Online Collaboration Tools

1. WordPress

TRU-Hosted

The following tools exist on servers owned by TRU or shared with TRU. For this reason, use of these tools complies with federal and provincial privacy laws (i.e., FIPPA). For more information about privacy and online technologies at TRU, please contact the Privacy Office: privacy@tru.ca

WordPress

What is it? Used as a platform by more than 30% of all websites, WordPress is one of the most popular web-based software applications in the world. TRUbox is TRU's locally-hosted instance of WordPress. This means that TRU owns the server on which all WordPress content created through TRUBox exists. All service and administration of TRUBox content happens through the TRU Open Learning team.

It is best for: You can use WordPress for any number of purposes including:

- Professional or academic portfolios
- Blogging / sharing ideas
- Newsletters, community events
- Professional website for business or service
- Highlighting team accomplishments
- Sharing interactive content using H5P and other plugins

Not so great for: Content created in WordPress is normally meant to be shared publicly. Websites created using TRUBox exist outside TRU's Banner authentication system. It is possible, however, to place passwords and other security measures on entire WordPress and TRUBox sites or specific sections of these sites.

How can you learn more? To learn more about WordPress and TRUBox please visit: https://trubox.ca/

How can you gain access to it? Please contact Brian Lamb (blamb@tru.ca) or Troy Welch (twelch@tru.ca) to get started with TRUBox.

You can also visit the Open Learning building (OL 346) during "Learning Technology Drop-in" sessions (see CELT calendar for schedule), or by scheduling an appointment: learningtech@tru.ca.

H5P

What is it? H5P is an open-source application which can be used to create a wide range of interactive multimedia content including videos, presentations, games, and others.

It is best for:

You can use H5P to create engaging, interactive assignments and projects such as:

- Maps, schematics, or plans with hot spots
- Images with embedded videos or other content
- Slide presentations rendered as videos with interactive activities
- Audio recordings
- Timelines of events with multimedia

More activity types can be found at: https://h5p.org/content-types-and-applications

Not so great for: Although H5P is generally user-friendly, there can be a learning curve when using any new technology for the first time. For this reason, you should experiment with the H5P before starting on a major project. Open Learning staff members are happy to assist.

How can you learn more?

To see samples of learning activities and visuals which are built with H5P specifically for TRU please visit https://h5p.trubox.ca/.

You can visit H5P.org to see other examples, and to try using it yourself.

How can you gain access to it? You can gain access to H5P through TRU as a plug-in to a WordPress site. Contact Brian Lamb (blamb@tru.ca) or Troy Welch (twelch@tru.ca) for more information.

Mattermost

What is it? Mattermost is an online collaboration and communication space. It is frequently described as "an open-source, self-hosted Slack-alternative" (Mattermost.org). As an alternative to proprietary messaging platforms, Mattermost brings team communication into one place, making it easily searchable and accessible from any device.

Best for: You can use Mattermost for private team chat, planning and development discussions, as well as document sharing in a single, searchable place. Mattermost allows for different "channels" or topic areas, and customizable notification options. Relatively easy to use, Mattermost works well on most devices.

Mattermost is optimally used by team members who may work on multiple projects together, possibly over a longer period of time. It may be less helpful if only being used for a single assignment or short-term project.

Not so great for: No video or audio chat. No live document editing.

How can you learn more?

Further information about how Mattermost is used at TRU can be found at:
https://bit.ly/TRU-mattermost

Documentation for Mattermost, including technical specifications, can be found at:
https://docs.mattermost.com/guides/user.html

Details regarding features and functionality for Mattermost teams can be found at:
https://about.mattermost.com/features/#featuresTeam

How can you gain access to it? Contact Brian Lamb (blamb@tru.ca) or Troy Welch (twelch@tru.ca) and request a team for your project. You will need to designate a "Team Admin" in your group who will have the ability to manage team membership and other settings.

Etherpad (Sandstorm)

What is it? Etherpad is an online editing application. As with Google docs, Etherpad allows you to create, edit, and share documents easily. Although lacking in some of the

advanced features and functionality of Google docs, Etherpad provides a higher degree of privacy and is more compliant with BC and Canadian government privacy requirements regarding use of cloud computing services.

Best for: You can use Etherpad to work on documents and share links with multiple users. Etherpad also allows you to comment on others' contributions to documents. With the Time Slider feature you can track changes to the document over time. As well, Etherpads can be shared without requiring other users to create new accounts. Editing can be done anonymously by users, requiring only an email address by way of signing in. For these reasons, Etherpad can be helpful for group projects or assignments, or possibly longer-term team-based initiatives.

Not so great for: Etherpad documents are easy to create, share, and access later. Given that it is an open source application (i.e., non-proprietary software) Etherpad's functionality for manipulating text, visuals, media, and links is not as advanced as that through Google applications (i.e., Google docs or drive) or desktop software such as through Microsoft 365.

How can you learn more?

To learn more about EtherPad please visit: http://etherpad.org/

How can you gain access to it?

Etherpad is available for free through the Sandstorm app market. You can contact Brian Lamb (blamb@tru.ca) or Troy Welch (twelch@tru.ca) to gain access for your project or initiative. You can also visit the Open Learning building (OL 346) during "Learning Technology Drop-in" sessions (see CELT calendar for schedule) or schedule an appointment with an Open Learning staff member: learningtech@tru.ca.

Davros (Sandstorm)

What is it? Davros is a file sync and storage system similar to Google Drive or Dropbox. Like EtherPad, Davros is available through the Sandstorm app market.

Best for: You can use to upload files which can then be easily downloaded by others. This could save time and energy compared to collaborating on projects or assignments using multiple email attachments.

As a Sandstorm app, Davros has a higher degree of privacy than other online storage systems such as Google Drive.

Not so great for: Davros is an open source application which is dedicated to file sharing. As such, those interested in other features (i.e., collaborative editing) would have to use additional apps in tandem with Davros.

How can you learn more?

To learn more about Davros please visit: https://bit.ly/TRU-davros

How can you gain access to it?

Please contact Brian Lamb (blamb@tru.ca) or Troy Welch (twelch@tru.ca) for access to Davros.

You can also visit the Open Learning building (OL 346) during "Learning Technology Drop-in" sessions (see CELT calendar for schedule) or schedule an appointment with an Open Learning staff member: learningtech@tru.ca.

Cloud-Hosted (i.e. external to TRU)

Note: to varying degrees, the following tools collect personal information about their users. As such, they should not be required for student activity without informed consent. If you or your team decide to use these tools, we encourage you to ensure everyone participating is in agreement. We also encourage you to explore the privacy policies of online tools when making a decision.

For more information regarding TRU's privacy policies, please visit: https://www.tru.ca/secretariat/foipop/personal-information.html

More information can be found at the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse: https://www.privacyrights.org/blog/privacy-implications-cloud-computing

Office 365

What is it? Office 365 is a suite of cloud-based Microsoft applications which is available free to TRU students. Office 365 provides access to popular Microsoft apps such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and others.

Best for: You can use Office 365 to access Microsoft applications through the cloud, permitting multiple users to work on documents, presentations, and other kinds of projects. Office 365 apps have the same kinds of features and functionality as their desktop counterparts, with the added capability of collaborative use across a wide range of devices.

Not so great for: Generally, apps in 365 permits have limited ability to engage with files or products outside Microsoft formats. The look and feel of 365 apps is very similar to desktop software.

How can you learn more?

Contact TRU IT Services for access:
https://www.tru.ca/forms/notification/it/hupoffice365stud/index.php

To discuss how Office 365 applications might be used for your assignment or project, please visit the Open Learning building (OL 346) during "Learning Technology Drop-in" sessions (see CELT calendar for schedule) or schedule an appointment with an Open Learning staff member: learningtech@tru.ca.

Google Docs

What is it? Google Docs is a cloud-based word processing software which shares some features with Etherpad or Word in Microsoft 365.

Best for: You can use Google Docs to collaboratively write, edit, and share documents. Files created in Docs can be downloaded or exported in a wide range of formats including PDF's, Word docs, and others. Like with Etherpad, links to Google docs can be shared with other users without requiring sign-in or accounts.

Not so great for: It is important to take data privacy into account when considering using Google products for educational purposes.

How can you learn more?

Google has many websites with information about its services:

https://docs.google.com/

https://www.google.ca/drive/

To discuss how Google applications might be used for your assignment or project, please visit the Open Learning building (OL 346) during "Learning Technology Drop-in" sessions (see CELT calendar for schedule) or schedule an appointment with an Open Learning staff member: learningtech@tru.ca.

Google Hangouts

What is it? Google Hangouts is an online video conferencing application. It has similar capabilities as Skype or Appear.In for hosting video conferences quickly and easily.

Best for:

You can use Google Hangouts to hold meetings with multiple users with voice and video. You also have the ability to stream meetings to YouTube, potentially reaching hundreds of viewers. Hangouts can also be archived for later viewing which may be helpful when working on a project for later reference or sharing with others.

Not so great for:

As with all Google products and services, it is important to be mindful of privacy concerns. There is a limit of 10 users in a single Hangout.

How can you learn more?

More information on Google Hangouts can be found online:
https://hangouts.google.com/

Appear.in

What is it? Appear.In is "a browser-based video meeting tool" (appear.in). Unlike with other video conferencing applications, users do not require accounts or logins to participate meetings. For this reason it is considered to have a higher degree of privacy than Google Hangouts or Skype.

Best for: You can use Appear.In to host meetings quickly and easily. Meeting organizers create online meeting spaces within Appear.In and share links to the meeting spaces with invited participants.

Not so great for: An emerging service, Appear.In does not yet have other tools or capabilities beyond conferencing. The free offering does not permit recordings, and is limited to four participants in a meeting.

How can you learn more?

Information on how to create an Appear.in meeting room and share with participants can be found at:

https://appear.in/

You can also visit the Open Learning building (OL 346) during "Learning Technology Drop-in" sessions (see CELT calendar for schedule) or schedule an appointment with an Open Learning staff member: learningtech@tru.ca.

Hypothes.is

What is it? Hypothes.is is an open source software that allows you to annotate web-based resources. It exists as a website and as an extension to the Google Chrome browser— which permits users to see publicly-accessible Hypothes.is annotations anywhere on the web.

Best for: You can use Hypothes.Is to add and share annotations, comments, and additional resources to web pages. Annotations can be viewed through the Hypothes.is website, or in their original context (i.e., by visiting the websites bearing the annotations). You can share your annotations publicly, with groups, or keep them private. Hypothes.is is increasingly used by students to collaborate on assignments that require research in databases, library sites, and across the web generally.

Not so great for: Hypothes.is is an emerging platform. As such, it presently has limited options for document sharing, video or voice capabilities, or integrations with other platforms and applications.

How can you learn more?

Please visit a TRUBox site prepared by Open Learning for more information:

https://hypothesis.trubox.ca/

You can also visit the Open Learning building (OL 346) during "Learning Technology Drop-in" sessions (see CELT calendar for schedule) or schedule an appointment with an Open Learning staff member: learningtech@tru.ca.

Loom

What is it? Loom is screen recording application available as a Google Chrome extension. A free alternative to feature-heavy recorders such as TechSmith Camtasia, Loom allows you record, save, and share screencast videos quickly and easily.

Best for: You can use Loom for a wide range of projects involving screen recordings. It has in-app integration with Slack and allows users to share their videos immediately via embed codes, social media postings, or hyperlinks.

Not so great for: As a free web-based offering, Loom emphasizes ease of use, cost effectiveness, and quick publishing of videos. Loom tends to have limited editing capability for recordings in comparison to TechSmith Camtasia or other recorders designed for use in professional settings.

How can you learn more?

You can visit Loom's website to find out more and to download the Chrome extension: https://www.useloom.com/

To discuss how Loom or other screencasting applications might be used for your project or assignment, please visit the Open Learning building (OL 346) during "Learning Technology Drop-in" sessions (see CELT calendar for schedule) or schedule an appointment with an Open Learning staff member: learningtech@tru.ca.