

Using Interactive White Boards

An IWB is made “interactive” by being linked to a computer which uses special IWB software. The three essential components needed to use an IWB are:

- the whiteboard itself.
- a computer which has IWB software installed.
- a data projector (or “beamer”) which projects the image from the computer screen onto the Whiteboard.

What makes the IWB special is that the teacher uses a special pen (or their finger with some makes of boards) to manipulate content on the IWB itself, rather than the mouse to manipulate images on the computer screen (which the teacher can also do).

The latest IWB can also be used with a wireless tablet PC (a smaller hand-held computer) instead of the larger PCs or laptops.

This has the advantage that it can be passed around so that learners can manipulate the IWB from the tablet PC

The IWB comes in different sizes. The most common is the 75 inches across. Teachers seem to agree that the bigger the board the more effective it is as images are more clearly displayed.

An IWB can be mobile (moved from room to room: this takes time every time!) or fixed.

There are also backlit IWBs which do away with the need for a projector, but they are very expensive.

The great innovation of IWBs lies in the fact that all the devices used before are now integrated into a single unit to help teachers create new types of lessons (image, sound, word and motion blend)

An extra benefit is that it may be connected to the Internet to bring the outside world into your class instantly: accessing thousands of teaching resources, getting the latest news, browsing your students’ blogs, watching the latest Youtube videos, etc.

Radio broadcasts, digital papers exhibited instantly and spontaneously.

The material you can use:

- 1.- Interactive course-books: CDRoms commercially produced by publishers (OUP, Pearson, etc) designed specially to follow a syllabus or play games.
- 2.- Interactive dictionaries. For example the Oxford Essential Dictionary has great picture banks and videos that can be used on an IWB while the games and exercises make great warmers.
- 3.- Files prepared by you on matters of your interest.
- 4.- Connections to the Internet with its vast array of resources.

IWBs allow us to encourage a more heads up learning environment in the classroom. Instead of the students working with their noses in their textbooks, we can have them working while looking at the IWB which is more conducive to communication.

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