A wooden desk with a laptop, a wooden pencil holder, and a pair of scissors. The text is overlaid on a dark grey rectangular background.

# Using Google Classroom more effectively and efficiently

**Matt Miller (@jmattmiller) DitchThatTextbook.com**

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



**Google Classroom can already make us more efficient, but these tips can save you even more time and effort. (Images via [Pixabay.com](https://pixabay.com) and Google)**

If you and your students are using Google Apps in the classroom, Google Classroom can save you tons of time and effort. It helps you assign, collect, grade and return work seamlessly.

But, like anything else, there are tricks that can help you do the same work in less time.

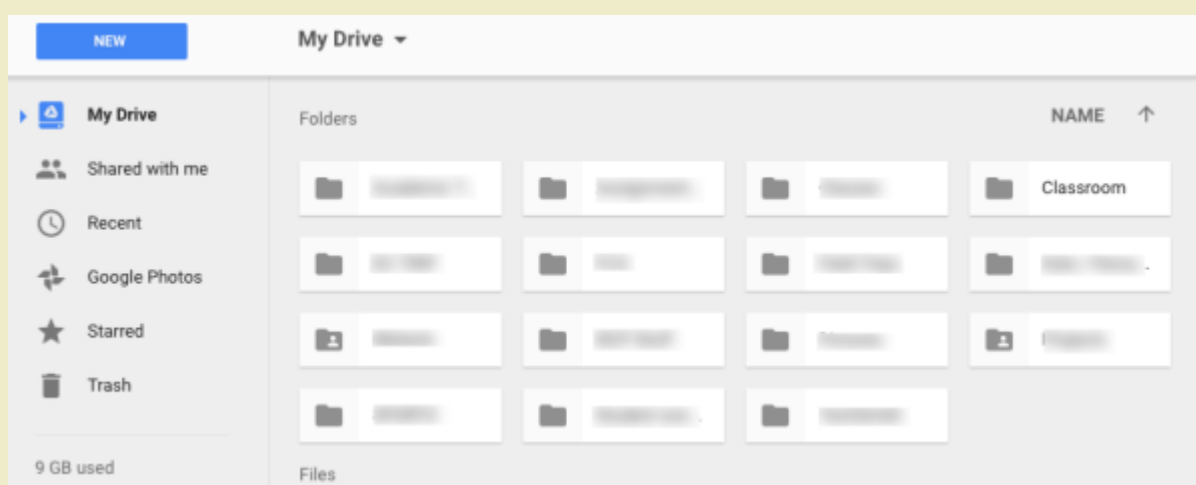
They make you more efficient and effective.

Here are some tips to save you some time while using Google Classroom:

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers

## 1. Find student work in Classroom by using Google Drive.

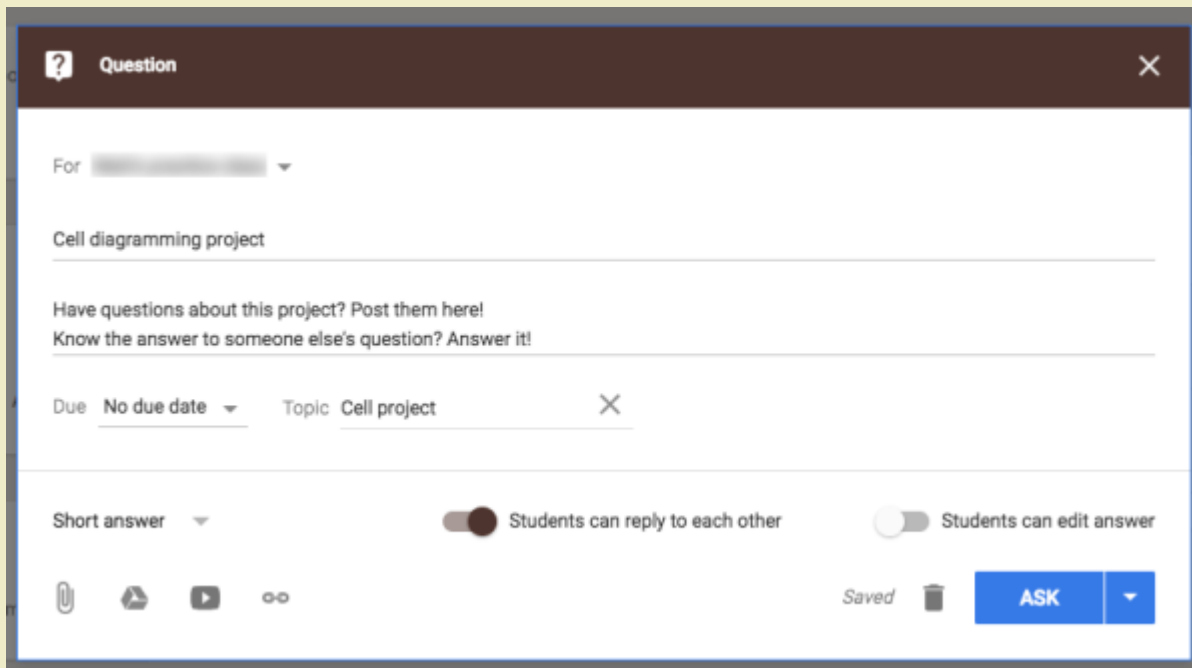
Digging files out of assignments in Google Classroom isn't the only way to open and review student work. Files that students turn in to you are saved in a folder in your Google Drive called "Classroom." They're sorted by class and by assignment, too. You can always find those files by opening the subfolders in Drive. You can also use the search bar to search for a specific student name or assignment name.



## 2. Let students help each other by posting a question.

Teachers don't have to answer every question! We can empower students to help each other. Use the "+" button to create a question for a particular assignment or project. It can serve as a discussion board where students can help each other. (Of course, you can always pop into the question to view discussions to make sure they're accurate and on point.)

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers

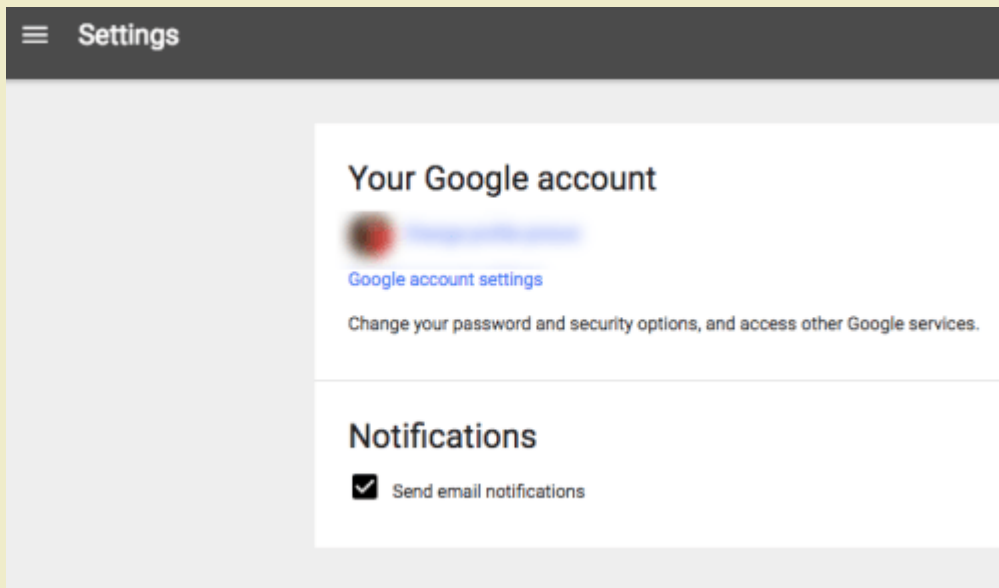


## 3. Get just the right amount of email by adjusting notification settings.

Is all the email that Classroom sends you killing you? There are some settings that let you customize it.

First, Classroom lets you turn email notifications on and off. (Classroom sends you emails when someone adds a comment to your post and when a private comment is posted on a student's assignment or question submission.) Click the menu button (three lines) and "Settings", then check or uncheck notifications.

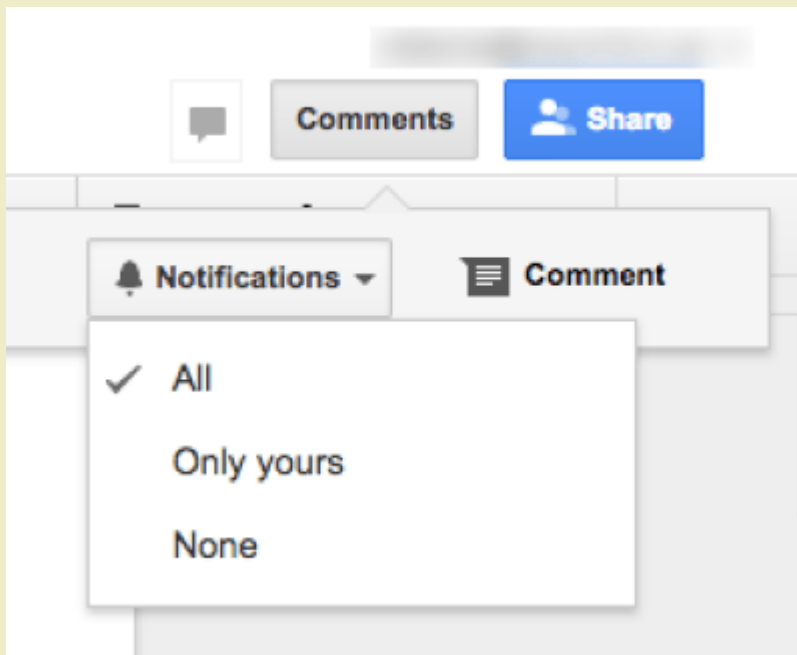
# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



Next, Google sends you notifications when someone replies to a comment you wrote. To change those notifications, open the file (in Docs, Slides, Sheets, etc.) and click the “Comments” button. Then click “Notifications,” where you can decide to receive notifications ...

- when any comment is made (All),
- whenever others reply to your comments or comments you are added to (Only yours), or
- never (None).

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



## 4. Use keyboard commands instead of the mouse.

Keeping your fingers on the keyboard can save you seconds each time you do many things on Classroom, and those seconds add up quickly!

**For example:** When entering grades, once you've clicked on one student's grade, you can push the up and down arrows to move to students' grades up and down the list. This is SO much faster than clicking and typing.

**Other keyboard commands:** Tab can move through links and text fields on the page. The space bar works like a mouse click.



# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers

**Of course, don't forget the basics:** Ctrl+C = copy, Ctrl+X = cut, Ctrl+V = paste, Ctrl+Z = undo. Another favorite: Ctrl+K = add a link. (Use Command instead of Ctrl on a Mac.)

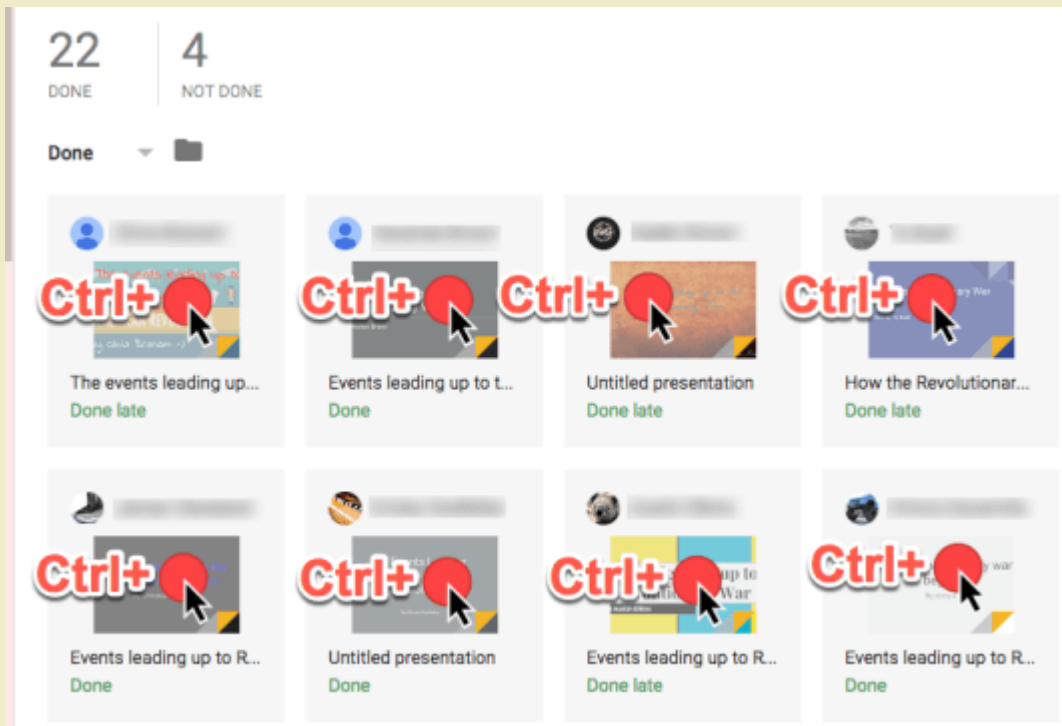
Not all keyboard commands are faster than clicking with a mouse, but you can definitely find some that save you time



## 5. Open lots of student work at once with the control key.

I was reminded of this useful trick [in this Alice Keeler blog post](#). When viewing an assignment, there's no button to open all of the student files at once. But, if you hold control while you click the files (Command on a Mac), it will open them one by one as new tabs in your browser window.

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



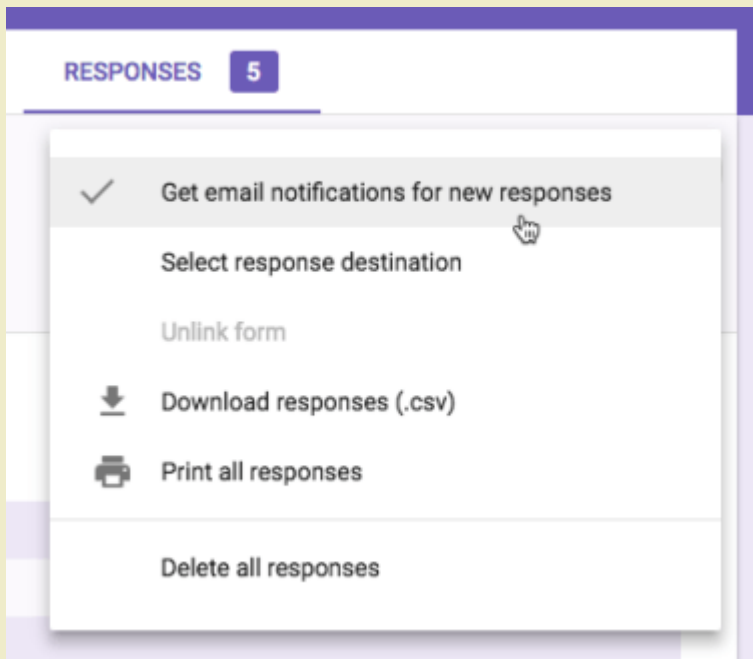
## 6. Get notified of late student work with a late work form.

Google Classroom will not email you when students turn in late work. However, you can create a Google Form for students to use to do that for you. (This is one of 20 practical ways to use Google Forms in class/school from [this blog post](#).)

- Use this Google Form as a template to create your own. (Click [here](#) to copy it into your Google Drive.)
- Change the text fields to suit your needs.
- Click the “Responses” tab, and click the menu button (three dots). Select “Get email notifications for new responses”.
- Click “Send” and click the link button. Copy the link.



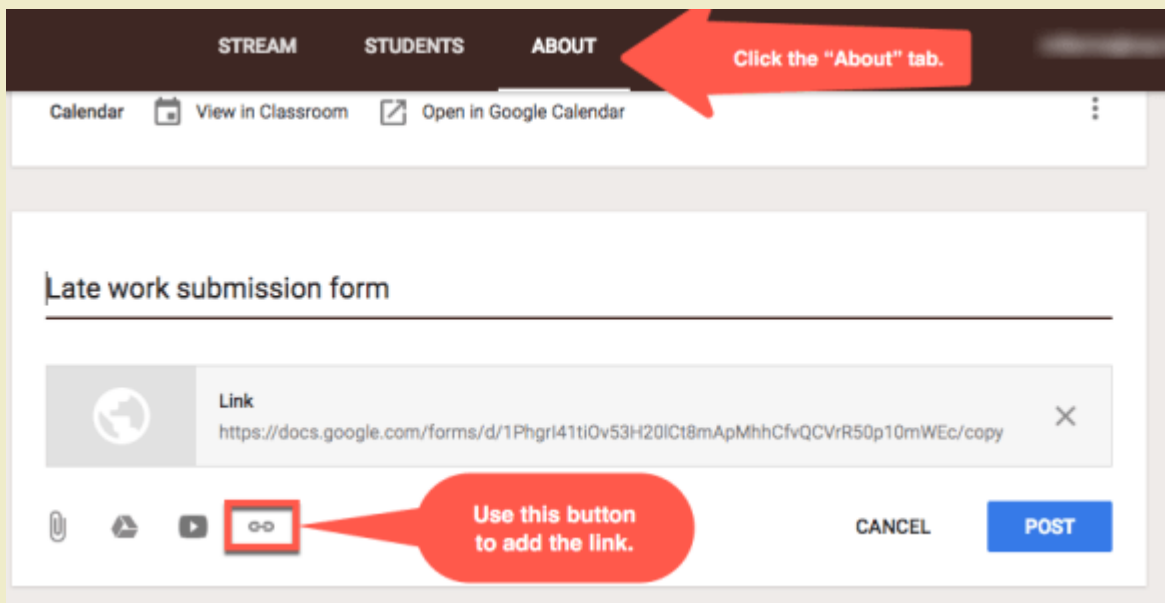
# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



Then, go to Google Classroom ...

- Click the “About” tab and click “Add class materials ...”.
- Click the link button and paste that link. Change the title to something like “Late work submission form”. Click “Post.”

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



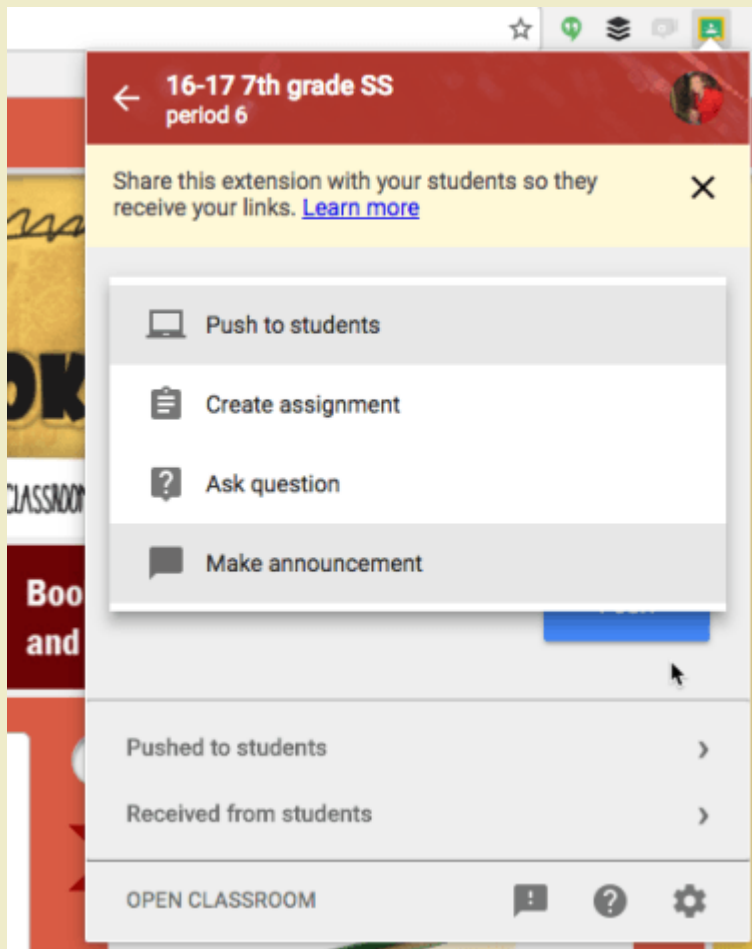
Tell students that submitting that form is part of the process for turning in late work ... that if they don't submit that form once work is late, it's like the work isn't turned in!

## 7. Get resources in Classroom quickly with the Share to Classroom extension.

If you find an article or webpage you want to share in Classroom, you can add it with a single click. [Install the Share to Classroom extension for the Google Chrome web browser first](#). It will create a little Google Classroom icon in the top right corner of your Chrome browser.

When you're on a page you want to share to Classroom, click on that icon.

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



From there, you can:

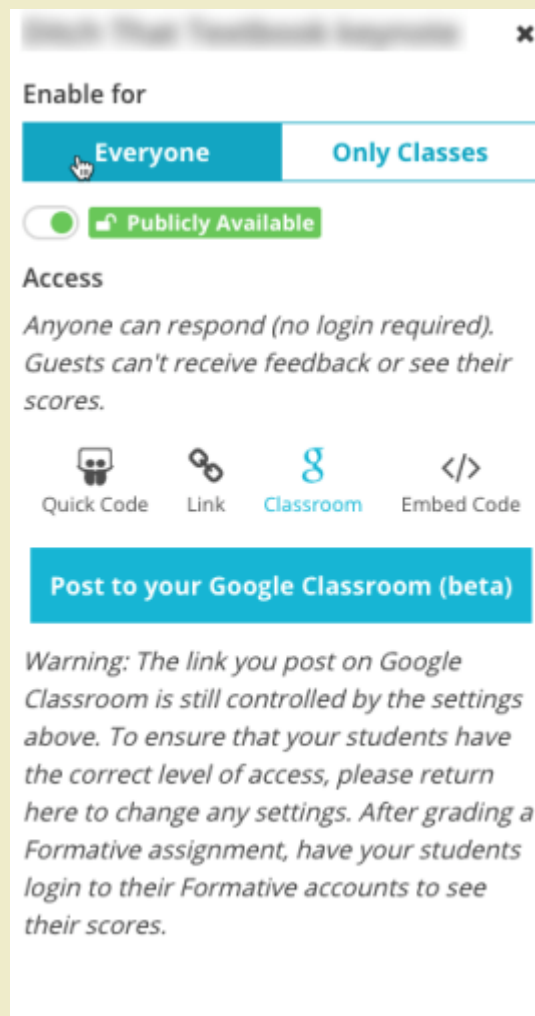
# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers

- Push that page to your students' devices so it opens instantly on their devices (if they have the Share to Classroom extension enabled). ([More on that in this Google support page.](#))
- Create an assignment based on that page.
- Ask a question based on that page.
- Make a new announcement based on that page.

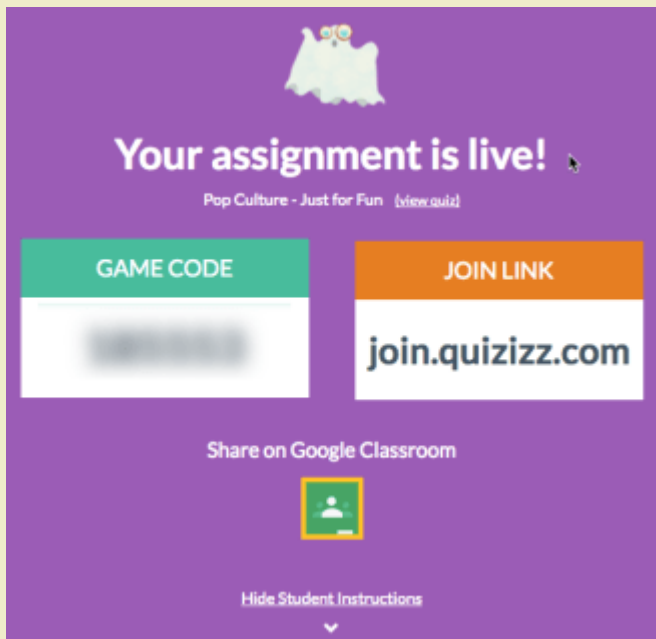
## 8. Connect other tools to Classroom quickly.

Lots of great educational websites work hand in hand with Google Classroom. Here are some examples:

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers





# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers

- **Formative** ([goformative.com](https://goformative.com)), which lets you create digital assignments for students and provide real-time feedback, lets you add those assignments directly to Google Classroom.
- **Quizizz** ([quizizz.com](https://quizizz.com)), a site that turns your activities into game-show-type games, lets you assign those activities as homework through Google Classroom. Once you assign a Quizizz game as homework, you can add it to Google Classroom.
- **Other sites:** Google for Education has partnered with lots of other sites and digital tools through Google Classroom. [Click here to see which ones have formal partnerships with Google Classroom.](#)

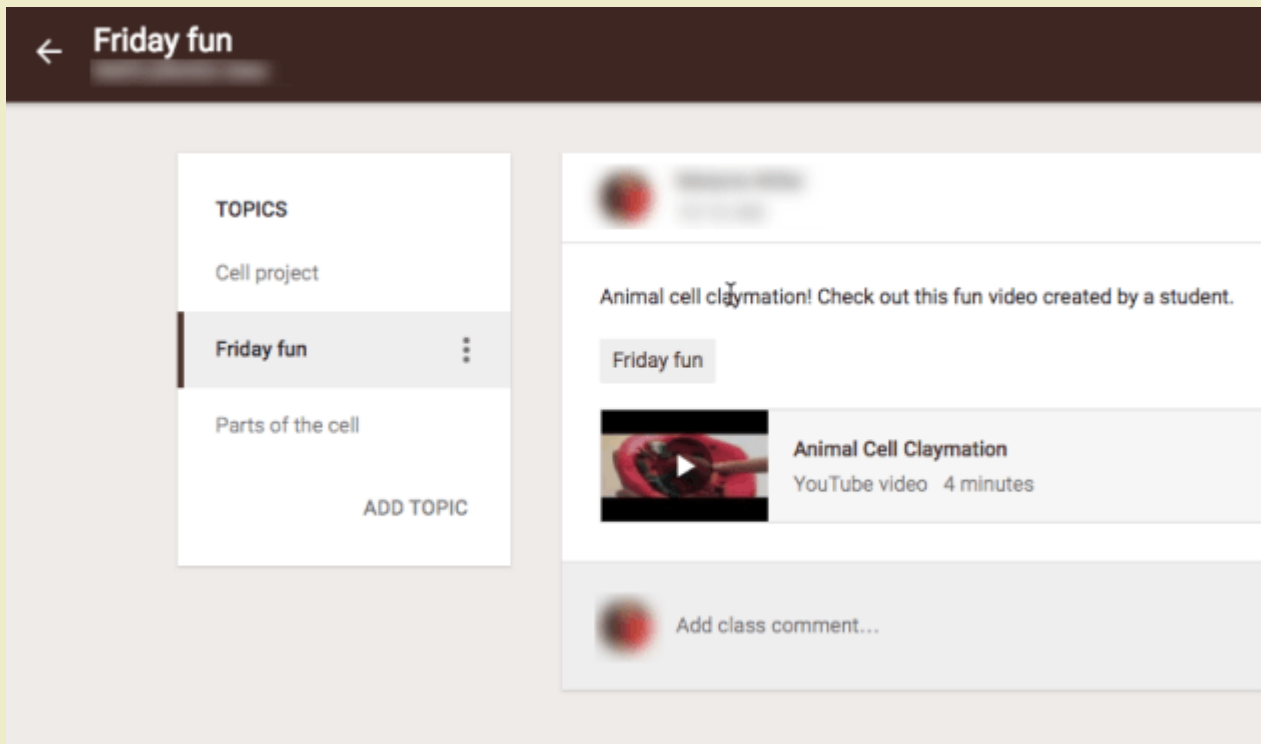
## 9. Organize and sort your posts with topics.

Do you feel like all the assignments, announcements and questions in your Classroom are too unorganized? Tag them with topics and you can filter and sort them to create some order!

Create topics by clicking “Add topic” in the topics window in your Classroom stream ... or create a new topic when making a new assignment, announcement or question.

Click on an individual topic to see ONLY the posts in that topic.

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers



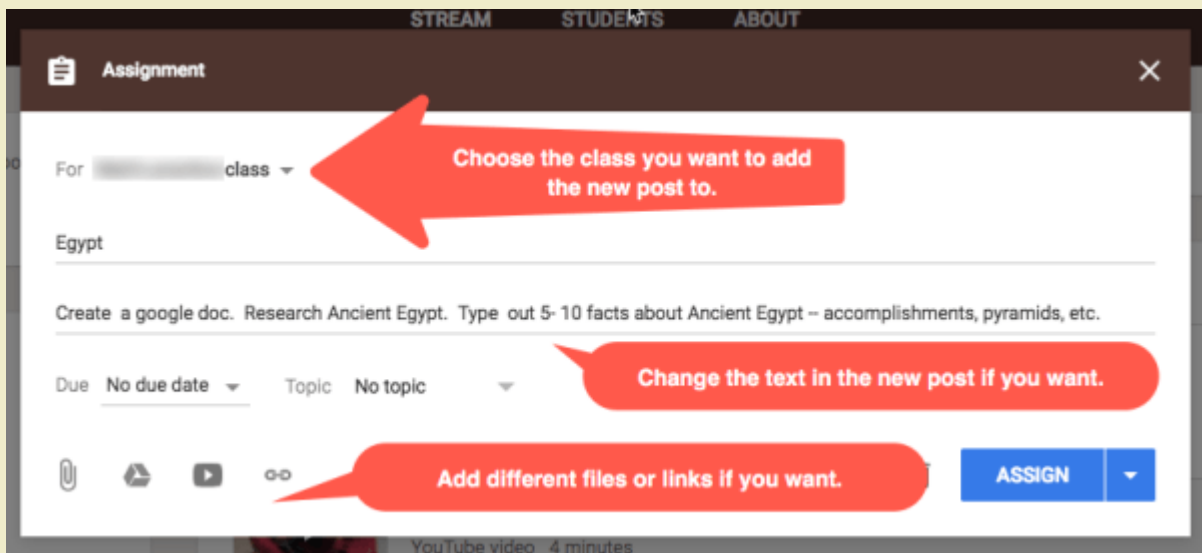
(Curious about that animal cell claymation video you see above? [Click here to watch it.](#))

## 10. Reuse posts so you don't have to create them again from scratch.

Do you create the same kinds of posts over and over? Don't re-create them from scratch each time! Use the "reuse post" option.

# 10 Google Classroom time savers for teachers

- Click the “+” button. Choose “Reuse post”.
- Select the class where you posted it first. (Note: You can take a post from one class and reuse it in another class!)
- Select the post you want to reuse.
- Classroom will create a new copy of that same post that you can customize. You can add it to any class, change the text, add new links or files, etc.
- Click “Assign” to assign it to your class immediately, or use the dropdown arrow and choose “Schedule” to schedule it to post later.



## More about Google Classroom

Here are some other blog posts I've written about Google Classroom:

- [10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently](#)
- [10 things you might not know about Google Classroom](#)
- [12 ways to use Google Classroom's newest features](#)
- [The Google Classroom Quick-Start Guide + tips and tricks!](#)
- [12 great ways to start using Google Classroom now](#)

# 10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently



**Google Classroom can be even more powerful with a few tips and strategies to make it efficient and effective.**

Google Classroom streamlines the management of student work — announcing, assigning, collecting, grading, giving feedback and returning. It has certainly saved many teachers hours of work.

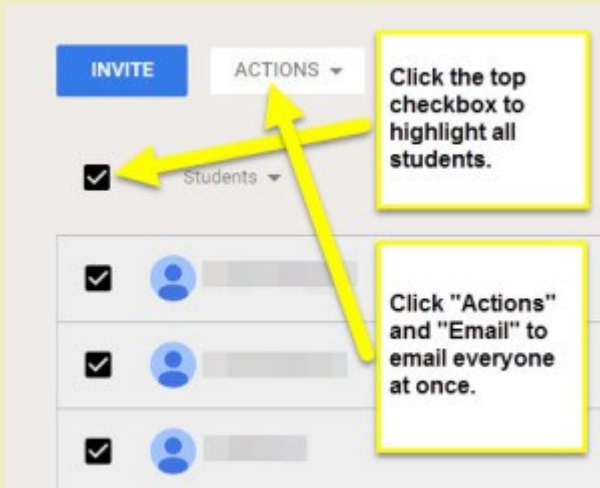
Without a solid workflow and some strategy, grading digital work can be cumbersome. Google Classroom does make working with student work more efficient — but only if you understand how Classroom works and how to use it to your advantage.

# 10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently

Sometimes, a few quick tips can make all the difference.

Here are 10 tips to help you use Google Classroom more effectively and efficiently:

**1. Use move to top to bring important older material back to students' attention.** This simple act bumps an assignment, announcement or question to the top of the class stream. Use this if students haven't turned an assignment in OR if you want to remind them of an upcoming deadline.



# 10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently

**2. Email everyone in a class in the “Students” tab.** Once you click the “Students” tab, click the checkbox above all of your students to highlight everyone. Click “Actions” and “Email.” This is great for calling special attention to something you want to communicate to students OR for longer-form communication.

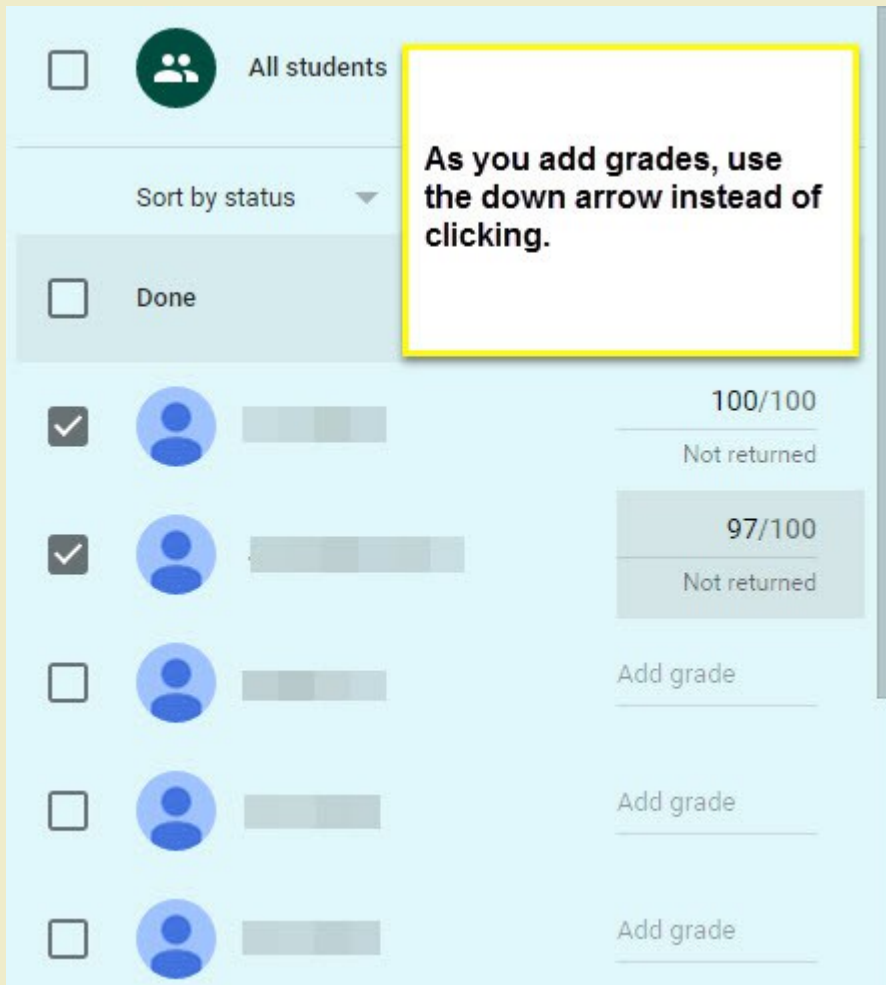
**3. Use the right kind of comment.** There are several kinds of comments you can leave students in Classroom. Knowing how each one works can make you more efficient and effective.

- **Adding class comments:** Do this by adding a comment in your class stream on the “outside” of an assignment or announcement. This will make the comment visible to the entire class (important if it’s an answer to a question anyone might have).
- **Adding private comments:** Do this by viewing student results and clicking on an individual student. On the right, where you can see student submissions, the comment bar at the bottom adds a comment that only the student can see (important if it has sensitive grade or feedback information).
- **Adding comments in a doc/slide/sheet/drawing:** Do this by clicking on the student’s file that he/she submitted to you. Click the black speech bubble icon after highlighting something you’d like to comment on. This adds a a very pointed comment on specific items in student work (important to be very exact in feedback).

**4. Use announcements to share “right now” links.** Announcements put content in your classroom stream without creating an assignment students must turn in. Use them to give students important links, docs/files and videos they’ll need right now. (If it’s a resource they’ll need often, add that resource to the “About” tab instead.)



# 10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently



**5. Use the keyboard instead of the mouse.** Keyboard commands beat moving and clicking the mouse every time. The best one in Google Classroom: When entering grades, type the grade for a particular student's assignment, then push the down key to get to the next student. Cycle through students with keystrokes instead of mouse clicks to save lots of time.

# 10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently

**6. Reuse posts.** Don't recreate assignments, announcements or questions that are similar to those you've already created. Click the "+" button in the bottom right and select "reuse post." Choose an assignment, announcement or question you've created before. You can modify and update it before you repost it.

When you reuse a post, you can even choose to create new copies of all the attachments you used before.

**7. Grade everything in one place.** Click the three lines button in the top left of Classroom and select "Work" at the top. Here, you'll find all of the assignments for all of your classes in one place. Work your way down the list and get on top of everything in one spot.

**8. Get email from Classroom the way you want.** Do you spend too much time deleting email notifications from Classroom and wish you could turn them off? Click the three lines button in the top left of Classroom and choose "Settings" at the bottom. There's a checkbox where you can turn off email notifications. (Or if you have it turned off and wish you'd get emails, that's where you turn them on!)

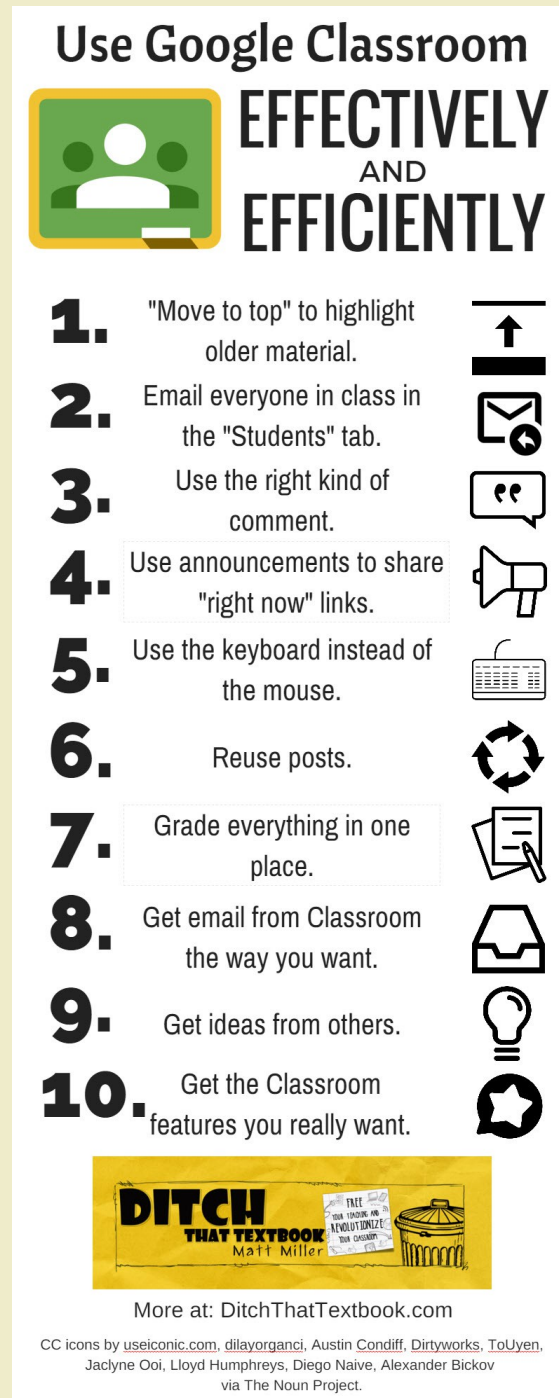
**9. Get ideas from others.** Educators that are already using Google Classroom hang out in lots of online communities where you can read their posts and ask questions. Here are some suggestions:

# 10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently

- Google Classroom community on Google Plus
- Google Apps for Education community on Google Plus (with a category for Google Classroom)
- Twitter hashtag: #GoogleClassroom (for Google Classroom-specific posts)
- Twitter hashtag: #GoogleEDU (for general Google updates)
- General Pinterest resources on Google Classroom
- Pinterest board on Google Classroom by Shake Up Learning

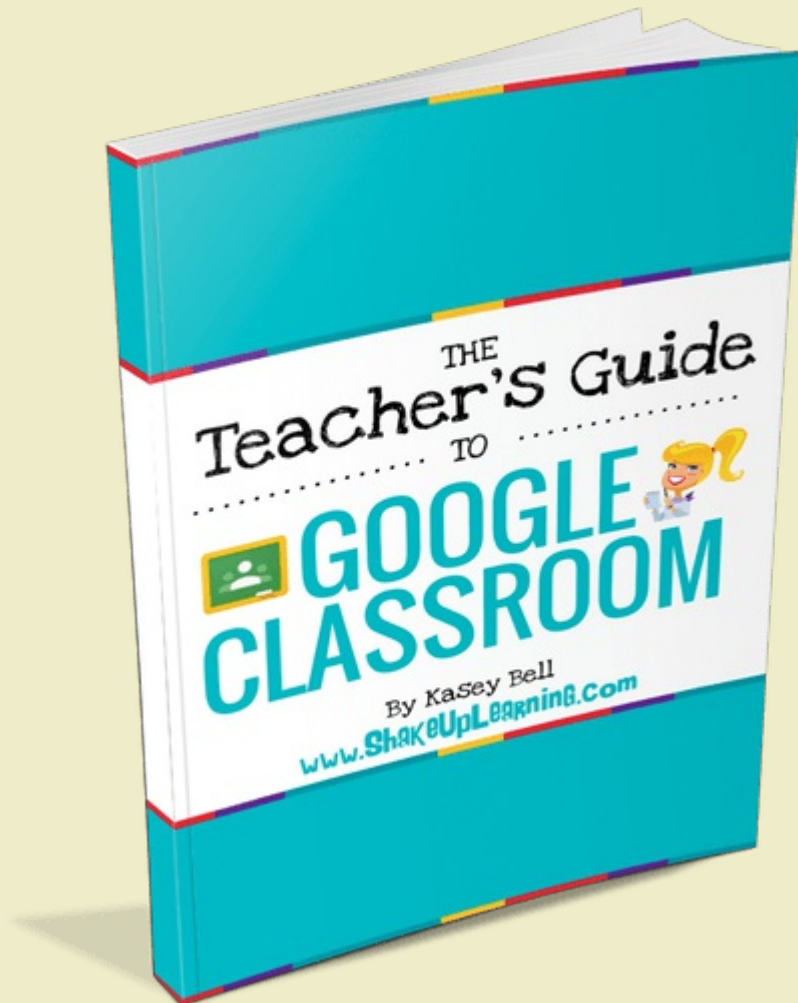
**10. Get the features you really want in Classroom.** Do you have a suggestion for a new Google Classroom feature? Is there something you can do but wish you could do it easier? This type of feedback is what the Google Classroom team craves from teachers. Click the “?” button in the bottom left of the screen and choose “Send Feedback.” According to the Google Classroom team member that talked to my Google Teacher Academy group in December 2014, someone from their team reads *every single feedback item* sent that way. It’s how they’ve made many of the important feature changes to Google Classroom. And the more popular a feature request, the more likely it’ll be implemented. So send feedback and send it often!

# 10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently



**Click for full-sized infographic!**

# 10 tips to use Google Classroom effectively and efficiently



Google Classroom is great for speed, simplicity and efficiency. But not all functions are easy to get at first. Here are 10 you might have missed, taken from **Kasey Bell's new Google Classroom teacher's guide**. (Cover image via **Shake Up Learning**)

# 10 things you might not know about Google Classroom

Google Classroom has become a hot topic among educators because of its simplicity, speed and efficiency in working with Google Apps in the classroom.

As easy as many features are to use, some aren't as intuitive ... and some are just hard to find. I regularly stumble upon a feature in Classroom that makes me think, "How did I not know about this before?"

If you're looking for a how-to guide that walks you through the basic points of Google Classroom as well as its finer points, look no further.

Kasey Bell, author of [the Shake Up Learning blog](#), has produced a very thorough, clean and easy-to-understand guide to Google Classroom. Her blog is full of great useful Google content, and her "[Teacher's Guide to Google Classroom](#)" is no exception.

Its table of contents includes:

- Getting Started
- The Stream
- Announcements and Questions
- Assignments
- Reusing Posts
- Communication
- Google Drive
- Getting Around
- Tips and Resources

In this post, I've excerpted some of my favorite Google Classroom ideas from Kasey's guide.

If you'd like to get your copy, [it's available here](#). At \$9.99, it's a ton of value and content for a very reasonable price.



# 10 things you might not know about Google Classroom

Plus, for additional value, Kasey created a 15-page printable student quick guide to Google Classroom that's included for free! Two books for the price of one ... you can't beat that!

Here are 10 functions in Google Classroom that you might not know about ...

- 1. Look for the lines and the dots** — When you see a button with three lines or with three dots, you can click them for more options. The three lines usually denotes the main menu; the three dots usually denotes more actions.
- 2. Get it right the first time** — When a teacher or student logs in to Google Classroom for the first time, he/she must choose the correct role — student role or teacher role. If he/she chooses the wrong role, the Google Apps IT administrator will have to be contacted to change it.
- 3. Put classes in order** — If you teach multiple classes, when creating those classes in Google Classroom, create them in reverse chronological order. By doing that, they will display in chronological order in Classroom.
- 4. Don't overload the About tab** — Only add the most important, year-round links to your About tab. If you overload it with too much content, it will become difficult to find anything there!
- 5. See the student side** — To see what the students are seeing, ask a colleague to invite you to one of his/her classes. That way, you'll be a student in that class and you'll see what Classroom looks like as a student.
- 6. Set comment settings** — Take control of your Google Classroom stream (where students see all the assignments, posts and other content) by deciding what students can do. Options include:

# 10 things you might not know about Google Classroom

- Students can post and comment (students can write their own posts and comments for the class to see)
- Students can ONLY comment (they can't write posts but can comment on teacher's posts)
- ONLY the teacher can post or comment (students can't write posts or write comments)

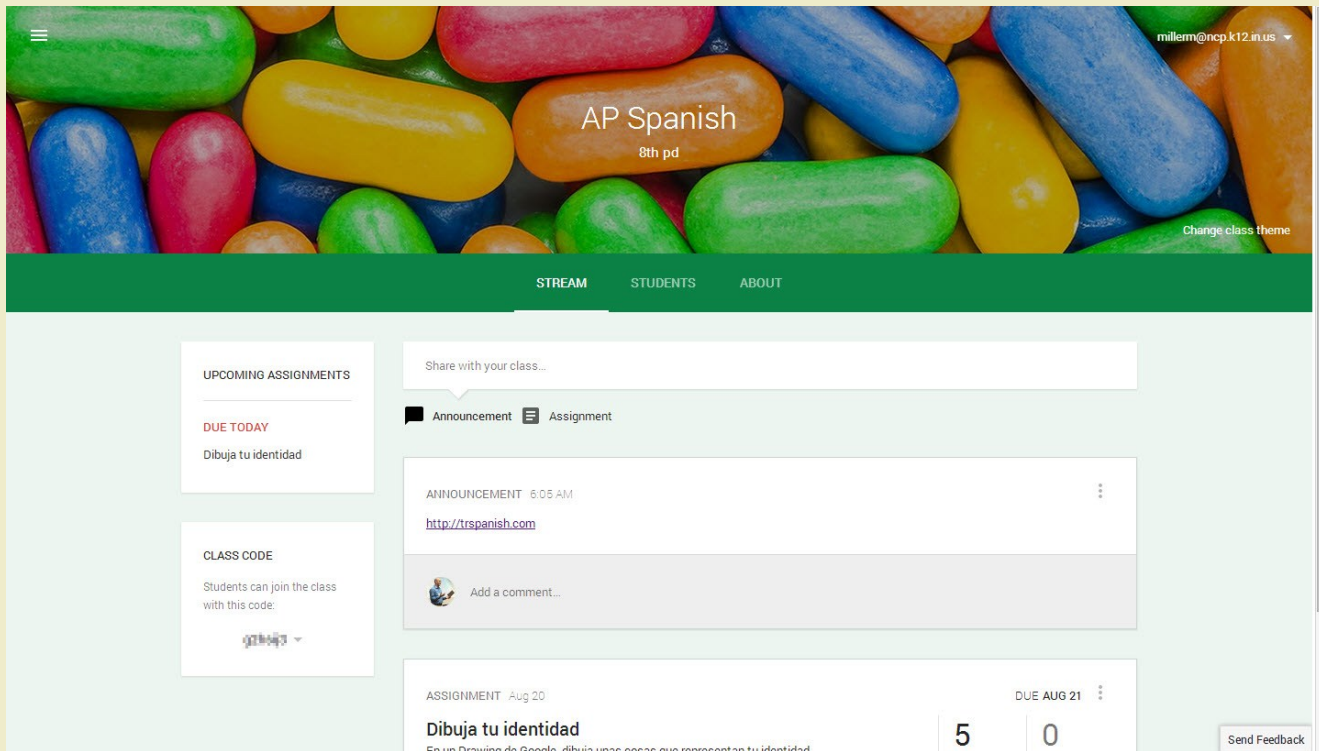
**7. Save it for later** — You can prepare your announcements, discussion questions and assignments for use later without publishing them immediately. Write them now and click the drop-down button next to “Assign” to save them as a draft.

**8. Assign without a Google file** — Students don't have to turn in a Google Document, Slides presentation or other file to submit an assignment. If the assignment doesn't require a file, the students can click “Mark as done” to show the teacher that he/she has completed the work.

**9. Add more than one** — You can add multiple files, videos and links to an assignment. Be sure to include everything the student needs, and maybe offer multiple options the student can choose from!

**10. Download your grades** — Get a spreadsheet of the grades for an individual assignment or for all assignments. When viewing grades, click the settings gear wheel in the top right corner and choose “Download assignment grades” or “Download all grades.”

# 12 great ways to start using Google Classroom now



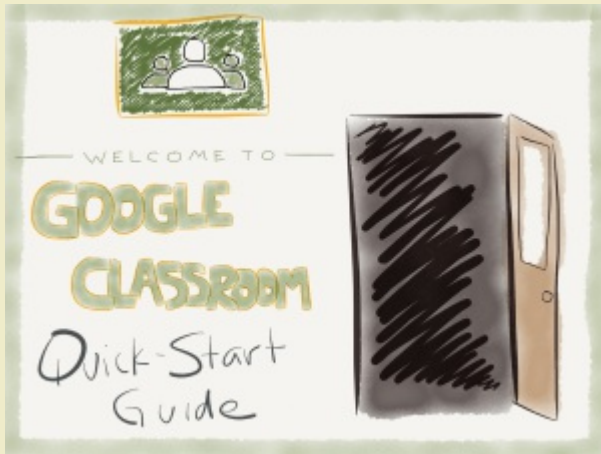
**Google Classroom is a powerful yet simple place to manage everything you do with Google Apps in the classroom. Here's where I'm getting started with it. (Google Classroom screenshot)**

After waiting all summer, Google Classroom is finally available to all Google Apps for Education teachers and students.

Google's venture into the world of learning management systems seems to be a pretty solid one. My first impressions:

- It looks and feels like a Google product (which it should and which is a good thing)
- It's clean and simple (which hopefully will make it easy to use)
- It provides a home base for everything you do in Drive

# 12 great ways to start using Google Classroom now



**Check out the Ditch That Textbook Google Classroom Quick-Star Guide! [Click here!](#)**

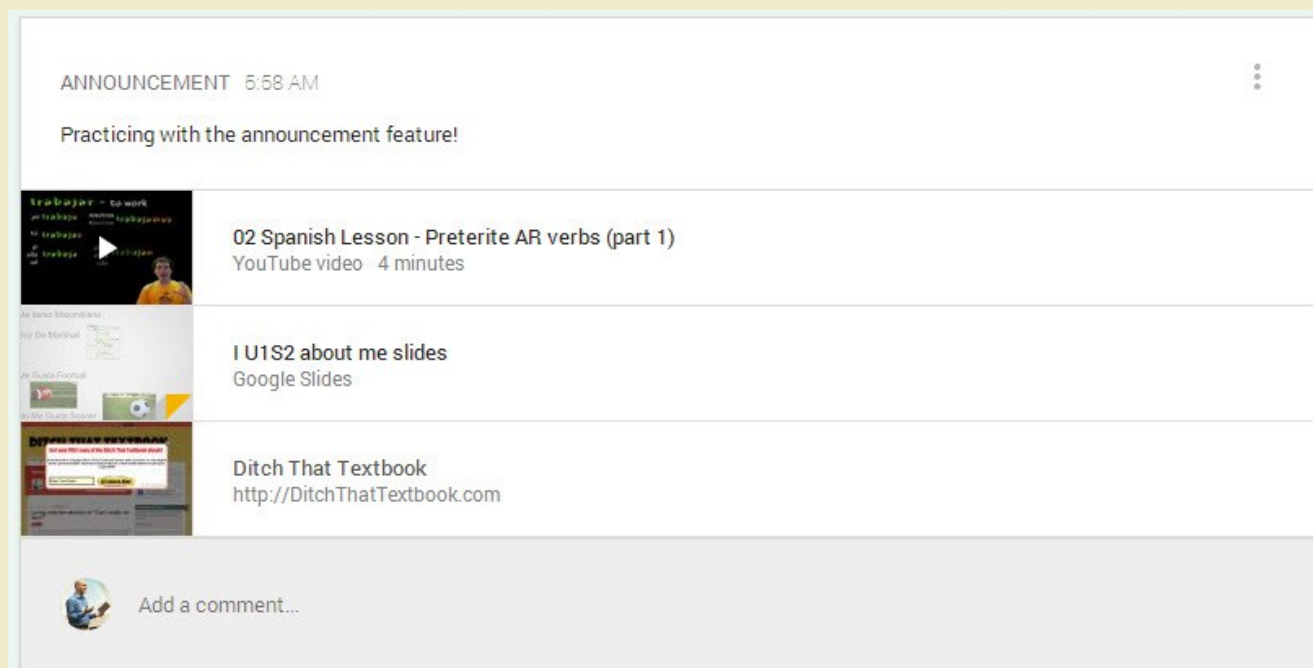
For those of us that used lots of Google scripts (i.e. Doctopus, gClassFolders) to manage our classes — and for those of us that didn't know those existed! — Classroom should make life easier.

After taking Google Classroom for a spin, here are some features I know I'm going to take advantage of:

# 12 great ways to start using Google Classroom now

**1. Set the class theme.** This was the first thing I did after creating my classes. I love the breathtaking photos and the color schemes that go with them. Several photos will be a perfect fit for certain classes (i.e. there are a few nice ones for science).

**2. Use the “About” page to provide information and important links for/about your class.** After opening your class in Classroom, click the “About” tab at the top. Your “About” page can be a central hub for your class with clickable links (make sure to use <http://> before links) and information students will need throughout the year.



**Click for a larger version of this image.**

# 12 great ways to start using Google Classroom now

**3. Attach YouTube videos, Google Drive files and links to announcements.** What better way to show students what you want them to do or inspire their work than with a video? Create a video to teach a new concept, to excite students about a new project or provide answers to frequently asked questions. Or choose a video available on YouTube. Attach photos from the classroom from your Google Drive in an announcement. There's a LOT you can do with this feature!

**4. Choose how to deliver files to students in assignments.** If you include a file to distribute to students in your assignment, you choose the editing rights they receive. Select whether to let them edit the file or only view the file. You can also make each student his/her own individual copy of the file (so everyone isn't typing notes on the same document).

**5. Start a conversation/backchannel in announcements.** When you post an announcement in Classroom, anyone in the class can comment on it. Post a conversation starter and let students reply to it, creating a digital conversation. Backchannels like this are a great way to make sure EVERY student is comfortable to contribute ... not just the ones that are willing to raise their hands in class.

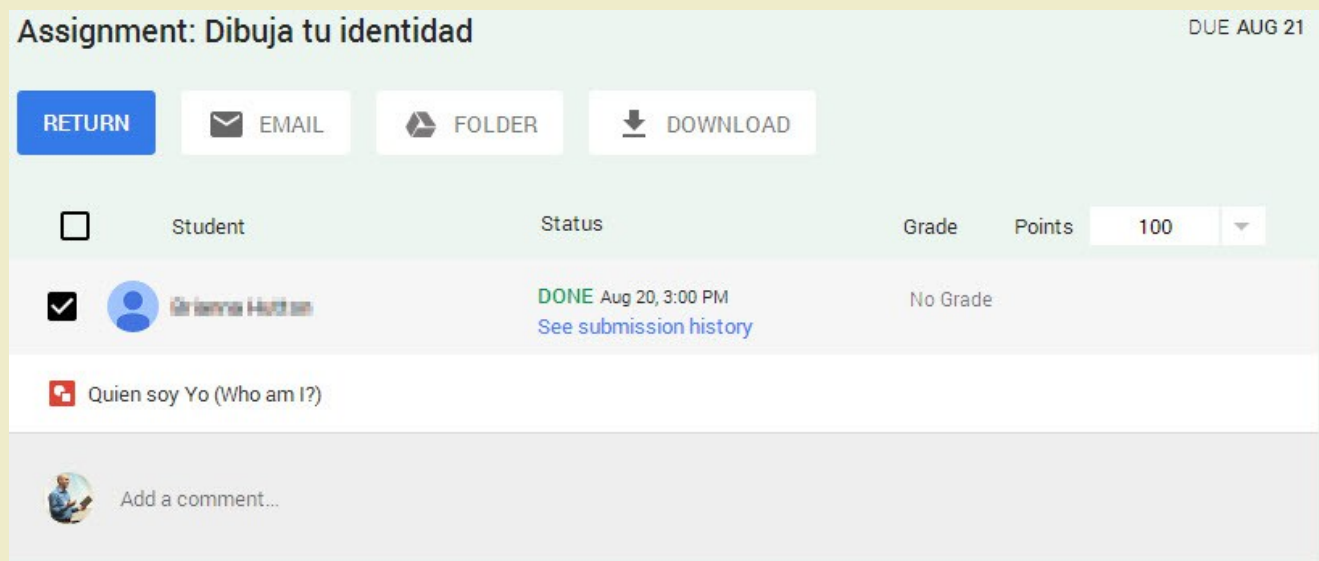
**6. E-mail students from within Classroom.** Using the "Students" tab at the top, send an individual student e-mail by clicking the mail button to the right. Or highlight several students and e-mail them at the same time. There's no need to leave the app to send messages!

**7. Provide an example of the work you'd like them to do.** Within the description of an assignment, provide a link to an example you want students to emulate (and again, remember the <http://> so it's clickable).



# 12 great ways to start using Google Classroom now

**8. Provide a collaborative space for students to work.** Distribute a place for collaborative class notes. Create a Presentation and give everyone a slide as their own space to work on a class activity. If you create files that everyone can work in, teamwork takes place online.



**Click for a larger version of this image.**

**9. Track student progress with submission history.** Follow the changes students made to their assignments by clicking a student's assignment in the "Assignment Status" section (after you click on the assignment) and "See submission history."

**10. Revisit previous work in your class folder.** Classroom creates a new folder for submitted student work in your Drive when you create a class. It creates a new folder for each assignment so files aren't jumbled together (like they were in your "Shared with me" or "Incoming" folder when students shared them with you!).

# 12 great ways to start using Google Classroom now

**11. Toggle your e-mail notifications on and off.** This is a nice feature if you don't want an e-mail every time something happens in Classroom. Change it under "Settings" when you click the menu button at the top left of your class (the three lines button ... sometimes called the "hamburger button").

**12. Give Google your feedback.** Use the little button in the bottom right corner to send Google your praise, your frustrations and your suggestions. You never know if the next feature they unveil could come from you!