

How to think.com

Written by Jane Dorner, Jane Field and Anne Sparrowhawk
Cartoons by Beatrice Baumgartner-Cohen

Dedicated to Christina Preston,
without whose enthusiasm and energy in setting up the MirandaNet community
this handbook could not have been written.

ORACLE®



First published in 2000
by Oracle Corporation
Oracle Parkway
Thames Valley Park
Reading, Berks
RG6 1RA

ISBN ???????

© Jane Dorner, Jane Field and Anne Sparrowhawk

Jane Dorner, Jane Field and Anne Sparrowhawk are identified as the authors of this book and assert their rights in accordance with Chapter 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

Parts of this handbook may be freely photocopied for classroom usage only, not exceeding 5% of the whole at any one time. All other rights reserved. It may not be utilised in any other form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

The authors and the publishers have done their best to ensure the accuracy of all information in this handbook. They can accept no responsibility for content found as a result of following links on the think.com website.

Handbook designed and produced by Peter Cox Design Studio, Shillingford, Oxon.
Printed by Fine Print (Services) Limited, Oxford

contents

introduction

<i>To the teacher</i>	5
<i>About think.com</i>	6
<i>About this handbook</i>	7

1. the electronic challenge

<i>Technical information</i>	9
<i>Purpose</i>	10
<i>How ICT can support and extend teaching</i>	11
<i>Classroom strategies</i>	15
<i>Value of cross-fertilisation</i>	16

2. issues for schools

<i>Access policy</i>	18
<i>Time within the curriculum</i>	19
<i>Management of pupils' work</i>	20
<i>Home support</i>	21

3. tools for development

<i>Core ICT skills</i>	23
<i>Tasks and evidence</i>	25
<i>Thinking tools</i>	27
<i>Personal profiling and achievement</i>	32
<i>Learning to organise</i>	33
<i>Multimedia potential</i>	34

4. communities online

<i>What is an online community?</i>	36
<i>Why communities matter</i>	37
<i>Community rights</i>	38
<i>Setting up an online community</i>	40
<i>Newcomer confusion</i>	42
<i>Keeping communities going</i>	43
<i>Closed and open groups</i>	45

5. publication online

<i>Home page</i>	46
<i>Combining resources for assignments</i>	47
<i>Editorial standards and social responsibility</i>	48
<i>Web copyright</i>	51
<i>Public and private dissemination</i>	53

6. new screen dynamics

<i>Email and chat etiquette</i>	54
<i>Tapping into expertise</i>	56
<i>Conferencing</i>	58
<i>Distance learning</i>	59
<i>Collaboration using electronic files</i>	61
<i>Writing for screen reading</i>	63

7. where next?

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	68
<i>Postscript</i>	69

8. Glossary

70

introduction

To the teacher

You've probably got this handbook because your school has registered to use think.com. You might be the ICT co-ordinator who has signed a User Agreement. Or perhaps you are a teacher wondering what think.com actually is and how it can help you in your teaching.



It is a software environment for schools that is accessed from the internet. The best way to start finding out what it does is to connect up and play with it. There is nothing like experience of something to give you a flavour of what it will contribute to your classroom.

Experimentation is the stage *before* this handbook begins. That's because what we are trying to do is to look at some of the fundamental tasks and principles the software supports that will make your teaching experience more engaging.

We hope the various topics below give you ideas. You do not need to read them in any particular order – look at the sections that apply to you personally. This technology is new. We are all finding out about how to use it in the classroom; its possibilities are bounded only by the imagination of those using it. We hope this handbook stimulates your thinking and enjoyment of using the technology of the twenty-first century.



Go to
www.think.com
or
www.think.com/demo

- You will need a user name and a password
- Ask for a guest ID from beehive_uk@oracle.com

About think.com

Communication via the Internet and effective interaction with the World Wide Web present teachers with new and unexpected challenges. What we all want is a safe environment where we can meet new goals – at all levels and in key subject disciplines.



Think.com offers just that. It offers a protected environment freely available on the web to schools, students and educators. It has been developed and sponsored by the Oracle Corporation as part of its 'Promise' to bridge the digital divide in education. The company is reacting to the Government's initiative to bring industry and education closer together by providing Primary, Middle and Secondary schools with a new collaborative tool.

The Government has set targets for ICT use in all schools by 2002 through the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) initiative. A number of studies and Government projects have indicated the benefits to be gained through the appropriate use of the Internet in education. Think.com can be used to support such activities as:

- discussion with experts in many fields for pupils and staff;
- support for learning outcomes planned for pupils' age and maturity;
- social and leisure use in school clubs and at home.

Think.com harnesses the power of Internet technology, allowing teachers and students from around the globe to share curriculum projects and ideas. Users can post up ideas, communicate and collaborate in a closed, and protected, educational environment.

This concept of an online education community may be new to you. It is one where individuals with a common educational interest use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as a tool for communication with each other and for individual or collaborative work as part of a learning agenda. The online community as a whole (a school for example) may comprise numerous smaller communities with narrower and more specific common interests (such as subject or year groups). Members may be students, teachers or education professionals.

About this handbook

The handbook is not a step-by-step guide on how to use the software. This information can be found on Help Files within the system. It considers how to use the software imaginatively and effectively in ways that may be new to you. In particular:

- *where* think.com can be effective for teaching key skills;
- *how* it helps pupils participate and freely interact with one another;
- *why* it could be a useful storehouse for work at various stages in the assessment process.

Many topics in this handbook offer 'Key Skill development points' as set out by the guidance booklets published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. These key requirements apply, in varying degrees of sophistication, at unit Levels 1 to 5 in the core subjects of Communication, Application of Number, Information Technology, Working with Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance and Problem Solving. Whilst these requirements are currently focussed on the post 16 year-old, it is clear that in ICT, the objectives move down to younger years very quickly. These Key Skills already form part of the activities required for Key Stages 3 and 4.



• Key Skill development points are highlighted throughout this handbook.
Look for the key symbol.

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8



Your focus will also be drawn to relevant parts of think.com that relate to Key Skills.

The margin suggestions will help teachers to focus on the parts of think.com that can help in the development of these Key Skills and gathering evidence for them. The thinking tools that aid these skills (explained in detail on page 28) will appear in bold where the text refers to a particular function.

This Handbook speaks about children and students equally. The tools can be used across the age groups, and the use of one term or the other does not imply that the activity described could be used more with one age group than the other.

The text refers to version 1.0 of the system and subsequent versions may vary in some details. For example, in version 1.0 all users publish their work in a **Newspaper** which can have several different pages. In version 2, this web space will not be called a newspaper any longer. Because of this, we are using the term **Home Page** for the personal web space that think.com offers to every school student on the system.

Similarly, version 2 will offer privileges to a School Manager that are not available in version 1. We have borne this in mind in writing this handbook.

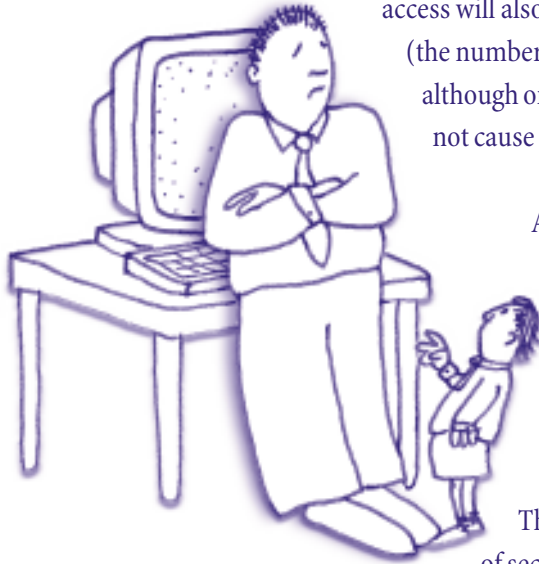
Although details of system terminology may change, the relevance of the teaching uses and approaches suggested in this handbook will remain.



1. the electronic challenge

Technical information

Remember the speed of access will depend on the type of connection to the internet your community has. Schools and other educational establishments are likely to have access to fast connections such as Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL) and International Standard Digital Network (ISDN) links. Speed of access will also be determined by the network traffic (the number of people on the net at the same time), although on ISDN and ADSL connections this should not cause any degradation in speed.



A typical home user would be connected via modem using an ordinary telephone cable. The connection speed depends on the speed of the slowest modem between you and your Internet Service Provider (ISP).

The software uses 'session cookies' (a type of security token system) which authenticates users (i.e. knows legitimate users and their levels of access). This means that anyone logging in has to be a valid member of a think.com community. Before you enter the system, you should set your internet browser preferences to 'accept cookies'. Don't worry, this is the default setting on most browsers. If you have changed the setting, you will continuously be directed back to the login screen.

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8



• If you are not a registered user, go to <http://think.oracle.co.uk> for registration details.

Think.com brings the power of the Oracle 8i internet platform to the classroom and the home. One of the greatest benefits is the integration and centralisation of information. Because the application is centrally managed by Oracle and accessible via a standard web browser, educators need not be bothered with the complexity of managing an information system.

Individuals have approximately 25MB of personal web space which remains theirs until they leave school at 18+.

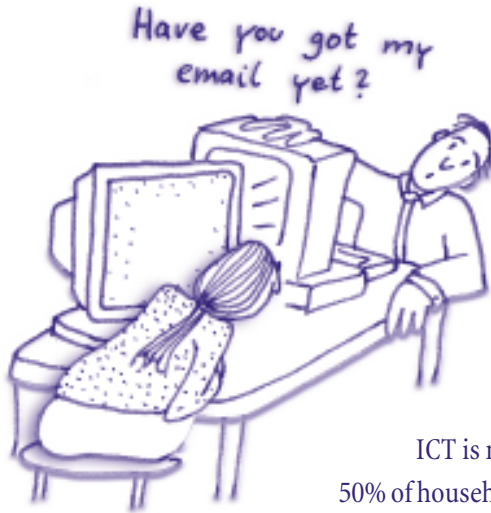
Purpose

Think.com is available and designed for youngsters from Primary School up through Secondary School. Its purpose is to offer a secure environment in which they can communicate with each other. But unlike email it also offers shared reading and writing areas where pupils can read and write content on subjects determined by their teachers as well as of their own choosing.

The mix of tools (detailed on page 28) marks out think.com as a significantly different resource that builds on the school community and reinforces the role of students as members of that community as well as individuals within it.

Like most activities that are worth doing, getting to grips with implementing think.com in your school will involve you in looking at a number of dimensions at the same time. The topics in this, and the next, section will raise some of the questions you need to consider before you implement the software in your school.

How ICT can support and extend teaching



ICT activities offer new and interesting ways of developing skills. As educators, you will be looking at its benefits as a primary focus.




The world of email and communication is becoming central to youngsters' out-of-school lives as well as to the adult workplace into which they will be moving. Children have an entitlement to learn how to use new tools effectively.

ICT is now seen as core to teaching and learning – over 50% of households with children in them have computers and, of these, over 40% have internet access. These proportions are significantly increasing all the time; although there are issues about out-of-school access for pupils that teachers will need to take into account (more on pages 21–22).

School usage

How ICT is delivered in school, where and when are all determined by the practicalities of the classroom which, despite new resources, often makes internet access difficult.

There seem to be four different management models of school use of ICT:

-  one or sometimes two computers as the classroom resource;
-  the computer suite – sometimes managed by particular subjects or departments;
-  the reference library where computers sit alongside books and other materials for reference;



the interactive projector generally managed by the teacher to present material during lessons.

Different classroom models are further discussed in the section on Classroom Strategies on page 15. Each makes specific demands on the software that is to be used, how students will access the computers, and offers various opportunities too.



Frequency of access

Online communities offer facilities that are different from software tools or content-rich materials such as CD-ROMs or the internet. To make communities work, members need to be able to get online frequently to read what has been written and to send new messages. Once every couple of weeks or so will not sustain interest. On the contrary, it will frustrate the communities considerably.

So if schools are to be able to use communities online, then access is perhaps the most important issue to consider. Schools have been most successful at introducing think.com when they have identified the limitations and opportunities of their internet provision. It is better to aim for a successful small project rather than a larger, unsatisfactory one.

You could start a project with just one class, or year group, of pupils who can all hope to access the system at least once a week, rather than make the service available to all, of whom only a small proportion ever manages to access the material.

If you are the ICT co-ordinator setting up the system, think carefully about the communities you need. It may be best to have an overarching community for your school, as well as class or year or project communities with pupils belonging both to specific sub-communities as well as to the school overall. It is easier to publish materials for a wide group of students to access if there is a whole school community.

Critical questions

Unless you and your colleagues engage with the set of questions below, you are likely to find think.com frustrating. So it is in your interest to consider the answers before you start. Each school will have different approaches. You may find it helpful to browse other parts of this handbook (where suggestions are given) and return to these questions later.

- ❓ How many internet-enabled computers are there?
- ❓ How many students can realistically share resources?
- ❓ When and what sort of teacher management of this process is required?
- ❓ When and what sort of teacher management is available?
- ❓ What are the realistic goals?
- ❓ How will the use of think.com support or enhance each term's learning plan?
- ❓ Can activity on think.com benefit pupils working towards specific qualifications?
- ❓ Which class or groups of students would best suit the project?
- ❓ Which class has project work or activities to be done that best match online activity?
- ❓ Does that class already have good computer skills? If so, it might be an ideal group to pilot think.com. As administrator of the project you will then be able to concentrate on the project rather than on the of pupils' skill development.



• Version 2 will offer a School Portal and the ICT co-ordinator will have a School Manager status.

• For more on setting up communities, see page 40.

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

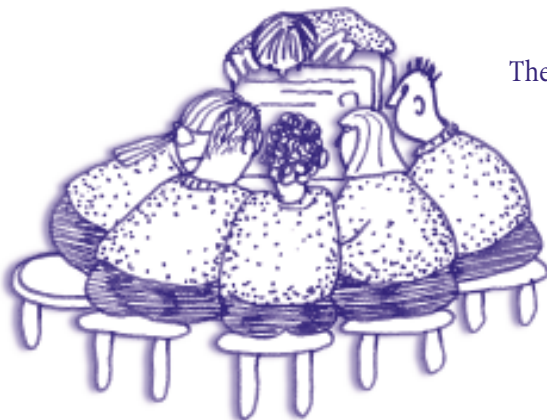
7

8

Finding support

It's useful to consider why you want to explore an online community. Separate out your objectives in terms of skills that you want young learners to develop from the content of the task you want them to explore. For example, if your purpose is to promote poetry writing by creating a number of poems that you will share with another school, and then have the audience respond, then focus on that as the task. The ICT skills students will need for this are subordinate to the main task.

Communities work best when they have something real to do; such as work to share, especially if this is with people in other institutions or environments. Projects based within the school will work well when each student is being asked to provide independent information to support a common goal – for example, parts of a story, or putting forward points of view for a **Debate**. Projects to share and amass data or to share reflection on a common experience work well between institutions. Groups of students might share measurements of daily weather characteristics, thoughts about a theatre or dance performance, or data on their own height or shoe size.



The value of the shared interface to the work is that not everyone has to be able to do it at the same time – it does not have the constraints of video-conferencing for example. But it can have a real immediacy, with different and new materials being posted at different times directed at a particular group of interested readers.

Classroom strategies

Using think.com from the computer suite

Entering information in think.com has to be done whilst online. This may not be practical in a computer suite at all times. If the task is to create an extended piece of writing, helping the students to write their texts off-line in a word-processor, and then uploading it into think.com achieves better results. This has advantages in fostering ICT skills – it encourages students to use two different applications at once, and copy and paste between one and the other. It also encourages them to think about the writing task separately from the presentation of it on screen.

Other tasks might involve shorter contributions from pupils – adding a sentence to a **Brainstorm** question, adding a single point to a **Debate**, reading a friend's work and commenting on it. These writing tasks will be better done online.

In both of these examples, the fact that a whole class or group of students are working at the same time means that a significant body of data can be produced relatively quickly and that the task of analysing that data can then begin at the next ICT suite lesson.

Using think.com from the classroom computer

If you are going online from the computer at the back of the classroom, the sequential nature of the contributions will mean that it takes longer for a class to complete a particular task. It may be more desirable in this situation that you ask the children to read what is written before they add their own contribution. This can encourage students to consider the response of others before they add their own thoughts. Mixing reading and writing tasks offers a powerful opportunity for students to engage more thoughtfully with the contributions of others.

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8



You may want to use either situation to encourage pupil-to-pupil communication.

The use of coloured Post-it note equivalents – **Stickies** – to comment on another child's work can be very encouraging. It's good to suggest rules and guidelines about the sort of comments that are acceptable at the outset. Young people quickly understand that they are both readers and writers and that therefore inappropriate comments are likely to rebound on the writer. Where communication is with youngsters in different schools there is growing evidence that talking to a friendly stranger can be very helpful. Year 9 boys have been known to comment that they were enjoying Shakespeare to someone who was just a name in a different community, a fact that amazed and delighted the teachers involved.

Revisiting work once everyone has contributed is a valuable activity to be completed in the classroom. Students can use the tools provided to summarise the outcomes – especially of **Debates**, or **Brainstorms**. They can also read and collect evidence of opinions in tabular or descriptive form using the tools to amass evidence either from within their own community or from a number of others.

Value of cross-fertilisation



There is growing evidence of the value of sharing projects with others. Students are more motivated to carry out the writing tasks presented. They can see why it makes sense to write up their ideas and work, so that others out of school or out of their class can share it. They also become more concerned about the quality of what they write – they see it as being critically appraised by their peers whose opinions they care about. The use of **Stickies** to offer feedback to each other is motivating because it shows that someone has read what they say and cares enough to reply.

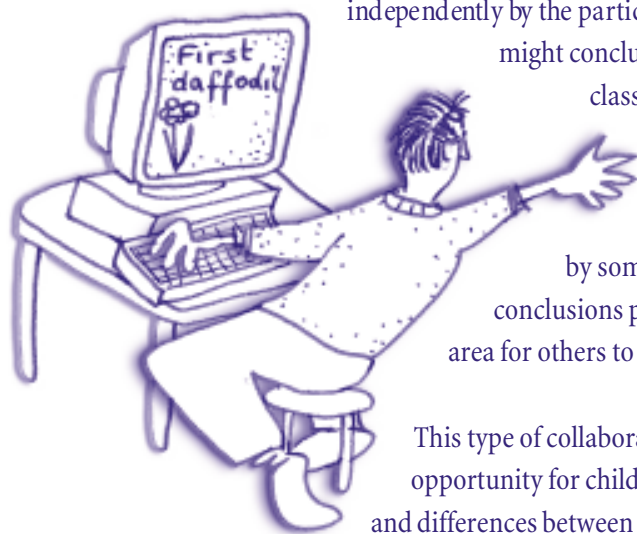
There is also benefit in projects where a number of schools are contributing data for all to share. For example, a project could be run to test the hypothesis that spring comes later to the UK the further north you go. You could set up **Debate** or **Brainstorm** about the sort of data to collect, such as when the first daffodils appeared, or the first sticky-buds or whatever the agreed indicators are. Students can share spreadsheets and then post them back to an agreed area. Different groups post the data, which can be analysed

independently by the participating groups. You might conclude the project in the

classroom, or on think.com, with a

Debate about the outcomes of the research. Outcomes of the **Debate** can be summarised

by some of the participants and the conclusions posted in the think.com news area for others to share too.



This type of collaborative research offers some opportunity for children to reflect on the similarities and differences between themselves and pupils in other

schools or other parts of the country. As links are forged between schools, the information exchange can become more personal. This offers a new dimension and level of interest that is highly motivating, and because it is reliant on the written word, it offers a stimulus for pupils' writing that can be immensely valuable.



• All areas

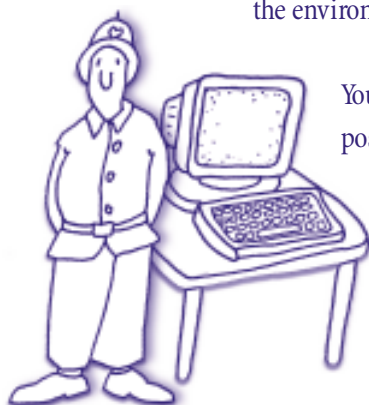


• All skills and levels

2. issues for schools

Access policy

Access to think.com is secure – only institutions which have signed the user agreement with Oracle Corporation can belong. It is offered widely to schools and some other related institutions, but security is paramount in ensuring that the environment is not abused by inappropriate groups or individuals.



Your institution has to take responsibility for the work that your pupils post. So you would be well-advised to develop an Internet Access Policy.

In fact, the DfEE requires that schools' ICT development plans for the NGfL must set out their policy to protect pupils from access to undesirable materials. Most such policies have an Acceptable Use Statement (for staff and senior students) and Rules for Responsible Internet Use (for younger pupils).

It is also vital to ask parents to sign a Permission Form. This makes sure that parents are aware of the responsibility they have towards their children using the system appropriately. It also ensures that they are aware that material that is technically their child's copyright will be being published on the internet. If you intend to use photographs of children alongside their names, then you will need to have signed permission from the child's parents to do this.

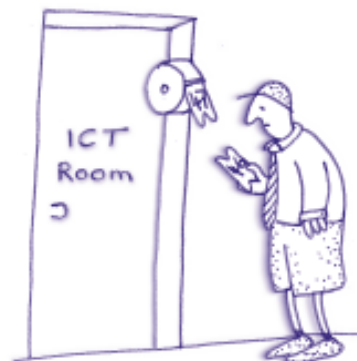


• If you are not a registered user, go to <http://think.oracle.co.uk> for registration details.

Every user needs a personal code and password to get in (supplied by Oracle). Once you have received login information for your pupils then you need to manage this within the school environment. It is all too easy to forget the password and so it makes sense to have a conversation with the class about choosing

a password they will remember. The school manager will always be able to change any student's password if – for any reason – they need interactive access to the student's work.

Individual children will need time to access their accounts. If think.com is a book-marked internet site, then access should not take long. It may be possible to implement a system such that pupils can check their email and **Stickies** before school and during breaks. It might be valuable to differentiate activity that is about communication between users, which could be checked for out-of-lesson hours, and communications that are directly related to the tasks in hand, which form part of the work activity.



Time within the curriculum

Using think.com offers an opportunity to develop ICT skills, and for developing literacy and thinking skills. It is clearly important that these are identified and shared with colleagues across the school so that familiarity with ICT can make a contribution in a number of different subject areas.

The ICT skills that think.com addresses are identified in the Schemes of Work published by QCA both within the ICT document and also within subject specific Schemes of Work. Attention is paid to the writing task (especially for different audiences), evaluating information, and so on. The balance and mixture of online / offline activity ensures that pupils are encouraged to develop higher-order skills. Using think.com to satisfy ICT requirements can clearly be justified in terms of meeting the pupils' needs.



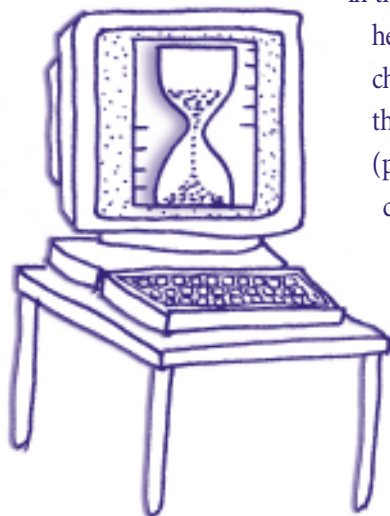
For supporting information go to:

- www.kented.org.uk/ngfl/policy.html
- www.acitt.org.uk/aup.html
- www.becta.org.uk/info-sheets/parents.html

The environment helps enhance and develop thinking skills in other subject areas. In science, for example, a debate could be set up to argue through the pros and cons of a controversial activity – such as GM foods or genetic testing. Think.com offers a format for discussion amongst pupils through its **Brainstorm**, **Conversation** and **Debate** tools that allow pupils to develop and present their knowledge in a formal way. Identifying suitable opportunities for activities of this sort depends on viewing the curriculum in terms of the type of discourse and discussion that pupils need to have to understand a specific way of thinking.

Management of pupils' work

Think.com is a publishing medium; every community has its own site. This displays work, focuses activity through time and can act as an archive. **Debates**, **Brainstorms** and **Hotseats** can be set up for a limited time, completed and then summarised for others to read. The final outcome can be archived in the **Gallery**. This lack of permanence is both refreshing and helpful. It is refreshing in that the community can seem new and changing and therefore worth re-visiting regularly. It also allows the community owner to collect work over a period of time (perhaps a year) and identify changes and progression. This can be very helpful both for assessing children's progress and demonstrating to them that they have moved forward during the year.



As a teacher you will need to find time to interact with the materials your students are producing. You can send email communications to groups very quickly. **Stickies** can be placed next to their work, which can be very powerful and

motivating to young people. It takes longer to look at 30 pages, read and comment, than it does to send group email, but there is evidence that the direct link between the comment and the pupil's work is especially valuable.

Pupils can post up work in two different ways. They can create a piece of work as a draft visible only to themselves by choosing the 'Only Me' button in their own **Gallery** to decide who can see the work. Alternatively, they can save it for 'Everyone' so others can read it if they wish. There will also be options for teacher and pupil to interact on the material before it is available to others.

Students can put together several different portfolios containing pages of their own materials and ideas from a variety of resources that they create.

It is for this reason that it is advisable to create an overarching community. If you want students' work to be displayed for all to see, then the school or community should publish a showcase of work on its site.

Home support

One of the clear benefits that think.com offers is that children can see the work they were doing in school when they are at home. Given that home computer time is usually much less constrained than in school, this can be a real advantage.

Assignments can be completed at home, or work can be set specifically as homework to be completed on the system. This removes the need for pupils to bring in disks from home that may be virus-bearing and avoids infecting the school system.



- Creating and managing communities
- Home Page



- Develop information in the form of text, images and numbers.
- Work through action points to develop tasks on time.

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

This does present some equal opportunity issues for schools. For those who do not have computers at home or online access, making resources available to them can be a problem. Time spent online is still an issue for parents, not just because of the cost of metered phone calls, but also because it can clog up their home phone line. The new ADSL services may be beyond the pocket of many households.

Think.com may not work in some cybercafé or library environments since it relies on form-filling to secure password entry and not all venues will permit that. If think.com is to be a community-wide resource, then the school will need to address this. For example, it may be possible to make computers available after school and at break times specifically for those who lack access at home. As with any homework set for children, the system works best when the task is clearly defined and does not rely on pupils remembering what the lesson had been about in order to continue appropriately.

It is also possible for students to post questions to staff from their home access. Careful thought needs to be given to that and its management implications. Having 20 questions presented in your in-box from students working at home may not be an efficient use of teacher time. On the other hand, one of the benefits of think.com is that the system indicates when a piece of work is written so, as the teacher, you can monitor those students who are active as opposed to those who are not.



3. tools for development

Core ICT skills

Think.com offers a number of different strategies to youngsters for developing and demonstrating their ICT skills. These are discussed below in terms of the new Key Skill Qualifications, but as you read these you will note that many of these new skills relate closely to the Schemes of Work that have been developed for Key Stages 2 and 3. What is unusual about think.com is its ability to develop skills in ICT whilst also challenging ways of writing and thinking.

Children need to develop a range of skills in ICT, and they also need to relate them to the communication task and to the subject with which they are working. One of the conundrums for teachers is to decide when the use of ICT helps to achieve teaching objectives in a subject or at a phase of development, and when it is less effective or inappropriate. That said, the National Curriculum has certain ICT requirements that no one can afford to ignore. At a simple level, all pupils are expected to:

- ① use ICT to answer valid questions appropriate to the subject matter being taught;
- ② save work, evaluate and improve it using computer technology.

Think.com gives particularly strong encouragement to activities using words. It has a **Toolbox** that offers a range of formats for interaction. The tools provide users with mechanisms and templates for discussion or interaction that will support and stretch the way they think (see page 28 for further details of the **Toolbox**). This can be of great benefit to the teacher who needs to:



- use ICT with a whole class or a group for introducing or reviewing a topic and ensuring that all pupils cover the key conceptual features of the topic;
- organise individuals, pairs or groups of children working with ICT to ensure that each participant is engaged, that collaborative effort is balanced, and that the teacher can intervene if necessary;
- make ICT resources available to pupils so they can achieve subject-related objectives.



• All areas



• All skills and levels,
especially related to
planning and presenting
information and
assessing own learning
performance

Think.com's underlying architecture relies on one of the most powerful databases in the world, which gives it a great deal of flexibility in supporting these – and many other – aims. If students need to understand how databases function, you could talk to them about what happens to their work on think.com. They will discover how a database can re-order their individual contributions in a number of different ways. At a simple level, they will see how to prioritise their contributions by arranging their pieces in a chosen order. At more complex levels they will see how they can interact with the various thinking tools described below (page 28) and how their votes and choices can make a difference.

Those who are learning HyperText Markup Language (HTML) coding will benefit from their ICT skills. Students can write HTML code direct into the drop-down boxes that the system offers. In this way they can change the look of the website they have on the system. This will present some users with an interesting challenge and enables them to create content with more visual sophistication.

Tasks and evidence



The Key Skill Qualifications for post 16 education students starting in September 2000 are designed to be included in formal records of achievement and contribute to UCAS points.

Key Skills require students to collect a portfolio of particular evidence that naturally occurs in their other studies. Think.com is a good tool for demonstrating the requirements of the Key Skills in IT, Communication, and Application of Number. It is also a good medium for assembling and presenting Key Skills evidence for assessment.

The specifications for Key Skills require certain qualities of tasks and evidence. These terms are listed below together with suggestions how think.com can help your students meet the requirements.

Complex

Complex subjects and materials present a number of ideas, some of which may be abstract, very detailed or deal with sensitive issues. Think.com's various **Discussion Tools (Brainstorm, Debate, Conversation, Hotseat)** supply the basics, providing powerful tools to help children to debate issues. The youngsters can feel empowered to add their point of view to the anonymous discussion in a **Brainstorm** whereas in class they might feel more anxious about peer opinion. **Stickies, Email** and the **List Tool** provide tools for classmates to offer feedback to their peers and for teachers to comment directly on the child's work.

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8



- Throughout all the communities



- One-to-one and group discussion at simple and complex levels
- Carry out effective searches
- Plan how to obtain and use information

Details of the Key Skills
are at
[http://www.qca.org.uk/
keyskills/](http://www.qca.org.uk/keyskills/)

Evidence

Examples of written material, artwork, photographs, audio/video recordings, computer print-outs, diagrams and records are all evidence. The **Toolbox** offers the opportunity to experiment with all these. It is possible for individuals to upload their own work into a personal **Gallery** which also provides a chance to show background thinking. The **Gallery** can be equated to the old-fashioned 'rough book', best work can move straight from the **Gallery** to the student's own show pages, or **Home Page**.

Extended documents

Reports, articles and essays of more than three pages to identify lines of reasoning and structuring writing count as extended documents. The **Toolbox** can be used to support anyone writing long documents which can be posted up from the **Document** function.

Straightforward

Content is put across in a direct way with the main points being easily identified. Think.com's **Article** template has a box in which a brief summary of the article is written. This encourages the writer to think carefully about the purpose of a piece of work.

Substantial activity

This applies to a number of related tasks, where the results of one task will affect the carrying out of the others. Think.com has developed a means of linking school communities with each other. **Explore** is a search facility that enables users to look round other open communities and see if anyone is doing similar

work to their own. Users can **Explore Content** by searching on keywords – for example, if another school is doing work on racism or prejudice, then others can find out what they are doing, get ideas and interact with them.

Portfolio

A portfolio is a file or folder for collecting and organising evidence for assessment. The **Gallery** is a folder which holds all work loaded into the student's web space. Finished work is 'published' from the **Gallery** to the **Home Page**, which acts effectively as an assessment portfolio.

Thinking tools

Most children develop their thinking by participating in classroom discussion. This helps them to verbalise and to spark ideas off each other. They also need the corresponding language skills to equip them for a world where study, work, and leisure make new demands on the writing ability of the individual. This requires an ability to think logically, sequentially and to write clearly.

Think.com offers a number of useful ways of developing these requirements *in addition to* classroom interaction. The difference between using a software solution and traditional written work is the ease of collaboration. It supplements class work, developing new techniques at the same time. All members of the class are encouraged to participate and it gives individuals a sense of pride and shared ownership.



In the **Toolbox** there are buttons that have the functionalities outlined below.



Article

The **Article** tool is useful for any piece of written work – an essay, a report, a poem, homework assignments of all kinds, or even teachers' lesson plans and announcements. Most people will find it easier to write off-line and then upload the piece to the **Gallery**. You can also add HTML coding and upload it in a form that gives more control of the look of the piece than the default settings. Users may find it easier to do this using software that can generate HTML coded output in a graphical interface program which automatically adds the required coding (remembering to paste the code itself into the **Article** textbox). A cautionary word here; students tend to want to use a variety of fonts or animation features when they do this, just because you can. It can be helpful to talk about this and decide when adding features is fun and when it's just irritating.



Brainstorm

You can initiate a topic and ask the class to add ideas or answer a question. For example, 'Do you think school summer holidays are too long? Give reasons.' Or 'Should everyone celebrate Black History Month?' Contributions are anonymous so everyone can concentrate on the ideas themselves. When you have collected a variety of ideas, you can then ask the group to vote – i.e. to tick boxes next to the ideas they agree with. When they have done this, you can set the **Brainstorm** in summary mode and the software will automatically give percentages to show which ideas were the most popular.

Debate

The debating area is more formal. Participants are identified by name (and picture) and can argue a position. For example, 'Everyone should be vegetarian. Discuss.' The **Debate** tool allows students to add a statement relating to the proposition. It can also be set up with five different debating positions – totally agree and totally disagree being the extremes (the user decides what terms to use). This can encourage clear thinking and the framework allows students to contribute both their views and the reasons behind them. When the **Debate** finishes, the software counts the positions people have taken to show whether people supported the original point of view. As in the **Brainstorm**, a further step is for pupils to draw something meaningful from this automatic function so they can write a summary based on what the percentages information shows.



Document

Students can post up their own documents to share with others. This is particularly useful for word-processed documents (essays, or questionnaires, for example), spreadsheets (for numerical work) and presentation slideshows (for personal presentation skills). The computer on which these are displayed must have the correct plug-ins.



Conversation

This could be similar to a **Debate**, but the aim is to encourage pupils to write dialogue. It can be helpful if you suggest that each contributor responds to the contribution from last person. Suggestions range from, 'Has anyone seen a good film lately?' to 'I wonder what it's like being a twin', or 'Does anyone actually like doing homework?'





Hotseat

This is the 'Ask the expert' zone. Your groups can ask the person in the **Hotseat** questions on a specific topic. This could be made into a game, like Mastermind, so that it becomes both fun and educationally useful. Each student could have a turn in the **Hotseat** answering questions about a special interest or hobby. Or you could ask them to pretend to be a character in history – in which case they would need to spend some time finding out about that person beforehand.

Alternatively, you might invite a member of staff, a parent, or a local volunteer to sit in the **Hotseat** for a limited amount of time. For example, your local policeman might agree to look at pupils' questions on road safety or a popular author might agree to answer questions about writing. You'll want to be careful whom you invite as a temporary guest. Make sure they sign the appropriate agreements and only keep their guest password for a limited amount of time so that you always know who has access to the system at any one time.



Image, audio and video

The feature handling images and sound or film clips is called **Intermedia** and is useful for multimedia. However, users may want to consider storage implications here. Mixed media occupy a great deal of space so it's best to try and minimise file sizes and to use these features sparingly.

As a general guideline, depending on file formats and compression technologies, you could expect that

- 1 MB = 250 A4 pages of plain text
- = 3 colour images
- = 3 minutes of sound
- = 30 seconds of video

The supported image formats are **gifs** and **jpeg**s and the audio files are **.wav**, **.avi**, **.ra** and **mpeg**. As not many schools have sound and video recording studios, there is likely to be a natural restriction on use of audio and video. Scanners, however, are very common so teachers might consider some awareness-raising that it's only really OK to scan in pupils' own art-work or photographs. See also page 51 on using material that belongs to other people.

List

This is another useful thinking tool, which the thoughtful teacher can use in a variety of collaborative ways. It is intended for a list of URLs, but is more versatile than that. It can form a quiz function, for example 'List the Kings and Queens of England', or 'Name ten Italian composers'. It can stimulate shared interests, such as 'What are the best computer games?' or 'Our favourite websites are ...'. Use of the **List** can be a shared activity that the group discusses before going onto the computer. Or it can be part of a student's **Home Page** as a free expression of personal interests. This encourages participation as well as an ability to engage with other people's interests.

Think.com's thinking tools can be as unlimited as your own imagination. It's often just a case of seeing how to harness their power to your own needs. One useful way of doing this is to see how other people have used them. Once on the system, you can go to **Explore Content** and search on **Brainstorm**, **Debate**, **Conversation**, **Hotseat** and **List** and browse the ideas.



• **Toolbox**



• **All areas of the requirements for communications, problem-solving and working with others.**

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8



- Home Page
- Article



- Identify ways to further improve performance
- Explore, develop and exchange information

Personal profiling and achievement



As with any community, introductions are important. Children can create their own profiles on their pages within think.com and while doing so, should be aware of the potential reader who may see what they have to say. This is a good opportunity to discuss and define what others might want to know. It can form the future basis of learning how to write a CV.



It's worth setting time aside to allow children to read what others have written. They often learn best from each other, and commenting on someone else's work allows them to reflect on their own writing too. **Stickies** can give an opportunity to practise tact and diplomacy as well as encouragement and enthusiasm. Imagining themselves in the shoes of the receiver of that comment is important to successful **Sticky** use.

There are opportunities within think.com for students to put together pages of information that might be conclusions drawn from a piece of project work, or some writing about what they felt about their work. They can use the **Gallery** to store portfolios of material they have created, and remind themselves of work that they have done through the year.

The discussion tools can be useful in wrapping up a project and reflecting on such questions as:

- ❓ What did you learn?
- ❓ What did you like doing best?
- ❓ What will you do differently next time?

The tools encourage all the young people to become owners of their own learning. These sort of reflective tasks do not have to take long and they need not be completed in the classroom. They can be very valuable as a reminder of how the project or topic worked when re-visited sometime later.

Learning to organise

There is plenty of opportunity for collaborative activity (details of good working practice are on page 61). Groups can work together to produce a final piece of work, which might include text, pictures, graphics and video. Think.com gives pupils opportunities to plan how their work should look on the screen and to combine the effects of these different media. Think.com will not actually demand that children use different media, but it gives them plenty of opportunities to do so. They can put together work for others to comment on too.

Conducting surveys and questionnaires is sometimes easier online than it is face to face. Children can create questionnaires as a word-processed document to post to their pages for others to fill in and send back. Then they can collect and analyse the data. They can publish their findings and start off debates about them too.

Think.com offers opportunities to discuss and use time management skills. For example, youngsters will have to plan when a **Brainstorm** needs to finish to make sure they have the data in time for the next lesson. Perhaps others need to read some materials before they enter their comments into the **Debate**. Making links to these materials or providing them for others to read needs to be given some time, as well. This sort of planning is often difficult to achieve in school. But because this software puts a time-stamp on a number of processes, it can help focus youngsters on the steps they need to take in the tasks they are doing. In particular, they can learn to identify group or individual elements and then publish a bit at a time.



- **Brainstorms**
- **Debates**
- **Articles**
- **Intermedia**

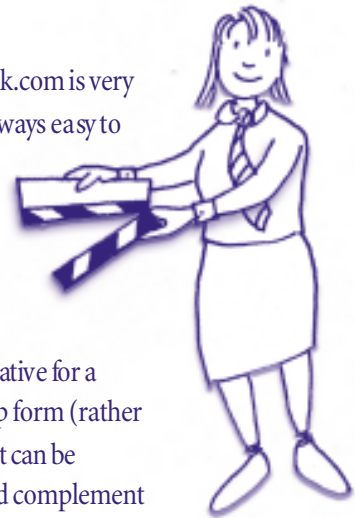


- **Plan and use different sources to search for and select information**
- **Use support given by others to help meet targets**

Multimedia potential



Pictures, sounds and videos come in all formats and sizes. Think.com is very accommodating to a wide range of graphics and sounds. It is always easy to produce text as there are templates included within think.com that will allow you to do so. Children's work will be much more satisfactory to them if they are able to include images and sound files too.



It is an important skill to identify which format is most informative for a particular purpose. Directions to a venue can be created in map form (rather than words); or a picture can illustrate a recipe. There is a lot that can be achieved by encouraging pupils to create images that inform and complement their writing, not simply illustrate it.



- Article
- Intermedia

See the
demonstration site at
www.think.com/demo



- Present information,
including text,
numbers and images

It is of course important that the students remember that they must respect copyright (see also page 51). Just because they have found a good picture or piece of music on the web does not mean that they can freely copy it. This can be a good opportunity for drawing and then scanning in images that they have created, so using other ICT skills.

As bandwidth and speed of access improve, it will become easier to use full multimedia potential. For example, if you have a digital video camera you could film your class carrying out a chemistry experiment, or could keep a video diary, or video a sports event. Be wary of the amount of space video takes up, though, and that it can be slow to upload and download.

One school used a live link with the NASA Glenn Research Center Learning Technologies Project in the USA. They showed video material of a range of science experiments carried out by pupils

aged 12 to 17 and a NASA expert commented, 'Science lessons look like more fun in the UK than in the USA'. Neil Armstrong personally praised a poem by one of the 12 year-olds, which then went up on the NASA web site.

Multimedia sharing of this sort opens up an exciting new future.

... and action!



4. communities online

What is an online community?

An online or virtual community is a gathering of people in an online 'space' where they connect, communicate and get to know each other better using the internet.

It works best if there is a 'leading light' – someone who wants to make the community happen – perhaps the person in charge of literacy hour, or the chess club, or the geography field trips. Consider that to be you. You'll be the facilitator, the one whose enthusiasm makes it happen. You could be a gardener, a conductor, the leader of a jazz group, or (of course) a teacher.



Your members might be a subject group, a class, a club, a society or perhaps a whole year-group. You'll want to know what they need; how being online makes a difference; and how it can enhance your normal teaching practice.

Each community will be what you and your members make of it, everyone in it has a personal responsibility to make it succeed. And it will if there is a genuine sense of purpose, ownership and audience with shared aims, goals and interests. A system like think.com is easy to use on computers connected to the internet – and ease of use is a prime requisite of any online community. It will work best where everyone can have trouble-free access. Participants need to feel they can *and want* to make the time to use it.

The value of *think.com* in the school context has been outlined on pages 11–14. Community-building can lead to a rethinking of teaching strategies.

For example:

- peer support and collaboration;
- an increase in the variety of course delivery;
- opportunities to set group assignments;
- encouraging peer assessment.

Online communities and virtual workgroups do not always ‘happen’ spontaneously. They often require care and nurturing: facilitation. That’s a commitment for a teacher, but it is one well worth making because the motivation and enthusiasm for joining in can have a significant impact on children’s skills of self-expression.

Why communities matter

Schools are complicated places, and operate at a number of different levels. An environment such as *think.com* offers some new mechanisms whereby pupils can take responsibility for their own activities. Where *think.com* is readily accessible, young learners can use it as a tool for organising themselves. They can use it to set up meetings of groups and clubs, to manage and collect evidence for the school council, to plan future activities of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. All of these tasks are part of what the school community is currently about, but the added dimension of electronic communication adds powerfully to the efficiency with which these sub-communities run.



See the
demonstration site at
www.think.com/demo

Ask for a guest ID from
beehive_uk@oracle.com

In using think.com in this way, youngsters are learning many skills about communication and ways of influencing others. They can experiment with ways of writing that will influence, report, inform, or question. The value in the community context is that all of these activities are real. They are not artificial exercises designed to teach particular skills, and as such, young people will value them and be stimulated by them. Teachers have already found that think.com can motivate children at all levels to produce work that would not have happened with pen and paper. The comments of others and the ease of editing make the honing of the piece of writing both acceptable and worthwhile in children's eyes.

Think.com also makes group responsibility a tangible phenomenon. Students have the responsibility for checking their areas regularly, for updating information and so on. In Citizenship Studies, think.com can be a powerful way of exploring some of the issues of personal responsibility, rights, freedom of speech and so on.

Community rights

An online community – especially in a school or college – will always need to have different access rights for individuals within the community. Different members will also access different communities.

Clearly you want reassurance that you can exercise some sort of control to deal with trouble-makers. One of the concerns is that students, let loose in an online environment, will post up personally abusive, pornographic or inflammatory materials. Most schools have filtering software to help detect the worst offences, but bullying by email or **Stickies** is much harder to spot. It is important to make clear to all children that they can both write comments and receive them, and that they should not write upsetting comments about a classmate's work.

Except for the **Brainstorm** (which is anonymous) all other contributions automatically have their author's name affixed. So it is easy to spot who is responsible for inappropriate content.

It's never easy to monitor such activities – whether in a physical or a virtual world. But it can be easier to deal with in an online community. This is done by assigning 'roles' or 'rights' to individuals determining when, where and whether they are allowed to post up material and by removing privileges from those who transgress. In some public online communities there is a moderator; others have password-protected areas.

Think.com has five levels of rights – **Owner, Editor, Reporter, Reader** and **Guest**. Each of these is explained in the Glossary and the roles range from **Owners**, who have power of veto and are ultimately responsible for what happens within the communities, to **Guests**, who are not members and can only browse in public areas.

Ownership is vital to the concept of a safe online environment for children. The school manager has an administrative role and can simply change a trouble-maker's password or access rights in order to disable undesirable activity.

Schools may want to consider carefully who should have **Owner** or **Editor** status. It need not be a single individual – indeed shared responsibility is probably best, and means that someone will be available to act should the occasion arise. One possibility is for a senior member of staff to share the **Owner** ID and password with trusted personnel and to develop internal policies for using it. Future versions of the system may allow associative privileges which would obviate the need to share IDs. See page 49 for further ideas on usage policies.








- Throughout all the communities

Setting up an online community



Only those with top access levels can actually create (or delete) a think.com community. If you are not the **Owner** or **Editor**, you may need to negotiate with a school manager to set up a community with a name of your choice.

Once that is done, the steps it takes to set up a community generally follow this pattern.

1.  Familiarise yourself with the technology – so that you have at least mastered the basics and can help others to do the same. Think.com has some Help Files and you may find it easiest to print them off so you can use them when you are at the screen.
2.  Identify your community purpose – having a clear focus will help to give participants what they want.
3.  Decide who in the school can join – who will be a part of the community? Some communities will be set up when your school registers with think.com; on other occasions you will be using the **Invite Members** or **Assign** function which lets you bring in people from anywhere on the system.
4.  Consider which of think.com's interaction tools would serve your purpose and audience and how to structure the space – make think.com work for you. See the ideas in this handbook and on the demo site at **www.think.com/demo**. Think about how you want to manage your community – is it optional; is it part of the lesson plan; when will people access think.com?
5.  How will people introduce themselves in the community – it may be helpful to provide the community members with a template or framework to produce their own profile on their **Home Page**. They might do this in a word processor and then transfer the information



- Home Page
- Membership of communities



- Create opportunities for others to contribute when appropriate

to think.com when they are online. Is it permissible to use photo images of the children, or are they going to draw a picture of themselves, scan it in, and then upload it to their space?



Start it off with materials the group can relate to – keep it simple at the beginning. Have clear tasks that need to be completed by a specific time. If possible, encourage the children to access think.com in their own time. This will give them opportunities to review each other's work and explore more widely.



Draw in the members and give them tasks. Identify activities that make them browse the environment with the **Explore** function. They could collect data about other schools and communities as part of a data collection exercise. They could find out how many people have the same sur name as themselves. Activities such as these encourage exploration and a better knowledge of what the wider community is about.



Make sure members understand how to behave online – you may need to produce some guidelines on 'netiquette'.



Keep up the momentum. Some of the tools readily set timescales by which all the contributions must have been made. Using these enables some things to finish whilst others are just starting. It keeps the community area fresh and interesting.



Of all these, the last is probably the most challenging. Community leaders (offline as well as online) foster member interaction, provide stimulating material for conversations, keep the space cleaned up and help hold the members accountable to their own guidelines. You will be the one providing leadership, giving the community a focus, stimulating group interaction, offering support, team-building, refereeing, dealing with problems, timekeeping and responding to member feedback.

You can also divide the main space into smaller sub-communities and help community members do these things for themselves. It is all too easy for an online space to get side-tracked, disrupted or simply abandoned. You can save yourself a great deal of aggravation if you are aware of these possibilities at the outset.

Newcomer confusion



• First visit



• Help to move
discussion forward

When you come into an unfamiliar room for the first time, you start by looking around to get your bearings. The same is true in the online world, and there is an added constraint that not everyone is happy with electronic interaction. Generally speaking, school-children will have no difficulty with the idea of joining an online community. But teachers may want to reflect on these points:



- ⊙ If you have reluctant users, see if you can discover why – it could be technical or personal insecurity.
- ⊙ Consider the optimum size of the community – if it is too big you will get youngsters who hog the limelight and lurkers who do not participate fully.
- ⊙ Establish good initial relationships.
- ⊙ ‘Sell’ online discussion by spelling out the benefits. You could see how it might enhance lesson plans, or what is in it for the students.
- ⊙ Open sub-groups to discuss specific or burning issues if necessary.

Once newcomers have joined in:


- ⊙ Make sure there is something to read and there is a real reason to engage with the community.
- ⊙ Ensure all participants know the purpose of each community group.

- Ensure familiarity with the online communication system.
- Encourage introductory messages, especially if there has been no prior face-to-face meeting.
- Establish clear guidelines within which to work.
- Encourage reluctant members to contribute by:
 - sending email messages;
 - inviting joint contributions;
 - commenting on contributions in the **Gallery** before they are published;
 - refocussing discussions if they are losing impetus or wandering aimlessly.

Keeping communities going

It is a challenge to make an online community succeed. One of the difficulties is that it is primarily text-based. Think.com does support images, audio and video, but in reality the word is all-important. This is educationally useful because it encourages reading, and writing with care and darity. Students will start to make decisions for themselves about what they want to read or enjoy reading. They may start to work together collaboratively and find ways in which they can successfully argue their corner online.

Use text effectively, and encourage your members to use text effectively, to engage participation and to respond to them. Here are some ideas.

-  Ask members to create personal profiles – it's good for writing skills and good for getting to know each other. Remember that very often the hardest thing to do is to take that first step; it may be that a little spoon-feeding is needed initially (for example providing a template or framework from which to develop their first personal profile).



- Community owners and editors



Write articles that will appeal to the group members – and don't leave them at the top of the page for months at a time. The **Edit Paper** option allows you to **Order Rows**, which is a way of moving topics up and down the electronic page. Try new topics, vary them so members can be engaged or re-engaged. Invite others to write articles, or to suggest new topics.



Initiate group work – a debate, a discussion, a never-ending story, a list of favourite 'somethings'.



Provide relevant news stories about topics of interest, web resources or quotes. These can be linked directly to web site URLs and so children can go directly to pages you want them to see. You can present your topic task list in this way – read this web information, read the article you have pasted in, and write a report in your area about what you conclude.



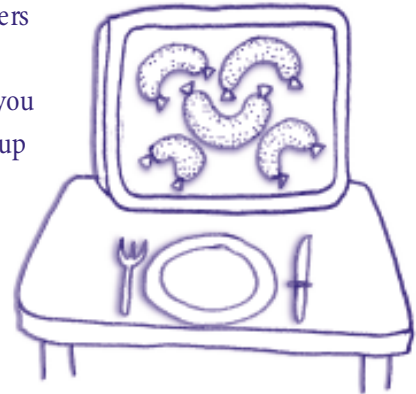
Respond to member feedback – children love using the **Stickies** because it shows someone is responding to their work. Encourage them to respond to each other in this way (though as teacher you may wish to protect yourself from a deluge of notes).



Encourage sub-groups – make new communities and appoint school-children as monitors to organise them. The monitors might also have their own community and be encouraged to share their experiences and identify what does (or does not) work well.



Provide technical assistance and Help Files – new members should have access to a mentor or guide. Think.com has its own Help Files and you may want to print them off or amend them with your own additions.



Finally, someone has to do some housekeeping (removing old material) otherwise the community becomes static and therefore dead – just as it would in the offline world.

Closed and open groups

The dosed environment offered by **think.com** is ideal for the classroom. Because it is a private system, a school manager can administer teacher and student accounts. Private sub-groups within communities on the system give privacy and protection to members of those communities.

Think.com lets teachers decide whether community groups are open to anyone on the system or only to members invited to join. It will be part of the schools policy to decide whether their school is – effectively – a private intranet using the technology that think.com provides, or whether it is a mini-internet – open to people registered on the system only, not the world at large.

In considering whether to be a dosed or open community, weigh up the attractions and values in adopting both forms at different times. A closed community means that no one will add comments to work your pupils create. No one will contribute new ideas either. An open community means that all think.com users can potentially read articles, and all will view spelling errors or factual errors. On the other hand, an open community allows others to get involved too – another school in a different area working on the same topic can pool resources. If all school communities are closed, then the wider benefits of a global sense of community are diminished.



• [Create a Community](#)

5. publication online

Home page



Many think.com projects start on the **Home Page**. Teachers find it encourages students to write text about themselves offline in a traditional word-processor and then cut and paste it into think.com. As a writing activity, this helps students to focus on what is important for someone else to know. As an ICT skills activity, it provides a real purpose for cutting and pasting between two applications running simultaneously.

Children can illustrate what they write about themselves either with photographs or with drawings. There can be issues about publishing photographs together with names of children, even though it is a secure community. Photographs or drawings of places that are important to the children can be very informative, and are a good reason for either managing a digital camera and the images it creates or for scanning in pictures to be used on the page. Again combining information in this way is an important skill.



- Gallery
- Toolbox



- Present information including text, numbers and images

Once the information is created, children can choose to display it in a variety of formats. Their page is divided into rows and students can make choices about which is the most important information and which less important. They can also decide to create articles in draft or finished form by choosing whether they are visible to everyone or only to themselves.

Children who regularly add a new item will find that their pages are read more often. The page counts can be a great incentive to some children (the software automatically shows how many people have visited a particular page). Recognising this, and making sure they are aware of their readership and have an opportunity

to put information up regularly, is an important part of maintaining a community. **Stickies** welcoming other new users to the system can be helpful and give writers an incentive to keep writing. If you are working together with another school, it is very important to make sure children have thought about the person receiving the **Sticky** and what they would like to hear in a message.

Inviting other readers to come to read your personal pages by putting an advertisement for it on your community pages also offers opportunities for discussion about marketing and how you let people know that there is something there to read.

Combining resources for assignments

Some communities have used the tools to present assignments to students. There are a number of tools that can be used in a combination of different activities to support one project. You can use the **List** tool to save lists of tasks or lists of URLs to be searched and read before answering questions, contributing to a **Brainstorm**, or completing an **Article** (see page 28 for details of each function). Setting up a set of tasks in this way focuses the children on a logical progression of work, and helps them to see desired outcomes very clearly.

Publishing work for students provides a pressure to use online resources outside the classroom and every school adopts different ways in which they address the issue of computer access. This has proved to be a very successful use of think.com where students complete work begun in class when at home. When they have completed the assignment, you can choose to post it for all to see and read, or just comment on the work the individual student has done for their attention only. This much more closely matches the normal model of classroom working, but given support there may be more value in other students seeing the work too and understanding why it is a good example.



- **Toolbox**
- **Stickies**



- **Present information from different sources and for two different audiences**
- **Present information, including text, numbers and images**

The common format also removes barriers of age and school. A number of projects have been set up to support particular activities – theatre visits, or poetry week or a music and movement session. When complete, the students have used think.com to write up their thoughts or critique of the event. Children often dismiss what others say because they are younger than they are, or merely a girl! Through using think.com, groups of different ages and academic levels can share information and experiences, and comment on them safely and openly in ways that may not be so easily accepted or successful within the classroom.

Editorial standards and social responsibility



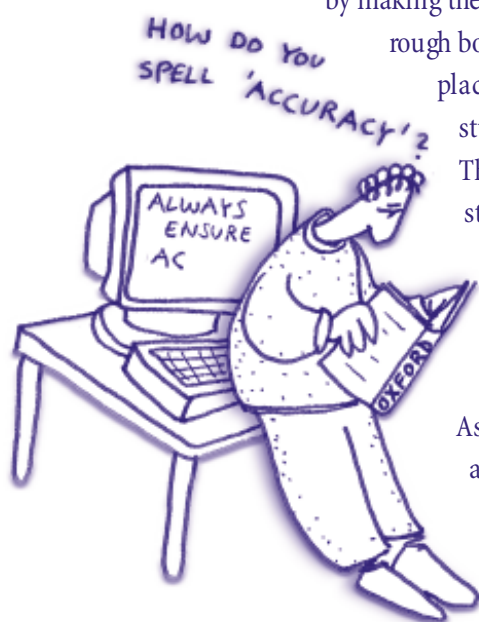
Posting an **Article** online is, in effect, publication, even though it only goes before a limited community. Think.com lets students hide draft work from general view

by making them private in the **Gallery**. The personal **Gallery** is a bit like a

rough book – indeed think.com's own language describes it as a place where you can put all your own 'stuff'. It is here that the student decides who can see the work: 'Everyone' or 'Only Me'.

The teacher could work on a private piece together with the student (or on a print-out). When it is ready to be seen by others, the piece in the **Gallery** can be marked to be seen by 'Everyone' or can be published to the whole community or to the student's **Home Page** (see page 21).

As teachers, we may be concerned about the levels of editorial accuracy in all work that is placed for public view. This is a tricky issue. When you pin up an essay or poem on the walls of a classroom, your audiences will not expect publication standards. They know that this is ongoing



work and spelling inaccuracies don't necessarily spoil a creative piece of work – they're even part of the ingénue charm. Pinning up work is useful because children take a pride in showing their best efforts to their peers and it gives them a sense of self-value. This can often be enhanced in an online environment because children of any age can make their work look so technically professional. On the other hand – some pupils confronting public display may be inhibited and keep refining a piece of work, trying to make it 'good enough' or 'perfect'. Positive feedback is going to be important to some pupils, especially when it has taken a lot of personal confidence to place something visible to all in the **Gallery**.

Each school community will want to consider how think.com's 'article' metaphor works best for them. It's still wise to develop a school policy on editorial standards, and the extent to which the professional look-and-feel and public front needs to be defined. After all, thousands of people might see a piece of writing and some responsibilities go with that. One of the issues about the **Gallery** is that the external reader does not know the context in which a piece of work was developed, nor the individual achievement that might go with it.

Ground rules are important to ensure that school-led communities on think.com reflect the school's ethos. Here are a few of the issues each school may want to consider which may provide safeguards for children and reassurance for their parents and school governors.

- ① Information presented by teachers should be accurate and well-presented (encourage all adults within the community to make sure everything they post up is factually correct, uses the correct spelling and is grammatically accurate as an example of good practice).
- ② Different policies on literacy are appropriate for each age and key stage level.

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8



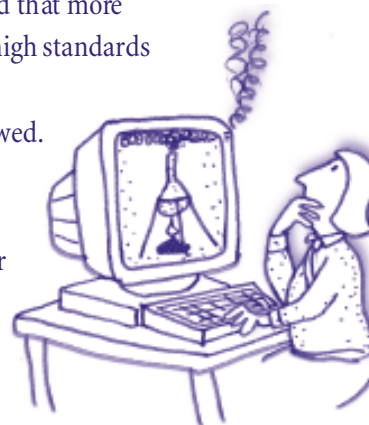
- Articles and Inray



- Make sure spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so your meaning is clear

- Present information from different sources for two different purposes and audiences.

- Teachers need to establish the extent to which children should correct errors while the work is in the **Gallery** and before they 'publish' it. This also raises issues for reflection about smothering creativity.
- The school needs to decide whether more informal parts of an online community – such as brainstorming, debating, emailing and so on should have different rules about accuracy. It could be argued that more transitory elements of think.com do not require the high standards and refining that published work might aspire to.
- Safety issues and instructions might need to be reviewed. Consider how science experiments are written up, or whether an imaginative recipe has a dangerous ingredient, or what's in a 'how-to-make' kit. Remember that a child of any age might happen upon your community and you have a responsibility to make sure there's nothing that could be misinterpreted or misunderstood.
- Libel can damage people's reputations. This may be more apparent in the outside world, but the same is true (and sometimes more so) within the microcosm of a school community. Every think.com community needs to decide how the community leader and moderator will make sure that no one is getting teased or bullied, or that misinformation or personal information about any individual is being broadcast. It's not the same as whispers in the playground.
- Think about prejudice (such as racism, gender, fascism or religion). Make sure children understand that they can't use their personal pages for any kind of hate mail statements.
- Putting pupils' names beside photographs that identify them may be considered inappropriate. While any risks might be small, because this is a protected environment, the parents' perception of risk must also be taken into account in devising an appropriate policy. Some communities have



decided on children's drawings of themselves as a solution for this issue. If that policy is adopted, it should be adopted for all pupils in the school.

- ☉ Teachers need to agree how the online community will be moderated to prevent children posting messages or displaying material that is inappropriate or disturbing to other readers.

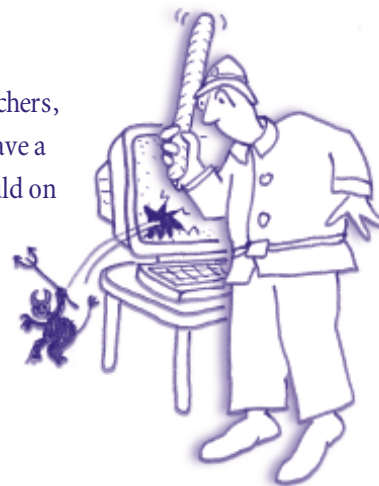
All these – and many similar – issues show the need for exceptional vigilance in an online community. Someone will want to take editorial responsibility, which with an online school-based community will also involve a high element of monitoring. This can be very difficult with a huge school community in which every child has a personal area where they are free to post up what they like. It points to a need to make sure children are as aware as you are of the need to act responsibly.

Web copyright

It's a myth that anything that is freely available is available free. As teachers, you may want free research and educational materials, but you also have a responsibility to honour copyright online in the same way as you would on paper. Posting to an online community is publishing *no matter how small that community is*.

Remember that there is no redress in British law if you have taken anyone's materials for anything other than personal information. Be aware – in your own work as much as your pupils – that you *may*:

- ☺ copy something from an internet site for individual use only;
- ☺ print one paper copy from a screen copy;
- ☺ print a list of URLs for web sites that you want the class to use.



You may not:

- ✗ copy it again for a friend or colleague;
- ✗ copy it for use in class;
- ✗ post a copyrighted cartoon, photo, video clip or anything else on a personal page which is visible to anyone else in a community;
- ✗ cut and paste any material that you didn't write into your own **Article** unless it's a short quotation.

Some people may well feel that copyright isn't appropriate to the internet and that if it is hard to protect then no one can enforce it. But enforcement is not the issue. At the moment, and for the time being, copyright is all we've got to protect an individual's work. Copyright is a right whether the work appears on paper, on screen, on film, over radio waves or just spoken or performed across a room. So electronic words, music and pictures are protected by copyright as soon as they are created, and at all stages of being copied on to disks, retrieved from disks or transmitted from any kind of host computer to any receiving computer.



- Intermedia
- Attachments
- Document



- Presenting combined information including text, images and numbers

Make sure students publishing their own web pages understand this. It's not OK for them to scan in pictures of football heroes, favourite cars or technical diagrams, post up tracks of CDs they like, or block-copy in bits of poems or stories. They can always ask permission from the creators of these things – and most people are happy to say 'yes' to educational use – but if they don't ask, then actually it is stealing. It is up to the teacher to explain this to their pupils (and possibly to their colleagues too).

In any case, isn't it educationally better for children to take the trouble to do their own drawings – even if they are creating their own version of a Pokemon character? At least it will be their own work.

Public and private dissemination

One of the options of running communities within think.com is to run the community as a private one, which can only be seen by its members. This has some advantages; you do not have to worry about other people interfering with your materials; you can internally decide on publication issues such as 'Do you correct spellings?' for example.

The downside of such a privacy policy is that other people cannot share ideas or information with you. They do not know that you are creating some interesting materials for Years 3 and 4 on, say, the Celts. Sharing failures as well as successes can be very helpful on the internet and think.com is no exception. Some of the early think.com communities were private for a while and then became public as their confidence grew. This seems a good model to follow, as it gives both pupils and teachers a bit of breathing space to get used to the system unobserved. However, going public is important eventually. If communities always remain private then the learning that takes place and can be shared amongst all the communities will be that much less rich and diverse.

A further issue is that of parental involvement. When children are at home accessing think.com, what can the parents see? It is important to be clear about the role of parents and to understand if it is acceptable for them to read the information on the site or not. It can be problematic if parents believe that they can contribute to what the child is doing or alternatively email you as teacher about the work set, or expect information to be sent directly back to you through the system.



- Setting up communities
- Home access






6. new screen dynamics

Email and chat etiquette

There is a level of flippancy and informality in email that has become acceptable discourse; it's OK to be informal. All the same, people are still people and the same rules of social awareness apply. If you wouldn't say something face-to-face, don't do it by email or online chat. It's very easy to feel detached from what you are keying onto a screen, partly because there is the multiple distancing of silence, inherent problems of decoding text, lack of communication cues, and uncertainty about what time lags mean.

Some good practice 'rules' for using email and computer conferencing have developed. Here's a checklist of the points you might encourage pupils to raise in a class discussion.

Code of conduct

-  Read messages twice before sending.
-  Avoid expressing strong feelings of disagreement in public forums such as a **Debate** or **Brainstorm** (write to the individual concerned via their private mail box).
-  Ask permission before forwarding or copying other people's messages – they're not yours.
-  Avoid sexist or racist language.
-  Avoid using all upper case letters (looks as if you are SHOUTING).



- ✉ If the message is very important, controversial or open to misunderstanding consider a face-to-face discussion instead.
- ✉ Select the right forum – private mail or conference. If your comment is only of interest to a limited number of people, send it to the private mail-boxes.
- ✉ When joining a **Conversation, Debate** or **Brainstorm** that has been in existence for some time, read through all the contributions to date to avoid asking a question or making a point that has already been made.
- ✉ Calm down before responding to an offensive message.
- ✉ Do not assume that all outrageous messages are intended to inflame opinion (they may be a clumsy attempt at humour or lack of familiarity with the medium).
- ✉ Check that you are sending the message to the right person or people.

Making sure messages are read

- ✉ Describe the content of your message clearly in the ‘Subject’ line and keep that subject in replies to the same conversational thread. This helps people to prioritise and to find information again later.
- ✉ Send short messages that can be clearly understood on their own.
- ✉ Make sure the title of your message is relevant to the content of that message; use strong *subject lines*.
- ✉ Make the top of the message count. People will decide whether or not to read on.
- ✉ Make sure your message is written in a style that is friendly, appealing and logical. ‘Who, why, what, where, what’ is a formula that works well.
- ✉ Use short paragraphs. People are overwhelmed by large pieces of text. Short coherent chunks allow readers to breathe between chunks of thought and also provide relief to the eye.





- Brainstorms
- Conversations
- Hotseats
- Stickies
- Inray



- Matching language and style to the subject.
- Structuring ideas

Children today will learn to develop meaningful email relationships – and writing skills are paramount in making those relationships work. The written word, used with care and thought, can convey many nuances. Ambiguities may cause offence or lack of clarity may mean you have to keep rephrasing what you say.

Tapping into expertise



Electronic communication makes everyone easily available. It's quite hard to be ex-directory in the cyberworld. This means experts in various walks of life – the famous and the not-so famous – are on tap all the time. It's seductively easy to send out requests for information – but students should be careful that they aren't actually asking an expert to do their homework for them.

When to write to an expert

In geography and history studies, students are often expected to collect case history material. Sometimes they need to do personal market research. Sometimes email can be a very good way of data gathering. **Think.com** lets students email outside the enclosed environment to a trusted person who can then reply to the child's mailbox on think.com.

Here are some suggestions to put to your pupils.

- One way of tapping into expertise is by inviting an Expert to sit in the think.com **Hotseat**. This might be a staff member who is already part of your community. Or it could be someone you invite in from another community.
- When you use the **Explore Content** function, you might find someone who is running a module like your own, or a student who has just done one. You can invite them in for an open Question and Answer session – in real time (which is difficult to synchronise) or serially.

- Take it slowly. If you want to approach someone who is known in a particular field in order to do personal and original research, remember that they are probably very busy people. Just introduce yourself and ask one simple question. If you get a friendly reply, you might feel confident enough to ask another one.

Advantages

The email interview gives your subject time to think, so the chances are that they will express what they really want to say more carefully. What's good about the email approach is that it's not intrusive; the interviewer can ask questions at any hour of the day without bothering anyone.

Techniques

Ask your groups to consider these techniques:

- Online interviewing is exactly like traditional interviewing. The first email should be exploratory: introduce yourself, say what your course is about and explain why you would like to make a personal approach.
- Use the same formality register as you would in any other circumstance; email doesn't give you a licence to be casual.
- Do not contact a subject by email and begin firing questions at them press-conference style – it's the online equivalent of kicking down the door.
- State your intentions, and ask for permission to do the interview first – then follow up with a few questions, not too many.
- Think about what you will do with the information that you get; only ask those questions that are really relevant to your assignment (too much information can be just as frustrating as too little).
- Be sure to send a thank-you email; tell the subject what you did with the information and how it helped you.

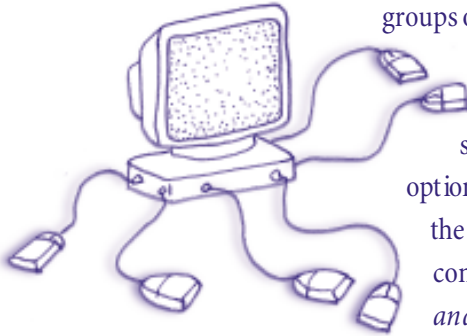


- Email
- Hotseat



- Explore and develop information to meet your purpose
- Seek feedback from relevant sources

Conferencing



Computer conferencing is a way of exchanging information and ideas with groups of individuals through electronic means. Computer conferencing is most commonly text-based; with think.com, you can also add in audio or video clips. It will happen spontaneously when you link a whole class within think.com. The options in the **Toolbox** enable conferencing activities paralleled on the internet generally with listservs, email groups, video-conferencing and chat-rooms. Think.com – because it is a *closed and safe* environment – is slightly different, but many of the general principles about computer conferencing apply.






Benefits of computer conferencing

Computer conferencing enables groups of people who are in diverse geographical locations to ‘meet’ and feel they belong to a community sharing the same interests. They can be as varied as groups of football fans or doll collectors. Groups of pupils may work together within a small computer conferencing group.

Electronic conferencing is a leveller because people have names, but there are no immediate clues as to their status, race and, sometimes, gender. Think.com has the edge over other forms of conferencing because students *can't* masquerade as someone else.

Discussions are ‘*asynchronous*’: you write one time, read later, and then answer at leisure. An advantage is that you can reflect before you respond; whereas in the classroom it is usually necessary to react immediately. Electronic conferences can become a richer experience because students have had time to discuss the issues beforehand and teachers are more aware of the position different students might adopt.

As computer conferencing allows people to 'talk' to each other from remote locations at different times, it provides many potential benefits to teachers and learners. However, given the newness of the medium and its ambiguity (in that people are 'alone' when 'talking' to others) computer conferencing may cause some problems. Computer conferencing can:





-  enable students to collaborate with peers;
-  facilitate easy transfer of information;
-  clarify and supplement the content of lessons, lectures, seminars and tutorials;
-  engage students in debate outside of normal contact time;
-  lead to the development of new communities.

On the internet, all conference messages are public – it is like putting a notice up on a board for everyone to read. Tell students to use email if their reply is private. This will ensure it only goes into the mailbox of the person you want to read it. Always checking the 'To' line before you send can avoid unnecessary embarrassment.

Distance learning

There are differences between other forms of teaching/tutoring and computer conferencing. Sometimes, given distance, access or other constraints, using ICT tools is the only practical solution. Perhaps this is one of the reasons some people view learning or communicating at a distance as second best, whereas in practice there are times when ICT is the ideal tool to use.

For example, in face to face conferences

-  The audience is present in 'real time'.
-  Facial and audio cues are possible.
-  People can interrupt a speaker.
-  Several small group conversations can take place.



- Debate
- Hotseat



- Listen and respond sensitively, acknowledging gender and cultural freedom and empathising with how others may be feeling

i
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

- Brainstorm
- Conversation
- Debate



- Speak (or write) clearly in a way that suits the situation

- The group leader can change tack according to audience signals.
- The group leader can mediate when problems occur.
- Questions can change the direction of the discussion.
- Hesitant contributors can be encouraged to join the discussion.
- Time restraints determine an end point to the discussion.

In electronic conferences

- People in diverse geographical locations are able to 'meet'.
- Unless members of the conference know each other beforehand, there are no immediate clues about who they are.
- Communication does not require everyone to be connected at the same time
- Writing a contribution to a discussion is likely to improve thinking and writing ability and provide a written record.
- It avoids the task of noting down enough key points of a classroom discussion or group debate to remember it afterwards.

Making an electronic conference work

The reason for having an online forum needs to be thought about beforehand.

- It is often useful to build in a classroom debate about computer conferencing in think.com before the students participate.
- Give some guidelines in advance.
- Consider how electronic tools can support a lesson plan, your teaching, or for both.
- Contributions on think.com may or may not be assessed, so you'll want to work out how the assessment would work.
- Look at the positives of computer conferencing between students working together in the same class and how it can provide an effective learning experience.

- It's beneficial to invite people from outside the immediate school environment (for example an expert, a parent, or children from other schools) but you'll need to ask them first.
- Don't start something unless you are prepared to moderate it.

Collaboration using electronic files



Communication skills place a great deal of emphasis on students collaborating on a project, whether in spoken or written work. Think.com allows for a great deal of interactivity, but also supports written collaborative assessment work that is done off-line and then uploaded. Collaboration issues apply in particular to higher-level work prepared for the think.com **Gallery** by more mature students.

When the work is electronic, it is hard for the student to see what a friend or a teacher has done to alter it. In the days of paper, students could just respond to scribbled margin notes and ignore them if they didn't agree. Now teachers will need to invent their own codes of practice because the paper paradigms do not apply. It is tedious to read two versions of an electronic file line for line against one another.

Here are a few ideas:

General

- Decide at the beginning what software you will use and agree on how pupils in a group and their teachers will handle revisions.
- Decide every time the file changes hands who has the 'live master' copy and try to ensure that only one child is working on the current master version at any given time. If it is a large project with several 'live' files, make sure one person co-ordinates them all before the presentation version is ready for assessment.



- Article
- Document
- Email attachment files



- Use appropriate layouts
- Act responsibly when taking part in discussions



Agree on a House Style (depending on the age of the students). This might involve talking about capitalisation style, punctuation, grammar and spelling, references, clarity and sense.

Word processor files

Either



Agree on and use different screen text colours or highlighter markings for each person who is working on a multi-authored file. As well as showing the student group who has said what, this can be useful for an assessor to see which students are contributing and pulling their weight, and who is not.



Teachers could write comments and queries using an annotations function;

Or



Use a footnote function as an insertion point for a comment – this is better for printouts.



Use a changes tracking facility to view all changes.



If taking emailed text into a word processor, remember to remove hard carriage returns.



Remember to keep the previous versions. This can be an informative way to reflect on the development of the task. It also gives evidence of the work that has been done.

Plain Text



Contain comments or edited text within personal delimiters such as ### or [] or << >> so the next person can search for changes.



If children are collaborating by the **Intray**, suggest they should return the original and interrupt it with a double carriage return every time they are suggesting a change – so it is easy to see.

It's also easy to include HTML and JavaScript coding in any contribution. Pupils will enjoy the challenge of making their contributions look different to the default settings.

Try to anticipate areas of misunderstanding in the use of electronic files *before* they happen. It will make group projects much easier to do. Encourage the students to reflect on how they are using the ICT tools to produce collaborative work.

Writing for screen reading



Most online communities operate primarily through the written word – even in chat rooms. It's always paperless communication and most pupils are quite familiar with that. You need a different way of thinking about the writing itself; which may not be the way in which we have learnt or taught in the past.

Informal notes are always sent from one person to one or more other people; and all the normal 'rules' of behaviour apply. Where users only have the written word to convey every nuance of what they want to say, they need to think more carefully about it, where ambiguities may cause offence (see page 54). It is not the same as speaking to someone face-to-face, where a smile may take away the 'sting' of what is being said, or body language may modify responses.



The following guidelines may be helpful.

Readability

Statistics show that the average person spends 8 hours a week reading books or newspapers, as opposed to 27 hours watching TV. Reading from screens has so



• *Formal:* Articles
(projects, reports)

• *Informal notes:*
Stickies, Emails,
Brainstorms,
Conversations,
Debates, Hotseats



• Write different types
of document

far proved to be less efficient than paper. Ask your classes to listen to the words used on radio or television; write them down if possible. Look at the text and consider the sentence structures used. You could use that as a model and then encourage learners to use even simpler and clearer language when they write.

Of course, there will be occasions when you want to write 'normally' and assume your audience will print out and read from paper. As the teacher you may want to experiment with this, and ask pupils to consider how they read from screen, why they want to download some documents, whether there are any advantages in screen reading and what disadvantages there are to learning off screen. In most online communities, the chances are people will expect to read from the screen. At present screen resolutions, 10 words is a good reading line length. More than that, often results in readers losing their way. It is worth reinforcing this for other web work that students may do outside think.com.

Tadpole or pyramid structure

Give your reader the main points at the top of the page (people are reluctant to scroll). Let details and complexity unfold lower down the page. Encourage students to use this technique too, it will help them in paper-based written work as well as online.

Be concise: The overall length of a radio or television piece is about a third of a print article; a web page should be even shorter. Cut every word that doesn't contribute. A good web-page length is under 500 words – it is better to divide anything longer than that into sub-topics.

Write short paragraphs: Paragraph breaks refresh the eye: between two and five sentences is enough.

Write simple sentences: Ideas are easier to digest in a simple subject-verb-object progression. Make sub-clauses into separate sentences. Use one idea per sentence and keep sentences under 17 words (the average for print).



Use the present or present perfect tense: The web is here and now. Keep passives away.

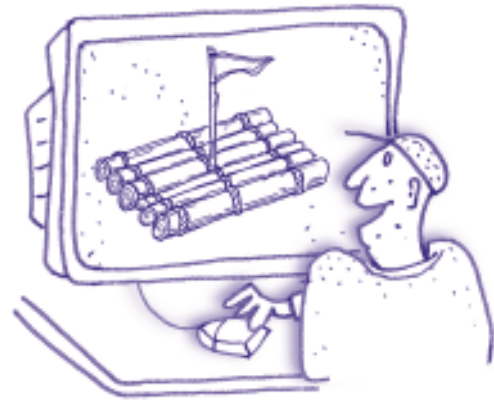
Spell-check everything: People can be very cavalier about online spelling. It matters in print and it matters online. Good spelling is not an issue of correctness, but of consideration for the reader. It's best not to confuse or annoy readers: they won't attend to your message if you do. We should be setting an example of good practice.

Use graphics sparingly: Bullet points or graphic elements help pick out key words. But animations are irritating. Studies show that the message is lost when television images fail to reinforce spoken words. The same is true of the web.



7. where next?

There has been a great loss of freedom for children in the last 20 years or so. They are taken everywhere by parents; they have little opportunity for imaginative den-building in the woods behind the house or raft-making on the local brook. There are so many parts of their lives where they are expected to achieve and to demonstrate skills publicly.



The great advantage of think.com is that it offers an opportunity both to stretch their imaginations and engage with people they might never meet on tasks both formal and informal. It offers a safe space, but a potentially challenging one, in which the communication task is paramount. What's motivating about it is that their active participation is rewarded by neat-looking electronic pages, easily available when they want them – all through school if they wish to keep them. Children learn by *doing*, not by passive listening. Think.com makes it fun to write – to be active.

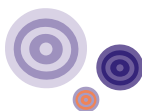
There is no doubt that ICT is here to stay. It is a cultural, business and educational revolution that has changed lives in a very short space of time (far more quickly than say the wireless or television). As teachers, we have a choice, to become pro-active in the use of ICT in the classroom, or to wait until we are told what to do next.

Think.com is a tool for classroom use. It will support lesson plans or can act as a motivator for students to work towards annual targets (be they SATs, GCSEs, or other goals). As more schools use it, examples of best practice will grow.

Look at what you want to achieve this term; there may be ways in which think.com can be introduced as a tool to support and enhance what you want to do. There are probably pupils in your class who might be encouraged to do just a little more if there is something new and different to use.

This handbook has tried to give you a few ideas about think.com and online education communities and share with you some teachers' experiences. It is a tool that you can use as well as (not instead of) other education materials to help you and your pupils achieve that little bit extra. As with most educational resources, there are not right and wrong ways of using it, and this handbook has attempted to help you plan its effective use by sharing some of the issues that it will raise in your school community.

Think.com affords all schools opportunities of interacting with powerful software and through its use, with others. Ten years ago, opening your classroom door, working as a team and sharing experiences with other school colleagues was seen as breaking new ground. Now tools exist to enable us to share experiences immediately with a wide array of communities not just in the UK but across the world too. It is a world that children are embracing, perhaps more rapidly than adults. We need to be enablers of their broadening experience and share their collaborative learning and creativity.



i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Acknowledgements

We have drawn on the following resources:

Kent County Council *Internet Access Policy for Schools – 2000* with thanks to Peter Banbury (this is NGfL-funded, so it is freely available for non-profit use, and modification, by educational organisations at www.kented.org.uk/ngfl/policy.html);

Moderating guidelines for online communities by Michelle Selinger;

Key Skills Units published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (ISBN 1858384028);

Community Building on the Web: Secret Strategies for Successful Online Communities by Amy Jo Kim published by Peachpit (ISBN 0201874849);

The Art and Science of Online Facilitation paper by Nancy White at the trace Online Writing Community Conference (July 2000).

We would like to thank the following teachers and schools for their help and advice in furnishing the experiences that have helped inform this handbook.

Mara Chrystie, Hermitage School

Alastair Wells, Netherhall School

Susan Heightman, Tolworth Girls' School

John Cuthell, Boston Spa Comprehensive School

Basia Korczak, Valentines High School

David Fuller, Oundle School

Alison Seagrave, Redbridge Schools

Lawrence Williams, Holy Cross Convent School

We would also like to thank the many other teachers who have communicated with us through think.com and other means about the opportunities that the software affords.

We would like to acknowledge and thank Caroline Hook, from Orade Corporation UK, for her support and infectious enthusiasm about think.com; and David Pywell and Lynne McIlwraith, also from Oracle Corporation UK, for checking the technical accuracy of the text.

Postscript

Think.com was first launched in 1999 with a commitment to provide an email address and web-based learning facilities for 10,000 UK schoolchildren between the ages of 9 and 14. Now it is a feature-rich online learning environment available, free, to all UK schoolchildren between the ages of 5 and 18, and their teachers.

Think.com is the brainchild of Larry Ellison, Oracle Corporation's Chairman and CEO. It was initiated in a letter that he sent to the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in outlining a \$10 million investment that Oracle would provide to help UK schoolchildren to learn using internet technology.

The project has come a long way since then. Oracle hopes that schools across the country will now adopt think.com.

If your school is not registered, please contact think_uk@oracle.com or look at the registration details at <http://think.oracle.co.uk>.

i

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59

60

61

62

63

64

65

66

67

68

69

70

71

72

73

74

75

76

77

78

79

80

81

82

83

84

85

86

87

88

89

90

91

92

93

94

95

96

97

98

99

100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

109

110

111

112

113

114

115

116

117

118

119

120

121

122

123

124

125

126

127

128

129

130

131

132

133

134

135

136

137

138

139

140

141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

151

152

153

154

155

156

157

158

159

160

161

162

163

164

165

166

167

168

169

170

171

172

173

174

175

176

177

178

179

180

181

182

183

184

185

186

187

188

189

190

191

192

193

194

195

196

197

198

199

200

201

202

203

204

205

206

207

208

209

210

211

212

213

214

215

216

217

218

219

220

221

222

223

224

225

226

227

228

229

230

231

232

233

234

235

236

237

238

239

240

241

242

243

244

245

246

247

248

249

250

251

252

253

254

255

256

257

258

259

260

261

262

263

264

265

266

267

268

269

270

271

272

273

274

275

276

277

278

279

280

281

282

283

284

285

286

287

288

289

290

291

292

293

294

295

296

297

298

299

300

301

302

303

304

305

306

307

308

309

310

311

312

313

314

315

316

317

318

319

320

321

322

323

324

325

326

327

328

329

330

331

332

333

334

335

336

337

338

339

340

341

342

343

344

345

346

347

348

349

350

351

352

353

354

355

356

357

358

359

360

361

362

363

364

365

366

367

368

369

370

371

372

373

374

375

376

377

378

379

380

381

382

383

384

385

386

387

388

389

390

391

392

393

394

395

396

397

398

399

400

401

402

403

404

405

406

407

408

409

410

411

412

413

414

415

416

417

418

419

420

421

422

423

424

425

426

427

428

429

430

431

432

433

434

435

436

437

438

439

440

441

442

443

444

445

446

447

448

449

450

451

452

453

454

455

456

457

458

459

460

461

462

463

464

465

466

467

468

469

470

471

472

473

474

475

476

477

478

479

480

481

482

483

484

485

486

487

488

489

490

491

492

493

494

495

496

497

498

499

500

501

502

503

504

505

506

507

508

509

510

511

512

513

514

515

516

517

518

519

520

521

522

523

524

525

526

527

528

529

530

531

532

533

534

535

536

537

538

539

540

541

542

543

544

545

546

547

548

549

550

551

552

553

554

555

556

557

558

559

560

561

562

563

564

565

566

567

568

569

570

571

572

573

574

575

576

577

578

579

580

581

582

583

584

585

586

587

588

589

590

591

592

593

594

595

596

597

598

599

600

601

602

603

604

605

606

607

608

609

610

611

612

613

614

615

616

617

618

619

620

621

622

623

624

625

626

627

628

629

630

631

632

633

634

635

636

637

638

639

640

641

642

643

644

645

646

647

648

649

650

651

652

653

654

655

656

657

658

659

660

661

662

663

664

665

666

667

668

669

670

671

672

673

674

675

676

677

678

679

680

681

682

683

684

685

686

687

688

689

690

691

692

693

694

695

696

697

698

699

700

701

702

703

704

705

706

707

708

709

710

711

712

713

714

715

716

717

718

719

720

721

722

723

724

725

726

727

728

729

730

731

732

733

734

735

736

737

738

739

740

741

742

743

744

745

746

747

748

749

750

751

752

753

754

755

756

757

758

759

760

761

762

763

764

765

766

767

768

769

770

771

772

773

774

775

776

777

778

779

780

781

782

783

784

785

786

787

788

789

790

791

792

793

794

795

796

797

798

799

800

801

802

803

804

805

806

807

808

809

810

811

812

813

814

815

816

817

818

819

820

821

822

823

824

825

826

827

828

829

830

831

832

833

834

835

836

837

838

839

840

841

842

843

844

845

846

847

848

849

850

851

852

853

854

855

856

857

858

859

860

861

862

863

864

865

866

867

868

869

870

871

872

873

874

875

876

877

878

879

880

881

882

883

884

885

886

887

888

889

890

891

892

893

894

895

896

897

898

899

900

901

902

903

904

905

906

907

908

909

910

911

912

913

914

915

916

917

918

919

920

921

922

923

924

925

926

927

928

929

930

931

932

933

934

935

936

937

938

939

940

941

942

943

944

945

946

947

948

949

950

951

952

953

954

955

956

957

958

959

960

961

962

963

964

965

966

967

968

969

970

971

972

973

974

975

976

977

978

979

980

981

982

983

984

985

986

987

988

989

990

991

992

993

994

995

996

997

998

999

1000

1001

1002

1003

1004

1005

1006

1007

1008

1009

1010

1011

1012

1013

1014

1015

1016

1017

1018

1019

1020

1021

1022

1023

1024

1025

1026

1027

1028

1029

1030

1031

1032

1033

1034

1035

1036

1037

1038

1039

1040

1041

1042

1043

1044

1045

1046

1047

1048

1049

1050

1051

1052

1053

1054

1055

1056

1057

1058

1059

1060

1061

1062

1063

1064

1065

1066

1067

1068

1069

1070

1071

1072

1073

1074

1075

1076

1077

1078

1079

1080

1081

1082

1083

1084

1085

1086

1087

1088

1089

1090

1091

1092

1093

1094

1095

1096

1097

1098

1099

1100

1101

1102

1103

1104

1105

1106

1107

1108

1109

1110

1111

1112

1113

1114

1115

1116

Home:

In version 1, the entry point is the **Personal Home** and gives access to all tools and to the **Newspaper** which is the portfolio of published work.

In version 2, the start-up screen displays a **Home Portal**. This is a personal web space, which stays with the pupil until they leave school at 18. Pupils can also choose to access the system through a **School Portal**, which contains information based upon the school and classes they attend. An additional **Community Portal** includes information about other communities they belong to outside school (e.g. clubs and interest groups that are not directly related to schoolwork). Finally, the **World Portal** provides a search mechanism allowing users to find published content, communities and people throughout the system (except where owners have made closed communities with access limited to members only).

Hotseat:

This is the think.com 'ask the expert' zone. Community members can ask the person in the Hotseat questions on a specific topic over a specified period of time.

HTML:

HyperText Markup Language – the code that tags elements such as text, links, graphics so that browser software will know how to display a document.

Image:

Users can upload image files into think.com which can be published on their own site or on community sites. An uploaded image can also be used to represent them on the system and may be a photograph of the user or something else that depicts the individual, such as a cartoon or self-portrait (as long as it does not violate acceptable use policies) and will be viewed alongside the user's name.

Portals: *see Home*

ISDN:

Integrated Services Digital Network: an international standard for digital communication over telephone lines, which allows transmission of data (removing the need for a modem).

ISP:

Internet Service Provider – a company that sells or offers access to the internet.

List:

A think.com tool where users can write lists on themes, this may be on subjects of educational or personal interest.

Log in:

Connecting to a computer network – each think.com user logs in using the combination of their unique user name and password.

Log out:

Quitting the system – users should log out to protect their own think.com site and to help prevent inappropriate use of think.com.

Mailbox:

The location on the computer where an individual's email is stored.

Memberships: *see Roles*

Newspaper:

The area where work is published (version 1 only).

Owner: *see Roles*

Path:

think.com displays the path for the user to give an indicator of where he/she is and provides a means of navigating back up the hierarchy (either by community or function).

Privileges: *see Roles*

Popular Items:

The think.com popular items box contains the most popular items that have been created in the communities to which the user belongs.

Private: *see Communities*

Public: *see* Communities

Publishing:

On think.com version 1 when creating the **Newspaper**, users have to select items from their personal **Gallery** to publish on the **Newspaper**.

Recent Documents:

Think.com's Index displays the most recently created/modified items in the user's **Gallery**. This feature allows a user to keep an eye on what's going on in their communities.

Reporter: *see* Roles

Roles:

The different think.com roles, which come with different privileges include Owner, Editor, Reporter, Reader, Guest (or Visitor) and School Manager (in version 2). Each think.com role comes with different privileges, ie what the individual is able to do, for example, writing articles, editing material or deleting material.

On think.com the community **Owner** can do whatever he/she wants in terms of creating, editing, deleting or publishing content and stickies. The owner can invite members, create and delete sub-communities and ultimately delete a community. A think.com **Editor** has the same privileges as the owner of a community except they cannot delete the community. A think.com **Reporter** has privileges on the content that he/she created (e.g. viewing, editing, publishing and deleting).

A **Reader** may view, but has no other privileges and cannot contribute or communicate directly with the community.

Search:

Within think.com the search capability is used to seek content, communities and people. When a think.com user performs a search, the results will only contain those objects that the user has privilege to see.

Smiley face icon:

Smiley faces appear at the bottom of the think.com screen and indicate other users from any community that are logged onto the system at the same time. Clicking on the smiley face icon takes the user to that person's home page.

Stickies:

Think.com's electronic 'post-its'. Users can leave stickies on other people's pages.

Sub-community:

think.com sub-communities are smaller communities within a community; they may be public or private.

Teacher Tools:

In version 2 think.com has a number of tools limited to use by the teacher. These include: Inappropriate Content, Image Review, Content Review, Address Book Review, Assignments, Bulletins, Projects, Create a Class and Create a Club.

Toolbox:

The Toolbox displays a menu of the types of documents and files the user may create.

Users:

There are several types of users in think.com. Each type of user has specific roles, privileges and restrictions that contribute to how the user is represented in the system and what the user can do – *see* Roles.

User Accounts:

All think.com user accounts represent real-life users that have been identified by an authenticating community. The authenticating community starts the process by registering with Oracle, who will then issue usernames and passwords for teachers and pupils. Each user name is unique; users can choose their own passwords.