

Best Practices: ePals



What is ePals?

ePals is a safe, secure solution for student email. It is a global community of collaborative learners and teachers in 200 countries and territories, creating opportunities for electronic pen pals and other collaborative projects.

Why do we use ePals?

- **Engage Students:** Email is a real life experience in the writing process. Students are motivated to write emails because they know others are reading and responding to their messages.
- **Improve Writing and Communication Skills:** Emailing requires students to organize and process their thoughts and communicate a point of view to a specific audience.
- **Encourage Higher Level Thinking:** Emailing helps students articulate their thoughts, develop and evaluate ideas and respond to the comments and ideas of others.
- **Use Relevant Tools:** Emailing is a 21st century communication tool used in many professional and higher education settings. If students are not already emailing they will be very soon. Email allows students to quickly send and receive messages.
- **Safe Communication:** Teachers set filtering and moderating levels for student email.
- **Global Community:** Easily browse the ePals community to locate a partner teacher for collaborations. Over 200 countries are represented in the ePals community!

Lessons Learned

- Email with a purpose. Know why you want to do it and what your outcome is.
- Send your students an email prior to your first lesson so they can learn how to check their email.
- Establish standards for emails. Require students to write in paragraph form, utilize correct grammar, spelling, and capitalization.
- Make sure to monitor messages sent and received by your students. You should read everything before your students do.
- Model emailing with the students. Give students time to read and respond to emails.
- Teach vocabulary associated with emailing.
- Have students sign a code of conduct and enforce consequences for violations.
- Emphasize the importance of internet safety.
- Don't leave the emailing to the students. Participation is increased when teachers are emailing too. Encourage discussion by responding to students - ask questions, challenge their thoughts, help them draw conclusions.

Resources & More Articles About ePals

<http://www.epals.com/>

Click "Projects" for lesson plans

Click "Community" to locate partners

"Being a new teacher, I was interested in setting up a real life correspondence system for my students. I am thrilled at the idea of providing them with a meaningful, technologically paced, culturally enriched means to achieve my objective. ePals sounds perfect! Thanks."

Karen O, Pocono Mountain School, PA, USA