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## **Nearpod Slides to Enhance Students' Self-Study**

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### **Abstract**

Nearpod encourages students' self-learning outside the class. As online learning becomes inevitable due to the development of technology and rare but possible emergencies such as environmental disasters or even what was experienced during the pandemic. Nearpod is a likely candidate in assisting students in their independent learning. This article gives insights into all the features this platform provides along with some perspectives from the authors as the teachers who are using it in their practice. A number of strengths and limitations are explored, along with guidelines from the teachers on how to use the app, concluding that the platform can benefit students greatly in regard to their independent learning.

*Keywords:* Nearpod, self-study

Students' lives are closely attached to technology as it provides a more efficient way of life, including learning (Henderson et al., 2015). However, students become gadget dependent as they spend too much time on their devices, such as mobile phones (Gupta et al., 2013). This situation may make students reluctant to do their homework and neglect their self-directed learning (Carlson, 2005). On the other hand, students' attachment to their devices can be seen as an opportunity to include technology in independent learning. Fun, engaging applications or platforms can be used as a bridge to increase the student's motivation for self-directed learning (Dhal et al., 2022). To serve this purpose, interactive response systems (IRS) have been introduced as a tool to provide engaging self-directed learning. IRS enables students to be engaged in self-accessed activities using their favorite gadgets while allowing the instructors to give real-time feedback. Nearpod (<https://nearpod.com>), among others, has been reported as a successful tool to be used for learning synchronously and asynchronously (Burton, 2019). Using

Nearpod, students can independently complete many interactive, engaging slides without having to give up their devices. This article discusses the benefits and drawbacks of the platform and practical examples for use in English self-directed learning.

Nearpod was initially developed by Panarea Digital in Argentina for iPads (Mattei & Ennis, 2014). However, the development allows it to be accessed from any device, such PCs and smartphones. Nearpod provides interactive slides that allow students to enrich their learning in an effortless and manageable way to study anywhere and anytime (Burton, 2019). Using Nearpod, students then can do various exercises autonomously outside the class with teachers' supervision.

### **Nearpod to Support Self-Study**

In order to support self-study, learning materials (e.g., PowerPoint presentations) can be utilized. Then, interactive slides within the presentation are added by selecting the 'add on' feature, for example, open-ended questioning slides, polls, matching activities, and interactive video activities. The slides, then, are set to 'student paced.' With this setting, students have full control over learning and accessing them. We will share a variety of slide settings that can be set to accommodate students' interactive independent learning.

#### **Open-ended questions**

Question slides for grammar, punctuation, and spelling activities can be created. For example, in a grammar lesson, students can be asked to form complex sentences using *while* and *when*.

#### **Matching activities**

When new words are introduced in lessons, matching can be utilized to check the students' understanding of keywords. For example, matching keywords to the correct image can be an effective way to enrich learning. Even though the activity is set to be completed at the students' pace, this is automatically marked, and the students' choices will turn green if the answer is correct, and red if it is not.

#### **Interactive videos**

Students can also watch prepared YouTube videos for listening activities, as Nearpod has a feature that allows teachers to slow down the speed of the video to suit the learner's level. The

students can then answer multiple-choice questions or open-ended questions throughout the video to help their learning.

### **Polls**

Students can use Polls to share their opinions about the materials given. For example, teachers can prepare a poll where students respond to the question, “How do you feel about this topic so far?” In response, they might answer ‘interesting, difficult, boring,’ etc.

### **What Are the Strengths of Utilizing Nearpod Interactive Slides?**

A great benefit of Nearpod for self-study is the students’ paced slides where they have full autonomy for their learning (Sanmugam et al., 2019). Because the slides are interactive, they can always practice from anywhere. Students who were absent in class can also benefit since they can still participate in self-directed learning. Another benefit is that their answers are recorded and can be returned to them by their instructors. Additionally, the answers can be saved or printed as a PDF which provides some benefits such as evidence of the learning outcomes, reflections, and further study materials.

### **Are There any Weaknesses in Using Nearpod?**

Though this tool possesses benefits, some aspects can be improved. Some learners who use mobile phones might find it cumbersome with certain activities like the match-up activity. We noticed that the interface varies from phone to phone; this tends to be an issue for a minority of learners who often require some support. Another aspect is the collaborative board. Nearpod has a feature that we have found helpful called Collaborative Board which enables learners to write comments while also seeing their friends’ answers. However, this feature is not enabled when using the student-paced mode. If the board was enabled in student-paced mode, it could improve students’ independent collaboration.

### **Is it free?**

Currently, there are four plans that Nearpod offers: silver, gold, premium, and premium plus. The first three are for individual teachers, while the last is for institutions such as schools. The silver plan is free of charge and could be best for fewer than 40 students. Hence, if teachers

would like to provide self-study slides for more than 40 students, it is recommended that they purchase one of the other plans to get the most out of the tool.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, it is evident that Nearpod has substantial benefits in promoting students' independence. Additionally, this platform does not only help many of the learners develop their English skills by themselves but also their ability to use fun and engaging interactive slides. In addition, Nearpod allows teachers continuously assess learning in a manageable way both synchronously and asynchronously, enabling learners to leave the session knowing their areas of development. Furthermore, teachers can also evidence learner progression through PDF reports. It is strongly recommended that English instructors utilize the Nearpod platform to support students' independent study endeavors.

### **Notes on the Contributors**

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