# Gauging Your Technology Skills: Using Technology

## Instructions

In this assignment, you will select and learn how to use a tool you would use in your course and evaluate specific characteristics of the tool using a tool evaluation rubric. You will use the tool to create a learning object you could use for your course and then reflect on your experience completing this task.

*Note: A learning object is a resource (digital or web-based) that can be used and re-used to support learning activities.*

Follow these steps to complete this assignment.

**Step 1 – Pick a topic you would like to teach to students and a tool to use to present the topic.**

1. Identify the concept or skill you want students to learn. Consider the goal of teaching this concept or skill (what do you want students to be able to know or do as a result of this activity)? <mark>**Students will explore personality tests useful to small business owners for refining their business concepts and presenting products.**</mark>

2. Pick a tool to use to present the topic. This tool could be one of the tools available in your learning management system, a tool available at your institution, or any of the tools presented in the following resources:
   a. Kathy Schrock's Guide to Everything – **Bloomin' Apps** (Tools are sorted into four categories; scroll down the page to view all of them.)
   b. UMBC – **What is VoiceThread?**

3. Use the tool to create a learning object suitable for you to use with your students. Remember, a learning object is a resource (digital or web-based) that can be used and re-used to support learning activities.
   a. Examples of learning objects created by other instructors:
      i. **What is APA Format?** (Created with PowToon)
      ii. **Hand Tool – Explain Everything Whiteboard**
      iii. **Website Critique: Explain Everything Whiteboard Example**
      iv. **How to do a "Hanging Indent" using Google Docs?**
      v. **Examples of Science Infographics**

Paste the link to your learning object where indicated at the end of this paragraph. **Note:** If the tool you selected does not provide an option to share learning objects produced with it via a link, make a screen recording that shows the learning object you created and upload the screen recording to YouTube or another video service that enables you to provide a link. Review the following resources if you are not familiar with screen recording tools: **Screencast-O-matic, PowToon, Recording Your Own Videos**

**Link to learning object or screencast of learning object:** I created a Symbaloo webmix called Sm Biz Personality Tests at https://www.symbaloo.com/shared/AAAABHWlshcAA41_lb56Bg==

**Step 2 – Reflect**

1. Respond to the following prompts:
    a. Explain why you selected the tool, and describe any pros and cons using the tool (How easy is it to use the tool?). What are some ways you could use the tool to help learners reach the learning objectives or competencies in the course? What grade levels will benefit from the use of this tool? What did you learn from creating your learning object using this tool?
        i. **Selection**: I selected Symbaloo because, as a bookmarking app, it had the ability to graphically display in an easy-to-conceptualize format all the information (an overview for each test, how to take a free version of the tests, and various results descriptions) for the small business personality tests.
        ii. **Pros**:
            1. Symbaloo provides the graphic representation of information and website links for which I was looking.
            2. The tool is simple, so it is easy to learn how to use the main features.
            3. Sharing a Symbaloo webmix and/or embedding it in a website (which I did on my own website at https://owl10.com/business-personality/) or learning management system is straightforward.
            4. The free desktop version of the app that I used allows unlimited webmixes and link tiles.
            5. There are many available webmixes on a huge variety of topics in Symbaloo's public webmix library.
            6. Symbaloo allows educators and/or students to collaborate on creating webmixes (but only with paid plans).
            7. More features are available with various levels of paid plans.
            8. Symbaloo offers a mobile app and browser extension and has a learning pathways product that provides a sequenced learning experience along with analytics under development.
        iii. **Cons**:

1. The Symbaloo tool is somewhat buggy, unfortunately. I couldn't arrange the tiles on my webmix in my preferred configuration because the grouping function wasn't working reliably. The app also inexplicably dropped tiles I had already created at times when I was performing edits to the webmix.
2. The free version displays ads.
3. While the desktop display of a webmix is great, the mobile display was not as easy to use without the mobile app.
4. Information on the accessibility of the tool for those with disabilities was not readily available.

iv. **Ways to Help Learners**: Symbaloo provides a well-organized interface for information exploration through website links. This bookmarking app allowed me to easily provide an efficient and visually interesting online environment in which students can explore personality test information relevant to small business ownership.

v. **Grades**: Symbaloo would have applications from early elementary school through university and professional learning. All that is required is the ability to read sufficiently well, basic computer skills, and basic internet skills.

vi. **What I Learned**: I now know how to create and organize Symbaloo webmixes of link tiles to share large amounts of website information in a simple, graphical interface. I also know how to share and embed these webmixes so students can easily access them.

b. Develop a step-by-step guide explaining to other teachers/instructors how to use the tool to create a learning object similar to the one you created. **(Include the steps or guide below.)**

i. *Note: These instructions are for the desktop version of Symbaloo. If you wish to use the free Symbaloo mobile app, download it from your app store and follow the prompts given there. Not all Symbaloo features are available in the mobile app.*

ii. **Sign Up For an Account**

1. In your internet browser, navigate to http://www.symbaloo.com/.
2. Click the Sign up! option at the top right of the page.
3. Create a free Personal account by clicking the green Get Started button beneath this option. (You can upgrade your plan to a paid one later if you choose.)
4. Enter your email address, full name, and password OR choose an existing social media or other account (like Google of Microsoft) to create login credentials. If you would like to get promotional emails from

Symbaloo, check the "Receive news and updates about Symbaloo" box. Otherwise, leave the box blank. Indicate your agreement by checking the "I agree to Symbaloo's privacy policy & terms and conditions" box. Then click the green Register Now! button.

5. Complete the Welcome to your new account tour by navigating through each of the slides with the Next Slide button. These slides will give you a quick overview of Symbaloo's features. The final slide instructs you to verify your email address to unlock more features. In your email account, look for an email entitled "Welcome to Symbaloo." Check your spam and other folders if you do not find this email in your main inbox. In the welcome email, click the turquoise Click here to verify your email button. In the new browser tab that opens, you will see a slide informing you that your account is now verified. Press Skip Tour to dismiss the slide.

### iii.    Create a Webmix

1. Symbaloo provides a standard organization with premade Home, Education, and EDU Games webmixes. (A webmix is a collection of bookmarked website links.) This organization is displayed at the top of the app window. To the right of this organization area, there is a plus symbol. Click it to create a new empty webmix.

2. Enter a name for the empty webmix. Check the RSS Feeds only box if you will only link RSS feeds in the webmix. Otherwise, leave this box unchecked. Then click the green Add button.

3. You may be prompted to select the type of webmix you intend to create. If so, select a type or dismiss the slide.

### iv.    Individual Tiles

1. In a separate browser tab, navigate to the website page you wish to link in your webmix and copy the URL (website address).

2. Back in Symbaloo, click a blank tile area to begin the process of bookmarking your website link. Paste the URL into the search field. Symbaloo will then provide the top result below the search field. If you are satisfied with the appearance of this tile, click the blue Add to webmix button to the right of the tile and description. Below the top result area, Symbaloo provides alternate tile designs. To choose one of these alternatives, simply click on the one you want. Symbaloo also allows you to customize the tile title, embedding, color, and graphic by clicking on the Add & Edit Tile option.

3. To move an already created tile, drag and drop it in a new location. To access the settings of a tile, drag and drop the tile over the Settings option above the webmix or right click on the tile.

v. **Tile Groups**

1. To create a group of tiles, drag one tile on top of another and hold it there until a group field appears in which to place the tile. Continue dragging and holding tiles to add more items to the group.

2. To edit the group name, color, graphic, and other options, drag and drop the group over the Settings option above the webmix or right click on the group.

vi. **Webmix Settings**

1. To edit webmix-wide settings, click on the Settings option above the webmix. Here you will find tools for renaming the webmix, changing the wallpaper, and modifying the webmix tab settings (this tab appears in the organization area at the top of the app window). You will also find toggles for activating abilities to resize the webmix (displays resize buttons round the edges of the webmix), adjust the transparency of the webmix, and add markers around tiles (allows you to click and drag to place a rectangular marker around a single tile or multiple tiles). Once you have created a marker, options for editing it will appear in the Settings menu area, as well.

vii. **Sharing**

1. When you are ready to share your webmix, Symbaloo provides several ways to do this. Click on the Share option above the webmix. This will make the webmix shareable and give you options for copying the link to your clipboard, sending the link through email, sharing the link through other services like social media, getting code to embed the webmix on a website or in a learning management system, or changing the status of the webmix to unshareable. If you like, you can also add your webmix to Symbaloo's public webmix library.

viii. **Remove a Webmix**

1. If you wish to delete a webmix, simply click the Remove option above the webmix, type DELETE where prompted, and click the pink Delete this webmix forever button.

ix. **Account Settings**

1. <mark>All of your account-related settings are made available by clicking on the area in the upper right corner of the app that shows your name along with a green person icon.</mark>

x. <mark>**Further Information**</mark>

1. <mark>For further information about Symbaloo and its features, visit [https://en.help.symbaloo.com/portal/en/kb/symbaloo-usa](https://en.help.symbaloo.com/portal/en/kb/symbaloo-usa).</mark>

2. Gather enough information about the tool to complete the **tool evaluation rubric** provided on page 3. (Please note that not all criteria apply to all tools.) Highlight or underline the criterion that matches the tool you selected. Assess a criterion as "Not Applicable" if the criterion is irrelevant.

   **How to apply or remove highlighting in Microsoft Word**

# Tool Evaluation Rubric

The Tool Evaluation Rubric is built upon the [**"Rubric for eLearning Tool Evaluation"**](#) by Lauren M. Anstey & Gavan P.L. Watson, copyright 2018 Centre for Teaching and Learning, Western University, made available under the terms of a [**CC BY-NC-SA 4.0**](#) license. Used with permission of the authors.

**Name of the tool: Symbaloo**

Features and functionality available in the free version of the app are marked in green. Features and functionality only available with paid plans are marked in blue.

| Criteria | Works Well | Minor Concerns or Serious Concerns | Not Applicable |
|---|---|---|---|
| Functionality (does the tool serve its intended purpose?) | a. The tool is user-friendly and easy to use (instructors and learners won't have any problems using the tool). <br> b. Help documentation (or tutorials), or the institution's help desk assists instructors and learners in solving problems with the tool; or, the tool provider offers robust technical support. <br> c. The tool allows instructors and learners to communicate using different channels (audio, video, textual). | a. The tool is somewhat cumbersome and non-intuitive. <br> b. Help documentation and technical support are available, but limited, or technical documentation or tutorials are unavailable. <br> c. The tool only allows the use of one communication channel. | Works Well c. is NA – the only communication that can occur directly through the app is collaboration on webmixes |
| Accessibility (The tool offers options for multiple ways of representation | a. The tool meets accessibility standards (the tool provider has an accessibility statement or a voluntary product accessibility | a. The tool has limited accessibility features, or there is no information about accessibility compliance. <br> b. The tool has some limited capacity to address the needs of diverse | |

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| and expression. The tool is compliant with Web Accessibility guidelines and accessibility laws.) | statement template (VPAT) published on its website.)<br>b. The tool is designed to address the needs of diverse learners.<br>c. Instructors and learners don't need to purchase additional equipment. The tool can be used using a computer with built-in speakers, a microphone, a webcam, and an Internet connection.<br>d. Cost of use: Is the tool free of charge or not? There is free version of the app. Additional features are available with paid plans. | learners or restricts some learners from fully participating.<br>c. Instructors and learners need to use specialized equipment at a low or at a high cost.<br>d. Some aspects of the tool are free, or instructors and learners must pay an expensive fee to access and use the tool. | |
| Technical (Basic technologies needed to use the tool.) | a. The tool can be embedded or integrated into the learning management system.<br>b. Instructors and learners can utilize the tool with any standard, up-to-date operating system, and a web browser.<br>c. Instructors and learners don't need to download additional software or web browser extensions. | a. There is limited functionality when integrating the tool into the learning management system. Or the tool cannot be integrated at all (instructors and learners can only access it via a hyperlink).<br>b. Instructors and learners have limited functionality when using an older operating system or can have the functionality with only one operating system.<br>c. Instructors and learners must download a browser extension or software. Or the tool requires | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | downloading a past version of the browser extension or software. | |
| Mobile Design (Option to access content and complete tasks using a mobile device.) | a. The tool is also available by downloading a mobile app or via a mobile browser regardless of the mobile device used.<br>b. Instructors and learners have the same functionality as when using the desktop version.<br>c. Instructors and learners can use the core features of the tool and utilize it even when offline. | a. The app for the tool is available for limited mobile operating systems or not accessible through a mobile browser or, the tool cannot be accessed using a mobile device.<br>b. There is some difference in functionality depending on the mobile operating system, or the app functions poorly.<br>c. The core features of the tool cannot be used offline, or the tool cannot be used offline at all. | Works Well c. is NA due to the nature of the tool as a website bookmarking app |
| Privacy, Data Protection, and Rights (Protection of personal information and intellectual property.) | a. Instructors and learners are not required to create an external account or another login.<br>b. Instructors and learners maintain ownership of their intellectual property/data and can decide if and how data is shared.<br>c. Instructors and learners can archive, save, or import and export content or data on activities completed using the tool. | a. Only instructors are required to set up an account. The tool has been vetted through appropriate channels to ensure strict adherence to local, institutional, or personal policies/standards for protecting the collection and use of student personal data by a third-party group. Or, there is some question or concern of the adherence to local, institutional, or personal policies/standards for protecting the collection and use of such data by a third-party group.<br>b. Instructors and learners maintain the copyright of their intellectual | Concerns a. about institutional vetting is NA due to no attachment to a formal institution |

| | | property of data, but data cannot be made private. Or instructors and learners forfeit ownership and copyright of data.<br>c. There are certain limitations to archiving, saving, or importing/exporting content or data on activities. Or, nothing can be archived, saved, or imported/exported. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Presence (Safe, trusting environment that fosters collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of community) | a. The tool offers features to support a community of learning through both asynchronous and synchronous communications.<br>b. The tool offers options to control learner anonymity.<br>c. The tool is widely known; most learners are likely to be familiar with the tool. | a. The tool offers features for asynchronous communications but nothing for synchronous communications; or, the tool does not offer any features for both asynchronous and synchronous communications.<br>b. Instructors cannot control learners' anonymity, but the tool provides options for holding learners accountable for their actions; or, there is no option for holding learners accountable.<br>c. Learners' familiarity with the tool is mixed; or, the tool is not well-known at all. | |
| Teaching Presence (The tool includes elements that enable instructors to establish and | a. Instructors can demonstrate their presence via active management, monitoring, engagement, and feedback. | a. The tool offers limited functionality that allows instructors to demonstrate their presence; or, the tool does not offer any functionality | Works Well a. engagement and feedbeek are NA due to the nature of the tool as website bookmarking app |

| maintain their teaching presence through facilitation, customization, and feedback) | b. Instructors have the flexibility to customize how learners engage with the tool.<br>c. Instructors can monitor learners' performance using a user-friendly dashboard. | to demonstrate an instructor's presence.<br>b. There are limited aspects of the tool that can be customized; the tool cannot be customized at all.<br>c. Monitoring learners' performance is limited; or, the tool does not support the collection of learning analytics at all. | |

**General Observations or Comments: Symbaloo allows educators to share large amounts of website information in a simple, graphical interface. By its nature as a bookmarking app, Symbaloo is designed for information sharing, not communication between educators and students. The only form of direct communication possible through the app is webmix collaboration (available with paid plans). An educator can demonstrate presence through limited customizations, management, and tracking (tracking is only available with paid plans). For an overview of features in the various paid plans, visit https://www.symbaloo.com/plans.**