

“PERSONAL INFORMATION AND THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES”

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Introduction

One of the first units in almost any textbook makes students give and ask for personal information. If they have been studying together for several years, or at least the previous year, or that task is not carried out the first day, it becomes highly artificial and senseless.

The Net offers you the possibility of making an extraordinary activity out of this function: students open their personal and free e-mail accounts.

There're several web pages in English where you can do it, but the most popular ones are:

www.yahoo.com

www.hotmail.com

www.altavista.net

Doing it in Spanish is also possible, but that's not our aim as teachers of English.

Procedure

Step one

Pre-teach the students the specific vocabulary to be needed, like linking words and their definitions

URL/Location	your invented name. e.g. manuelb
Login/mail name/ ID/Email name	e.g. www.yahoo.com where you write the web page address
Password	a personal secret identification e.g. mb34

Step two.

Make an OHT (Overhead Transparency) out of the screen/s they're are going to work on, to make them familiar with it. Pointing at different parts of it, they identify the various elements.



Step three

The student opens his/her personal e-mail account following the steps we include in step three. But remember that web pages are alive and keep changing everyday, so you may find slight changes when you visit it.

- 1.- URL: www.yahoo.com
- 2.- Yahoo! Mail free email for life →(click)
- 3.- I'm a new user Sign me up! →(click)
- 4.- Read the Mail Terms of Service Agreement→I accept (click)

- 5.- Just read the form and go to section 2 (Personal Account Information), where it says “If you are not a United States resident, please continue with→this form (click)
6.- Fill in all the gaps and →submit this form (click)

Step four

The use of e-mail in TEFL is something extremely rich which offers a wide scope of possibilities. Finding a partner school can be very rewarding, you can do it for instance in:

*www.epals.com : It connects with classrooms from over 80 countries; more than 450.000 students are now participating. It's very good for teacher-monitored school projects. These projects can range from language arts, cultural learning, history, geography, social studies, science... The aim should not always be language itself, but content-teaching, that is, teaching/learning on other fields of knowledge using English as the vehicle language. You can search for classroom and/or add your classroom to the database. It's suitable for any language teacher, not just English.

*wfs.eun.org : a web designed for collaborating to produce educational projects; over 70 of them have been developed using the Internet. As above, in www.epals.com, they cover different areas. It involves over 700 European Secondary School teachers and has as a first objective linking schools to produce electronic educational material. It was inspired by the European Commission's *White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment*.

*www.comenius.com/keypal/index.html: very similar to the previous ones, but you have to pay to subscribe.

*deil.lang.uiuc.edu/exchange: you may exchange recipes for the cookbook, a very simple task for beginners or false beginners, send texts on different topics for the world cultures section, write short stories, poems, or find a friend to write to.

*www.wfi.fr/volterre/keypals.html: it includes links to other sites related to e-mail for language fluency, articles on this topic, etc..

*www.iwaynet.net/~jwolvepal.htm: there's a schools database, mainly from the USA.

There're teachers all over the world seeking schools to establish this kind of cyberlink. If you haven't made up your mind yet, just visit those sites and you'll discover a new world.

Then, you'll have to explain how to send a message and how to get mail, etc.. You also need to find a person in the partner school responsible for the project, to jointly organise it: topics, frequency of mail exchanges... If you find some “home” practice necessary, you may start by asking them to send you a composition and you send it back to them corrected in a different colour, underlined...

The first step after the contact has been established between you and the other school is write a first letter. Each student has to write one according to the logical guidelines that you'll present.

Sometimes one wonders whether there is still any sense in teaching students how to write a “snail mail” letter (that you put the address at the top right of the page, where to put the date, and the more formal vocabulary and expressions used), when nowadays this sort of mail is being replaced by the electronic one. We could then compare an e-mail with a snail mail letter, having to find similarities and differences:

- the address (how it is written and where you put it, or rather, where the server automatically puts it)
- the date, and how it includes the time
- the topic or “asunto” and
- the recipient's address placed immediately below the sender's one.

If you are a new netter, GOOD LUCK!