

The Google Classroom Quick-Start Guide + tips and tricks!

Thousands of teachers are certainly finding their way to Google Classroom. **It has been as billed by Google: less focus on tech, more focus on teaching.** It has made managing Google Apps files in schools more streamlined and communicating with classes easier.

(<http://i1.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/classroom-sketch.png>)

Google Classroom makes organizing and managing all of your Google Apps activities streamlined and easy. Set it up in minutes. (Sketch by Matt Miller)

Have you set up Classroom in your classroom? If you're like many teachers I know, you might not have for some reason.

Well, now is the time! **This guide will show you how to set Classroom up in a matter of minutes and perform the main tasks.** It will even address a few things Classroom will NOT do, as it's not a fully featured learning management system.

Consider keeping this post open in one tab in your browser and Classroom in another so you can refer back. Feel free to click on the screenshots below to see the full-sized versions.

In addition, you can check out [12 great ways to start using Google Classroom now](http://ditchthattextbook.com/2014/08/21/12-great-ways-to-start-using-google-classroom-now/) (<http://ditchthattextbook.com/2014/08/21/12-great-ways-to-start-using-google-classroom-now/>) and [10 ways Google Classroom will make learning better](http://ditchthattextbook.com/2014/05/15/10-ways-google-classroom-will-make-learning-better/) (<http://ditchthattextbook.com/2014/05/15/10-ways-google-classroom-will-make-learning-better/>) (which I wrote before Classroom was released).

Let's get started!

Set up your class in Classroom

1. **Go to: classroom.google.com (<http://classroom.google.com>)**. You can use Classroom if you log in using a Google Apps for Education account (i.e. if your Google log-in is your school e-mail address, you're probably good).

(<http://io.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/plus-button.jpg>)

2. **Click on the “+” button in the top right to create your first class.**

Use the “+” button to create your first class.

(It's next to your e-mail address you used to logged in.) Then click "Create class."

3. **Add a class name and a section.** The class name should be the title of the class

("Mrs. Johnson Fourth Grade," "Spanish 3," "8th Grade Social Studies"). The section should identify which of those classes it is (for me, mine say "2nd period" for the section). Then click "Create."

(<http://i0.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/content/uploads/2014/10/class-name-section.jpg>)

Add a class name and section.

4. Once your class is created, students can start joining it. But, chances are there won't be any students around the moment you create the class. This is the time to get creative and have some fun with it! **Click "Change class theme"** on the right side of the header. It will open a gallery of header images you can use to spice up your classroom.

5. Also before your students join your class, you can **add details to your "About" tab.** This provides some basic information, such as the name of the course, a description of the course, the room where it meets and the teacher e-mail. You can also add materials (like a syllabus, classroom management plan or anything else students might need to refer to during the year) by attaching them.

(<http://i1.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/content/uploads/2014/10/about-section.jpg>)

Enter class details in the "About" tab.

6. The time has arrived ... **your students are ready to sign up for Classroom!** This is really one of the easiest parts. Have them log in to Classroom with their school

Google account and click the "+" just like you did. It will prompt them for a class code, which you can give them (write it on the board, show it on a projector, etc.). Once they enter it, they're in — like magic!

(<http://i2.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/content/uploads/2014/10/class-code.jpg>)

Give students the class code.

Using Classroom in everyday class

After your class is set up and students join, you have a fully functioning Google Classroom. Congratulations!

But you don't want to stop there. Here are some things you can do in your Classroom:

ADD AN ANNOUNCEMENT: This is a good way to communicate with your class and give them up-to-date information. Click the "Announcement" button to display a message to your class. You can even attach files (from Google Drive and otherwise), add YouTube videos and provide links. Tip: If you assign an activity outside of Classroom (i.e. a blog post on Kidblog), you can link to it in

(<http://i0.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/content/uploads/2014/10/announcement.jpg>)

Communicate with announcements.

an announcement so there's a record of it in your class.

ADD AN ASSIGNMENT: Creating a new assignment is almost the same as an announcement, but it has a due date.

Write the title of the assignment, a description of it and attach files (if necessary). Then specify when it's due. In student accounts, it will put extra notifications on assignments in your class to remind students when something is due — or when it's late.

<http://i2.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/assignment.jpg>

Add assignments with details.

MANAGE STUDENTS: From the “Students” tab, there are several actions you can take to interact with student accounts. You can manage permissions, giving students the ability to post and comment, only comment, or give only the teacher the ability to post and comment. The envelope icons let you send e-mails to individual students (if Gmail is available through their school Google accounts). By checking individual or multiple students, you can remove them from the class, e-mail them or mute them from commenting.

<http://i2.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/manage-students.jpg>

Manage details of students in class.

GRADE AN ASSIGNMENT: After you've added an assignment and students have turned work in, it's time to grade it.

Click the title of the assignment to open it. Click on a student's name to show any files attached that you need to view and to reveal a text field where you can type a comment to the student. Classroom flags every assignment as “not done,” “done,” “late” or “done late”. Classroom doesn't change student grades if assignments are late, but you can.

<http://i0.wp.com/ditchthattextbook.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/GRADE-AN-ASSIGNMENT.jpg>

Grade and return work.

Once you've viewed assignments, you can assign a grade by clicking where it says “No Grade.” If you want to change the number of points an assignment is worth, find the “Points” section at the top of the page and change it. Use the button at the top of the assignment screen to download student work to your Google Drive or to view the Google Drive folder where the student work is being stored. Be sure to click the blue “Return” button to finalize all of the grading you've just done.

Note: Once students turn work in using Classroom, they won't be able to make changes to those files until you return them to the students after grading them.

What Classroom doesn't do

Classroom is not a full-fledged LMS (learning management system) like Schoology, My Big Campus, Canvas and others. It's Google's foray into the education world and strives to help teachers with very specific, basic functions. Here are some things that Classroom will NOT do:

- **Provide tests and quizzes.** Those can be created using Google Forms and a link to that form can be added to an assignment or announcement in Classroom. Google Forms can be graded automatically using the Flubaroo add-on. But all of this happens outside of Google Classroom.
- **Chat.** There are no chat features within Classroom itself. If enabled by the administrator, students can chat with each other and the teacher within various Google Apps, but not in Classroom.
- **Calendar.** There is no connection to Google Calendar to display due dates. You can do that separately in Calendar, but Classroom won't do it itself.
- **Full-featured forums.** If you want a forum or discussion board, an announcement can serve that purpose in a limited way. You would need another option for more complete nested discussions, though.

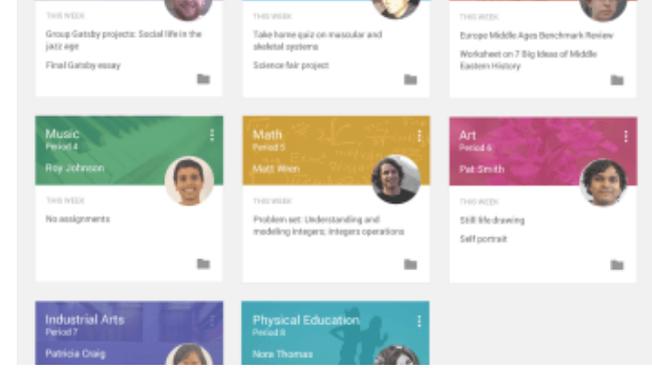
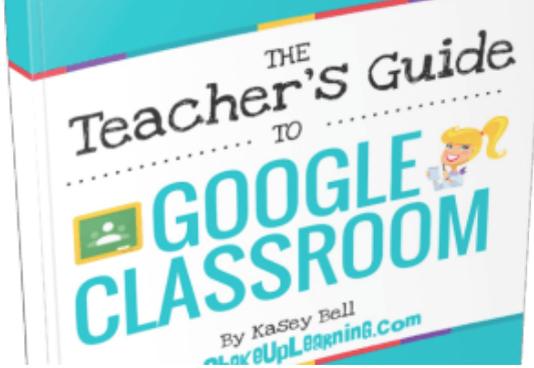
Tips and tricks

1. **There are lots of places to provide feedback (which is great!). You'll want to think about where you want to provide it.** It can be left in a comment in a file attached to an assignment. It can be left on each student's assignment (only visible to that student). It can be left on the assignment when you click "Return" (visible to all students).
2. **Adding descriptions to assignments is a good thing to do.** The assignments in Classroom become good points of reference for absent students and kids that see their grades and wonder why they are as they are. Spelling out all of the details makes for easy reference later.
3. Student work lives in a Google Drive folder in your Google account while it's turned in to you in Classroom. You have access to that folder, but it's not a good idea to make many changes to those folders in Google Drive. **Make all of your changes directly through Classroom.**

What are your opinions about Classroom? Is there anything you're unclear about after this guide? How are you using it in your class? Share with us in a comment below!

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Interested in having Matt present at your event or school? [Contact him by e-mail!](mailto:matt@ditchthattextbook.com)
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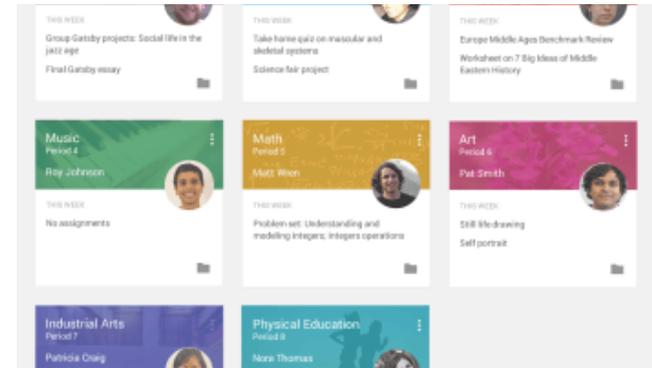
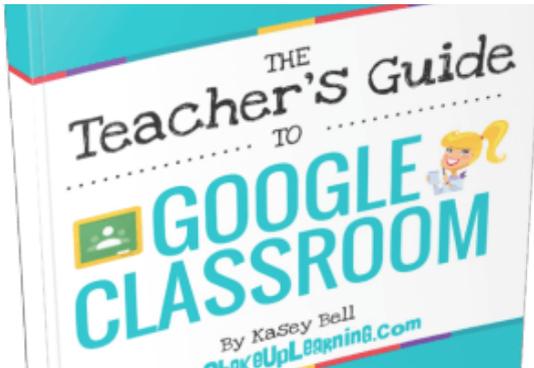
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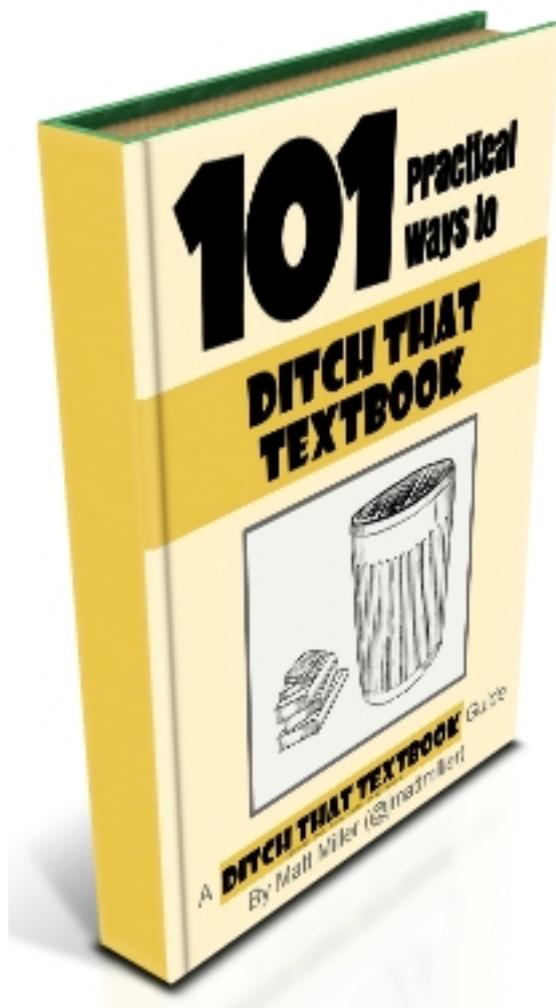
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