a suite of programmes that together perform a number of useful tasks. It does have a tiresome aspect, though – like many downloads it tries to coerce you into downloading 'third party' software at the same time. As long as you are careful, you should not have any problems. The download is quite large - 79mb. Because of Youtube's policy of varying the coding of uploaded videos, you may need to keep your Free Studio up-to-date to keep it working well.

This is the general method: open Free Studio, and then open one of its programmes - **Free Youtube Download**.

On Youtube, find the clip you wish to download, copy the URL, and paste into Free Youtube Download. You can change the video quality settings if you wish. Ignore any advertisements or messages in the lower part of the window.

To download audio, use the same method, but paste into **Free Youtube to mp3 converter**.

When you close the programme you may be prompted to buy another programme. Click the red cross in the corner to avoid this.