Getting Started with VoiceThread

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OBJECTIVES
Participants will be able to
- Create a VoiceThread
- Participate in a discussion thread using VoiceThread tools
- Explore various uses of VoiceThread

INTRODUCTION

What is a VoiceThread?
VoiceThread is a web-based application that allows you to place collections of media-like images, videos, documents, and presentations, at the center of an asynchronous conversation. VoiceThread allows people to have conversations and to make comments using any mix of text, microphone, webcam, telephone, or uploaded audio file. VoiceThread runs inside your web browser, so there is no software to download, install, or update.

Uses in Teaching and Learning
The 2009 Horizon Report K-12 Edition states, “A growing emphasis on collaboration in education—and an increasing recognition that collaboration is the norm in many modern workplaces—has led more teachers to seek tools to facilitate group interaction and teamwork in their classes.” VoiceThread provides a unique tool for teachers to tap into this trend because it is easy to learn and it is enthusiastically embraced by students. Students express, besides the ease of use, their willingness to participate in VoiceThread discussions for several reasons, including a sense of confidence that they can contribute comments that are not off-the-cuff, but considered, and even practiced, before they go “live.”

LOGGING IN

1. Open a Web browser.
2. Type http://voicethread.psu.edu/ in the Address bar.
The VoiceThread landing page includes sections for:

- Training to explore more training options.
- Support that includes quick start guides and tutorials for faculty and students.
- Help where you can submit your questions that will be answered by one of the programmers, project manager, or IT training specialist.

3. Click **Sign in**.

The Web Access screen will appear if you have not previously authenticated.

4. Enter your PSU access user ID and password.

5. Click **Login**.
VOICETHREAD INTERFACE OVERVIEW

The VoiceThread interface has three tabs: Browse, Create, and MyVoice. The application will open directly into the MyVoice page.

MyVoice Tab

The MyVoice page is like your e-mail inbox. It holds all of the VoiceThread conversations that you have created, participated in, or subscribed to. Each VoiceThread on your MyVoice page is represented by a square thumbnail image.

Browse Tab

From the Browse page, you can view, search for, and share VoiceThreads with other community members. You can see all of the VoiceThreads available to you. This includes all groups at Penn State and any additional groups you might belong to. You can narrow down your view of VoiceThreads by looking at only those that were created today, this week, or this month.

Create Tab

To find out more information about a particular VoiceThread, move your mouse over any VoiceThread on the Browse page. This information displayed on the screen includes the title, a description of the VoiceThread, information about the creator, and how many views and comments the VoiceThread has received.
From the Create page, you can create VoiceThreads by uploading files (images, documents, or videos). Once you have created your VoiceThread, you can go to your MyVoice page to view your VoiceThreads.

**GROUPS**

**Creating a Group**

Creating a Group is one of the first things you will want to do. It will simplify sharing as well as organize the work that is being shared within a Group. You can create as many Groups as you like.

⚠️ **NOTE:** Only VoiceThread Pro users may create Groups.

1. Click on your login information in the top right corner of the screen.

2. Select Groups & Contacts from the drop-down menu.

Your screen should look similar to this:

You will see any Groups that you have set up as well as any default Groups, such as Penn State University. The My Contacts tab will show any contacts that you have set up.

3. Click to create a Group.

4. Type a name for your Group in the Name box.

If the name you type is not being used by anyone else, a green check will appear to the right of the box.
5. Type a description of the Group. This is optional.

6. Click **Save**.

7. VoiceThread will create a Group sign up link that you can send by e-mail or embed into a web page or blog.

When anyone with an account visits the link, they will automatically be added to the Group.

**Group Permissions**

You can control Group permissions. The permissions you can assign to a Group are viewing and viewing/commenting permissions.

From the Share menu:

1. Click on the **Group** name.

2. Select either **viewing** or **viewing/commenting**.

If you want Group members to have viewing privileges only, select the icon that resembles an eye. If you would like them to have viewing/commenting privileges, click the icon that resembles a call out box.

**Adding Users**
All Penn State full-time faculty, staff, and students have a VoiceThread account. If someone has logged on to VoiceThread, they will appear in the Penn State University Group. To find a person to add to your Group, you can scroll down the list or use the search feature to look for them. If you have a VoiceThread Pro account (faculty and staff only), you can create as many groups as you want. You are automatically a member of any group you create.

🚨 NOTE: Friends of Penn State account holders do not have access to VoiceThread.

Adding Users to a Group

1. Click on the **name** in the list that you would like to add to the Group. The surrounding box will be highlighted in yellow.

2. Drag the **name** box to the Group that you would like them to join.

3. Drop the **name** box into the Group.

You can add more than one person at a time to a Group. When you add people to a Group, they will receive an e-mail telling them they have been added. The invitee has the option to accept or decline the invitation.
If the name of the person you would like to add to your Group does not appear in the Penn State University Group, and they are a Penn State faculty, staff, or student, that just means they have not yet logged into VoiceThread. However, you can still add them to your Group.

1. Click **Add+** from the **Share** menu.

![Add+ from Share menu](image)

2. Type their **email, name, and tags** (optional) in the **Add a Contact** dialog box.

![Add a Contact dialog box](image)

A green check will appear if the information you have entered is valid.

3. Click **add**.

**Removing Users**

1. Select their **name**.

2. Click the **X** next to their name.

![Removing Users](image)

**CREATING A VOICETHREAD**
To create a thread, you must first upload content. Content can come from your computer, media sources, URLs, or your web camera. You can upload images, documents, and videos.

**Video**

1. Click **My Webcam**. This will activate your webcam.

2. Click **Allow**.

3. Select **video**.

4. Click **video** to start recording.

You will see a countdown on the screen and hear it in your headset to let you know when you can start recording.

5. Click **Stop** when you have completed recording your video VoiceThread.
6. Click on Add a title and description at the top of the VoiceThread to include additional information.

Non-Video

7. Click Upload to add additional content to your VoiceThread.

8. Pick your data source (My Computer, Media Sources, or URL).

My Computer

You can upload files stored on your computer.

Media Sources

- Photos from the VoiceThreads in your MyVoice page
- Photos from Flickr
- Photos from your Facebook account
- Digital images from The New York Public Library

URL
This would be a direct URL where there would be an acceptable file type, like a .pdf, MS Office files, Open Office files, or an image (jpeg, gif, png, bitmap), that could be pulled into the thread.

Before you insert a URL, save your VoiceThread. If the URL is incompatible, VoiceThread may unexpectedly close.

**Sharing a VoiceThread**

All VoiceThreads start off as private, so you will need to share it before anyone else can view or participate in your VoiceThread.

**Sharing – Public**

The most public way to share your VoiceThread is by sending your VoiceThread link via e-mail or adding it to a blog, website, or printed material.

1. Click the **Gear** menu icon on the VoiceThread you want to share.

2. Click **Share**.
3. Click **Get a Link**.

![Get a Link](image)

4. Click **Copy the Link**.

![Copy the Link](image)

You can then send the link in an e-mail or post in a website, blog, or printed material. The default values for your link will allow anyone that clicks the link to view and comment on your VoiceThread. If you uncheck **View** and **Comment**, then only people that have been invited via a group or your contacts list will be able to access your VoiceThread.

**Sharing – Secure**

You control the groups or individuals you share your VoiceThreads with. You can also control their viewing, commenting, or editing privileges. Whole groups can be assigned viewing and viewing/commenting privileges. You can also assign individuals viewing, commenting, and editing privileges.

**Individuals**

1. Click the **Gear** menu icon on the VoiceThread you want to share.

![Gear menu](image)
2. Click **Share**.

   ![VoiceThread interface](image)

3. Click the **face** of the group member(s) you would like to invite.

   ![Group members](image)

4. Click **Send Invite**.

5. You can select the sharing options of viewing, commenting, or editing.

   ![Sharing options](image)

   The first button allows viewing of the VoiceThread only. The second button allows viewing and commenting on the VoiceThread. The third button allows the person to edit the VoiceThread. You can change these permissions settings as often as you like.

**Group - Drag and Drop**

1. Click on the **thumbnail** of any of your VoiceThreads.

2. Drag it to any group on the left hand slide of your MyVoice page.

3. The VoiceThread will be instantly shared with all members of that Group.

**COMMENTING**
Comments on a thread can be made by you and the individuals you shared your thread with. As participants make comments they will fill in around the edges of the slide. Comments can be made by telephone, webcam, microphone, text, and file upload. Participants can even draw when they are commenting.

**Audio (Microphone)**

1. Click the **Comment** button while viewing a VoiceThread.

![Comment button](image)

2. Click **Record**.

![Record button](image)

An Adobe Flash Player Settings menu may open requesting access to use your microphone.

3. Click **Allow** to begin commenting.

4. Click **Stop Recording** when you have finished your comment.

VoiceThread will then play the comment back, and you can to decide if you want to keep it or record another.

5. Click **Save** to keep your comment or **Cancel** to delete it.

When you click Save, the comment will appear under your identity image next to the VoiceThread page.
Text

1. Click the **Comment** button while viewing a VoiceThread.

2. Click **type**.

![Comment button](image)

A white comment bubble will appear over your identity image. This is where you enter your text.

1. Click **Save** to keep your comment or **Cancel** to delete it.

When you click Save, the comment will appear under your identity next to the VoiceThread page.

Video (Webcam)

1. Click the **Comment** button while viewing a VoiceThread.

2. Click the **Webcam** image.

![Webcam image](image)

An Adobe Flash Player Settings menu may open requesting access to use your microphone.

3. Click **Allow** to begin commenting.

If your webcam is functioning properly, the video you are recording should appear in a white bubble on the side of the VoiceThread page (slide).

4. Click **Stop Recording** when you are done recording your comment.

VoiceThread will then play the comment back for you to decide if you want to keep it or record another.

5. Click **Save** to keep your comment or **Cancel** to delete it.

If you save your comment, it will appear next to the VoiceThread page.

Pre-recorded Audio File
This feature is only available to Pro account users.

1. Click the Comment button while viewing a VoiceThread.

2. Click the Upward-Pointing Arrow.

This will open a browse dialog for you to select an MP3 or WAV file to upload as an audio comment. A progress bar will appear as the file uploads. You can click cancel to abort the upload.

**Telephone**

1. Click the Comment button while viewing a VoiceThread.

2. Click the Telephone image.

If your account has available phone commenting minutes, a dialog will appear that will allow you to type the phone number to make a VoiceThread call (currently U.S. and Canada phone numbers only). VoiceThread will call the phone number and prompt you to leave a comment, or multiple comments on different pages (slides).

Each slide in a VoiceThread can hold thousands of comments. After about 35 comments, pagination turns on. The More button appears next to the comment navigation arrows so you can scroll through the pages of comment. If you are allowing comments, you may want to consider limiting your group to 35 or less.

**M5 Commenting (Multiple Slides)**

VoiceThread allows people to browse entire collections of media while making a single unbroken comment. You are can navigate from image > video > document > presentation slide > or any different media types without breaking your narrative comment.

**NOTE:** Users need to be aware that if more than one person is commenting, they may not comment on every slide. For example, someone might comment on slides 1, 3, and 5 and
someone else might comment on slides 2, 3 and 4. This can result in a disjointed “conversation.” To avoid this, ask participants to comment only on the slide they are viewing.

**Doodling Tool**

Doodling is an additional way of commenting. It will capture what you draw and exactly how you drew it. Instead of seeing just the final product, it lets you see the process. To doodle on a VoiceThread:

1. Click on the **Comment** button and choose your commenting mode (doodling is not available for comment by telephone or uploaded comments).

2. Place your mouse over the center portion of the VoiceThread once the recording process starts.

3. Click and drag your mouse cursor over the VoiceThread slide to draw on it.

4. Click the **center of the color palette** to stop your doodles from fading.

All doodles created during this comment will remain visible. If you want a fresh slide, save the comment with one doodle and then begin recording another comment to create a new doodle.

You can doodle on a video just like you would on any other image. After you click the **Comment** button and select your commenting method, click the **play** button on the video to begin playing it (comments via telephone or uploaded audio files do not support doodling). You can pause the video at any point in your comment and use the doodle feature. When the comment plays back, the video will pause in any place you paused it, and your doodles will appear where you made them.

**MODERATING COMMENTS**

Moderating the comments allows you to control which comments are shown to everyone. People can still leave comments, but they will be visible to you, co-editors, and the person who left the comment. If you choose to moderate the comments, you will have to listen to all comments to decide if you would like to show it, keep it hidden, or delete it.

Comment Moderation is accessed from the **Publishing Options** tab.

1. Click **Publishing Options**.
2. Select **Moderate Comments**?

![Publishing Options for this VoiceThread](image)

3. Click **save**.

Comments that you have not yet heard will have a yellow border.

1. Click the **comment** to listen to it.

When you click on the comment, this bubble will appear. Moderated comments appear gray and have a closed-curtain icon.
2. Click the closed-curtain icon to reveal the comment.

Un-moderated comments will have a white background and have an open-curtain icon.

**PLAYBACK OPTIONS**

This is where you can set the rules for how you would like your thread to play back. Only creators or editors of a VoiceThread can set the options. To access the Playback options:

1. Click the Gear menu icon of the VoiceThread that you would like to edit.

2. Select Edit.

3. Click Playback Options on the bottom left side of the screen.

Your screen will look like this:

![Playback Options](image)

**Wait "X" Seconds**

X = the number of seconds after all the comments have played before the VoiceThread automatically goes to the next slide. The default is 4 seconds, but you can change it to anything you would like. To encourage commenting on a slide, you may want to make it longer. If you want your VoiceThread to play like a presentation, you probably may want to set it to 0 seconds.

**Start Playing When Opened**

This option automatically plays the VoiceThread when it is opened. If there are comments on the first slide, they will start playing as soon as the VoiceThread is opened. If there are no comments,
Getting Started with VoiceThread

the slide will advance after the set number of seconds has passed. This feature is enabled by default.

**Show Fullscreen**

This option automatically shows the VoiceThread in fullscreen mode when it is opened. The viewer of the VoiceThread can turn off fullscreen mode by clicking the fullscreen button on the top-right of VoiceThread. This feature is disabled by default.

**Allow Others to Download**

This option allows viewers of your VoiceThread to download your original slides by right-clicking on the slide. Comments will not be included. This feature is disabled by default. This option is available only with VoiceThread Pro accounts.

**Share Final Slide**

This option allows the final slide of your VoiceThread to be hidden. This feature is disabled by default. If you do not want people you did not invite to view your VoiceThread, to share it with others, or to export, this option should be disabled. It is available only with VoiceThread Pro accounts.

![VoiceThread Interface](image)

**Allow Others to Export**

This option allows others to export your VoiceThread. Exporting a VoiceThread will create a video version of your VoiceThread, which you can download so you have a copy preserved offline. For more information on exporting, see the section below on Exporting a VoiceThread.

**Allow Others to Copy**

This option allows you to determine whether anyone can make a copy of the VoiceThread. This feature is disabled by default.

**EXPORTING A VOICETHREAD**

Exporting a VoiceThread will create a video version of your VoiceThread that can be downloaded to your computer so you have a copy offline. You can then save it to a flashdrive, CD, or DVD. VoiceThread uses the QuickTime .MOV container and H.264 to save all exported movies.
The exporting option can be found on the final screen of a VoiceThread or by clicking on the Gear menu icon on the VoiceThread and selecting it from the options that appear at the bottom of the screen.

Penn State VoiceThread Pro accounts users have 30 export credits available for exporting threads. Additional export credits can be purchased. For current pricing, go to http://psu.voicethread.com/about/features/exporting/.

**COPYING A VOICETHREAD**

You have the ability to copy an existing VoiceThread so that it can be reused with a different group of people or as a backup copy. You can make a copy that includes all comments, only your comments, or no comments.

1. Select **Make a Copy**.

2. Select the type of copy you would like to make.
   a. Include all comments
   b. Include only my comments
   c. Don’t include any comments

**EMBEDDING A VOICETHREAD**

You can embed your VoiceThread into your ANGEL course, websites, or blogs. Embedding your VoiceThread means that it will play for your viewers and readers while still in your page.

**Embed Code**
To get the code to embed your VoiceThread into a website, blog, or an ANGEL course, follow this procedure:

1. From inside VoiceThread, click the Gear menu icon for the VoiceThread that you want to embed.

2. Click Edit.

3. At the bottom left of the screen, click Embed.

4. Copy the embed code (the window directly below the quick post window).

5. Click Close.
ANGEL

Log into ANGEL and go to the course that you want to embed the VoiceThread.

1. Click Lessons.

2. Click Add Content.

3. Click Page from the Create an Item list.

4. Add a title for your page.

5. Click the Source button.

6. Press CTRL and V on your keyboard to copy the embed code into the text area.

7. Click Save.

The VoiceThread is now embedded into the ANGEL page. If commenting is enabled, only students who can authenticate into ANGEL will be able to comment on the thread. These comments will then become part of the thread, and can be viewed either in ANGEL or in VoiceThread.

Websites or Blogs
Once you have your embed code, you can embed it into your websites or blogs as you would any other html code.

**Auto-embed**

You can auto-embed your VoiceThread into many popular platforms, including Blogger and Facebook.

1. Go to your MyVoice page and select the VoiceThread you want to embed.
2. Click the **Gear** menu icon on the selected VoiceThread.
3. Click **Edit**.
4. Select **Embed** from the options at the bottom of the screen.

5. Select the platform where you would like to embed your VoiceThread.

*NOTE:* The embed option is also available on the final slide.
Technology Training Resources

Resources Through ITS Training Services

Find face-to-face and online training workshops through Penn State ITS Training Services at http://its.psu.edu/training/catalog/

Learn about Training On Demand (sessions upon request for groups of five or more) at http://its.psu.edu/training/ondemand/

Explore thousands of free video tutorials that are available for self-paced learning at http://lynda.psu.edu/

Take free Microsoft eLearning courses or find out more about free certification vouchers at http://msitacademy.psu.edu/

Discover training news, fun tips, and session reminders via social media on @psuITStraining (Twitter) http://www.facebook.com/psuitstraining/ (Facebook)

Join one of our news lists to receive monthly email notification of all upcoming technology training opportunities, by sending a blank email to L-TRAINING-NEWS-SUBSCRIBE-REQUEST@LISTS.PSU.EDU (Training News List) L-FACULTY-TECHTRAINING-SUBSCRIBE-REQUEST@LISTS.PSU.EDU (Faculty Training List) L-CAMPUS-TECHTRAINING-SUBSCRIBE-REQUEST@LISTS.PSU.EDU (Campus Training List)

Additional Technology Resources

Contact the IT Service Desk with general technology-related questions by emailing ITServiceDesk@psu.edu or call 814-865-4357 (HELP)

Search for technology-related information in the IT Knowledge Base at http://kb.its.psu.edu/

Purchase discounted software or software licenses through Penn State at http://software.psu.edu/

Access free online books about popular technology topics through the Penn State Libraries at http://proquest.safaribooksonline.com/