

TECH EVALUATION VOICETHREAD

SUMMARY

VoiceThread is a cloud-based content authoring and discussion tool recognized for its versatility and ease-of-use. Users can create presentations by uploading text, images, audio, video, or web links, and add commentary via the same five methods. Presentations can easily be shared or embedded, and viewers can then add their own comments to start a discussion.

VoiceThread is excellent for:

- First-time users
- Multimedia presentations
- Discussions
- Learners with special needs
- Discovery-based learning
- Digital media-based assessment

VoiceThread's limitations include:

- Limited features with free version
- No traditional assessment options
- Slow playback without high-speed internet
- Bug-riddled mobile application
- No live technical support

All in all, VoiceThread is a strong tool for teachers and learners alike, offering a simple but versatile solution for creating and discussing content. See the full evaluation below.

EVALUATION CHECKLIST

	PURPOSE	0%	100%	
1.	Does the source meet the learning needs of the target audience?			It depends what the audience's learning needs are. If content creation or discussion are the key objectives, then VoiceThread is a great tool.
2.	Given its purpose and medium, is the source credible?			VoiceThread is a reputable tool with a good degree of conferred credibility, though its tabulated credibility varies based on medium of access. Many teachers and students have heard of or used VoiceThread in their courses. The effectiveness of VoiceThread has been studied in K-12, higher-ed, language-learning, and professional environments with generally positive results. Teachers on Common Sense Media rate the tool at 4/5 stars. On the other hand, users of VoiceThread's mobile application give it a dismal 2.2 out of 5 stars, stating for example, "I'm not going to say this app is straight trash, but it's something close to it alright."
3.	Is the source's design congruent with its purpose?			VoiceThread's design is well-suited to its purpose. Its simple but versatile user interface easily allows users to create and discuss content in nearly any manner they can imagine, thus fulfilling VoiceThread's social and constructivist approach to learning.
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INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT				
4.	Does the source allow opportunities for practice and assessment?			Practice and assessment is certainly possible through VoiceThread. Teachers can easily post practice or discussion questions via text, audio, or video, and have students respond directly on a slide. With gradebook integration (a premium feature), teachers can also create graded assignments within VoiceThread. However, VoiceThread does not provide options for more traditional, objective assessments such as quizzes or tests.
5.	Does the source allow for individualization based on the user's prior knowledge and/or learning preferences?			VoiceThread offers individualization by allowing the user to create and comment on content using multiple means, including text, audio, or video. It also offers advanced options such as LMS and gradebook integration, reporting and analytics, and a customizable homescreen for expert users. However, many of these advanced features required a paid subscription.
6.	Does the source provide opportunities to interact and collaborate with other users?			VoiceThread is built for discussion, allowing viewers to comment on slides and other users' comments via text, audio, or video.
7.	Does the source offer opportunities for discovery learning and/or digital media-based assessment?			VoiceThread is an excellent tool for discovery learning and digital media-based assessment. Users can not only add their own media, but also draw media from a variety of built-in links, such as Khan Academy, Flickr, and the New York Public Library. This makes it easy to explore, make connections, and synthesize new ideas.
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ACCESSIBILITY				
8.	Is the technology easily accessible?			VoiceThread offers web and mobile platforms for ease of access. Both require an account to use, though it is free to set-up. To access full features, however, a subscription is required. The website does not require a VPN for those in areas with restricted internet, such as China. It loads fairly quickly, though audio and video playback may be slow without high-speed internet. The mobile application often has issues with loading and logging in, crashing frequently. For users without audio/video capability on their computer, VoiceThread does offer the option of calling a mobile phone to add audio to a slide.
9.	Does the source accommodate learners with special needs, such as people who are visually impaired or digitally illiterate?			VoiceThread's user interface is simple and intuitive to use. There are clear instructions and few buttons, making it relatively easy to find what you need. Its various options for commenting can accommodate users with any number of special needs. In addition, closed-captioning can be added to any audio comment for the hearing-impaired. VoiceThread Universal also offers accessibility to people who use full screen readers to access the web.
10.	Does the source offer opportunities for feedback and support?			For content creators, there is a clear "Help" button on the home screen for FAQ's and troubleshooting, though no option for live technical support. VoiceThread also offers a number of free workshops on everything from STEM, language instruction, and even game-based learning. For content viewers, there is plenty of opportunity for feedback through the software's multiple means of commenting on media.