

# Engaging the Net Generation

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## Abstract

What do you see on your university campus? Have you noticed students listening to iPods, texting, talking on their cell phones, or checking the latest entry on their Facebook site? Does this describe the students you are trying to teach? If so, how has your teaching changed to accommodate this type of learner, or are you beginning to question your current teaching methods? The scenario above suggests that teaching strategies for this new type of learner must change. The “Net Generation” tends to describe effective teaching as opportunities for meaningful, purposeful, hands-on learning. They want to make a difference. They want to discuss. They want to be involved. This session will provide participants with effective hands-on strategies, interactive games, and Web tools that will have the “Net Generation” asking for more. The following is a list of “Net Generation” characteristics, trends, and effective teaching strategies for this type of learner.

## Net Generation Characteristics

- Today’s Net Generation college students have grown up with technology. Born around the time the PC was introduced, 20% began using computers between the ages of 5 and 8. Virtually all Net Gen students were using computers by the time they were 16 to 18 years of age.
  - [http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_College\\_Report.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_College_Report.pdf)
- Computer use is even higher among today’s children. Among children ages 8 to 18, 96 percent have gone online. Seventy-four percent have access at home, and 61 percent use the Internet on a typical day.
  - <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/pub7101b.pdf>
- Over two million American children (ages 6–17) have their own Web site. Girls are more likely than boys to have a Web site.
  - <http://www.educause.edu/IsItAgeorIT:FirstStepsTowardUnderstandingtheNetGeneration/6058>
- The Net Generation learners prefer to learn by doing rather than by being told what to do. They learn well through discovery and by exploring by themselves or with their peers. This exploratory style enables them to better retain information and use it in creative, meaningful ways.
  - Don Tapscott. 1998. *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- The Net Generation is oriented toward inductive discovery or making observations, formulating hypotheses, and figuring out the rules. They crave interactivity. And the rapid pace at which they like to receive information means

they often choose not to pay attention if a class is noninteractive, unengaging, or simply too slow.

- <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part2.pdf>
- More than half (55%) of all online American youths ages 12–17 use online social networking sites, according to a new national survey of teenagers conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.
  - [http://www.pewinternet.org/ppf/r/198/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/ppf/r/198/report_display.asp)

The Net Generation's characteristics keep educators searching for innovative strategies to use in the classroom. What does this look like? How do I implement some of these new tools that are second nature to the Net Generation? The following is a list of some of these strategies and possible uses in the classroom.

- Googlepage Creator
  - This is used to for students to create WebPages. This is free and easy to use. Students can add graphics, videos, interactive games, and content in an appealing format. This also can be used as a space to place links. Googlepage Creator allows you to create more than one site.
- Google Docs and Spreadsheets
  - This is a free application that is similar to MS Word and Excel. Google Docs has a feature that allows students to create and collaborate on projects online. Multiple people can view and make changes at the same time. There's an on-screen chat window for spreadsheets, and document revisions show you exactly who changed what, and when.
  - The Google Spreadsheet form feature allows you to send questions to students, and when they submit an answer, it is instantaneously added to the spreadsheet. This saves time in building a database.
- Survey Monkey
  - Survey Monkey within a Web browser enables anyone to create professional online surveys quickly and easily. You can change the color, size, and style of any element in your survey.

## References

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