

eTools: Using Socrative in the Classroom

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Introduction

Over the past decade, the "clicker"--a \$35+ device used to quickly gauge where students are in their understanding of a particular topic, have students work in groups to complete small group projects, or take course attendance with the click of a button--has become the mainstay for the large lecture classroom. Unfortunately, because this technology is not free and often is updated regularly, the expense of requiring clickers can build rather quickly. Software developers have been working diligently to create app-based platforms to address this problem through the development of freeware or adware applications, one of which is Socrative.

What is Socrative?

Socrative (<http://www.socrative.com>) is a free software application that provides instructors with a way to complete all of those tasks that clickers generally can do through several templates for examination, polling, and competitions. All results are e-mailed to you so that you can import them into your grade book, remove identifiers and display whole results for the class, or use them however you wish to do so. Socrative reports in real time, so you can respond to what is happening while, for example, an in-class assessment is occurring, with the results displayed in the front of the classroom. Although this system works quite well and is easy to use, any data you collect from

student interactions on Socrative eventually are deleted, so you will need to be sure to download all reports regularly.

How can I get Socrative for use in the classroom?

Socrative is available through Google Play and iTunes for download to any Wi-Fi or dataplan-based device; it can be accessed through a web browser, a Chrome app extension, or a mobile device. (Even iPod Touches can use it.) Using a smartphone, tablet, or personal computer, Socrative can be downloaded by students at <http://m.socrative.com> and by instructors at <http://t.socrative.com>. (Although I recommend that you download both apps, you will only use the Teacher application to actually run any activities you choose.) You will need to create an account on the website by generating a unique user name that signifies your specific course that can be easily found by your students. Doing so will ensure that your students are signing in to the right space, which is important as one limitation to Socrative is that you are only allowed to create a single classroom per user (i.e., e-mail address).

How can I use Socrative in the classroom?

There are four preset applications within Socrative that are available for you to use with your students. More specifically, Socrative can be used to:

1. *create quizzes*. The various formats are familiar to instructors and students alike. My suggestion is to create your quizzes in advance. This way, you simply need to enter the classroom through the instructor app, activate it in the classroom, and have

your students complete it.

2. *ask a quick question.* A Quick Question is a question that you pose to students that have potential responses. The Quick Question can be used as a reading check to help shape the direction of daily class discussion. The response format often utilizes multiple choice options and students will be able to visually see how their understanding (their individual responses is not identified) compares to their classmates.

3. *issue an exit ticket.* An Exit Ticket is a final question students are given to answer as a way to determine whether students understand the content covered in the class session or as a way to take attendance. It should be noted, however, that because Socrative is limited to 50 users at a time, depending on your course enrollment, taking attendance may not be possible with Socrative. However, if you have your students work in small groups, this issue can be alleviated.

4. *play Space Race,* which is an interactive game attached to a quiz. Working individually or in teams (in my experience, teams seem to work better), students answer a series of questions that enables them to move the "ship" forward. The greater the number of correct responses, the greater the distance the ship moves.

Conclusion

Socrative only does a few things, but it does them quite well by providing a free technology that any student with a web-enabled device can use. It allows instructors to collect and interpret specific types of knowledge from their courses in real time, and it

removes the need for an additional device for students to have to purchase. If you are interested in using student response and data collection devices in your courses, Socrative is a viable option over the "clicker."