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 into VoiceThread
The VoiceThread landing page includes the following sections:
- **Getting Started**: Information for how VoiceThread is being used at Penn State, including best practices, features, and tips for VoiceThread creation.
- **Support**: Quick Start Guides, frequently asked questions (FAQs), information regarding instructional design consultation, uses case, and accessibility information.
- **Training**: Registration information for VoiceThread training provided by ITS Training Services.
- **Support that includes quick start guides and tutorials for faculty and students.**
- **Help**: Contact information for the IT Service Desk.

To login to VoiceThread:
- Open **Mozilla Firefox**.
- Navigate to http://voicethread.psu.edu.
getting started with voicethread

- click the sign in button.
- enter your penn state access account id and password.
- click the login button.

**voicethread interface overview**

the voicethread interface has three tabs: home, browse, and create. the application will open directly into the home page.

**home tab**

the home page is like your email inbox. it holds all of the voicethread conversations that you have created, participated in, or subscribed to. each voicethread on your home page is represented by a rectangular 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.
To find out more information about a particular VoiceThread, move your mouse over any VoiceThread on the Browse page to display a popup window. The information displayed in the popup window includes the title, a description of the VoiceThread, information about the creator, and how many views and comments the VoiceThread has received.

**Create Tab**

From the Create page, you can create VoiceThreads by dragging media to the drop area or by uploading files (images, documents, or videos). Once you have created your VoiceThread, you can go to your Home page to view your VoiceThreads.

![Add Media](image)

Figure 3: The + Add Media area on the Create tab.

**Working with Groups**

**Creating a Group**

VoiceThread Pro users, Penn State faculty and staff, have the ability to create groups. Creating a group is one of the first things you will want to do when working with VoiceThread. Creating a group 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.

To access the Groups & Contacts drop-down menu:

1. Click on your login information in the top right corner of the screen.
2. Select Groups & Contacts from the drop down menu.

![Groups & Contacts](image)

Figure 4: The Groups & Contacts drop down menu

You will see any Groups that you have set up previously. The My Contacts link will show any contacts that you have added to your VoiceThread profile.
To create a new Group:

1. Click the + Group button.
2. Type a name for your group in the Name box.
3. Type a description of the group, if desired.
4. Click the Create Group button.

VoiceThread will create a Group sign-up link that you can send by email or embed into a web page or blog. When anyone with an account visits the link, they will automatically be added to the Group.

To utilize the Group Sign-up Link:

1. Ensure the group is selected within the Groups and Contacts dialog box.
2. Click the Group Sign-up Link button.
3. Select the URL.
4. Copy the URL by using the Ctrl + C (Windows) or Command + C (Mac) keyboard command.
5. Paste the URL into an email or share by other means with intended Group members.

**Group Permissions**

You can control group permissions. The permissions you can assign to a group are viewing and viewing/commenting permissions. Members of the group must be added manually or by using the sign-up link discussed in the previous section before permissions can be changed.
To edit group permissions:

1. Hover over a **VoiceThread** that you are the editor of to display the call out box.
2. Click the **Share** icon.
3. Select the **Secure** tab.
4. Locate your **group** from the list.
5. Select the **Members** link.
   - Select the **group member**.
   - Hold the **Shift** key.
   - Select an additional **Group member** to change share permission of multiple Group Members.
   - Select one or more of the following **share options**:
     a. **View**
     b. **Comment**
     c. **Edit**
   - Click the **Share** button.
   - With the Share Permissions window open, repeat steps 5-6 as needed.

**Adding Users to a Group**

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

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.

To add a user to a group:

1. Confirm that the **share permission window** is open.
2. Select your **group**.
3. **Confirm** that your VoiceThread Group title is now visible on the right side of the share permissions window.

![Figure 7: Selected Group in the Share Permissions window.](image-url)
4. Click on the **Contacts** button.

   ![Figure 8: The Contacts and Groups buttons](image)

   **4.** Click on the **Contacts** button.

5. Click on the *contact name* in the list to add them to the Group.

6. Confirm that the contact was **added** to the group.

7. Repeat steps 5-6 to add an additional **contacts** to the group.

8. Adjust your contacts **share permissions** as needed.

9. Click the **Share button** when finished.

10. Click the **X** icon to close the **Share Permissions** window.

**NOTE:** There is no longer a Penn State Group as in previous versions of VoiceThread. You will not be able to see a full directory of PSU users unless you are an Administrator and have access to the Manager. The best way to have PSU users join is to manually create a Group and send them the Group sign-up link. Once that you start using ANGEL integration more widely, Course Groups will be created automatically and students will be automatically and students will be automatically enrolled in them.

### Removing Group Users

To remove a contact:

1. Select the **contacts name** on the Share Permissions window you want to remove.

   ![Figure 9: The Clear selection option to remove a contact from a group](image)

   **Figure 9: The Clear selection option to remove a contact from a group**

2. Click **Clear selection** or the **X** icon.

### 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. You can drag files onto the + Add Media area or click in the + Add Media area to display a menu with other options for adding content to your VoiceThread.

### Adding Video

To add Webcam video content:

1. Click on the **Create tab** at the top of the browser window.

2. Click the + **Add Media** area.
3. Click the **Webcam Video** button.

4. Click the **Allow** button for the Adobe Flash Player Settings.

![Adobe Flash Player Settings menu](image10.png)

Figure 10: The Adobe Flash Player Settings menu

5. Look at your **Webcam** as the window counts down.

![Webcam 3, 2, 1 countdown window](image11.png)

Figure 11: The Webcam 3, 2, 1 countdown window

6. Begin **talking** after the countdown reaches 1.

7. Click the **red button** to stop the recording.

8. Review the **recording**.

9. Click the **Save** button.

Clicking the Save button adds the video clip to your VoiceThread. You can also click the cancel button and try again if you were not happy with the initial video capture. Since we saved our video clip we can now add a Title and Description.
Adding a VoiceThread Title, Description, and Tags

Once you have added content to your VoiceThread you can add a title, description, and tags. While a title for your VoiceThread is required, a description and tags are optional. Tags allow you to search for the VoiceThread by certain keywords on your VoiceThread Home page. Tags are not visible on the VoiceThread itself.

To add a title and description:

1. Click the **Add a title and description** link, located above the first page in your VoiceThread.

2. Type a **title** in the Title box.
3. Add a short **Description**, if desired.
4. Enter **tags**, if desired.
5. Click the **Save** button.
7. Click **Edit** and repeat steps 2-5, if needed.

Adding Media from Your Local Computer

All types of media can be uploaded to VoiceThread from your computer, including images, video, audio, etc. To add media from your local computer:

1. Click + **Add Media** to add additional content to your VoiceThread.
2. Locate the **media** on your computer.
3. Click the **Open** button.

After clicking the Open button, the media will be turned into a VoiceThread. At this point, you can add a title, description, and tags using the steps outlined in the previous section.
Media Sources

Media can be added from a variety of different online sources such as Flickr, the Khan Academy, and the New York Public Library. Images from these services are Creative Commons licensed and can be used by any Penn State faculty, staff, or student.

- Select the Create tab.
- Click + Add Media.
- Click the Media Sources button.
- Click the media source's icon.
- Search for the media you would like to use.
- Select the image(s) or video(s).
- Click the Import Selected button.

URL

The URL option allows users to import images and video from other websites. As long as you have a URL that directly points to the image or video, usually ending in .jpg or .mp4, then you can import the file seamlessly. It’s important to note that the URL option cannot be used to import files from media-sharing links like YouTube as those sites provide sharing links and not direct links to the video files.

- Select the Create tab.
- Click + Add Media.
- Click the URL button.
- Paste the URL in the URL textbox.
- Click the Save button.

Sharing a VoiceThread

By default, all VoiceThreads are private. Users must share a VoiceThread with other users before it can be viewed or commented on by others.

Sharing Publicly

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. Hover your cursor over your VoiceThread.
2. Click the Share button.
3. Click the Get a Link button.

Figure 13: The Get a link button
4. Select the **link**.

5. Copy the link by the keyboard command **Ctrl + C** (Windows) or **Command + C** (Mac).

6. Click the **Done** button to close the window.

![Image](https://psu.voicethread.com/view/share/6413157)

Figure 14: The Get a link window

The copied link can be sent to users via e-mail or be posted in a website, blog, or printed material. The default values for the link will restrict anyone that clicks the link to view and comment on your VoiceThread. If you check **Allow anyone to View** and **Comment**, then only people that have been invited via a group or your contacts list will be able to access your VoiceThread.

**Changing Individual Sharing Settings**

Users can control the sharing settings of a specific VoiceThread with other individuals. Users can also control their viewing, commenting, or editing privileges. Whole groups can be assigned viewing and viewing/commenting privileges. Users can also assign individuals viewing, commenting, and editing privileges. These permissions settings can be changed as often as needed.

To add and adjust an individual users privileges:

1. Click the **Share button** on the VoiceThread you want to share.

2. Click the **Contacts** button on the share window.

![Image](https://psu.voicethread.com/view/share/6413157)

Figure 15: The share window with contacts selected

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

![Image](https://psu.voicethread.com/view/share/6413157)

Figure 16: A selected contact on the contact list

4. Choose the sharing options of **View**, **Comment**, or **Edit** for your contact.
5. Confirm that the **Notify by email** checkbox is selected.
6. Click the **Share** button to add the contact to your VoiceThread.

### Adding a Group by Dragging and Dropping

To add a group to a VoiceThread using the drag and drop method:

1. Select the **Home** tab.
2. Open the Groups panel by clicking on the **Sidebar** button.
3. Left-click your **mouse** on your VoiceThread.
4. Without releasing your mouse drag your **VoiceThread** over to the Groups list.
5. Release your mouse over the group.

---

**Figure 17:** The share permissions options

**Figure 18:** The Sidebar button

**Figure 19:** Click and drag option to share a VoiceThread with a Group

**Figure 20:** The drop on a Group to share window
Commenting on a VoiceThread

Users can comment on any of their own VoiceThreads or any VoiceThread that has been shared with them by another users. As users make comments, they will fill in around the edges of the slide. Comments can be made by telephone, webcam, microphone, text, and file upload. Users can also draw on the VoiceThread while they are commenting.

Commenting Using a Microphone

To add an audio comment:

1. Select a VoiceThread.
2. Click the add Comment.

   ![Figure 21: The add Comment button](image)

3. Click the Microphone icon.

   ![Figure 22: The Comment option menu](image)

4. Click the Allow button for the Adobe Flash Player Setting.

5. When the countdown screen reaches 1, **begin speaking**.

   ![Figure 23: The Countdown screen](image)

6. To review your audio comment click the Start Speaking button.

   ![Figure 24: The Start Speaking button](image)

7. To accept your audio comment click the Save button.

   ![Figure 25: The Save button](image)
Commenter Identity Information

By hovering your mouse over the profile icon (Identity) and timeline on a VoiceThread page you can see the user’s name, as well as the date and time the comment was created. This can be done for any type of comment that is added by you or any other users with access to the VoiceThread.

To find the commenters name:

1. Hover your mouse over the profile icon to display your Name (Commenters name), and options to Delete or Hide the comment.

![Figure 26: The Comment options window](image)

To see the date and time a comment was added:

1. Hover your mouse over any location on the timeline to show the date and time a comment was submitted.

![Figure 27: Timeline displaying the Name, Date, and Time of comment submission](image)

Commenting Using Text

To add a text comment:

1. Click the Comment button while viewing a VoiceThread.
2. Click the ABC button.

![Figure 28: The ABC (Text Commenting) button](image)

3. Add a text comment.
4. Click the Save button to add your comment to the timeline.

Commenting Using a Webcam

To add a video comment:

1. Click the Comment button while viewing a VoiceThread.
2. Click the Webcam image.

![Figure 29: The Video camera button](image)

3. Click Allow for the Adobe Flash Player Setting.
4. Check the **camera position** on the preview as the screen counts down.

![Figure 30: The video preview and countdown screen](image)

5. Look into the **camera lens** while creating your video clip comment.
6. Click the **Stop Recording** button.
7. Preview your **recording**.
8. Click the **Save** button.

### Commenting Using a Pre-recorded Audio File

Users can leave a comment on a VoiceThread that was pre-recorded and is stored on their local computer.

To add an audio file:

1. Select a **VoiceThread**.
2. Click the **Comment** button.
3. Click the **Upload a file** button to open your computer look-in menu.

![Figure 31: The Upload a file button](image)

4. Locate the **audio file**.
5. Select the **audio file**.
6. Click the **Open** button.
7. Wait until the uploading file wheel **stops spinning** on your profile icon.
8. Preview your **audio file** by clicking on your profile icon. As the audio file plays a sound icon will be visible next to your name.

![Figure 32: The Comment options window with sound icon](image)
Commenting Using a Telephone

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).

To add a telephone comment:

1. Click the add comment button.
2. Click the Phone button.
3. Type your phone number.
4. Click the Call Me button.
5. Once your call is answered anything said will become the comment.
6. End the call.

While the call is placed your will see the progress wheel and phone number in the lower left corner of the browser window. When the phone is answered the progress wheel and number will change to a green color and read On Call while your phone message is being recorded.

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 to video to document to 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.
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.

**NOTE:** Doodling is not available for comment by telephone or uploaded text comments.

To use the Doodle tool:

1. Start a **video** or **audio** comment.
2. If prompted click the **Allow** button on the Adobe Flash Player Settings menu.
3. Once the video or audio comment has started to record click the **pencil**.

![Figure 35: The Doodle tool icon](image)

4. Choose any **one of the eight colors**.

![Figure 36: The eight color choices for the Doodle tool](image)

5. Click and draw a **few lines** on your slide. (Our example shows an arrow.)

![Figure 37: An arrow drawn on the VoiceThread screen with the Doodle tool](image)

6. Stop your **recording**.
7. Repeat **steps 1-5** as needed.

Your doodle will remain visible on your slide for a few seconds fading away shortly after. If you want a fresh slide, save the comment with one doodle and then begin recording another comment to create a new doodle.
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.

To control Comment Moderation:

1. Return to the **Home tab**.
2. Hover over the **thumbnail** of your VoiceThread.
3. Click the **Edit** button.
4. Click the **Options** link located in the upper right corner of your VoiceThread screen.
5. Click **Playback settings** from the Options menu.
6. Click in the **Enable Comment Moderation** checkbox.
7. Click the **Update** button.
Playback Options

- **Allow Others to Download Media:** 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 and only available to faculty and staff.
- **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.
- **Start Playing When Opened:** The VoiceThread will play automatically when the VoiceThread is opened.
- **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.
- **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; however it can be changed. 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, the slide will advance after the set number of seconds has passed. This feature is enabled 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 Share window of a VoiceThread. As of 01/12/2015 users will be directed back to the previous version of VoiceThread if they need to export a VoiceThread they own. Penn State VoiceThread Pro accounts users have 30 export credits available for exporting threads.

**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.

To make a copy of a VoiceThread:

1. Click the **Options** menu button.
2. Click **Copy this VoiceThread**.
3. Confirm the **Title and Description**.
4. Chose what comments you want to keep with the new copy.

   ![Comment options menu](image1.png)

   Figure 41: The Comment options menu in the Copy this VoiceThread window

5. Click the **Copy** button.
6. Return to your **Home** tab.
7. Confirm that a copy of your **VoiceThread** is visible on the Home tab.

**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.

**Obtaining the Embed Code**

To get the code to embed your VoiceThread into a website, blog, or an ANGEL course:

1. Click on the Options button for the **VoiceThread** you want to embed.
2. Select the **Basic** tab.
3. Click **Embed**.

   ![Embed button](image2.png)

   Figure 42: The Embed button

4. Select a **display size.** (Widescreen 16:9 is the default.)

   ![Embed display option menu](image3.png)

   Figure 43: The embed VoiceThread display option menu

Display options include:

- Widescreen 16:9
- Standard 4:3
- Document 8.5:11
- Custom
5. Click the **Copy Embed Code** button. (You can choose View and Commenting rights prior to copying the embed code.)

**Embedding the Code into ANGEL**

Paste the embed Code into ANGEL or other tool. Prior to pasting into a field within ANGEL you will need to click the Source button located on the HTML toolbar. Since you are pasting code into a field under the HTML toolbar the field has to be able to read the embed code. It is a best practice to check and test your VoiceThread is operating as intended in the desired location or tool.

![VoiceThread embed code pasted into a field in ANGEL](image)

*Figure 44: VoiceThread embed code pasted into a field in ANGEL with the source button is highlighted*

To embed a VoiceThread into ANGEL:

1. In an ANGEL Course or Group click the **Add Content** link.

![Add Content link in ANGEL](image)

*Figure 45: The Add Content link in ANGEL*

2. Select **Page**. (These steps will work in any area where you have an open field under the HTML toolbar.)

![Create a Page button](image)

*Figure 46: The Create a Page button on the Add Content page in ANGEL*

3. Click the **Source** button.

![Source button](image)

*Figure 47: The Source button*

4. Paste, (Ctrl + V windows or Command +V Mac) the **Embed Code** into the open field.
5. Click the **Save** button.

6. Confirm that the **VoiceThread** is displaying correctly.

---

**Figure 48:** VoiceThread Embed Code pasted into a field in ANGEL

**Figure 49:** within an ANGEL class
Technology Training Resources

Through ITS Training Services

Find face-to-face and online training workshops through Penn State ITS Training Services at [http://lrn.psu.edu/](http://lrn.psu.edu/)

Request Training On Demand (sessions upon request for groups of five or more) at [http://ittraining.psu.edu/workshops/](http://ittraining.psu.edu/workshops/)

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

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Additional Technology Resources

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