# An Introduction to Second Life ®
# for Educators

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## An Educator's Perspective on Second Life ®

This introduction to Second Life® world examines the networking tool from an educational perspective focusing on using Second Life as a medium to promote professional development and collaboration. It is intended to provide an introduction for educators to begin exploring the Second Life world.

## Second Life

What is Second Life? It is a communication tool, a social networking site, a presentation medium, a place for collaboration. Technically speaking, it is a MUVE (multi-user virtual environment). The users interact in these online worlds in real time. The residents, as they are called in the Second Life (SL™) environment, create everything in this virtual world. Residents are represented by a 3D avatar. There are two versions of SL, the teen grid for 13-17 year olds and the main grid for adults 18 and up.

Many who have not experienced the Second Life world refer to it as a game. Though some residents have created games within SL, it is more accurately described as an interactive social network where users engage in a variety of social and educational activities. There are many aspects of SL and, as in all places on the Web there is good and bad, appropriate and inappropriate. For our purposes we will examine the educational landscape of the Second Life virtual world and its role as a medium to provide professional development and collaboration among educators.



## Personal Learning Networks

Your Personal Learning Network (PLN) is made up of all the things which influence your learning and growth. We all have one whether we realize it our not. It is an extremely beneficial exercise for educators to examine their PLN once in a while. When I looked at my PLN I found some of the same people appeared in all categories. This told me I need to expand my community, to diversify. In many ways Second Life landscape has helped me to do this. It is not essential to my learning but is one more place to draw from, one more way to help me expand my network. The Second Life experience is engaging enough for me to keep returning, meet new people and attend more events. Your PLN can contain the following:

**Reading and Listening**
Books (recent, current and future)
Blogs, Periodicals (print or electronic), Podcasts, wikis
**Courses/Workshops and Trainings**
Those you are teaching or taking. These can be face-to-face, or online
**Conferences**
Face-to-face or online
What sessions did you attend? Were there any significant conversations or learning moments outside of a session?
**Conversations and Correspondence**
At work; the people you regularly meet with at lunch, department meetings, PLCs
Correspondence; The people with whom you have regular email, Skype, Twitter, and IM interactions (Second Life falls into this category)

# SL™ Culture and Etiquette

The Second Life® world has its own unique culture and etiquette. In fact, each region in Second Life has its own special way of doing things, just like the real world. We will take a look at culture and etiquette as it applies in the educational landscape. If you have ever traveled in a foreign land you may have experienced "culture shock." Some people have similar experiences in Second Life. The more time you spend in Second Life world, the more familiar you will become with the sights, sounds and culture of this virtual world. The key to success is to remember you are communicating with real people and politeness and respect are very important.

## Communication

Currently there are three ways to communicate with in the Second Life Platform; chat, instant message (IM) and voice. Chat is done by typing text into a text box on the bottom of the screen. It can be read by all the avatars in the immediate area. IM is a private communication between people. If the individual is not online an email will be sent to them. To use voice effectively you will need a microphone and head set.

Keep in mind that anything 'said' in Second Life is never really private so pay attention to what you say. Many people in the educational settings save the chat history and print it up for later reference or post it to the web. It is often polite to ask if someone has time for a conversation. Some people are busy working, though it may not seem obvious, others have time to shoot the breeze.

## Places & People

In real life, most of us understand people's need for personal space. Research has shown that this is also true in Second Life. When communicating with someone, it is important to face each other and keep a comfortable distance. You will be meeting people from other countries so this may vary a bit with avatars you meet.

It is quite comical at times watching avatars move into proper position as they bump each other around. This is affectionately called "bowling for avatars". Avatars can be on the ground, in the air or underwater. If someone is chatting with you and you can't see them, look all around. SL is not the physical world and avatars are not always where you expect them to be. It takes a while to learn to walk and move around, so take your time. Remember, everyone was new once.

## Making Friends

Second Life is a community and communities are made of friends. You can ask avatars to be your friend and you will be asked to become friends with others. Friends can see each other when they are online. Some people offer friendship quite readily, and others rarely offer it at all.

If you have not had many conversations with an avatar or do not feel comfortable accepting offers of friendship it is okay to decline the request. If you feel uncomfortable declining, you can IM the individual and explain that you do not accept offers from people you do not know well or that your friends list is just too long.

After a while you will be surprised how close you will be to some of the friends you make in SL, people you have never met in RL.

# The Basics

There are some basics every new member needs to begin their Second Life® experience. When you do enter the Second Life world take your time going through Orientation and Help Islands. *Do not be in a hurry* to get to the main grid. There are also many basic how-to tutorials on the Second Life web site. Here are a few things to be aware of.

### Getting Around

There are different ways to get around in Second Life. When you only have a short way to go, you can walk. It takes time to learn how to walk. If you have a greater distance to go, flying would be the method of choice. Flying can also give you a quick overview of the Island (Simulation) you are visiting. You can also use the map, search feature, and landmarks to teleport (TP) to a location. A friend can also send you a request to teleport you to their location. Take plenty of time learning how to use these three main modes of travel.

### Editing Appearance

Avatars look the same when they are created. On Orientation and Help Islands there is information on how to change your physical appearance as well as your clothing. It is important to take the time to do this so you look like you belong and to set yourself apart. Many people get attached to their avatars and do not want to change their physical looks after a time, however you can change your looks at any time. There is also plenty of times to find clothes to suit your look. You can find different hair styles, clothes and skins for a very customized look in many places in-world. These can be purchased or you can find some for free.

### Joining Groups

You can join up to 25 groups in SL. Some groups have open enrollment and you can simply join. Other groups, have limited enrollment and members are invited to join. To join a group you can use the search feature and look for groups or right click on your name above your head and select groups. When you are a group member, you will receive group notices of events, this helps you stay connected and involved in learning opportunities in SL. For educators I would recommend joining ISTE and the DEN (Discovery Educator Network) to get you started.

# Money

Participation in the Second Life world does not require money, though you may find you will want to purchase items in-world. The currency of SL is the Linden™. As of this writing about $4 USD would buy $1,000 Linden dollars. Millions of US dollars are traded within Second Life.

### Finding a Home

Many people find after being in-world for a while the need for a place of their own. They wish to have a place to try out their building skills, have conversations with colleagues, a place to change clothes, and to get away from the crowd. You can purchase land and build your own place or you can rent land and/or a house. It is best to ask around to find a neighborhood that is suitable for you. There are some areas that specifically cater to Educators. It is also possible to share a space with some friends, this may be a more economical solution.

### Inventory

When you begin your Second Life experience you are given an inventory of various objects and information. These include furniture, clothing, the information to make your avatar, notecards, landmarks and much more. Over time you will acquire many more items. Your inventory can get quite messy and overwhelming. It can be easily organized just like the hard drive on your computer. Feel free to make folders to aid in organization and move things around. You can also rename items so the list makes more sense to you. Items can be given to other avatars by dragging the item from your inventory to the avatar or to their profile.

### Building and Scripting

Everything in SL was created by the residents-- land, trees, flowers, buildings, furniture, clothes, everything you see. Easy building and scripting are what set SL apart from other MUVEs. Everything the user creates belongs to the user. These items can be bought and sold or shared with others. There are many in-world tutorials and classes that demonstrate building. Sandboxes are set up for you to practice your building skills and etiquette recommends you clean up after a building session. All objects are made from prims, simple geometric shapes linked together. Each Island (server) is only allowed 15,000 total prims.

# Educational Institutions working in the Second Life platform

There are a variety of educational institutions participating in SL.  Colleges, universities and libraries were some of the first to investigate using SL to facilitate online learning.  Many K12 educators are now exploring SL for professional development opportunities.  Others, like pioneering Suffern Middle School are examining how to use SL to enhance the learning of students on the Teen Grid.  For a more comprehensive list of educational institutions in SL please take a look at simteach.com

## ISTE



ISTE, the International Society for Technology in Education, has a very active membership in SL. ISTE island has a number of presentation and meeting areas.  ISTE has a docent program and volunteers are stationed at the island headquarters and are there to welcome people to SL and ISTE. They are an invaluable resource to a new arrival and are great at answering questions and making people feel welcome.

ISTE also hosts weekly gatherings. There is a Thursday Social 6pm SLT (Second Life time, which is Pacific time.)  The social is a great place to meet people and have discussions around the larger educational issues.  On many Tuesdays, there is a show and tell, a great way to find out what is happening in the educational arena in SL. ISTE attracts a varied and international group of people.

## Jokaydia



One of the most beautiful and informative of the Educational Sims is Jokaydia.  Jokaydia is the creation of  Jo Kay (Jokay Wollongong - RL) and Sean FitzGerald (Sean McDunnough - RL) of Austraila.  They are also the developers of the Second Life in Education Wiki,  a great full featured resource.

Jokaydia is a community of educators and artists exploring the uses of Second Life in Education, the arts and, related fields. There a newbie garden, a place to learn the basics in a relaxing garden setting. Educator Square is a must see.  It has many links to a variety of educational and interesting sims in Second Life and  meeting places. You can also access the presentations and information sessions that have been given on Jokaydia.

**Wiki:** http://sleducation.wikispaces.com/
**Jokaydia:**
http://slurl.com/secondlife/jokaydia/113/150/23

## Discovery Educator Network



The Discovery Educator Network has set up shop in Second Life. The mission of the DEN is to provide a place for educators to connect and share.

 "Connecting teachers to their most valuable resource …each other! The Discovery Educator Network is a global community of educators who are excited by the power of digital media and want to collaborate and share resources with other educators". (DEN Web site)

Second Life is the perfect platform for connecting and collaborating with teachers from the United States and around the globe. The DEN in SL holds educational events weekly.  To find out more about the DEN in SL, upcoming events please subscribe to the DEN in SL Blog and join our Google Group.

**Blog:**
http://www.denblogs.com/secondlife/
**Google Group:**
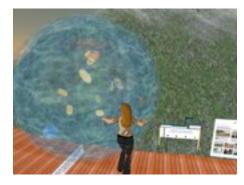http://groups.google.com/group/den-in-sl

# Places to visit

There is so much to see in the Second Life world, just like in the real world you will never get to experience it all. Each island is called a Sim (simulation). In reality, it is a server that contains the SL program and the memory of all that is created for the island. Everything is created by the residents using simple geometric shapes and scripts. Scripts are mini programs that can cause an action or animation. Take time as you visit to look at the creative talents of your fellow residents. According to the new Bloom's taxonomy, 'create' is the ultimate higher order thinking skill. Second Life is brimming with creative talent. In the resource section there are lists of references that review a variety of places worth exploring. As you explore Second Life, take time to soak in many of these sites-- they are quite enriching. If you are little hesitant to explore, bring a buddy along or ask someone to give you a tour. Exploring with someone else can be great way to build your confidence in participating in SL.

## NOAA



NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has made an interactive simulation on the island Meteroa. This simulation, in collaboration with the Earth Systems Research Laboratory, provides many educational demonstrations. There is the tsunami simulation, and a real-time weather map. You can ride on an airplane into a hurricane or a weather balloon to the stratosphere. Interact with a globe that allows the user to change the display from the earth at night to ocean temperatures among others. Visitors can ride a submarine, look at ocean life and visit a glacier. There is much to see here at this virtual exhibit so be sure to set aside enough time for proper exploration.

## Genome Project



The Genome project is a collaboration between two professors of Microbiology, one from New England and one from the Midwest. The island is designed to be used by students in these schools to develop an understanding of genetics. The island has a 3D interactive cell, a monastery devoted to Gergor Mendel, the Father of genetics' work with peas, a garden of procaryotes displaying the the genomes of various bacteria, and much, much more. The Island is a prime example of how 3D modeling and multimedia can be used to convey information in an interactive setting. Remember everything you see was created by building with simple prims. Residents have a great tool at their disposal.

## Sistine Chapel



Vassar college has created a sim for exploring the Second Life experience and its role in education. One of the highlights of the island is the re-creation of the Sistine Chapel. The original Sistine Chapel was built in the 1400's and is located in Vatican City. The recreation, built to scale, was constructed by Steve Taylor (SL- Stan Frangible). It is an excellent example of construction in Second life and how textures and simple objects, prims, can be linked to create wonderful works of art. The entire sim is worth the time for a tour. There are other sims that re-create various setting. Imagine studying French poetry in Paris of the 1900's or walking the streets of ancient Rome. The possibilities are endless.

# How to Participate in Second Life



The first step to participate in the Second Life virtual world is the creation of an avatar. You will need to think about a name. You create your first name and choose a second name from the provided list. Take your time on Orientation and Help Islands. Spend time adjusting your appearance to something you are comfortable with. Next join a few groups, I would recommend the DEN in SL (Discovery Educator Network), ISTE, TNC, SLolar Central, and K12 Educators to get you started. Remember, you are entering a new world and it will take some time to get comfortable with this environment. You will need to learn to walk, talk and get around. Do not hesitate to ask for help if you do not know how to do something. Everyone was new to Second Life once and felt bewildered and disoriented. If you are so inclined, start a blog or keep some notes to document your experiences and what you are learning. The educators you meet in SL will become part of your learning community and share what you learn with the members of your RL learning communities. The following are a list of ideas to help your earliest days of SL to be rewarding and not overwhelming.

- Set goals
- Visit one new spot a week
- Go to a presentation or a how-to class
- Set a time limit
- Share your expertise and experience with others
- Go with a buddy to explore SL

## SLurl™
## Second Life Addresses

A SLurl is a direct link from the web to a location in Second Life. Clicking on a SLurl will take you to a SL login page and then, after a successful login, to the specified location. You must have the Second Life client installed on the computer. Here are the SLurls for all the places mentioned in this document.

**Discovery Educator Network:** http://slurl.com/secondlife/Eduisland%20II/71/98/22
**Genome Project:** http://slurl.com/secondlife/Genome/158/119/29
**ISTE:** http://slurl.com/secondlife/ISTE%20Island/134/44/22
**Jokaydia:** http://slurl.com/secondlife/jokaydia/113/150/23
**NOAA:** http://slurl.com/secondlife/Meteora/175/152/27
**Paris 1900's** http://slurl.com/secondlife/Paris%201900/44/169/24
**Roma (Ancient Rome)** http://slurl.com/secondlife/ROMA/215/25/22
**Sistine Chapel Re-creation:** http://slurl.com/secondlife/Vassar/116/113/27
**SLolar Central:** http://slurl.com/secondlife/Eduisland%20II/32/218/23

# Annotated Resource List

**Annotated Bibliography of Second Life Educational Online Resources** is also a great place to begin your exploration of Second Life. http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~mpepper/slbib

**Beth's Second Life Resource wiki**. This wiki was created to support this document and presentation. http://www.bethknittle.net/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Main.SecondLife

**Discovery Educator Network in Second Life.** This community of educators is dedicated to welcoming and supporting educators as they explore Second Life. **Blog:** http://www.denblogs.com/secondlife/
**Google Group:** http://groups.google.com/group/den-in-sl

**ISTE** has a created a venue for presentations, discussions and collaboration. ISTE host events for educators working in Second Life to share their experiences.
http://www.iste.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Membership/Member_Networking/ISTE_Second_Life.htm

**Second Life** has many links to resources to help you explore SL. http://secondlife.com

**Second Life in Education** is an excellent wiki which has a variety of resources for educators in Second Life. http://sleducation.wikispaces.com/

**Simteach** is another good resource that provides the Second Life Education Wiki and list of educational institutions with a presence in Second Life. http://simteach.com

**SLED Picayune**, a Second Life Educational related newspaper, provides a list of videos and tutorials for getting started in SL. http://sledpicayune.blogspot.com/2007/06/fwd-sled-sl-tutorial-videos-and.html

**Sloodle**, Moodle for Second Life, has many resources that facilitate learning and instruction within SL. http://www.sloodle.com

**Suffern Middle School** (NY), has created 3 islands (Ramapo, Rockland and Suffern) that are private, their students and teachers can only access these islands and not the general teen area. Suffern MS are pioneers on using SL for student learning. http://rampoislands.blogspot.com/

**TechSoup** has a list of other virtual online worlds.
http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/internet/page6759.cfm

**The Story of my Second Life** a blog by Kevin Jarrett (KJ Hax in SL) is a wonderful resource about education and Second Life. http://www.storyofmysecondlife.com/