

What's My Child's Assignment?

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Have your students' parents ever kept calling or visiting you to find out what their child's assignments are? Or have you ever photocopied 26 copies of activity sheets for 25 students and kept a copy for yourself? You asked your students to keep the activity sheets just in case they would not be able to finish them, and could complete them the following day. The next day came, half of the students were doing the same assignment while the other half were doing nothing. So you asked one student, "Why are you not doing your work?"

The student answered, "I don't know what to do. I lost my copy." You ask another student the same question.

The answer, "I left it at home." Because you want the students to work, you give them a second copy. However, this is a waste of time and money.

What can technology do to solve the problem? In my computer classes, I can simply type the activity sheets and then put them in a shared folder in the network so every student in my class can access it (no need to photocopy). But how about my math class where a computer is not available in the classroom and the parents want to know their children's assignments? To solve this problem, I could develop a simple [web page](#) where I could post assignments.

One of the CAT~net articles mentioned [TeacherWeb](#), which is a good site for teachers to make their own web pages and post assignments, but it is no longer free. However, if you want to design your own, which means that you build it the way you want it to look, make links for all your classes, and may be add a little bit of animation to make your web page more attractive. You need to know at least the basics of making a web page or the basics of HTML (Hyper Text Mark-up Language). My web page has some educational links such as an interactive tutorial for beginners, HTML Goodies, plus links to enhance the web page.

Once you have your web page ready, the next step is to publish it on the web so that the students and parents can visit your site wherever they are, and whenever they want. You can publish your web page for free or with a minimal fee of \$4.95/month. Several organizations or companies like [Geocities](#) and [AngelFire](#) offer free web hosting. However, you won't have your own domain name (.net, .com, .org) and some advertisements will pop-up on the screen. On the other hand, if you choose to publish your web page for a fee, you will receive your own domain name but no advertisements. [HostSave](#) and [Cedant](#) are just a few of the companies that offer web hosting.

Below are some simple tips in making a website.

Web Page Design Tips

Loading Time

It is very important that your page loads quickly, otherwise people will not stick around-no matter how terrific your site is. One of the things that slows down the loading is graphics. For this reason use of graphics should be used to a minimum and no graphic should exceed 10K. So if you have graphics reduce the size. The total size of a page, including graphics, should be under 50K. If you have a site that relies heavily on graphics, such as an art site, use thumbnails that are linked to another page with a larger version of the picture clicked. It is also a good idea to have some text to go with the picture. That way people will have something to read while the graphic loads.

Colour

Keep a good contrast between background colour and text. Remember that dark text on a light background is easier to read than the other way around. But if you do want to use a dark background colour, keep the text very light such a white or yellow. A page that doesn't read well won't encourage people to return. Also, don't use too many colours on a page and keep loud and bright colours to a bare minimum. You don't want anything to distract from the contents of the page-loud, bright colours do just that.

Layout

A simple page layout is easier to read and navigate than one with too many "bells and whistles". It does not compete nor does it overpower the message to your viewers. Moreover, don't try to put too much into one page as it only makes information that your viewers might be interested in harder to find. Be consistent, and use the same layout throughout your pages. It will give your site a unified look.

Avoid those entrance pages (or whatever they're called), you know, the ones that say something like "WELCOME To My Site, click here to enter." They are useless and annoying. Your main page should clearly explain your site and be readily accessible.

Navigation

Make all your pages accessible from all other pages on your site. If you have too many pages to make that possible, then on every page have a link to an index or site map from which your visitors can easily access the rest of your site. It's also a good idea not to have your visitors clicking to many links to get at what they want. Anything that requires three or more links is too much; organize your pages to be accessible with the least amount of effort.

Compatibility

After spending weeks designing that perfect site, the real disadvantage of designing websites is to discover that it looks terrible in a different browser. That's because not all browsers interpret the code in the same way. For this reason you should check your pages in as many different browsers as possible.

It's also a good idea to make your pages with the monitor resolution set to 640x480dpi, then it won't look too bad when viewed in a 800x600 or higher resolution. If it's done the other way around, for instance you make your page with the screen resolution set to 1024x768, guess what? The page won't fit the lower resolutions and you'll end up with horizontal scroll bars at the bottom of the screen, a definite no-no.