

# Connecting Classrooms around the World with Mystery Skype



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# What is Mystery Skype?



**Mystery Skype** is an educational game, invented by teachers, played by two classrooms on Skype. The teachers will know where (and who) they are calling but students will not. The aim of the game is to build cultural awareness, critical thinking skills, and geography skills by guessing the location of the other classroom through a series of yes/no questions using the target language (for example, Are you in Europe?). It is suitable for all age groups, from kindergarten through university students, and can be adapted for any subject area.

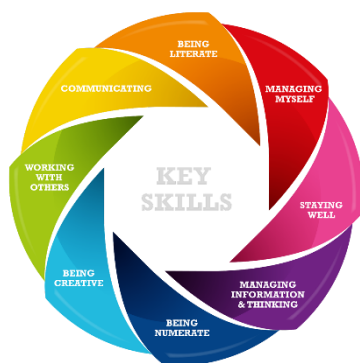
## Why play Mystery Skype?

**Mystery Skype** provides a fun and inclusive way to engage students in an authentic learning experience. When playing Mystery Skype, two classrooms arrange to call one another using Skype video. By asking questions, giving clues and listening to each other in the target language, learners use their communication and collaboration to discover where the other classroom is located.

The simple format of Mystery Skype allows teachers to easily tailored the activity to meet different curriculum requirements and learning intentions, while putting students at the centre of the learning experience.

**Mystery Skype** is a wonderful tool to teach your students 21st century skills such as:

- Critical Thinking
- Collaboration
- Teamwork
- Language skills
- Cultural Awareness
- Deductive reasoning
- Digital Literacy



# Mystery Skype in the MFL Classroom

The main benefit of using Mystery Skype in the Modern Foreign Language classroom is the ability to bring language learning to life for students. Connecting with other classrooms around the world, provide unique opportunities for all learners to widen their understanding by exploring differences and similarities across cultures. Skype provides language teachers with an authentic way to enable learners to experience how other students live, to get to know other countries and cultures, and to make meaningful connections through collaboration and conversation.

Some of the benefits of adding Mystery Skype to the Modern Foreign Language classroom are:

- Skyping with students from the target language country brings the language to life.
- Giving the opportunity for all students to travel and practice the target language with native speakers.
- Students can learn about idiomatic expressions as used by native speakers.
- Students can learn about non-verbal aspects of different languages, which can't be fully experienced with a textbook.
- Students can become the teacher, helping other students learn the target language, English and Irish.
- Awakening students' curiosity about other cultures and ways of life.

## Learning Outcomes

### **Strand 1 Communicative Competence**

1.2 recognise frequently-used words and phrases related to areas of immediate relevance and experience, including the language of routine classroom interactions

1.9 pronounce words accurately enough to be understood, with appropriate intonation

1.15 take part in routine classroom interactions such as pair and group work, asking questions, language games and activities, asking for help and repetition where necessary

1.16 communicate orally with others using digital technologies such as social media

### **Strand 2 Language Awareness**

2.2 apply all language learning to creative activities such as producing simple poems, posters, presentations, games and drama

### Strand 3 Socio-cultural Knowledge and Intercultural Awareness

3.2 discover and use facts and figures related to the target country/ countries such as statistical data, festivals, inventions, famous people

3.7 analyse similarities and differences in relation to their peers' lives in the target language country/countries in areas of daily life such as school, socialising, sport, eating habits

## What do you need to play Mystery Skype?



A Skype in the Classroom  
Community account:  
<https://education.skype.com/>



A Skype ID:  
[login.skype.com/registration](https://login.skype.com/registration)



Good internet  
connection



A device with a  
built-in camera  
or webcam



Microphone  
(Internal or  
external)

## How to play Mystery Skype

### Playing Mystery Skype in 5 steps:

1. Find a teacher to play at <https://education.skype.com/>
2. Arrange a date and time to play.
3. Assign jobs
4. Prepare for the call
5. Start the Skype call

## After the Mystery Skype call

Collaboration and connection with classrooms around the world can continue following the Mystery Skype call with several activities:

- Class blog, website or newsletter where students can describe their learning experiences after the Mystery Skype
- Exchange of letters or post cards with partner classrooms
- Shared documents or presentations with students from partner classrooms where students can collaborate in projects
- Flipgrid to share short video messages between students from partner classrooms
- Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom as a central platform where classrooms can collaborate and communicate

## Tips for a successful Mystery Skype

1. Have a test call with the other teacher a day or two before your Mystery Skype call.
2. Hide location on your profile. Go to the Skype tab, choose "Profile" and delete your location.
3. Grab bag of local items once it's solved or as a clue
  - Flag
  - Newspaper or Magazine
  - Unique Food
4. Have a backup plan.
  - Three possible times and dates you've set up with teacher
  - Have a different plan if you can't connect
5. Have a set agenda and time frame. Mystery Skype games duration can vary from 20 minutes to 45 minutes depending on students age and topics.
6. Be sure that you have agreed on the same time. Be sure and check your time zones.
7. Send a chat message before you start.
8. If they aren't understanding the accents, use the chat features or make paper signs.
9. Develop a list of good questions based on your experience in case you get stuck.
10. It doesn't have to be perfect.
11. If your class gets noisy, know how to mute the mic and ask them to quiet down.

## Assigning Mystery Skype Roles

Before the Mystery Skype connection call with the other classroom, you can assign different roles to students. Giving everyone a role makes all students responsible for a particular job during the Mystery Skype call and it keeps everyone engaged during the activity.

- **Greeter.** One student greets the incoming class by speaking about our class and going over the rules.
- **Questioner.** One or two students ask the yes or no questions.
- **Answerer.** One student answers yes or no to the questions and should have a good grasp of geography.
- **Mappers.** Two students will use maps to try to help with questions or find the answer.
- **Lead Thinker.** A student needs to be a gentle leader that can keep everyone organized and on track.
- **Note Taker.** One or two students that will write down all answers and questions during the call for easy access by filters and if any confusion occurs.
- **Reporters.** Two students to take pictures and notes throughout the call to then write a blog post on our classroom blog after the call is done.



# Getting started to play Mystery Skype



## Joining the Skype in the Classroom Community

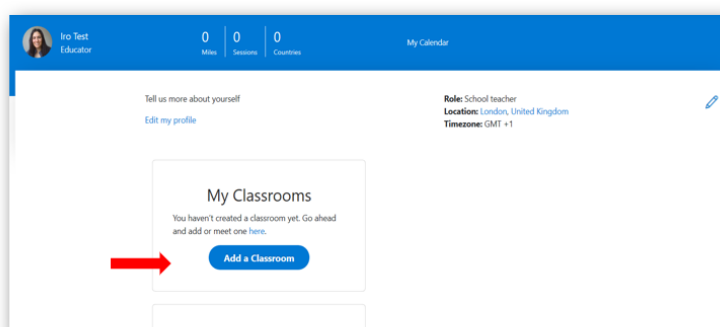
- 1 Visit [skypeintheclassroom.com](https://skypeintheclassroom.com)
- 2 If you are not a member already, then click to [Sign up for FREE!](#)
- 3 You will need to authenticate by using an Office 365 or Microsoft Account (MSA\*).

*\*MSA can be any account authenticated with Microsoft (Gmail, work account, Yahoo etc.)*



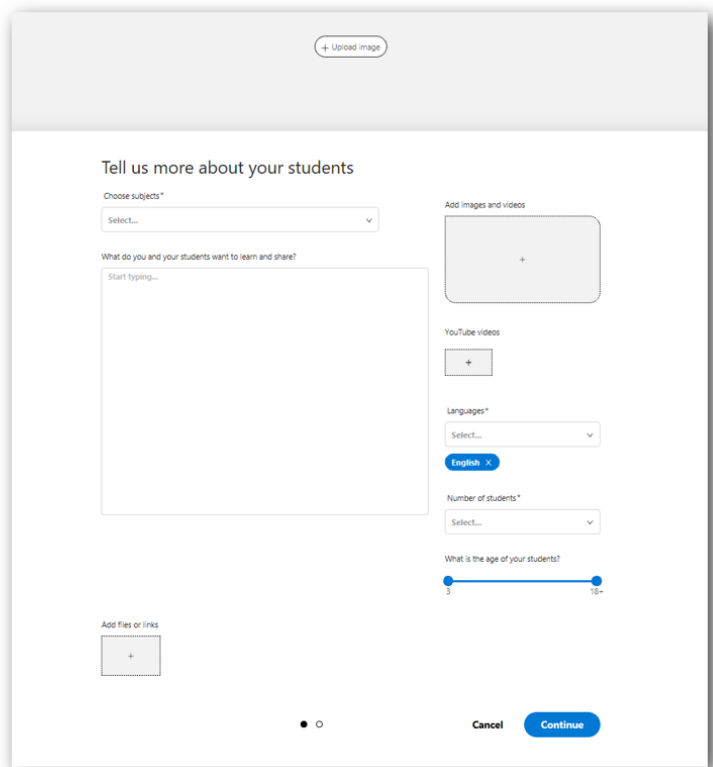
## Connect by Adding a Classroom

- To be discoverable on the site for other educators to request class to class connections (i.e. cultural exchange, Mystery Skype etc.) you need to create your classroom.
- If you are teaching multiple classrooms, then you can create a generic classroom or multiple ones.
- If you are an educator (i.e. Tech Coach) who wants to request sessions but not receive requests, you do not need to add a classroom. You can just request sessions with other classrooms.



## Creating Your Classroom

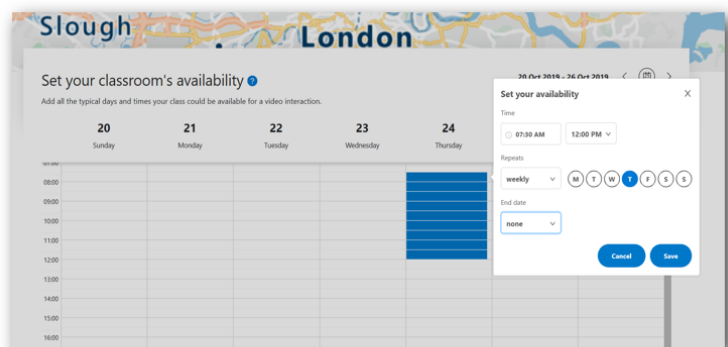
- Choose subjects of interest for your class.
- Add a few words about what you and your students want to learn and are hoping to share with other classrooms.
- Add an image of your class or anything else you want! If you do not add an image, we will share a map with your location.
- Ensure you add languages, number of students and the approximate age of your students.



The screenshot shows a form titled "Tell us more about your students". At the top, there is an "Upload image" button. Below the title, there is a "Choose subjects\*" dropdown menu. To the right of this is a section for "Add images and videos" with a large plus icon. Below the subjects dropdown is a text area labeled "What do you and your students want to learn and share?" with a placeholder "Start typing...". To the right of this text area are three more fields: "YouTube videos" with a plus icon, "Languages\*" with a dropdown menu showing "English" selected, and "Number of students\*" with a dropdown menu. Below these is a slider for "What is the age of your students?" ranging from 3 to 18+. At the bottom left is an "Add files or links" button. At the bottom right are "Cancel" and "Continue" buttons.

## Set Your Classroom's Availability

- Add typical days and times your class is available for connections by clicking and dragging slots on the calendar.
- Other classrooms will be able to find you and request connections with you. **Time zones are converted for you when you receive a request!**
- You can add recurring availability or one-off time slots.
- You can add an end date and also remove specific slots for school breaks, holidays or other special events.

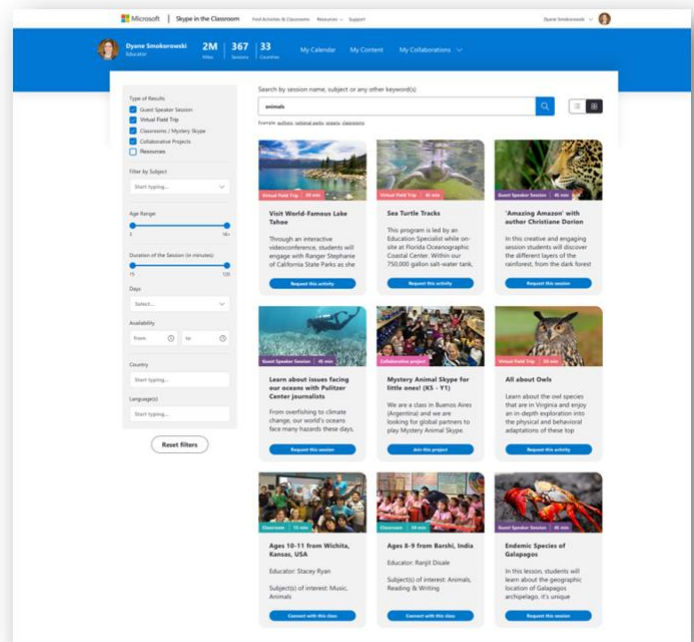


The screenshot shows a calendar interface titled "Set your classroom's availability". The calendar displays days from Sunday (20) to Thursday (24). A time slot from 08:00 to 16:00 on Thursday is highlighted in blue. A modal window titled "Set your availability" is open, showing a time range from 07:30 AM to 12:00 PM, a frequency of "weekly", and a day selection of "T" (Tuesday). The modal also includes "Cancel" and "Save" buttons.

# Finding a Classroom to play Mystery Skype

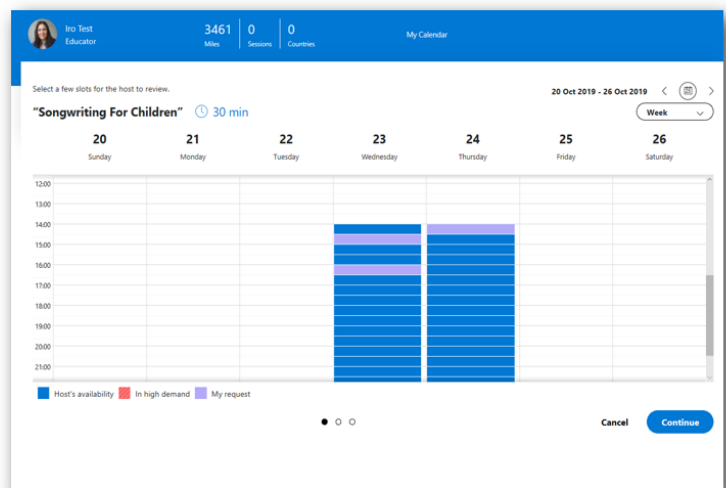
## Finding a Classroom

- Use the keyword search bar to find an activity for your class. Narrow results by using the filter options.
- Select the type of activity you want to participate in – virtual field trips, guest speakers, class connections.



## Requesting a Mystery Skype

- Select a few time slots from the host's approximate availability that work for your class. The host will either approve one or decline.
- If a slot is red, someone else has also requested it. The host will review all the requests and approve one.
- We recommend you request activities at least a week or two in advance.





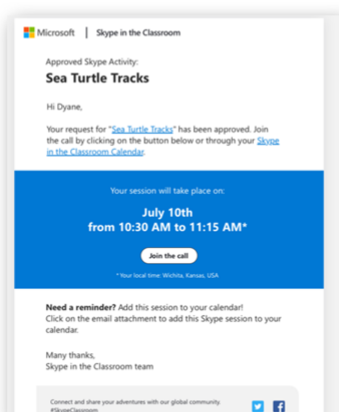
## One Last Step

To complete your request, you need to provide the host with some extra information.

- If you are connecting with another class, make sure that you specify in the message box what you want the connection to be about (read aloud a book, sing a song, play Mystery Skype, share about traditions or your school etc.)

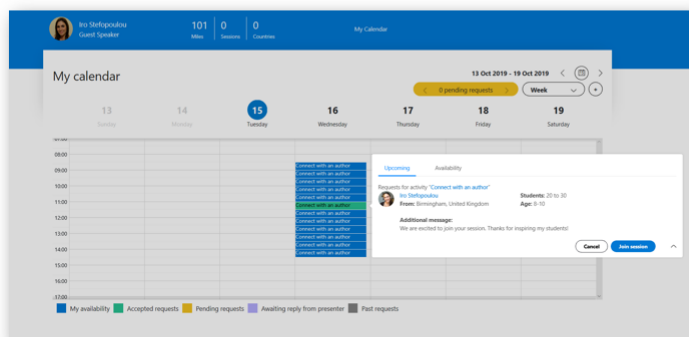
Once you click continue, you will receive a summary of your request and you can review its status in your calendar.

## 2 Ways to Join a Session



1

Join by clicking on the "Join the call" link on your confirmation. You can also find the link in your calendar if you added a reminder.



2

Join by going to your Skype in the Classroom calendar. Find the accepted request (in green), click on the slot and "Join the session" button.

# Variations on Mystery Skype

As well as guessing each other's locations, other popular examples include:

- Mystery number
- Mystery animal
- Mystery food
- Mystery weather



## Useful links

[Mystery Skype Curriculum OneNote](#)

[Mystery Skype Activity Plans](#)

[Rubric for Mystery Skype and its variations](#)

[Mystery Skype Signs](#)

[Skype Toolkit: Developing Background Knowledge of the World](#)

