



Second Life Education: The Virtual Learning Advantage



Learning in Second Life easily brings remote students into the same virtual classroom.

“Loyalist College believes strongly that were it not for Second Life, we would not be involved in virtual worlds whatsoever. The learning in these spaces is amazing, and when we are working with 30% increases in success, there is nothing more memorable than that.”

— Ken Hudson, Managing Director, Virtual World Design Center, Loyalist College

Today’s Challenging Environment

Economic pressures from budget cuts and the rising cost of education continue to mount. While students are forced to pay higher tuition fees, share resources, and even drop classes, educators are obligated to creatively “do more with less” by designing curricula that accommodates economic constraints. For forward-thinking learning institutions committed to the cost-effective employment of emerging technologies for communication, collaboration and learning, Second Life supports and amplifies the ongoing mission to deliver world class education.

Virtual Worlds Enable Real Life Learning

Virtual worlds solve many of the challenges faced by educational institutions. Today, hundreds of colleges, universities, and other learning organizations--from nearly every country--are either augmenting their current curriculum with a virtual learning component or they are holding classes and entire programs exclusively in immersive learning environments in Second Life.



Second Life’s persistent virtual environments enable students to work together synchronously and then return, individually or as a team. The learning space is always available, not just for geographically dispersed groups but even those who meet regularly in the physical world. This is particularly useful when students require more flexible schedules or need to work asynchronously on the same project.

Second Life amplifies learning beyond capabilities afforded by teleconference calls and web presentation tools--but it also creates opportunities for field trips inside virtual organs, machines and other environments that go far beyond the walls of traditional learning spaces. Training simulations are also incredibly powerful in Second Life because they simulate complex, processes in the physical world and avatars can take on different roles to enhance learning. Great examples are how Loyalist College trains Border Patrol agents or how Imperial College trains medical students. What makes Second Life training so powerful? You feel like you’re there. We call it a sense of “presence”. You just have to experience it to understand it. Already, many prominent educational institutions and organizations understand it and are creating virtual learning environments to deliver a wide range of courses, field trips, and events including:

- Distance and Flexible Education
- Presentations and Discussions
- Historical Recreations
- Simulations and Role-Playing
- Multimedia and Games Design
- Language Learning Practice



“At the NMC, we see Second Life as the most currently evolved of the virtual world platforms today, and wherever this technology takes us, Second Life will be seen as the seminal first instance of what the 3D web might look like. ”

— Larry Johnson, CEO, The NMC, testifying before the U.S. Congress

Key Benefits:

Hundreds of Learning Institutions are in Second Life Today

There’s a reason why over 700 educational institutions from all over the world are in Second Life today — the advantages of learning in immersive 3D environments are many. Learning in Second Life can cut your costs and help you reach and retain more students. Dozens of highly successful projects are proving that Second Life can be as effective as traditional classrooms and for many students it’s an even more effective learning environment. In a few words, Second Life as an educational platform is engaging and it works. And it’s eco-friendly.

Engaging Learning Environment

Engagement is the “holy grail” when it comes to distance learning. If a student is not in a classroom, how can the experience keep the students’ attention and encourage participation? Second Life was designed as a social networking platform — to encourage social interaction. It enables deeply immersive, meaningful, and memorable experiences.



There are many distance learning technologies, but we believe that Second Life is the best because it actually feels like you're "there" when you're inworld, and it caters to many kinds of learners — visual, auditory, and experiential. Second Life also demands participation; if you walk away from your computer, or discontinue using your keyboard or mouse for a few minutes, your avatar slumps forward — asleep — and everyone else in the virtual space can visibly see that you're not paying attention. Students don't disengage or get bored when there are so many interesting ways to explore and learn in Second Life — it's a powerful simulation, modeling, and data visualization tool.

Rich Inworld Learning Experiences Available Today

What's better? Reading about Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel in a book, or walking through the chapel doors and flying up to the top of the ceiling for a closer look? In Second Life, you can do that. In fact, Second Life is the home to thousands of educational "virtual field trip" destinations and resources. Inworld museums include the Smithsonian's Latino Virtual Museum, the Dresden Museum, the San Jose Tech Museum of Innovation, and the U.S. Holocaust Museum. After visiting the museums, you can blast off into space at the NASA Islands or explore the Egyptian pyramids. Then, you can bring your class to one of hundreds of libraries or government institutions in Second Life. And, if you teach a language class, you, and your students, can visit one of hundreds of islands where there are native speakers for an immersive language lesson. The possibilities are endless.



Collaborate with Other Learning Organizations

We all know that learning today has expanded far beyond books and lessons. In our global society, learning includes creating new understanding, respect, and appreciation for different people and cultures. A powerful way to create bridges is to collaborate with one of the 700+ educational institutions globally in Second Life. Many learning institutions have created joint learning programs in Second Life with great success. Using the various collaboration tools in Second Life, and the Second Life Education email list, it's easy to connect with other teachers and professors in Second Life who are open to collaborating, sharing, and creating joint learning programs. Because Second Life accommodates synchronous and asynchronous learning, time zones start to melt away — as do differences between people.



Reach More Students

You might be surprised to learn that many of your students are already in Second Life and that your new Second Life program is simply a smart way to be where your students already are. Whether a student is learning from home, work, school, or a cafe, they can all still reach Second Life with an Internet connection — and join class. With Avaline, you can also phone into classes or meetings. Additionally, Second Life is an ideal learning environment for many disabled students as it provides greater accessibility than traditional campuses, as proven by the Second Life community Virtual Ability.

Learn “Green”

Taking care of the environment by reducing our carbon footprint is no longer a nice idea — it’s a mandate for businesses, governments, and educational institutions from around the world. By reducing the need for travel and meeting in a virtual classroom, schools can save millions of carbon pounds from entering our environment. Although virtual worlds require energy to power computers and servers, the environmental impact is minimal by comparison.





For More Information

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About Second Life, by Linden Lab

Developed and launched by Linden Lab in 2003, Second Life is the world's leading 3D virtual world environment. It enables its Residents to create content, interact with others, launch businesses, collaborate, educate, and more. With a broad user base that includes everyone from consumers and educators to medical researchers and large enterprises, Second Life has become one of the largest repositories of user-generated content and the largest user-generated virtual goods economy in the world.

Privately held Linden Lab, founded in 1999 by Philip Rosedale and headquartered in San Francisco, develops revolutionary technologies that change the way people communicate, interact, transact, learn and create. For more information, visit www.secondlife.com.

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