

## **TechMatters: Do One Thing Well: Five Simple Tools for Instructors**

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In the realm of educational technology, there are a great many fairly complex tools available to instructors that offer a wide-variety of features and functionality. And, indeed, TechMatters has reviewed many of them over the years. Sometimes, however, all that one needs is a simple tool that does one thing and does it well. Keeping that idea in mind, let's take a look at a few great tools that are super easy to use while still offering great functionality for those engaged in a wide-range of instructional activities.

### **FlipQuiz**

<https://flipquiz.com/>

FlipQuiz allows you to easily create a Jeopardy-style game to engage your students in learning and review of concepts. To create a free account, simply provide your name, a user name, an email address, and create a password (or login using your existing Facebook or Google account). Get started by clicking the "+ Create Board" button, giving your new board a name when prompted, and then begin adding categories (e.g., Around the Library; Reference Tools) and then questions and answers under those categories to construct your game board (see Figure 1). Just like Jeopardy, you can add "dollar" values that will be displayed (e.g., students will say "I'll take Reference Tools for 100"). For each question and/or answer you have the option to add images or videos to make them more engaging.

Once you have your questions set, you can launch your board in play mode to easily gamify your class session. A built-in timer can be used to add pressure and keep up game momentum. Additional features such as on-screen scoring, student flashcards, the ability to save class lists and priority support are available with a paid "Pro" account that starts at \$7 per month.

### **Autodraw**

<https://www.autodraw.com/>

This nifty little tool makes it easier for the artistically challenged amongst us to generate reasonably professional illustrations in short order. Starting with a blank canvas, begin sketching and AutoDraw will use artificial intelligence to predict what you are trying to draw and offer you a variety of clipart-quality images from which to choose (see Figure 2). You can further augment your image using the basic features available in most drawing tools such as changing and adding color, adding simple shapes and text, as well as freehand drawing. Once com-

plete, you can download and save your drawing as a .png image file or simply generate a link to the online version.

For instructors, this tool can be useful if you want to quickly augment your teaching materials with illustrations but don't want to spend hours searching the internet for useable options. For students, AutoDraw might be a useful toolkit option for assignments that involve the production of infographics or other data visualizations.

### **Tricider**

<https://www.tricider.com/>

Tricider is a collaboration tool designed to facilitate group brainstorming and decision-making. From an instructional standpoint, this tool can be used to facilitate discussion, conduct formative assessments, poll and survey student responses, or provide a basic forum to encourage collaboration amongst students engaged in group projects. Tricider is completely free, and can be used without creating an account (although users that create accounts gain access to additional features such as analytics, archived questions, and the ability to export results).

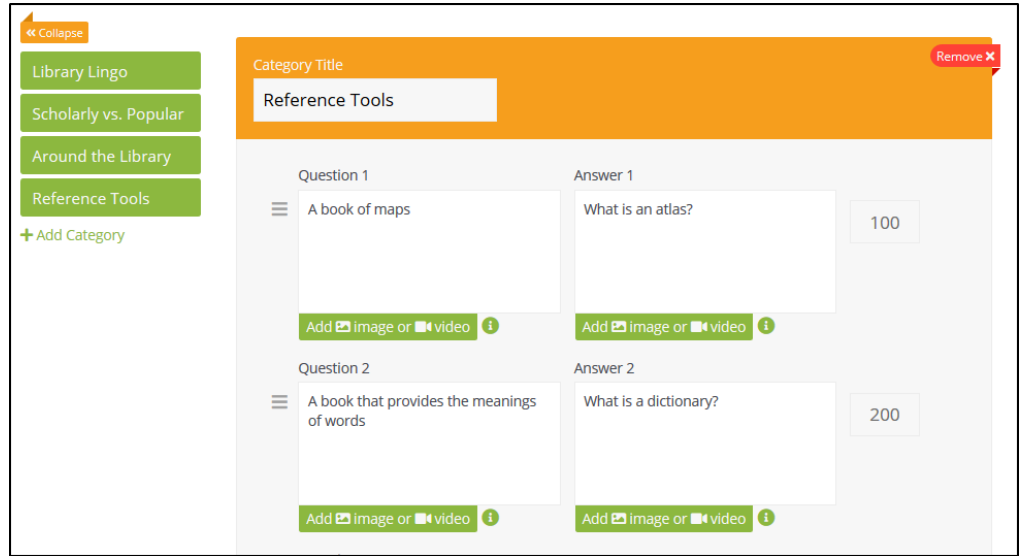
Start by entering a question or feedback prompt into the "Enter your question here ..." box on the Tricider home page and hit the "Go" button. Next, you can add a description and can change the deadline for a response. Then, once your question is ready, click the "Share and Invite" button which will provide you with a link to your "tricism" page, as well as a variety of options for inviting participation via email, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. From the "tricism" page (see Figure 3), students can add a response ("Add idea"); once the idea has been added, they can suggest pro and/or con arguments to support or refute any idea listed (their own idea or any other already added by other students), and then vote on those ideas with which they agree or think are best.

### **Google Quizzes (aka Google Forms)**

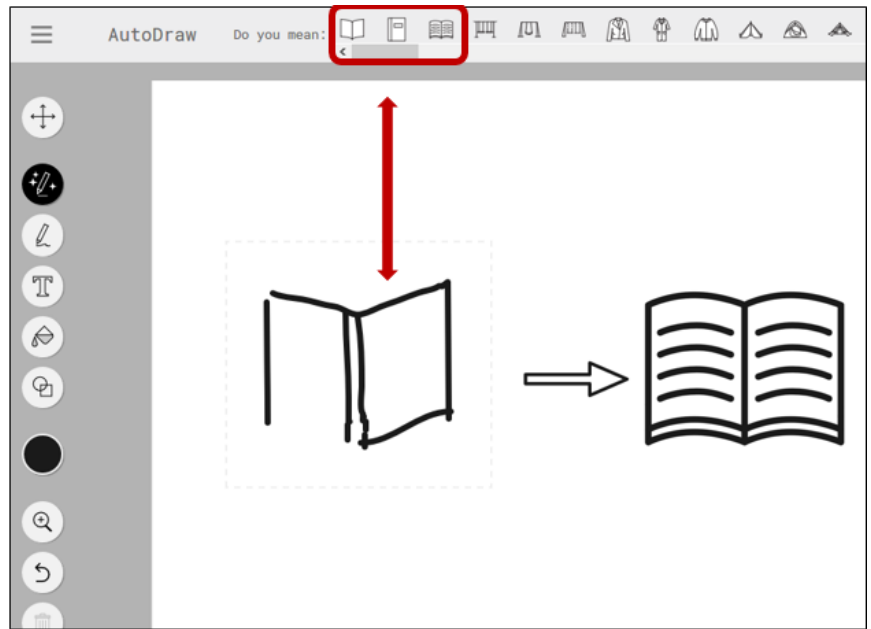
<https://docs.google.com/forms/>

If you are looking for a quick and easy way to build an online assessment, look no further than the quiz feature within Google Forms (aka Google Quizzes). To build a quiz, choose "Start a new form (Blank)" from the Forms home page. Navigate to the "Settings menu" (gear icon in the upper right corner), choose the "Quizzes" tab, and toggle the "Make this a quiz" selector (see Figure 4).

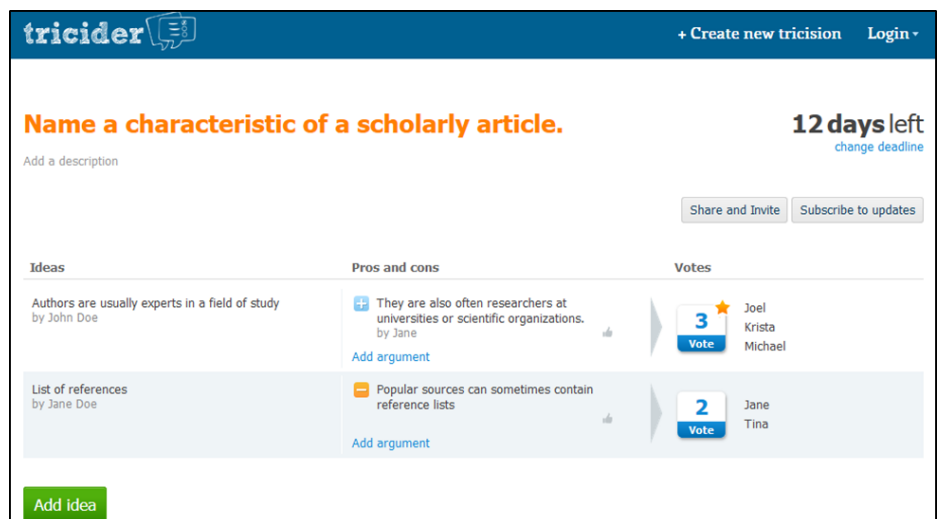
**Figure 1:**  
Construct a FlipQuiz by creating categories, questions, and answers.



**Figure 2:**  
The “Do you mean” bar suggests options based on the freehand drawing on the AutoDraw canvas; once you click on an option (in this case, the right-most icon circled in the above bar), the tool instantly generates the more refined image on the right.



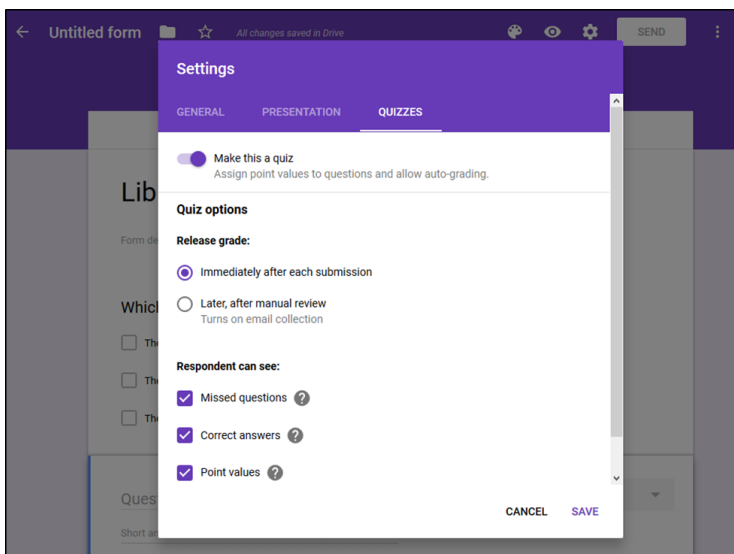
**Figure 3:**  
In response to a prompt in Tricider, students can offer ideas, suggest pros and cons for ideas, and vote for the best responses.



Creating questions is simple. Just choose the type of question you want to create (e.g., short answer, paragraph, multiple choice, etc.) and then follow the prompts on the screen. For all questions, you can assign point values and provide answer feedback, and for most you can also provide an answer key with the correct response(s). When you setup your quiz, you can determine whether grading will be automatic and immediate, or whether manual review is required. When you are ready to deploy your quiz, do so using the “Send” button. Options for distribution include email, social media, code for embedding the quiz on a website, or a link that can be copied and pasted into any channel you prefer to use. Once a student fills out a quiz, you can see what they answered and make sure they get feedback.

**Figure 4:**

**Turn a Google Form into a Google Quiz by selecting the “Make this a quiz” setting and adjusting quiz options.**



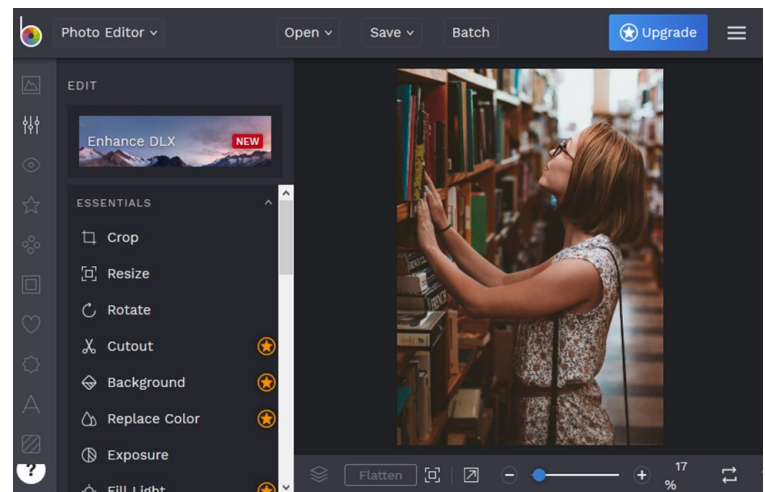
### BeFunky Photo Editor

<https://www.befunky.com/create/>

Whether working on a slide deck for a class session or developing an in-class exercise, sometimes you just need to edit a photo without engaging in a fight with Photoshop (or any other full featured graphic design tool). Enter the BeFunky photo editor tool which gives you access to many photo editing basics in an easy to use online interface. You don't even have to setup an account to begin, just open a photo from your own files or select one from BeFunky's stock image library.

**Figure 5:**

**Use the BeFunky Photo Editor to quickly modify photographic images.**



Once you open your photo, you will be able to access a variety of tools from the editing menu (see Figure 5). Although some features do require a paid account (these are clearly indicated with an orange star), all of the standard features are included: you can crop, resize, rotate, adjust colors, add text and graphics, and apply some basic filters (although many of these do require a paid account). One of the nice things about the premium features is that with many of them you can try them out to see the effect on your photo before you decide if you want to upgrade.

Provided you haven't applied any premium features, you can download your edited photo onto your computer as either a JPG or PNG file at any point in the process. If you want to save your work in the application, you will need to create an account which requires only an email and password.

### Conclusion

Although the tools described above are designed primarily to aid in the completion of a single task or activity, each can be used to support a wide-variety of instructional activities. From assessment to group collaboration, brainstorming to the development of presentations, and planning to engaging students in learning, try experimenting with these and other similar types of simple tools and you are sure to discover a wide-range of uses that will support your instructional goals and objectives.