



How to Choose and Use Technology Tools for COIL with **Data Privacy and Data Protection in Mind**



Collaborative Online
International Learning



Information
Technology



How to Choose and Use Technology Tools for COIL with **Data Privacy and Data Protection** in Mind

As Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) continues advancing in educational settings, it is crucial to address the important aspect of data privacy and protection when selecting tools for these collaborative experiences.

This guide offers practical insights and recommendations for how to choose technology tools for COIL while keeping data privacy and data protection at the forefront.

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How to Choose Technology Tools for COIL

TLDR: Whenever possible, use tools that you know and are commonly in use at both institutions.

1. Determine the Objectives: Before selecting technology tools, engage with your partner to clearly define the learning objectives and desired outcomes of your COIL project. Identify the specific tasks and activities that will be undertaken to achieve these goals.

2. Explore and Assess Tools: Look for tools that align with the objectives of your COIL project. Consider factors such as ease of use, functionality, security features, collaboration capabilities, and compatibility with different devices and operating systems. Think about tools that could be used to:

- Deliver instructions to your students
- Facilitate synchronous whole class or team meetings
- Communicate asynchronously with partners
- Collaborate to produce project artifacts
- Submit and/or display work

3. Support and Troubleshooting: Are the tools supported by your institution and your partner's institution?

- If the tool(s) are supported by both institutions, use the tools
- If the tool(s) are supported by one or neither institution, consult with your tech teams to determine if tool(s) meet institution requirements or return to step 2

Be prepared to provide technical troubleshooting and guidance to students and address issues that may arise during the COIL project. Offer resources or contacts for technical assistance to ensure a smooth and uninterrupted learning experience.

4. Provide Clear Instructions: Provide clear and concise instructions to students on how to access and use the tools. Offer step-by-step guides, video tutorials, or interactive demonstrations to ensure everyone understands how to navigate and leverage the tools effectively.

Universal Design for Learning: Principles for Tool Selection and Use

TLDR: Choose tools that are free, accessible, and offer multiple means of expression for all students.

When selecting and using tools for COIL projects, it is essential to consider the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL aims to provide inclusive and accessible educational experiences for all students. Here are some brief recommendations for applying UDL guidelines when choosing and using tools:

- **Accessible and Inclusive Technology:** Make sure that the tools you select are accessible to all participants, including those with disabilities or limited technological resources. Seek out platforms that adhere to accessibility standards and accommodate diverse needs.
- **Multiple Means of Representation:** Select tools that offer diverse modes of presenting information, such as text, images, audio, and video. This ensures that students with different learning styles and abilities can access and comprehend content effectively.
- **Multiple Means of Action and Expression:** Choose tools that allow students to express their learning in various ways, such as through written assignments, multimedia presentations, or collaborative projects. This promotes student engagement and provides opportunities for individual expression and creativity.
- **User-friendly Interfaces:** Select tools with intuitive and user-friendly interfaces that are easy to navigate. This helps students, including those with limited technological skills or language proficiency, to use the tools effectively without unnecessary barriers.

Data Privacy and Data Protection

TLDR: When selecting tools for use within COIL courses, regardless of cost, it is necessary to determine the types of student data the tool collects and how the tool secures student data.

Data privacy involves respecting individuals' rights to control the collection, use, and disclosure of their personal data. It entails obtaining consent from students and faculty members before collecting their personal information, clearly communicating the purpose of data collection, and ensuring transparency in data handling practices.

According to the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#), informed consent means the data subject, in this case, all the COIL participants know your identity, what data processing activities you intend to conduct, the purpose of the data processing, and that they can withdraw their consent at any time. Learn more about consent requirements [here](#).

Data protection, on the other hand, focuses on implementing measures to secure personal data from unauthorized access, loss, or misuse. This includes utilizing secure technology tools with encryption and access controls, adopting strong password and authentication practices, and establishing secure data storage and retention policies.

When implementing COIL projects around the world, faculty must adhere to relevant data privacy and protection regulations, which may differ depending on the country or region. For instance, in the United States, faculty should comply with the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), which protects the privacy of student education records. In the European Union, the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) establishes stringent rules for the processing and protection of personal data.

Privacy Laws and Codes

- **United States:** FERPA - Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act
 - Protects ALL student records.
 - Applies to all universities in the U.S. that receive federal funding.
 - Generally, it does not apply to private colleges.
 - Rights are generally transferred to individuals when they turn 18.
 - Student consent is required to release records.
 - Excludes directory information.
- **Europe:** GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation
 - European Union Law
 - Guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals from the EU (European Union).
 - Broader than FERPA – goes beyond education
 - Mimicked by many other countries, ex. Japan, Canada, New Zealand
- **Institutional:** Self-imposed by each institution.

To ensure data privacy and protection in a global COIL context, faculty must:

- familiarize themselves with applicable regulations and guidelines
- obtain the necessary consent
- use secure technology tools
- minimize data collection
- implement appropriate security measures
- respect the privacy rights of students and faculty
- promote responsible data handling practices

How to Protect Data Privacy in COIL

- **Identify Data:** Find out what data is being used:
 - **Personally Identifiable Information (PII):** Student names, identification numbers, grades, and any other data that could be used to identify individual students.
 - **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** Educational records (view examples of what does and does not constitute an educational record [here](#)).
 - **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA):** Health information or medical records.
- **Minimize Data Collection:** Collect only the necessary data required for the COIL project and avoid collecting PII unless explicitly required. Minimizing data collection reduces the risk of unauthorized access or data breaches and aligns with privacy best practices.
- **Limit Access to Student Data:** Only provide access to the collected student information to authorized individuals directly involved in the COIL project.
- **Establish Responsibilities:** Who at your institution oversees data privacy? Contact your technology department or legal office to get answers to data privacy and security questions.
- **Educate Students on Privacy:** Educate students about their privacy rights and the importance of safeguarding their own information. Promote responsible digital citizenship and encourage them to be mindful of privacy when interacting with other participants.
- **Evaluating Tools for Accessibility, Data Privacy, and Data Protection:** When evaluating tools, consider using the [Higher Education Community Vendor Assessment Toolkit \(HECVAT\)](#). The HECVAT is a questionnaire framework specifically designed for higher education institutions to measure tool risks.

Data Security Measures

- **Use Secure Platforms:** Select reliable and secure collaboration platforms that prioritize data protection. Ensure these platforms have appropriate security measures in place, such as encryption and secure data storage, to safeguard student information during COIL project activities.
- **Passwords and Authentication:** Encourage students and faculty to use strong, unique passwords for their accounts. Ensure that multi-factor authentication is enabled whenever possible, adding an extra layer of security to prevent unauthorized access.
- **Secure Data Storage and Retention:** Store your student's data (grades, submissions, communications, PII) securely and only retain it for as long as necessary. Regularly review and delete any data that is no longer required to minimize the risk of unauthorized access or misuse.

A Few Best Practices for Tech Tool Use

- **Explicit Consent:** Obtain explicit consent from students before starting a COIL project. Clearly communicate the purpose and extent of data sharing to ensure students understand how their information will be used. If necessary, have students sign a consent form to participate in the COIL.
- **Screen Names:** Allow students to use nicknames. This will allow students to maintain a personal connection with their international partner(s) without giving up their PII.
- **Secure Content:** Encourage students to only post things that they are comfortable with and only where it is safe to post.
- **Grades:** Never post grades in an open area. COIL uses many "common areas." Do not post grades in these open digital spaces.

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- **Publicizing COIL:** Follow the following procedures should you wish to share the results of your COIL outside of the classroom:
 - **Social Media & Conference Presentation:** Have students sign a Photographic-Film Consent and Release Form to share their likenesses or artifacts in public spaces. Do not share PII.
 - **Research:** Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before conducting research for publication in journals or other forums.

FIU Synchronous Meeting Policies for COIL

Faculty may embed COIL within face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses. These COIL experiences may include whole-class synchronous Zoom meetings.

- **Access:** Offer alternative credit or asynchronous participation opportunities for students who are unable to attend synchronous COIL meetings.
- **Fully online classes:** Keep synchronous class meetings no more than 20% of class time. For 3 credit courses, this is approximately 8-9 hrs. However, COIL courses may require a bit more scheduled, synchronous class meeting time for student-to-student engagement needed to accomplish student learning outcomes. ***Important note: Group work assignments in which students meet on their own time to complete assignments are not included in the 20%.**

Key Takeaways

- Before choosing technology tools, work with your partner to identify your COIL project's learning objectives and expected outcomes.
- When considering tools for your collaboration, use tools that you are already familiar with and reduce data collection.
- Familiarize yourself with your institution's security guidelines and regulations.
- Remember to determine the types of student data the tool collects and how the tool secures student data.

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