

A Smallpdf Guide To Digital Education

+



From the Class To the Cloud

How Schools Can Leverage PDF Software
To Make the Move To Digital

**If you have to
put someone on
a pedestal, put
teachers.**

**They are society's
heroes.**

Guy Kawasaki

- Marketing Specialist, Author, & Entrepreneur

”

Welcome to Smallpdf's very first digital guide to education.

This e-book was first conceptualized in mid-2020, a historic year marked by the advent and spread of COVID-19 or the "coronavirus." While it impacted negatively many businesses during this time, we at Smallpdf experienced a surge in usage of our PDF tools, which continues today.

While we understood this to be a product of a forced shift to remote activities, we were interested to find out even more about our users, who they are, how their lives have been impacted by the pandemic, what challenges they faced with documents, and what tools they used to overcome these.

We were both surprised and delighted to discover just how many schools and teachers had turned to our PDF tools to help them solve the challenges they were facing as they moved swiftly from the traditional classroom to the remote or hybrid classroom.

Having connected with a handful of schools and teachers across the US, we discovered they shared four common document-related challenges exacerbated by the shift to remote learning:

- Educational resource management
- Document accessibility for students
- Parent-teacher communication
- School administration and coordination

Even though these were posited to us as challenges in remote education, we were pleased to find that every school and teacher we spoke to had already found solutions to these problems. While these may not have been perfect or elegant solutions, they *worked*—and enabled the continuation of learning.

We hope you enjoy the journey with us and welcome any comments, feedback, or *your* story about how you navigated the digital classroom.

For more information, [contact us](#) or [sign up for a free trial](#) of Smallpdf to discover premium PDF tools to support your move to digital.

Contents

How Schools Can Leverage PDF Software To Make the Move To Digital

The Remote Classroom: Technology, Challenges, & Opportunities

- [The Remote Classroom: What, Why, & How?](#)
- [Technology & the Remote Classroom](#)
- [Remote Teaching: Challenges & Opportunities](#)
- [The Hybrid Classroom: Bridging the Gap Between in-Person & Remote Learning](#)

Digital Tools & the Remote Classroom

- [Managing Educational Resources With PDF Tools](#)
- [PDF Tools & Teacher-Student Engagement](#)

PDF Software & Parent-Teacher Communication

- [Effective Ways Teachers Can Communicate With Parents of Remote Learners](#)
- [Enabling Parent-Teacher Communication With Smallpdf's eSign Tool](#)

Paperless School Administration & Coordination

- [How Digital Tools Can Transform Internal Communications in a School Environment](#)
- [What Security Features To Look for in PDF Software](#)

The Resilient Classroom

01

The Remote Classroom: Technology, Challenges, & Opportunities

- [The Remote Classroom: What, Why, & How?](#)
- [Technology & the Remote Classroom](#)
- [Remote Teaching: Challenges & Opportunities](#)
- [The Hybrid Classroom: Bridging the Gap Between in-Person & Remote Learning](#)

The Remote Classroom: What, Why, & How?

Introducing the remote classroom, why it's central to teaching today, and how teachers and students are navigating this phenomenon in the education space.

Until early in 2020, the remote classroom was seen as an alternative to mainstream teaching, which espoused in-person contact between teacher and student in the shared space of a physical classroom. But since a forced shift to remote work and learning, the remote classroom has taken center stage in the world's drive to sustain a level of education for its youth.

What Is a Remote Classroom?

A remote classroom isn't a classroom at all. Rather, it defines the virtual connection between the teacher and their students. With the remote classroom setup, teachers can still facilitate their regular teaching times, deliver lessons, and stay connected with their students using technology, like video calls and conferencing, chat or discussion platforms, online assessments, and more.

Why Is the Remote Classroom So Important?

While remote teaching and learning were becoming increasingly popular before, they were viewed as alternative modes of teaching and learning to the traditional classroom which, for many people, represented the locus for higher quality education that couldn't be matched by any remote alternatives.

However, the early months of 2020 saw the rapid spread of the highly infectious respiratory disease, SARS-CoV-2, or “coronavirus,” as it is more commonly known. With little understanding of its behavior, plus rapidly rising case numbers and fatalities, governments across the world implemented varying types of lockdowns and schemes to limit person-to-person contact to curb new infections.

The traditional classroom, which previously facilitated daily contact with tens and hundreds of people, including teachers and students, would be impacted by this, too. Schools would have to make a swift move to a remote or hybrid environment to continue their work in educating students and maintaining a semblance of routine and order for children and young adults having to adapt to an alternative way of life—and learning.

Even though the education space has been disrupted, the remote classroom has become pivotal in maintaining a system of learning and helping students to move forward in their education. Likewise, the tools and technologies that make the remote classroom a possibility have shifted front and center and are evolving faster than ever.

In a global pandemic, the remote classroom makes education possible.

How Is the Remote Classroom Possible?

The old saying goes, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” But in this instance, we believe that “Where there’s a teacher, there’s a way.” We know teachers to be the most resourceful humans out there and, while they’ve had to face incredible challenges in the

global shift to all things digital, they've stepped up to the plate in some ingenious ways.

Thanks to teachers and technology, education has quickly taken on a new form to continue on into the digital realm. Some of the technologies leveraged by teachers that have made the remote classroom a possibility include hardware and software, both critically important in fostering a seamless and effective remote learning environment.

View or share this article online? Here's [The Remote Classroom: What, Why, & How?](#) on our blog.

Technology & the Remote Classroom

An overview of basic technology for the remote classroom.

The remote classroom is possible, thanks to advancements in technology, from hardware to video streaming technology, online chats, and document management tools. Here we cover the fundamental technology needed for a successful remote classroom.

Hardware for the Remote Classroom

When considering the logistics of the remote classroom, it can be tempting to focus first on software and digital technology. While these should be taken into consideration, the most critical foundation for the remote classroom is the hardware that will carry the software needed to facilitate a seamless and effective remote learning environment.

- Desktop or laptop computer
- Webcam
- Mobile device (smartphone or tablet)
- Good audio functionality (headphones or microphone and speakers)
- A good internet connection
- White board and stationery (for teachers)

Software for the Remote Classroom

While hardware makes it possible to host the software needed to run a remote classroom, this software evolves even faster than the hardware technology available to us, so new advancements in remote education are always on the horizon.

Even so, the software fundamental to the remote classroom is likely to remain the same in principle, as it supports the core of the teacher-student relationship: communication, connection, and document management. Some examples are:

- Video conferencing software
- Classroom management software
- Email functionality
- Texting or messaging software
- Tools to manage, organize, and share PDFs

Hardware and software combine to form a powerful tool in supporting the success of the remote classroom. It's important for both teachers and students alike to have the technology they need to engage with educational materials—and with one another. And while teachers may have a wealth of information about software and tools at their fingertips, they are key in weeding out what might not be a good fit, and in leading the class with the technology that works the best for them.

Need help in choosing PDF software? Here's a [comprehensive guide to sourcing the right PDF and e-signing tools for your school or classroom](#). View or share this article online? Here's [Technology & the Remote Classroom](#) on our blog.

Remote Teaching: Challenges & Opportunities

With a forced shift to the remote classroom, teachers have had to confront challenges and grab opportunities in the remote learning space.

The remote classroom enables the continuation of education in the remote environment and it is there in service of students pursuing an education. That said, it is the teacher in this environment who is primarily responsible for the success of the remote classroom, a fact that comes with new challenges and opportunities than otherwise associated with the traditional classroom.

What Is Remote Teaching?

Remote teaching defines the remote classroom from the perspective of the teacher. The recent shift to the remote classroom environment has required that teachers deliver lessons, conduct assessments, and communicate with their students through software and technology.

Digital document management won't just be a feature of the remote classroom, but will continue to be of value when the world returns to in-person instruction.

What Are Some Challenges That Come With Remote Teaching?

Teachers faced many challenges in the traditional classroom environment. While some of these challenges have fallen away in the remote classroom, others are exacerbated by this new environment, which has brought with it other new challenges specific to the remote learning experience.

Limitations on Human Connection

The traditional classroom has long been a place for real human connection between the teacher and their students. These bonds can form between teacher and students as a group as they engage with subject matter, or even one-to-one as a teacher walks a student through challenging learning material, or even personal issues taking place at home. In the traditional environment, proximity gave teachers and students an opportunity to connect, share, and bond.

Even though the remote environment is not devoid of similar opportunities, this environment does challenge the space for spontaneous one-on-one time, or addressing challenges or issues with students in a more private and personal way. However, this doesn't mean that teachers cannot connect with their students; it simply means that teachers must be more attentive and receptive to their students' needs, and make a point of scheduling one-on-one time with them.

Muted Body Language

Remote communication between teachers and their students can be effective, but some finer points of communication, like body language, facial expressions, and micro expressions can easily be filtered out over video. Even though these elements of body

language are not essential, they add a richness to the learning experience by conveying tone, emotion, warmth, and caring.

Presence & Authority

Many teachers have felt challenged when it comes to asserting their authority in the remote classroom, citing that their physical presence and proximity to students alone helped convey gravitas, assert authority, and capture the attention of their students.

In the remote classroom environment, which can act as a great equalizer in many instances, it's common for the role of the teacher to get lost in the fray of all the other attendees and lose a sense of control. It's therefore important for the remote teacher to set clear rules for the online classroom and take the necessary steps to keep their students' focus for the duration of the lesson.

Getting To Grips With Classroom Management Software

It takes years to become a teacher and, even though most teachers were using some kind of technology or software in the traditional classroom, the leap to a digital-only environment in a very short space of time, and under suboptimal conditions, has proven challenging to most.

Added to the urgency of the recent move to digital, teachers have had to not only educate themselves and their students on the classroom management software available to them, but ensure their students have all the other hardware and software they need for a smooth transition to the digital classroom.

Isolation From Peers

One of the teacher's most precious resources is other teachers. Teachers live their work in a way that no other profession does, and it's this lived experience that can provide a wealth of information and guidance to other teachers as they navigate the same challenges.

Working or teaching from home can be a serious impediment to teacher connectedness, as it's most often in the unplanned moments of a teacher's day that they can learn from a fellow teacher or take a nugget of wisdom with them along the way.

While this isolation can be overcome with video calls and conferencing, planned communication can take the spontaneity out of teacher-to-teacher communication and support.

Students Getting Left Behind

One of the most challenging things about being a teacher is knowing or finding out that a student is falling behind in class, doesn't have access to basic resources, or has little to no support at home. This can be deeply challenging on an emotional level, but with close daily proximity to the student, a teacher can be a lifeline for a student when they need it most.

The jury's out on whether the remote classroom really gives vulnerable students fairer access to education.

The remote classroom, however, eliminates the physical proximity and daily in-person routine that can be a comfort and a critical support system for vulnerable students. More than the challenges facing students in the traditional classroom environment, the remote classroom offers up other challenges to vulnerable students:

- Inadequate or no access to hardware, like a computer or laptop
- Inadequate or no access to an internet connection
- Exposure to a loud or uncomfortable environment not conducive to learning
- Inadequate access to good nutrition
- Sustained exposure to abusive family members
- Pressure to become economically active

Managing & Organizing Digital Teaching Resources

Teachers are often provided with large PDF documents containing all the educational resources they'll need for a year's worth of teaching. Printing the materials, photocopying them if needed, and distributing them among students was a regular and feasible process in the traditional classroom, but the remote classroom has rendered this process moot.

Having to deliver digital learning materials to students should be easy, but when large PDFs need to be split, merged, reoriented, and pages moved, deleted, or numbered, managing documents can become a proverbial nightmare for any teacher.

Unlike some of the other challenges associated with the remote classroom, this challenge is really a gift in disguise. Thanks to some useful and intuitive PDF and

document management software out there, teachers can leverage online tools to organize their teaching materials and reproduce them in an appropriate and palatable way for their students. It's even likely that this type of digital document management won't just be a feature of the remote classroom, but will continue to be of value when the world returns to in-person instruction.

What Opportunities Come With Remote Teaching?

Even though the move to a digital classroom has been daunting for most teachers, some surprising benefits and opportunities have come out of the remote teaching experience.

Improved Collaboration Among Students

Contrary to expectations, the remote classroom has offered new opportunities for deeper collaboration among students. While the success of collaboration in the traditional classroom hinged on student participation, group dynamics, and individual contribution, the remote classroom has helped to equalize the collaborative environment with a host of tools and platforms that engage students more readily and encourage their individual contributions.

Facilitation of Virtual Tutoring

After-school tutoring for students who need closer engagement with the teacher and material is far less logistically challenging in the virtual environment. In-person tutoring requires both the teacher and the student to be at a certain place at a certain time, which would involve more detailed time management, planning, and, in some cases, alternative transportation.

Virtual tutoring gives both the teacher and the student the freedom to connect without having to navigate the logistics of being in the same place at the same time.

Higher Participation From Quieter Students

Quieter or more introverted students have valuable insights to contribute to the classroom environment, but in the traditional classroom, they often feel compelled to stay quiet. This means that the most vocal or extroverted students are the ones that stand out and steer classroom discussions.

The work of [Susan Cain, writer, lecturer, and author of *Quiet*](#), highlights the value of introverts, how uniquely effective introvert leaders can be, how extroversion has historically been seen as the more desirable, dominant, and successful trait over introversion, and how we need to do more to create learning environments that give the introverts as much of a voice as the extroverts.

If you're interested, check out Susan Cain's popular [TED Talk on the power of introverts](#).

Far from perfect, the remote classroom has created an environment where quieter, more introverted students feel they can speak up and contribute to class discussions. Even though this may be attributed to a sense of distance created by the screen, introverts' voices are invaluable to any class discussion, and feeling heard could inspire any introverted or quieter student to contribute more.

Lower Levels of Disruption

Individuals make up a class, but every teacher knows that when a class becomes rowdy,

or disruptive, it's as if the class takes on a life of its own, making it a distinct challenge to restore peace and quiet.

Remote learning offers a learning environment that is far less prone to disruption than the traditional classroom, where students no longer occupy a single area in commune, but rather connect remotely from their own personal spaces. This split in interpersonal dynamic is a key contributor to a less disruptive—and disrupted—classroom. However, other factors, like body language, and smaller group dynamics, which are otherwise possible in the traditional environment, have no way to manifest organically in a remote setting.

A More Equitable Learning Environment?

In many ways, the remote classroom provides a more equitable learning environment for vulnerable students, with a host of benefits like cut travel expenses and minimal stationery requirements, but the jury's out on whether the remote classroom really gives vulnerable students fairer access to education. Most times, the teacher and the traditional school environment can be a lifeline to vulnerable students, who rely on the community offered by the school to survive and progress through the education system.

View or share this article online? Here's [Remote Teaching: Challenges & Opportunities](#) on our blog.

The Hybrid Classroom: Bridging the Gap Between in- Person & Remote Learning

A combination of in-person and remote learning, the hybrid classroom represents an intermediary learning solution during uncertain times.

The hybrid classroom is seen as the middle way between the traditional classroom and the remote classroom, and a sensible approach to limiting the number of students on site at one time, to restrict daily close contact. Even though this blended learning situation meets two different teaching environments in the middle, it comes with its own challenges that teachers need to meet in order to sustain an effective and seamless learning experience.

What Is a Hybrid Classroom?

A hybrid classroom is one that combines traditional in-person teaching with online learning. Originally, this type of learning environment was in place for higher education students to reap the unique benefits offered by each of these respective environments. Today, though, and through necessity, hybrid—or blended—learning is used to stagger the number of students flowing through a school campus daily, and a way to give otherwise remote students the opportunity to have in-person class time.

Of course, both environments come with their own benefits and challenges, but what other obstacles come up when these combine to form a hybrid classroom?

What Are the Challenges of a Hybrid Classroom?

A hybrid classroom can carry all the pros and cons of both the traditional and remote classrooms, but because it represents two types of learning environments in one, this can bring a new set of challenges to both teacher and student alike.

Social Interaction Can Suffer

Many students thrive on interpersonal connections, deep friendships, and intellectual challenges that come with a healthy in-person discussion or debate. A shift to a hybrid environment from a 100% in-person school environment can be an overwhelming change for many such students, and they can experience this restriction of access to their interpersonal networks as a loss.

While this can be addressed to some extent through opportunities for digital connection, for many students, digital connectivity is not quite the same as spending time together at recess, or bonding over group work in class.

High Chance of Overworked Teachers

We know that even in a traditional classroom, long before the forced migration to hybrid or remote learning, teachers were already overworked and likely overextending themselves emotionally and even financially to support their students.

The hybrid or remote classroom has not lightened this load and, because of increased distance and potentially tenuous connectivity, teachers are likely to be even more concerned about their students, going to great lengths to ensure they are coping.

Moreover, in a hybrid environment, teachers are likely to feel compelled to give their students as much and as detailed material as possible in response to—or even to compensate for—not being there in person.

Student Cognitive Load

In uncertain times or vastly different teaching scenarios, like the hybrid classroom, it can be common for teachers to pile up on information and additional learning materials to ensure students have everything they need to succeed.

Even though this is an act of care on behalf of the teacher, information overload can, in fact, be detrimental to students of hybrid or remote classes, as their cognitive load becomes overwhelmed and they cannot reasonably meet all the demands placed on their cognitive resources.

Plagiarism & Blurred Lines of Sharing

The internet and digital communication have gone a long way to transform the education space, but increasingly easy access to all the answers has the potential to open the door to copying and plagiarism, especially if a student is feeling overwhelmed, desperate, or strapped for time.

Combine this freely available information with a remote or hybrid learning environment, where students are encouraged to collaborate and depend on one another, and the lines between collaboration and plagiarism can become blurred.

Even in a traditional classroom, however, students need to learn how to engage

responsibly with material available on the internet, quote and credit sources correctly, and be able to distinguish between collaboration, appropriate sharing, and independent learning.

In the remote or hybrid classroom, teachers can take some time to go over how information should best be shared and handled, and mention during different classes, activities, or discussions, whether and how the internet should be used.

Procrastination & Self-Discipline

Student procrastination is rife in hybrid and remote learning environments, because students no longer have the structure and routine of a traditional classroom where their progress is constantly monitored.

In the traditional environment, students may have had to tap into a level of autonomy to get their homework done alone after school, but it's a leap to expect young students to have this level of self-control and discipline for hours on end, especially when they're likely overwhelmed by new information, pressure to participate, and looming homework or project deadlines.

Teachers can help mitigate this procrastination, support self-discipline, and bolster confidence by giving students a manageable amount of information at a time and tasks that are clear, to the point, and will not easily overwhelm them.

So Many Tools, So Little Time

In the hybrid learning environment, even though there is crossover into the traditional

classroom from time to time, it's smarter for students and teachers alike to have one way of managing educational resources, so there isn't constant changeover in document management depending on the learning environment.

The challenge here is that teachers and students have so many options in the realm of document management and PDF software, many of which don't alone solve the myriad document challenges faced in the hybrid classroom every day, that they may feel too overwhelmed to even start.

While the traditional classroom has been turned upside down, there are PDF tools out there that can solve a host of document management needs for both teachers and students to make a collective leap to a fully digital classroom.

Here are some points for teachers to consider about document management or PDF tools before implementing them:

- What PDF tools do I need as a teacher?
- What PDF tools do my students need?
- How many licenses will my entire class need?
- Does my school have a budget for PDF software?
- Do other teachers in my school also need PDF tools?
- What document and information security features do we need?

Armed with this information, teachers can research PDF tools and document management resources in line with all their requirements. If teachers team up together and communicate the need for these tools to the school administration, the school might use the number of licenses needed to leverage better pricing and higher-level resources for their staff and students.

Psst! We're just a little biased, but we think [our PDF tools](#) are a great place to start.

What Can Teachers Do To Bridge the Gap Between in-Person & Remote Learning?

The hybrid classroom can come with a host of benefits drawn from both the traditional and remote classroom, but with this difference in teaching environments, there can be many junctures in the learning experience teachers can help iron out for a smoother, more seamless transition from remote to traditional learning—and back again.

Communicate Consistently

When the learning environment is mixed as with hybrid or blended learning, something as simple as the method of communication can be a stabilizing factor for both students and teachers.

Digital communication can be a useful tool to support any learning environment, but when it's applied to the hybrid classroom, it can be powerful in connecting two very different learning environments and equalizing how information is shared.

It's important, though, for teachers to lead the way in this communication. The opportunity for confusion and disorganization is ripe when digital and paper communication are used interchangeably and inconsistently. The best bet in this case is for teachers to choose a set of tools to communicate across both environments that make up the hybrid classroom—and stick with those.

Get the Basics Right

Before the hybrid classroom can even begin to take place, it's important for teachers to ensure their students have both the hardware and software they'll need to be able to participate in remote learning. This should be done with the help of parents.

Some of the basic hardware students might need include:

- A desktop or laptop computer
- Webcam
- Good audio functionality (headphones or microphone and speakers)
- A good internet connection
- A comfortable, supportive chair
- A desk or empty surface to work on

Some of the basic software students might need include:

- Video conferencing software
- Classroom management software
- Email software

- Texting or messaging software
- Tools to manage, organize, and share PDFs

Advocate for Technical Support for Students

Navigating remote or hybrid learning can overwhelm students and parents alike, especially if parents have limited technical experience with computers and software, or if there are limited financial resources to equip their children with the tools needed for remote learning.

Teachers have an opportunity here to leverage the school's resources, not only to connect students with the technology they need, but to secure IT assistance for students and parents who may need help with the initial setup.

Embrace the Paperless Classroom

Even though there are so many document management and PDF tools to choose from, this variety means that teachers have their pick of tools and software, many of which are free. Having an organized, needs-based approach to choosing the right PDF tools for the classroom can help teachers weed out all the tools that won't work and hone in on a handful that respond exactly to their needs.

A paperless classroom comes with a host of benefits, including cost and time savings, enhanced collaboration and learning efficiency, plus the added bonus of consideration for the environment. Join us in chapter two as we unpack digital tools and the remote classroom and delve into the benefits, challenges, and handy tips for teachers on achieving a digital classroom to be proud of.

View or share this article online? Here's [The Hybrid Classroom: Bridging the Gap Between in-Person & Remote Learning](#) on our blog.

02

Digital Tools & the Remote Classroom

- [Managing Educational Resources With PDF Tools](#)
- [PDF Tools & Teacher-Student Engagement](#)

Managing Educational Resources With PDF Tools

Educational resources are critical to any sound curriculum, but how can teachers manage them digitally?

In the not-so-distant past, when the traditional classroom was the norm, printing, photocopying, and handouts were fairly standard activities in creating and distributing information among teachers and students. But how are teachers managing their teaching resources as they shift to a digital environment?

Ask a Teacher

At Smallpdf, we're always interested in learning more about how people manage their documents, because this helps us to make better PDF tools for people from all walks of life.

Since teachers have had to stay committed to their students and navigate a whole new world of digital documents during this season of remote or hybrid learning, we spent some time with a handful of secondary school teachers in the US to find out how they were struggling with documents and what they wished they had in document management software.

PDF Resource Packs

In many secondary school settings, teachers are most often provided with approved

learning materials for the year, and these are usually packaged in a large, single PDF document. While access to resources like this is a boon for most, the format can seem overwhelming for many teachers who will need to organize these materials without the help of any special PDF tools at their disposal.

Ownership & Control of Resources

One school representative we spoke to reminded us how, without the right tools, teachers can potentially lose complete ownership of the way they organize their teaching materials.

In this particular case, the teachers' resources first had to be transferred to the district level to be organized, something that included the simple task of splitting the PDF resource packs into sections, and further into chapters, or pages. This made the experience of organizing these PDF resource packs not only cumbersome, but inefficient, too.

Another scenario we learned about was that of a school that hosts therapy sessions for students. These therapy sessions are also reliant on multi-page PDF resource packs they need to split in order to use appropriately. This became a time-consuming and laborious process that hindered preparation for these therapy sessions.

When we think of teachers as the live conduit between students and learning materials, we need no convincing how important it is for them to have agency over the way they manage their teaching materials. A teacher's direct access to tools to split, merge, and compress PDF documents, and convert all types of files, comes with a host of benefits for

both the teacher and the school. These include, but are not limited to:

- Time savings
- Fewer dependencies on school resources
- Fewer dependencies on county or state governing bodies
- Teacher enjoys closer contact with learning material
- Teacher has the tools and flexibility to organize, manage, and present materials in a way that suits them and their class best
- Quicker access for students to appropriate, well-prepared learning materials
- Fewer resources needed to share and store smaller documents

Splitting PDF Resource Packs

For a teacher, the simple task of splitting a PDF resource pack into semesters, months, or even chapters, can be a daunting task, especially without the right tools. In the traditional classroom, this might have been done by simply printing and then photocopying the desired material, but the remote and hybrid classrooms of today have come with one distinctive demand: digital documents.

In order to meet this demand, teachers have had to embrace digital document management in a way that covers every aspect of their job—and it all starts with resource management. The very first step to getting started with a hefty PDF resource pack is to split it into parts, not only for easier access to more specific materials, but for easier storage and more efficient sharing.

Granular Resource Preparation

One teacher we spoke to needed to give her remote students one worksheet per week for four weeks, but the worksheets she received from her school were all bundled together and she ended up sending her students this entire bundle all at once. Another teacher needed to unlock a form students needed to fill in, but had to remake the entire form from scratch, because he just didn't have the right tools for this task.

This highlighted for us that teachers need far more detail-oriented tools than just splitting PDF documents. In fact, when it comes to the details of a lesson plan, or a day's learning materials, teachers need several PDF tools in their toolkit to prepare digital documents that are both useful and accessible to students.

Sharing & Storing PDF Resources

The days of scanning, photocopying, printing reams of teaching materials, and then storing them in a folder or paper basket are soon to be over. With the upsurge of remote learning, teachers have had to contend with storage and sharing their digital documents far more efficiently.

When teachers have access to PDF tools that can easily split and merge documents, this comes with even more benefits than document flexibility. With smaller documents to work with, teachers can save and store materials more quickly and efficiently, and use less data and energy to share materials with their students, who will also save on data and storage space on their end.

A Personalized Learning Experience

From learning materials to the student experience, teachers know best. A personal—and personalized—learning experience can make all the difference for a student and, with the right PDF tools, this is something a teacher can easily provide.

Representation Matters

One teacher we spoke to was deeply frustrated about the learning materials she was supplied with, because the characters in the PDFs all had the same color skin tone, which did little to reflect the diversity of her classroom.

Because all the learning materials she had were in PDF format, she found it very difficult to switch up the characters' skin tones in order to give her students access to learning materials that showed characters that looked more like them.

When teachers have access to PDF tools that help them edit documents so that they're more reflective of their students skin color, hair type, body shape, or ethnicity, they have the agency to foster a far more enriching, relatable learning experience for their students, and contribute to a sense of dignity that comes with seeing oneself reflected in everyday media—including educational materials.

Bringing Language To Life

Editing the text in a PDF document is almost never as simple as it sounds, but access to editing PDFs, and being able to add or remove text can be a game changer for teachers. One teacher we interviewed knew that her teaching materials could be doubly useful to her students, if only she could swap out the English labels with Spanish labels. This

would not only give her native-English-speaking students more integrated access to Spanish language resources, but she realized this had the potential to translate this learning material into any other language.

This type of document flexibility not only offers additional resource potential to students learning a new language, but has endless possibilities for resource translations and therefore greater accessibility to educational resources.

What Teachers Want From PDF Software

When teachers talked to us about managing their resources and finding the right PDF tools, their students and their access to digital resources took priority. While teachers may use PDF software to organize their learning materials for themselves, this and any further document preparation they do is primarily in aid of the student. Based on our interviews with these teachers, we created a quick list of the top tools teachers find useful to make digital documents more accessible to their students:

- Convert PDFs to Word documents
- Convert Word documents to PDFs
- Convert PDFs to Excel documents
- Convert Excel documents to PDFs
- Split PDFs and merge PDFs
- Extract images from PDFs
- Edit PDFs

View or share this article online? Here's [Managing Educational Resources With PDF Tools](#) on our blog.

PDF Tools & Teacher-Student Engagement

An overview of key document-centered remote class activities and how PDF tools can enable these.

In the remote or hybrid classroom environment, documents are central to teacher-student communication and engagement. With insights from a handful of secondary school teachers from across the US, we highlight five key PDF-related activities that underpin the success of the remote class and how PDF tools can make these processes a success.

Document Challenges in the Remote Classroom

Whether in the remote, hybrid, or traditional classroom, documents are central to information transfer from teacher to student and vice versa. However, in the remote or hybrid educational setting, digital documents can be more of a hindrance than a help in the pursuit of a seamless learning experience, mostly because of issues of (in)-accessibility.

Here we look at some of the top document challenges faced in the remote classroom by teachers and students alike.

PDF Readers

Not being able to access or read a PDF document makes educational information

transfer a non-starter. While most devices with access to suites like MS Office or Google Docs should be able to view PDFs, not all of these are free and can make document accessibility a frustrating challenge for students before they even get started.

Teachers can help to avoid this challenge by sourcing a high quality online PDF reader for their students who may not have access to hefty PDF software packages, so at least the basics of PDF management are covered.

While you're here, why not check out the [easy-to-use PDF tools from Smallpdf?](#)

Uneditable PDFs

Document accessibility covers several PDF challenges faced by teachers and students, but at the top of the list of these accessibility issues is the uneditable or locked PDF. Most often the onus is on the teacher, either to make the PDF editable, or to remake the document in an editable format in MS Word or Google Docs. Add graphs or images to the mix and recreating an editable document from a locked PDF can become an exercise in frustration.

Though students should not be burdened with the challenge of rendering the PDFs they get from teachers editable, this is a reality that many face. The good news is that this is easily resolved with the right PDF tools for creating accessible, editable PDF documents.

Unsecured PDF Documents

Privacy and security are common themes in document requirements across different industries, but they're also important for securing documents and sharing them only

with the intended recipient. One of the challenges of the remote classroom is ensuring a document is locked or password protected, so it's only accessible to the password holder. This is particularly useful for custom assignments or test papers that need to be written remotely.

Remote Class Activities With the Right PDF Tools

Even though digital documents have made the move to remote learning a possibility, PDF documents can come with a handful of challenges that can be solved with PDF software and tools that are readily available on the internet. Here we touch on five unique scenarios, where PDF tools can be leveraged to make document management and accessibility in the remote classroom that much better.

Creating Accessible Homework Assignments

For many students, it's important to get homework and assignments that are accessible in that they are readable and questions or images can be copied and pasted into a different document. This way, the student can work on a project without having to toggle between documents.

One teacher we interviewed adopted Smallpdf's suite of tools, not only to organize and prepare his own teaching materials, but to unlock and make documents accessible to his students to copy and paste as needed. He secured the same software for his class, which transformed the way his students could access and manage PDF documents, too.

Create Editable PDF Forms

A common feature in all school classes is filling in forms, be it for class administration,

pop quizzes, or even exams and assignments. While PDF documents are generally more secure and look more professional, they can be tricky to fill in without the right PDF software.

Given the right software, though, PDF forms can still be professional and secure, but easily accessible where they need to be. With the remote classroom, students shouldn't be able to edit certain text, like the exam questions, for example, but be able to fill in the answer section easily.

Sharing Homework Assignments & Projects

Sometimes teachers need to share documents in a more personalized, trackable, and collaborative way than via email. With PDF and document sharing solutions, teachers can share homework assignments and projects with their students directly via multiple platforms and keep tabs on document updates and access.

This gives teachers the added advantage of electronic confirmation that students have received, accessed, and worked on documents, and even help them along if they see a student is struggling or falling behind on a piece of homework.

Secure Test Papers

Even though tests and exams have become a point of contention in the education space, they still exist in some shape or form, even in the remote classroom. Two of the features of the test paper are security related: that students should not have access to the questions before the test time and that students should not (be able to) share test answers with one another during the test.

While the remote learning experience can blur the line between sharing and plagiarism, there are mechanisms teachers can use to secure test papers against this type of activity. These include securing PDFs, so that only the intended recipient can access the test paper with a specially generated password, plus a digital document trail that gives teachers the added security of knowing how and by whom a document was handled.

Reviewing & Marking Homework & Projects

One of the most useful document-centered exercises a teacher can carry out for a student is to give reviews and feedback on their work. This gives the student the opportunity to understand what they did well and what they could work on improving for next time.

Every teacher knows that grading a test or paper offers an opportunity to build a student's confidence and encourage them in their studies. In the traditional classroom, this was usually done by putting pen to paper, marking up answers, adding personal notes, and even smiley faces or ink stamps.

Individual feedback and personalized encouragement don't have to be lost in the digital space.

One school we connected with reported that a handful of its teachers were using PDF tools to mark and review their students' homework and projects—without compromising on this connection. They used these PDF tools for a host of actions,

including adding text and comments, highlighting certain text, adding drawings, shapes, and even their signature once they're done reviewing the document.

Even though the remote or hybrid classroom has offered a host of challenges, we've discovered that document management does not have to be one of them. With the right PDF tools and software, document and PDF management can be an asset to any successful classroom and a benefit of remote learning sure to live on in the education sector as and when we move back to traditional in-person classes.

View or share this article online? Here's [PDF Tools & Teacher-Student Engagement](#) on our blog.

03

PDF Software & Parent-Teacher Communication

- [Effective Ways Teachers Can Communicate With Parents of Remote Learners](#)
- [Enabling Parent-Teacher Communication With Smallpdf's eSign Tool](#)

Effective Ways Teachers Can Communicate With Parents of Remote Learners

Empowering teachers to use innovative tech to connect with parents remotely.

If 2020 has shown us anything, it's just how much people need real, human connection. For teachers, communicating effectively with students and their parents in a remote environment requires a willingness to embrace new communication technologies that help to bridge the gap between physical proximity and real connection.

What Is Remote Learning & Why Is It So Important?

Remote learning is where teachers and students are connected in an educational setting outside of an in-person classroom. This can include scenarios of video classes, computer screen shares, and even call-in classes. While remote learning has been a concept for some time, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, students and teachers around the world have had to make a quick transition from in-person learning to remote learning.

Remote learning has its downsides, but it has become a critical tool to sustaining an educational environment for students, all while keeping them safe from new dangers posed by being in close proximity during a pandemic.

Useful Tools Teachers Can Use for Effective Remote Communication

How can a teacher best stay in touch with their students' parents in a remote environment? It may not always be feasible to have frequent 1:1 video calls with each parent, but there are helpful tools out there that teachers can leverage to communicate effectively with parents of remote learners.

WhatsApp Groups

WhatsApp is a useful mobile application messaging platform owned by Facebook that works globally. The platform can accommodate group messaging for up to 256 contacts and can be useful for teachers to relay important information to parents of remote learners in one simple application. For ease of use, once a user has the app downloaded to their mobile device, they can easily open the platform on desktop and manage their messaging from there.

WhatsApp is end-to-end encrypted, ensuring the security and privacy of the messaging content and contact information.

Teachers are encouraged to check in with their school's organizational policies on communication and information security before they pursue any new route of communication with students or parents.

Email

Email remains one of the best ways for teachers to share information with students and parents quickly and easily. Its flexibility in accommodating information, from short text

messages to more detailed messages with multiple attachments, makes it extra useful in disseminating more detailed information, like term plans or project requirements, in a comprehensive and organized way.

If teachers need to email their students or their students' parents, they can easily “Bcc” or “blind closed copy” them into emails, reaching multiple recipients with minimal effort. This means that recipients will see who the email came from, but they won't be able to see who else was copied into the mail, nor access their contact information.

Teachers can also switch on “read receipts” to have a record of which recipients have opened their emails.

Classroom Management Software

Classroom management software like LanSchool or ClassDojo can help connect teachers, students, and parents by offering a suite of live sharing and presenting options. Many of these programs additionally allow for teachers to monitor their remote learners' electronic usage, ensuring that they remain on task during class hours. This is also a measurable way to reassure parents that their children are engaged and keeping up with their remote learning activities.

Programs like ClassDojo also carry features like “Class Story,” which allows teachers the freedom to upload announcements, photos, and videos. This enhances the remote learning experience by keeping both students and their parents engaged—and in touch—with their school community.

Document Management Software

Class management is an important part of remote learning, but another critical aspect of the remote classroom is managing documents safely and effectively. Because remote learning is underpinned by digital communication, it's necessary for teachers to have a convenient way to store their documents and share them with other teachers, students, and parents.

Smallpdf has a [range of document management tools](#) perfect for schools that gives teachers the freedom to create PDFs, convert different file types, compress files, and edit PDFs. The software integrates seamlessly with Google Drive and Dropbox, so teachers can keep all their documents in one safe—and organized—place. It also comes with the added security of regulatory compliance for document management, and SSL encryption for secure information transfer.

Tools To Request E-Signatures From Parents

Teachers often need to request signatures from parents for things like report cards, homework confirmation, or permission slips. Since the recent surge in remote learning, requesting signatures from parents has had to evolve into the digital space.

With Smallpdf's newly updated [eSign tool](#), teachers can use this platform to upload documents and request signatures from up to 100 signees. Teachers can also assume additional control over the signing process by showing parents where on the document they need to sign. Premium access to this software adds an extra layer of security with a digital seal for all signatures.

How Can Teachers Get Buy-in From Parents?

While technology and software to support communication with parents of remote learners is fast evolving, none of it matters without commitment and buy-in from parents to make it work. It may take some effort on the teacher's part, but the most effective way to ensure parental buy-in on these communication tools is to demonstrate how they work, trial them, and gather feedback from the parents on what works best for them.

Virtual parent-teacher check-ins (via email, group chats, or 1:1s) should be a consistent feature of remote learning and will go a long way in showing (rather than telling) parents the benefits of these tools.

View or share this article online? Here's [Effective Ways Teachers Can Communicate With Parents of Remote Learners](#) on our blog.

Enabling Parent-Teacher Communication With Smallpdf's eSign Tool

A look at how e-signing can enable parent-teacher communication in the remote classroom.

Getting parents' signatures the manual way was never easy. But how are schools getting parents to sign important documents with the added challenge of the remote classroom?

Do Parents Still Need To Sign Documents?

Absolutely. In the traditional school environment, permission slips and consent forms may have related to students going on field trips or watching a school performance, but the current remote setup has changed not only what documents now need signing, but how they are signed.

What Types of Documents Do Parents Still Need To Sign in the Remote Environment?

Paper slips might be a thing of the past, but teachers and schools still need signatures and approvals from parents to function and enable a productive and informed learning environment for their students. Here are just a few of the types of documents parents might need to complete and sign in the remote learning environment:

- Enrollment or registration forms
- Start-of-year forms to share information with the school or teacher about the student
- Consent forms and permission slips
- Signing off on homework
- Report cards or progress reports from the teacher
- News updates or circulars from the school

What's the Difference Between Digital & Electronic Signatures?

Even though both digital and electronic signatures are valid, digital signatures come with an extra layer of security, which ensures that the signed electronic document is, in fact, authentic. On the other hand, an electronic, or e-signature, is merely placed on the document by the signee without any special authentication attached and amounts to the same validity as placing a wet signature on a paper document.

While digital signatures can be authenticated, both digital and electronic signatures are legally binding in most parts of the world. Schools and teachers are encouraged to check in with local document laws and organizational requirements relating to document management and e-signing compliance before they implement any e-signing tools.

Important Document Signing Security Features

While signing paper documents can get the job done when it comes to school documentation, the physical nature of this document system means that simple challenges, like accidental loss or destruction at the jaws of a bored puppy, are very real impediments.

However, with the remote classroom, digital documents and electronic signatures have taken the place of the paper document. Even if this is a much easier way of managing documents and signing, digital documents and electronic signatures come with a new set of requirements to meet a certain level of privacy and security.

Here's an overview of some important security features e-signing tools should have.

SSL Encryption & HTTPS

SSL encryption is an important security feature to look out for when using a website, but especially online tools schools and teachers might be uploading sensitive documentation to.

When anyone accesses a website, it's important to note whether the connection is secure or not. Users can verify this status by checking the url prefix, which will either be "http" or "https." The latter, with the "s" attached, denotes a secure connection and should be complemented by a small padlock symbol, or information icon, attached to the browser's search bar.

A web page with a url prefix of "https" is using secure data transfer protocols, or SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) Encryption. These protocols encrypt data sent to this website, so that nobody else is able to see or access it.

Digital Seal

A digital seal is a piece of data or information that is either attached to a document or another piece of data, like a signature, for example. It's important for people using

e-signing tools, especially in an environment like a school, to make sure that the signatures produced using a specific e-signing tool carry a timestamp, or digital seal for security purposes. This offers an added layer of security if ever a signature or document needs to be authenticated or verified.

Document Privacy & Security Regulations & Standards

Wherever they are in the world, it's important that any website or software schools or classrooms use to manage and e-sign documents should comply with some level of international or localized security standards. Important standards to look out for are:

- ISO 27001
- GDPR compliance
- CCPA compliance

ISO 27001, which was introduced in 2013, is the globally accepted ISO standard for the application of an information safety management system. When a software provider is accredited for this standard, it means that they have an excellent security system in place, ensure it is always operational, undergo regular internal and external audits, and continually take measures to improve on the security of this system.

Click [here](#) for more about which security features to look for in PDF software.

How One School Used eSign for Signing Homework & Report Cards

At Smallpdf, we're always interested in how our tools are used and what problems can

be solved using our software. As we researched document management challenges faced by schools in the US, we encountered one school that implemented our eSign tool to get parents of remote students to sign off on completed homework and to acknowledge receipt of report cards.

Signing & Preparing Documents for Signing

When requesting a signature in the education environment, it's usually the school or teacher that will request a signature from a parent or guardian.

Homework: In this case, the teachers were proactive about producing a single quick form that would list the homework required for that day, upload it to Smallpdf's eSign tool to place their own signature, then simply request signatures from each of the parents. This tool allowed teachers to track activity on the document, see who had signed, who was still left to sign, and receive the completed document straight to their inbox for safekeeping.

Report cards: In the case of preparing report cards, which should be kept private between teacher, student, and parent, the teacher simply uploaded the digital report card, placed their signature, then requested parent signatures, showing them where to sign on the report card, with a link to the document shared directly to the parent's email from the tool. Teachers commented that they enjoyed the functionality of being able to send each parent a special note to go along with the link to open the document for signing, and that all parties would receive a link to the final signed document straight to their inbox.

Creating E-Signatures & Initials

With the eSign tool from Smallpdf, teachers enjoyed the freedom to create their own signature, either by drawing it using their trackpad or mouse, taking a picture with their device of their signature drawn on paper, or uploading an existing digital signature as an image. They could even create their initials in this way, which were then stored alongside the signature in the eSign tool for quick and easy signing and initialing.

Once the signature or initials have been prepared, teachers have the flexibility to place these elements anywhere on the document, with the additional option to resize or change the color of the signature or initial as required.

Adding Text To a Document for Signing

A huge advantage of a quality e-signing tool is the ability to add elements to the document other than signatures. Mostly, this boils down to being able to add text to an otherwise uneditable PDF, which is particularly useful when one needs to add places, dates, or extra details that need to be filled in prior to signing. In the case of Smallpdf's eSign tool, the text feature also comes with resizing options, plus a color palette to choose from.

Requesting Signatures From Parents

It can be really tough trying to explain to someone over an email where they should place their signature on a document, which is why it's so much easier to show them instead. When teachers requested a signature using the eSign tool, they found the functionality of showing signees exactly where to sign and/or initial the document very useful.

Using [Smallpdf's eSign tool](#), teachers are able to request up to 100 signatures at a time, removing any question about where to sign, saving time, hassle, frustration, and limiting potential errors.

Sharing & Saving the Final Signed PDF

Once the document has been signed by all parties, each person who signed gets a copy of the final document sent directly to their email. The document owner can also share the document afterwards (either with the document signees as an added safety measure, or with administrative staff to keep the document on record), via email, link, or WhatsApp. The document can also be downloaded to a computer or electronic device, or to Dropbox and Google Drive.

Is This the Future of Parent-Teacher Communication?

Probably. Though it may have taken a global pandemic to force a shift to digital communication between teachers, schools, and parents, it is likely that even in a post-COVID world, the way we communicate and manage documents will forever be changed. Even though the traditional classroom will probably be fully reinstated in the future, digital document management and e-signing tools, especially as a means for teachers and schools to communicate with parents, are here to stay.

View or share this article online? Here's [Enabling Parent-Teacher Communication With Smallpdf's eSign Tool](#) on our blog.

04

Paperless School Administration & Coordination

- [How Digital Tools Can Transform Internal Communications in a School Environment](#)
- [What Security Features To Look for in PDF Software](#)

How Digital Tools Can Transform Internal Administration in a School Environment

What PDF tools have schools adopted during the pandemic to manage internal administration and communications?

Much of the internal admin taking place in schools only a few months ago was done using pen and paper. We look at three scenarios where schools took matters into their own hands and leveraged PDF tools to keep internal admin and communications afloat.

Enrolling 350 Students in a Pandemic

Facing a new school year, one of the secondary school principals we spoke to told us about the concerns school administrators had about being able to register over 350 students for the new school year—entirely remotely. Fortunately, the school found the right e-signing PDF tool that would seamlessly carry the entire registration process and become a central PDF tool in the school’s admin center going forward. But how did they do it?

Document Preparation

Just as school administrators would have prepared paper documents for enrollment in the past, they needed to prepare digital registration forms to upload and request

e-signatures. Since they used [Smallpdf's eSign](#) tool for this exercise, they could either upload a Word document and convert it to a PDF, or simply upload a scan of the existing paper document if a digital file wasn't available, and create editable fields for parents to fill in text before e-signing.

Having ensured the fields requesting information, like name, surname, physical address, and emergency contact numbers, were editable, administrators then transferred or uploaded the document to the eSign tool, ready to request information and the required signatures.

Request Signatures & Show Parents Where To Sign

Once the document was uploaded, the teacher or school administrator input the parents' or guardians' email address into the "Signer" pane on the right side of the page. From here, they used the "Drag & Drop" feature to place a note on the document, showing each parent where to sign.

Note: School enrollment forms should carry a level of privacy, which, in this case, meant that the document was not to be sent out via a bulk action for all parents to sign. Schools and teachers should consider the privacy requirements of all documents before openly sharing them with more than one recipient.

Even though an individual sign request needed to be sent out to each family or parent, the eSign tool made this process both seamless and completely trackable.

Share the Document for Signing

With the document prepared and signees added and shown where to sign, the document was ready to be shared. All the administrators had to do next was press a single button to release the document for signing. Recipients then received a link, plus instructions, to complete and sign the document, which they did by filling in the form, and finally, creating and placing their signatures. Once all signing was complete, the person issuing the sign request, plus all signees involved, received a link to a copy of the completed document—straight to their email inboxes.

Save Completed Document

As administrators received notifications that the documents issued for signing had been signed by all parties, they followed the link to the completed document sent to their email, where they could open it and download it to their device.

This particular school used Dropbox for all their document storage, which posed no problems when working with the eSign tool, since Smallpdf comes with a Dropbox integration. The software also comes with a Google Drive integration for schools who use this platform for document storage.

PDF Management for Internal Admin & Board Meetings

One school we spoke to found that they had to adapt quickly to an alternative way of managing and sharing internal documents as remote learning took hold. This particular school only used Smallpdf's tools occasionally to convert JPGs to PDFs or merge several PDFs into one. But when teachers and administrative staff began working remotely, the school's familiarity with these PDF tools became a boon for internal document management.

Preparing Documents for Board Meetings

When we think of a school environment and documents, the most common type of document to spring to mind is usually to do with teaching or learning, or passed between teacher and student. What many people forget, though, is that behind every successful classroom is a vast and intricate administrative network that keeps schools operational, up to date with federal and state requirements and guidelines, and running according to an annual budget.

With so much going on behind the scenes, it's no wonder that the administrative staff at this school were delighted when they found out that the PDF tools they already had could do so much more than just organize and edit PDF documents.

Having to facilitate and attend no fewer than three school-related board meetings every second month, the principal at this school was relieved when she found out that she could create detailed and highly integrated information packs from existing material using just a handful of simple PDF tools. For her, this made creating and sharing content with board members a cinch, and kept any extraneous admin related to these board meetings to a minimum.

E-Signing for Students & Coordinators

One school we connected with about document management in the remote environment was happy to report that while e-signing was their greatest challenge in moving to an entirely digital environment, they could make this move with a single PDF tool.

Before the pandemic, the school managed its documents in paper format, requesting ink signatures, both internal and student-facing, on paper documents. But with the

move to a more digital environment, the school's administrative staff quickly had to find a solution to get students to sign PDF forms and to support coordinators in signing documents electronically, a challenge they met head on with the [eSign tool](#) from Smallpdf.

Resources for Resourceful Schools

One thing that struck us at Smallpdf as we connected with several schools across the US was that even though every school faced extreme levels of uncertainty and essentially had to change their entire operational model as they navigated the remote classroom, not one of these schools, teachers, principals, or administrators succumbed to despair or inaction.

In every case, schools and their representatives sprang into action as soon as they realized that shifting to digital as quickly as possible gave them the best chance of survival and lowered their chances of experiencing unnecessary setbacks.

In every environment that works with documents, PDF tools represent the springboard for taking a paper-oriented approach to digital in the shortest amount of time. Schools, which are structurally far more complex than most organizations, with administrative, parent-student, parent-teacher, and organizational responsibilities, have had to respond to the central issue of document management in smarter ways. Leveraging the right PDF tools is what's gotten them there—and will take them even further into the future of remote education.

View or share this article online? Here's [How Digital Tools Can Transform Internal Communications in a School Environment](#) on our blog.

What Security Features To Look for in PDF Software

The remote classroom places many demands on PDF software, but most overlooked are security features.

Document and information security are important factors when choosing PDF software for schools, teachers, and students in the remote classroom. Ensuring information and documents are safe in the hands of the software provider and that nobody without the right authority will have access to delete or tamper with documents are vital aspects of maintaining a secure remote classroom.

Important Safety & Security Features of PDF Software

Not all PDF software comes standard with all the security features necessary for a secure document management system within a school environment. It's important to determine which are important for your classroom or school and use this information to gauge which software or tools meet your minimum document security requirements.

Here, we outline some of the standard document security features and accreditations PDF tools should carry.

GDPR Compliance

GDPR (or General Data Protection Regulation) is a European Union (EU) law covering privacy and data protection in the EU and the EEA.

CCPA Compliance

CCPA (or The California Consumer Privacy Act) acts a lot like GDPR, but it's there to protect both the consumer and their privacy rights. CCPA is intended for people living in California, USA.

ISO 27001 Accreditation

ISO 27001 is named after its joint-issuing organization, the International Organization for Standardization. The international standard was released in 2013 and outlines best practices for organizations to manage information security via people, processes, and technology.

SSL Encryption

SSL encryption, or Secure Sockets Layer encryption, is a special protocol for internet servers and browsers to encrypt, decrypt, and authenticate transmitted information.

Digital Signing

Digital signatures are very useful for signing documents, as they come with a level of security (through authentication) that e-signatures do not.

Note: Both e-signatures and digital signatures are legally binding. Check your country's laws for localized regulations related to digital and e-signatures.

Digital Seal

A digital seal, or Advanced Electronic Signature (AES) includes a Long Term Validation (LTV) timestamp. This helps users to authenticate each signature's timestamp and invalidate documents that have been tampered with.

Checking Information & Document Security Requirements

As teachers and administrative staff prepare to buy document management or PDF software licenses to distribute across schools and classrooms, it's important to invest in software that responds well to the school, district, state, or even federal policies, protocols, and laws around information and document security.

Teachers and administrative staff are encouraged to check in with their school or district about any requirements that should be met when investing in PDF tools for their schools and classrooms.

View or share this article online? Here's [What Security Features To Look for in PDF Software](#) on our blog.

05

The Resilient Classroom

The Resilient Classroom

From the traditional to the remote classroom, we've learned that resilience is key. But what makes a resilient classroom?

Connecting with schools and teachers across the US as they navigated their way through a pandemic via remote and hybrid learning, we've gotten to understand not only what their document challenges were, but just how powerful documents can be in bridging the gap between people at a distance.

Is Remote Learning Forever?

In the thick of remote education, it can often feel like remote learning could go on forever, but the chances are that it won't. While the coronavirus has undoubtedly changed the face of education, if we look at the situation with some optimism, we find a few positive outcomes:

- Schools and teachers have been tested beyond their limits—and have prevailed.
- We now know how to adapt from traditional to remote learning.
- We now have the tools to support remote learning.
- Digital tool development for education has accelerated.
- We now have a fundamental appreciation for—and ability to adapt to—uncertainty.

Adapt, Survive, Thrive

When we think of resilience, we think of an inherent ability to bounce back from an

adverse situation; to continue as before, despite the setback. Much the same, we've seen teachers and schools admirably leading the charge in the forced shift to the digital environment, so that education might continue, albeit in a different format.

The schools and teachers we connected with across the country have faced many challenges during the pandemic, but four relating to documents stood out for us as distinctly common among them:

- Educational resource management
- Document accessibility for students
- Parent-teacher communication
- School administration and coordination

Even though many teachers and schools have had to tackle these document challenges for the first time, they have embraced these and, true to the resourceful nature of teachers, they've tapped into networks, searched online, asked around, and found the tools they need to manage their documents.

A year ago, paper and ink might have been a perfectly good solution to document management in schools and classrooms, but teachers have had to take on an entirely new mindset to embrace the paperless classroom.

Teachers have found solutions to merging and splitting PDFs, saving and sharing PDF resources, making PDFs editable, getting parents to sign documents electronically, and managing entire school networks—digitally.

Digital Document Management & the Future of Education

Education may be remote for some time still, it could go back to traditional in-person learning, or comprise an undefined combination of the two. What we have found to be true is that while the shift to remote learning has forced the move to digital document management in schools and classrooms, when the time comes to go back to the traditional school environment, this will not have been in vain.

Digital documents and the PDF tools critical to managing these will continue to benefit all schools and classrooms, whether they're offered online, in person, or in a hybrid format. Digital documents enable a resilient, adaptable, mobile classroom that can switch formats at a moment's notice and with little disruption.

It's this type of adaptability that has created an environment where education, regardless of format, will not only continue—but thrive. *This* is the resilient classroom.

We hope you've enjoyed this e-book. If you have any questions, comments, or have your own story to tell about how you made the move to a digital school or classroom, please feel free to get in touch.

For more information, [contact us](#) or [sign up for a free trial](#) of Smallpdf to discover premium PDF tools to support your move to digital.

About Smallpdf

Made in Switzerland, the land of watches, banks and clean design, Smallpdf is an award-winning company that offers a suite of clever document management tools for everyone—for work, for home, for life. Founded in 2013, Smallpdf provides a simple, secure, and reliable answer to heavy, awkward PDF software.

By removing unnecessary features and adding a deep focus on user experience, Smallpdf has become the most-loved and most-trusted PDF software on the planet, serving over 500 million users, in 24 different languages, and in every country in the world—even Antarctica!

Smallpdf.com is the most-visited website in Switzerland and consistently ranks in the top 300 websites in the world. The Smallpdf team works tirelessly to keep its servers in top shape for its 30+ million monthly users. We believe simple software solutions should be accessible to everyone, which is why our software is affordable, easy to use, and device-agnostic.

Users can get exclusive, unlimited access by subscribing to Smallpdf Pro, which boasts a host of additional features, like connected tools, batch processing, and offline access via Smallpdf Desktop. Learning institutions are also covered with Smallpdf for Education, which offers all the features of Smallpdf Pro for schools, colleges, and universities, plus priority support, custom pricing, centralized billing and account management, personalized onboarding, and a dedicated success manager.

Welcome to Smallpdf, the first and *only* PDF software you'll love.

+

