

Connecting Students & Content Through Macromedia Breeze

It is often stated that students need to interact with the instructor, with other students and with the content of a course for optimum learning to occur. The Breeze presentation tool offers a number of ways to help students engage and interact with the content.

What Is Breeze?

The Macromedia Breeze presentation tool, at its most simple and basic implementation, is an audio or voice over PowerPoint application. It allows instructors or students to create quality presentations that are both visually and auditorily engaging. But, with just a little imagination and practice, it can offer much more than an easy way to create stand-alone asynchronous lectures. Use Breeze to narrate demonstrations of math and science processes, facilitate virtual tours, and create mini-lectures punctuated by self-assessment questions with feedback.

Breeze is easy to use; simply download the plug-in and then you will see the Breeze pull-down menu in your PowerPoint application. Create your PowerPoint as usual, including builds, screen-shots, pictures and animations. Save the finished PowerPoint and then select "Record" from the Breeze menu. Individual slides can be reviewed and modified at any time. Self-assessment questions can be embedded anywhere. Publish the final product with another click. You will then have a URL that you can post in Blackboard, on a Webpage or send via email to allow students or others to view and listen to the presentation as a Macromedia Flash file.

Why Use Breeze?

When we already know that traditional hour-long lectures are not very effective learning events for most students, we should certainly avoid simply replacing the live lecture with recorded ones. But, students can view and review content through short, targeted Breeze mini-lectures or tutorials as often as they need. Even inquiry learning approaches sometimes require direct instruction techniques. Embed several quiz-type questions and students can self-assess their understanding of the content or skill, receiving feedback that offers hints, additional information, another chance or, perhaps, points to additional resources for help. This allows students to have ample opportunity to interact with course content as well as enabling instructors to use more of their limited face-to-face time with students for discussions, small group work, and other learning activities.

Videos of fieldtrips and demonstrations can be effective teaching and learning tools but they can be difficult and expensive to produce. Video may create student access problems on the Web as the large file size can present download, streaming and file conversion challenges. The audio quality of Breeze combined with still pictures, graphics, screen shots and PowerPoint animations can deliver the virtual fieldtrip or demonstration in an effective and efficient manner.

The technology is so accessible that students, too, can design, script and produce such fieldtrips, tours and demonstrations. When students are asked to learn something well enough to teach it to others, it not only deepens their own understanding but also invites them to contribute quality resources to the inquiry or study. Breeze offers another venue for your students to create presentations and tutorials to share with other students in the class – and, with proper permission, with students in future classes.



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
TEACHING &
LEARNING CENTRE

Connect with us:

5th Floor Bio Sciences

Phone: (403) 220-4949

Email: lcfeedbk@ucalgary.ca

Give Me an Example

Choose a topic – one that might be the first part of a lecture or one that students may need in order to advance their inquiry. Create a brief Breeze presentation – try to keep it to less than 10 or 12 minutes. Post it in your Blackboard course site and ask students to view it before coming to class. Instruct students to jot questions that occur to them as they view the presentation. Then, students should post their two most “burning questions” to a related discussion board. You can review the discussion and see what concepts challenged students and then be prepared to address these issues at the beginning of class.

Using the above example, another method of clarifying student understanding is to use study groups or teams. Create group areas or group discussion forums in Blackboard where students post their burning questions. Other students in the group respond and the group collaborates to arrive at understanding. If there are still “fuzzy” issues, a representative of the group can email or post the question for a response from a teaching assistant or the instructor.

Other instructors may wish to use a “quiz” to help students check for understanding and to help the instructor know what students need help on. Create a short, maybe 3-5 question, quiz in Blackboard over the material in the Breeze presentation and require students to complete it after viewing the presentation and before class. The last question on the quiz should be open-ended and ask students what specific question or topic they want the instructor to address in class. Instructors can quickly review the compiled quiz results to focus on topics identified as areas of need by the students.

More Ideas

Students, or groups of students, can create Breeze presentations that document their work on an assigned project. For instance, students studying religions, cultures, applied sciences, or the arts might visit local sites as part of their inquiry to gain a local perspective. They can take pictures, collect documents for scanning, gather information and quotes, and visit websites. All these resources can then be developed into a virtual field trip, complete with self-assessment or reflection questions, in Breeze, that is posted in Blackboard for all students to access and review.

All students can view and discuss the presentation in Blackboard with each group facilitating the discussion about their product. When students come to a face-to-face class, they are already quite familiar with the products/presentations so that the in-class discussion can continue and go even deeper.

Other Considerations

- Breeze presentations should be kept short. Ten to fifteen minutes is usually long enough.
- Don't put too much text on a single slide. Because there is narration, you can keep the slides simple, easy to read, and engaging.
- Consider using the “build” feature in PowerPoint to help focus viewer attention on the appropriate text and/or image within a slide at any given time.
- If you want students to have a hard-copy, post the original PowerPoint or the Rich Text Format (RTF) version in Blackboard, along with the Breeze presentation.
- Title your PowerPoint slides so that students can easily navigate back to a slide they want to review in the outline view of Breeze.
- Consider using the “notes” feature in PowerPoint and Breeze to allow students to call up points of emphasis or the full text of the presentation.

Where Can I Go for More Information?

1. Breeze Instructors Help Page

A listing of the most often asked questions about Breeze. This page also links to manuals and sample presentations.

<http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/breeze/instructors.html>

2. Getting Started with Breeze Workshop

Regular workshops are offered at the Teaching and Learning Centre that provide examples of how this application can be used to support teaching and learning and demonstrate how to download and install the Breeze plug-in. Participants get hands-on experience in recording narration for PPT, publishing to the Breeze server and retrieving the presentation and posting into Blackboard.

<http://tlc.ucalgary.ca>

3. Self-Paced Lectures

A study by Matt Bower and Debbie Richards (2005), Computing Department, MacQuarie University, which demonstrates that students prefer the higher degree of control and increased level of engagement afforded by self-paced Breeze lectures to traditional face-to-face lectures.

<http://www.comp.mq.edu.au/~richards/papers/wbe2005-2.pdf>

4. University of Calgary Examples

1. From a set of modules on Resume Writing – developed and delivered by Career Services.
 - a. Intro
<http://breeze.ucalgary.ca/p38683360>
 - b. Module I
<http://breeze.ucalgary.ca/p66646156>
2. Animal Physiology Example (used in ZOOL463):
<http://breeze.ucalgary.ca/p32046497>
3. Theories of Motivation (Human Behaviour in Organizations – Continuing Education)
<http://breeze.ucalgary.ca/p66216113>
4. Example of a flash movie embedded into Breeze
<http://tlc.ucalgary.ca/breeze/flashmovie>