

# Mobile Devices in the Classroom

## What is it?

Mobile devices can be cell phones or tablets or who knows what kind of hardware next, but what ties them together is their relatively small or handheld size, the ability to connect to the Internet, and the availability of applications or apps that create content, provide services, or aid users in performing activities. Some common devices are the iPhone and iPad, and similar devices powered by Android or Windows operating systems. It is this variety of devices that makes it hard to plan structured classroom activities, but also the characteristic that might invite impromptu and creative activities.

## What does it look like in practice?

Unless your institution provides devices to all students, most classes will have a wide variety of devices with differing capabilities, and some students will not have devices. Mobile devices may be used by students to take notes or record lectures, or may be objects of distraction. Faculty may use mobile device applications to perform routine actions such as taking attendance or projecting presentations or applications onto a screen, as they would with a computer.

Structured uses of mobile devices might involve group work where students use search capabilities to research course issues to report to the class or contribute to class discussions on social networks. Students can work in groups to aggregate class resources on a social bookmarking site or in a class wiki or blog.

In or out of the classroom, audio, video, and drawing applications can be used to plan, construct, and post online presentations.

## How does such a method fit into my course?

- Students can self-select groups based on available devices and assignments
- Using drawing or mapping apps, students can storyboard a project or outline a lesson concept
- Using an audio app, like SoundCloud, students can create and publish audio reports or interviews to social media; instructors can record and post lectures or course updates
- Using a social bookmarking app, like Diigo, students can post resources they find directly to a class list

### Further Reading:

- "Are Mobile Devices Fundamentally Affecting Higher Education?" April 2011: A short (3 1/2 mins.) video interview/survey of higher education professionals.  
<http://www.educause.edu/library/resources/are-mobile-devices-fundamentally-affecting-higher-education-video>
- "Mobile Devices in Higher Education" May 2011: View the short (18 mins.) video interview on this page about the implications of mobile devices. <http://andyburkhardt.com/2011/05/02/mobile-devices-in-higher-education/>
- "How Mobile Devices are Changing Higher Education." June 2012, excerpt from *Community College Journal*.  
<http://www.communitycollegetimes.com/Pages/Technology/How-mobile-learning-devices-are-changing-the-face-of-higher-ed.aspx>