

Welcome to our February update!



We're counting down to our annual convention and with less than a month to go, we're excited to see you all in Cáceres! Our speakers have started sharing teasers for their talks - check them out on our YouTube channel. And we've interviewed two of our three plenary speakers, Divya Madhavan and Evan Frendo, for the podcast, with an interview with Joan-Tomàs Pujolà coming at the end of the month.

On the podcast as well, we're continuing to share lots of fantastic events which are coming soon, with links to all events in the episode notes.

See you in Cáceres! [Click here to register](#) 😊

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13:36 33:00

REVIEWS

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TESOL-SPAIN publishes reviews of a wide range of materials relevant to teaching English. These materials include textbooks, reference materials, digital software, APPs, and non-print materials.

TESOL-SPAIN encourages you to propose material for review, and to submit brief reviews directly to the e-mail address above. One brief review is included in this issue.

If you would like to form part of our pool of reviewers, send your name, bio-data, and areas of expertise to the e-mail address above.

[Classroomscreen.com](https://www.classroomscreen.com)

Streamlining Classroom Dynamics and Management

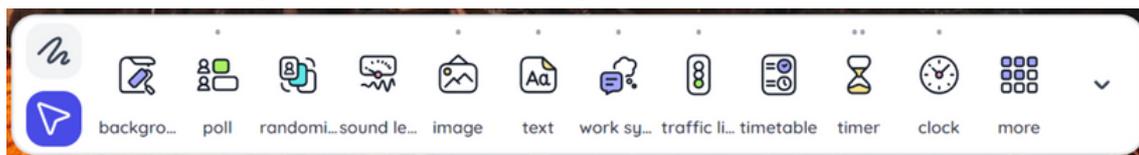
Introduction

[Classroomscreen.com](https://www.classroomscreen.com) is a web-based application that allows users to facilitate classroom management and learning in class. The development of this application began around 2017 and was founded by Lauren Koppers and Sebastiaan de Vries. Koppers created this application drawing on his own experience teaching science. It has a current user base of around one million. I discovered this website in 2020 and have been utilizing it in a tertiary academic setting with a wide range of ESL learners and English-related subjects.

Basics of Classroomscreen

The application is web-based, intuitive, and fairly straightforward. The website is basically a virtual blackboard that is aptly named a “screen.” During class, users visit the website and then cast or project the website onto a screen using a projector. To personalize the appearance, users can select a variety of default backgrounds and different color themes or provide pictures of their own. Similar websites include ClassTools.Net and Microsoft Whiteboard, but they do not have the same focus, integration, or ease of use that Classroomscreen has.

While on this screen, the user is given a customizable widget bar at the bottom.



This widget bar has a variety of tools or “widgets” to choose, resize, move, and place on the screen. These include a clock widget that shows the time, a group widget to form student teams, and a poll widget which allows students to vote in real-time. An inexpensive annual paid version allows users to save name lists and multiple screens.

The website contains several helpful pages on the basics, guides, troubleshooting, and billing. The main application also continues to get a steady stream of quality of life (QOL) improvements. But at its core, the current version is sufficient for most teachers’ class facilitation needs. I have not experienced any slowdowns or outages with either the free or paid version during my period of use.

Reason for Use

I am a big fan of aggregation, which means that one application or software suite should be able to do a variety of functions to maximize its usefulness. Examples of this include Zotero (research), Google Docs (documents), and in this case, a classroom application solution which encompasses classroom management and learning through a single interface. A small benefit is that teachers no longer have to worry about hands dusty with chalk or whiteboard ink markers running low.

In addition, my students are mostly at a low level, so a visual display such as Classroomscreen allows them to understand commands and lectures visually and more easily.

Selected Best Widgets

Here are some of the widgets I use frequently and their potential pedagogical uses.

Text

This feature allows the user to type in text of various styles and sizes. One use for this is to show a list of activities for the day's class, reminders for the next class, or to scaffold an activity with numbered instructions.

Traffic Light

This widget mimics a traffic light's colors (yellow, green, red) and can be used to show the stages of a class activity. For example, green can mean start, yellow can signal the midway point, and red signifies that the activity is over.

Image

With this widget, users can insert and display scanned, photographed notes, and even animated gifs.

Annotating

When posting in tandem with the image widget, the annotate feature can highlight and emphasize the important parts of a graphic or text.

QR Code

QR codes are used in conjunction with websites. A link is pasted into the widget prompt which then converts it into a QR code that students can scan with their phones. The code redirects them to a website. Some examples include websites which contain online quizzes like Quizizz, and collaborative online blackboards such as Padlet.

Stickers

Stickers are an informal way of greeting and encouraging the students with phrases such as "great work" and "good job." They can also serve as reminders under a sticker category called "directions" which includes phrases such as "must do," "discuss," and "goals."

Work Symbols

There are **four** icons (silence, whisper, ask neighbor, work together) to indicate the expected type of participation.

Randomizer

Using a list of student's names provided by the teacher, this widget randomly chooses and displays one name out of those provided. This is useful for promoting classroom discussion and student engagement.

Timer

A timer countdown and the option of a variety of sound effects for the notification: birds tweeting, crickets, buzzer, alarm clock, etc.

Draw

For those teachers who use a tablet with a digital pen, this widget can substitute writing on a chalk or whiteboard. This is good for a quick lesson on a grammar point or spelling correction.

From left to right: Poll, Traffic Light, Work Symbol



Strengths and Weaknesses

The main strength of Classroomscreen lies in the possibility of combining several widgets to serve lesson goals. For example, the video widget can play YouTube content, and when paired with the text widget, teachers can remind students what learning goals they must achieve or what questions they must answer while watching the video. The randomizer also works well with the noise level widget during class discussions because it reminds students to keep their voices down while a student is called on to speak. In a nutshell, Classroomscreen makes setting up activities more efficient and faster.

There are not any major weaknesses, just new features I hope the developers would add in the future. Among them is a token system which would give and save points for students within the existing name list function. Another is a seating chart widget which would help automate the process of grouping students together. Finally, the option of being able to run a webpage within the site would be ideal, but probably will not be possible because of coding and site security issues.

Conclusion

Although this website is not a revolutionary tool, as most of its features can be replicated through traditional means, it still is an extremely versatile application, and I highly recommend it. Frequency of use is a good indication of how good an application is, and I use this application in every class. Managing large classes has become easier and once a routine is established, I was able to shave minutes off my class preparation time. In the classroom setting, those saved minutes can be crucial in completing overall lesson objectives.

I suggest educators try out the free version, and although they will not be able to save their screens, they will at least be able to see what the application is capable of, and how it fits into their existing tool kit of useful technology software.

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