

ARTICLE



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THE TECHNICAL REVOLUTION

Technology has steadily become a part of teaching life; utilising helpful tech and tools for preparation, communication, and aiding classroom engagement is either commonplace or a standard to strive for within schools. However, no level of familiarity could have prepared any of us for Covid-19 and the challenges that it has presented to our vocation. Overnight every teacher had to go from okay with tech to leading online experts, as we took our practice from classrooms to tablet screens used at kitchen tables.

Did it come as a shock? Most definitely.

Were we ready? Of course we were...

Us teachers are used to spinning on the spot, answering multiple unrelated questions from excitable year 7's whilst balancing stacks of curriculum knowledge books on our head, right? Jokes aside, crucial skills for this calling are the ability to be dynamic and adapt to new ways of working and, perhaps most paramount, to be resilient. Which is why we all sang a simultaneous 'YES' to this challenge, and are working together to share the answers to the biggest question: HOW?

Personally, I am fortunate to have had brilliant infrastructure in place at my school as students already had devices and we have been integrating technology into our delivery for some time. Thus, the switch to virtual teaching was quite natural and we've been Zoom teaching since the 19th of March. This has led to our Academy Trust being a part of the EdTech Demonstrator Programme which works to aid other school in understanding technology within the classroom. Through this we have been helping others who are at the beginning of their own online teaching experiences and unpacking bundles of new ideas and methods of best practice. Like all elements of teaching, there isn't a one size fits all approach, and each school still has individual hurdles and demographic factors to contend with. However, the following approaches are just a few of the practices which have aided my teaching of geography and enquiry led learning through online lessons.



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Keeping consistent with your teaching

As with all things a beginning, middle and end are important. The same goes with teaching and we are all used to planning in this way. But as online learning is continuing, and we are yet to have a full understanding of the extent to which we will proceed to teach in this way come September I believe the importance of this has increased even further, particularly in plenaries. It's often difficult to tell how much a student has taken in when they're completing an online workbook that has everything squarely set out for them, giving them a simpler framework to interact with. Therefore, I've been using [Padlet](#) to collate feedback or responses from the students all in one place, so I can easily see the level of development each student gives as an answer. This enables me to give targeted intervention to certain students in future lessons and discern how effective the set work is.

Questioning

This is still one of the most important tools any teacher can easily use virtually. It increases engagement and ensures students are listening intently as well as checking their knowledge. Not only do I ensure my students are listening in my cold call by questioning them, I've also began to encourage the use of Tier 3 subject language as best practice by beginning lessons with a quick quiz, allowing students to confidently incorporate these within their work throughout the session. After trialling numerous tools I have found that [Quizziz](#) is one of the best tools for this. It quickly enables you to engage students in all the questions you have created and plays a 'plinky plonky' tune to go with it (that my partner says sounds like I'm playing a video game with the students), which helps keep enthusiasm levels up! If you're wondering about how I set up my own [Quizziz](#), I have uploaded a spreadsheet to the ECGN shared drive with links to all my ready-made language quizzes for you all to peruse.

Teaching Metacognition Strategies

Teaching our students how to learn independently and find out more about the ways in which they learn - so they can continue to improve - has never been more important. Whilst students are learning from home and managing their own time a self-awareness of their preferred learning styles is key to maintaining both academic achievement and moral. After watching Jenny Campbell ([@JennyCampbell90](#)) in @GeogChat live a few weeks ago exploring how retrieval practice is separate from metacognition, it helped to reiterate what I've been trialling in my own classes. The key for me has been to complete the style of task I expect my students to do at home within virtual lessons and then allow them to complete it at home in their own time.



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It won't be perfect at first, but they will improve over time and become better independent learners. The key for me has been to show them the revision technique in clear and concise detail, then the retrieval activity and the final part is HOW you expect them to evaluate their own work. We use SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities to improve and Threats to your understanding) which enables students to clearly evaluate not only good and bad, but where they can change their answers remedying misconceptions and confidently completing what they were unsure of. This approach has been a great success so far and these SWOT analysis worksheets help the students visualise how they are doing within topics.

Overall, it's been a learning curve for all involved, included us teachers, as we continue to shape what the online curriculum looks like and how we best deliver it to our students. Yet these particular tried and tested lessons I've learnt have helped a great deal. I believe I will not only use them in my online work, but feel they can be transferred directly into my classroom practice when the much awaited return comes.

