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10 Tools in 30 Minutes

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10 great tools in 30 Minutes
Debbie Ginsberg
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1. **Extract Comments from Word**

What it does: Extracts all comments from a Word document and puts them into a table in a new document.
Why it's useful: For student papers with many overlapping comments, the extracted comments can help students to better follow suggestions and edits.
How to get it: Visit http://www.thedoctools.com/index.php?show=mt_comments_extract or ask PCHelp for the macro.
Hat tip: Prof. Greenberg

2. **SimplyFile**

What it does: Files messages into any Outlook folder with a single click.
Why it's useful: A great tool to quickly clean up a large inbox. SimplyFile learns which messages should go where as you use it.
How to get it: Available at http://www.techhit.com/SimplyFile/. Use this link (http://www.TechHit.com/l/SFFBF) for a discounted price ($39.95). A 30-day free trial is available.

3. **Twitter lists**

What it does: Create lists of Twitter users, including users you don't follow personally.
Why it's useful: When you want to read the Tweets of only some of the people you follow (e.g. law school faculty), or track a group of users for a brief time without following them (e.g. conference speakers).
How to get it: Go to Twitter.com and sign in (you'll need an account). Click on the "Lists" menu (furthest right) and select "Create a list" to start making lists. You can share lists with others who do not use Twitter.
Fun example: Tom Gaylord's Food Trucks List: http://twitter.com/#!/list/segelk.e43/chicago-food-trucks.

4. **ShowMe**

What it does: Create instant explanatory videos on any topic. You can add your videos to the ShowMe public library or get a link to share the video with only a few people.
Why it's useful: Easily create short videos illustrating complex concepts and share them with students. This can be a great tool for visual learners.
How to get it: ShowMe is a free app for the iPad. See examples at: http://www.showme.com/.

5. **Khan Academy**

What it does: Short videos featuring graphical, detailed explanations on a variety of academic subjects. Topics include advanced mathematics, statistics, economics, finance, and science.
Why it's useful: A great reference resource when you or your students need a quick explanation or review of an advanced math, science, or economics topic.
How to get it: The videos are available at http://www.khanacademy.org/. There is also an iPhone app.

6. Instapaper

What it does: Saves web pages and web articles to read later.
Why it's useful: Lets you save articles from news and blog sites to review when you have more time. There's an iPad app so you can save articles on your computer then read them later on your iPad or iPhone.
How to get it: Visit http://www.instapaper.com/ to sign up for an account. Follow the instructions to add a "bookmarklet" to your browser's toolbar. When you find an article you want to read later, click the bookmarklet to instantly save the article. The iPhone/iPad app costs $4.99.

7. Wejoinin

What it does: Creates instant online signup sheets.
Why it's useful: A great tool if you don't use TWEN or need it for events with participants not on TWEN.
How to get it: Set up an account at Wejoinin.com. The site provides step-by-step instructions.
More: I created this video which explains the service in more detail:
http://www.screencast.com/t/ncpEFmggcKJd

8. Audacity

What it does: Records and edits audio files.
Why it's useful: Use it to quickly create recordings for course websites or other uses.
How to use it: To record, click the record button. Click stop when you are done. The file saves as an Audacity file so you can edit it. Use the "Export" feature in the file menu to save the recording in a format like WAV.
How to get it: Download it at http://audacity.sourceforge.net/ (PC & Mac)

9. Zamzar

What it does: Converts files from one type to another (e.g. a Word file to PDF). Upload a file in one format, and it will email you the file in another.
Why it's useful: For the most part, you won't need this. Word 2007 and 2010 can save as PDF, for example. But it can be a great solution for when you receive a file of a type you cannot open.
How to get it: Zamzar is available at http://www.zamzar.com. No account is needed, although free and paid accounts are available.
Hat tip: Prof. Greenberg (again). Find more information and similar tools here:
http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/free-user-friendly-file-conversion.
Note: Conversions may take a while

10. Dropbox

What it does: Personal storage for saving and sharing files on the internet.
Why it's useful: Install Dropbox on your desktop or laptop to create a folder which you can use to save files you can access from a browser, to move files to an iPad, or to share projects with students or other faculty. Dropbox even tracks versions of file.
How to get it: Sign up for an account at https://www.dropbox.com/.
Note about security: If you need the files to be very secure, use an alternative service like SpiderOak (https://spideroak.com/).