Teacher Start up manual
Fronter

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Welcome to Fronter

This is an introduction to the basic functionalities in Fronter. Fronter is a VLE or “Virtual Learning Environment” and is very flexible. Because of this flexibility, and because not two teachers are the same, all will use Fronter differently. Some teachers will use it mostly to distribute resources to students, some to share and collaborate with each other. Some will create their own content and some will let the students be the most active. Some might use it to organise all their resources and some think the platform is perfect for having an overview of each student’s learning progress. Parents and headmasters might be a part of the Fronter society as well. It might even be your school has integrated with other providers of educational software. Because of this plurality, there cannot be one complete teacher guide. This is an overview over some of the most used features and procedures for teachers.

Fronter is constantly releasing new improvements and functionality. This manual may therefore differ slightly from the application.

Metaphors in Fronter

Within the virtual walls of Fronter, find your learning resources, your students, colleagues and educational resources.

In some rooms you will spend a lot of time, like your virtual classrooms, and maybe the staff room. Some rooms you just nip into to borrow some equipment or have a quick chat.

The tools are any resources you need to digitalise and personalise your teaching resources and methods.

The same people that roam the halls, rooms and grounds of your physical school, will inhabit the Fronter school

Staff can have access to class rooms and staff rooms, caretaker will have access everywhere and students usually need to be let in, just like in a real school.
**Logging on:**

Fronter is a licensed product, which requires a username and password. All teachers and students/pupils must first get these awarded by those who administer Fronter.

As regards the username, it does not matter whether it is typed in upper or lower case letters. The password, however, is case sensitive. You must therefore be careful to check whether the caps lock key is on! Generally speaking, you should change your password to something which is easy for you to remember but hard for others to guess, and it ought to be a mixture of numbers and letters. Regularly changing your password is a good security precaution.

For some institutions, there are shared databases for several types of services, something that can also control username and password. This may involve passwords changing via a separate gateway and not directly in Fronter.

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You can select preferred language when logging in.

Some installations will allow you to order a temporary password if you have forgotten the existing one. You still need to remember your username, though.

**Opening page –the Today page**

The first thing you will see when you have logged on is your Today page – your personal start page. On this page you will find information that is recent and relevant to you, retrieved from rooms where you are a participant. This page can be customised for you, thereby making each page different for different users.
This is one example of how it may look when you log in. The image is dominated by the *Today page* (1). There are areas for news, personal messages and discussions, notifications for tasks, calendar, short cut to rooms and much more. The content of each area may change from day to day, depending on activity in the various rooms.

From the top menu, which is always accessible when you navigate around in the virtual school, you can see and access the rooms of which you are a member via the *Room selector* (2), utilise your personal *Tools* (3) and access, maybe even edit, your personal details in the contact card. Click your name to access the link called *My profile* (4).

**Customise Today**

If administrator has left the option open, you can decide which areas you want to see on your Today page. Click the *Customise today* link, usually found in the upper right hand corner.

Choose display mode, whether you want to see your content in one or two panes, or a combination (1). To remove areas; tick the box and click *Remove* (2). **Note:** This will not delete the content, only close the view, and can easily be restored.

To add new areas –click *New tool* (3) and select the relevant elements from the menu. Click *Save*.

Don’t be afraid to experiment by adding new elements. You can easily remove them later. Remember; the areas show content from rooms of which you are a member. This means that the Today page acts like a dynamic and personal bulletin board. If the areas seem empty or static –it may be you are not a member of many rooms (or any at all) or that there is no activity in the rooms.

**Personal tools**

From the top menu, you can access a set of Fronter tools related to your user role. Different schools use different tools. We will describe a few of them here: *Calendar, My documents, Search, Messages*. 
Special tools like the *ILP*, *Absence*, *grades and order* and *Survey*, are usually a part of the individual school’s strategy, and teacher training is provided.

The personal tools behave quite a lot like room tools, showing on the Today page etc. Access your tools by clicking them from the drop-down menu. Create shortcuts to your favourite tools by clicking the pin icon.

**Calendar**

Your personal calendar can also display the appointments of your contacts, read public appointments from rooms; you can create to-do lists or even book resources.

Select day-, week-, month- or year view. View others’ public appointments by adding them to *Others* (2). Click *More*, search by name and click *Show appointments*. See messages from rooms of which you are a member (3) and even register for appointments.

To create an appointment (5); click the required field in the calendar, set a title and the time. Click *Save* or *More options*. 
From more options; edit title and time (1), add a description that will be visible from the calendar view (2), tick the box (3) to make it possible for contacts to register (it is possible to limit the number of participants). From the drop down menu Type (4); mark the appointment as e.g. absence, travelling, meeting etc. If the event is to be repeated regularly, select repetition scheme from the drop-down menu (5) and set end date or number of repetitions. Publish the appointment to a group of contacts, make it public or private (6). It is possible to invite others to an event/appointment by adding them here (7). If there is no e-mail solution set up for your school, the invitation will show in the Calendar.

My documents
This is a personal storing space within the platform. It’s only accessible for the user.

The tool My documents works a lot like the Resource tool in a room, so some of the functions are described in that chapter.

Within the tool, you can store all kinds of files via the Upload file button, or use the Create button to create tests, forums, pages and other Fronter objects. Use the Folders to create a system. If the installation uses the Home page function, this too will be stored here.
To copy content to a room; select the element and click Copy.

Select the room (1) and tool (3) to which you want to copy the element. Then make sure you copy all associated content (2).

Click Ok on the confirmation pop-up.

**Contact or Search**
Access rights between groups and membership in rooms determines whom you can search and find in Fronter. From the top menu; click Tools (1); click Contacts (2). Type in the name of the contact (it’s usually best to type either first name or surname)(3) and click Search (4).
Search by groups or for groups
Step 1: After having accessed Contacts, do not type a name, but select More from the drop-down menu. This will close the menu.

Step 2: Open the drop-down again. The whole structure is now revealed. Highlight the required group. Click Search.

Step 3: To see the contact card; click on the name. To send e-mail/stickies; tick the boxes (one or more) and click the link at the bottom right.

How to organise your contacts in a friends list

Put contacts you communicate with more often on a separate list. Select the tab Friends list. Search for individuals or groups as described above, and click Add.

Messages

Fronter offers a web-based e-mail client, which makes it possible to configure your e-mail accounts so you are able to read external e-mails directly in Fronter. Fronter also offers a complete e-mail service called Webmail. This is a plus pack. In the E-mail tool (sometimes renamed to Messages or similar) you can also read and send Stickies. Stickies are short messages that can be sent to one or multiple contacts in Fronter, no address required (described in a later chapter).
**Room selector**

The rooms are where most of the learning happens. It is where you assign tasks and evaluate them, where the students submit their work and collaborate with each other, and where many of the class’ learning resources are stored.

There are several ways to create short cuts to your rooms; add to your Today page as short cuts, or pin the rooms tab like for personal tools. In addition all rooms can always be accessed via the *Rooms* on your personal tool package.

To the right are your favourite rooms listed, if you have added any (see below). To the left are your *Options* listed: *Rooms not visited* would typically be new rooms to which you have been enrolled. When you have entered them once, they will no longer appear on this list. Some teachers will have the option to create new rooms. This is usually an administrator task, and is therefore described in the admin guide.

Let’s review the last option: *Display all rooms*.

This will reveal a set of new tabs –some of them are a result of special settings and will not be relevant for all schools.

By default, you land on the tab *My rooms* which mean all rooms of which you are a member. Add them as favourite short cuts by ticking the boxes and clicking *Add to favourites*.

When a room is *archived*, it is in a frozen state where members can still access most of the content but nothing can be changed. In short; all members are downgraded to guest/read access. Room owner can select rooms to be archived from the tab * Archived rooms* and users with the required access rights may access, and even un-archive, rooms from this tab. **Note:** It is advised that only a trained administrator archives rooms.
External rooms/External room invite, Closed rooms, Requested rooms and Public rooms are special features and/or administrator’s choices and therefore not described here.

Contact card / My profile
Whether you click your own name to the top left or the screen (2), or use Contact to search for others (1), you access the Contact card.

Depending on different settings and added information (teachers are often allowed to edit more of their personal details than students) your own contact card might look something like this:

In this case, administrator has left it open for the teacher to edit her own contact information and add an image. Whether the students, parents or other teachers should be able to see this information (or part of it) is a decision to be made at the school.

Furthermore, the contact card can give a practical overview over membership in groups and rooms.
The username is the unique identity, and not to be changed, but often the users can change their own password. It is good practice to do so regularly. In some cases teachers are assigned the option to create new password for the students (especially the younger tend to forget sometimes).

This is done under the heading *Log-in info*:

- **Changing your own password**
- **Changing a student’s password**

In some cases admin will let teachers select their own tool package (1). This is done under the heading *Personal settings*. Changing style sheet is also an option (2). Set the correct time zone by selecting your city from the drop-down menu. You can also choose to enable keyboard shortcuts. When this option is selected and saved (4); click `shift+h` to see the short cut menu. The e-mail client should usually be left as Fronter WebMail (5).

**Save changes.**

This is how Fronter will look if we change to style sheet *Play*:
The virtual classroom

Teachers often spend most of their work day in the classroom. Likewise in Fronter. The virtual classroom is a designated area in which teacher and students are enrolled with appropriate roles, where resources can be stored and collaboration and creativity happen.

Below is an example of a secondary classroom.

To the left is the room tool package where all content is stored and created (1). Tools can be customised, added and removed. To the right is the content from selected tool, in this case the Front page (2). The teacher has made a link to the lessons (3), published some News (4), created a Forum where students can ask and teacher will answer (5), listed some important documents (6) and added a RSS news feed from an external web site (7). All elements are stored in the tool package to the left. From the Front page there are hyper links (which are easily created in Fronter) to the resources. A mini-menu allows the teacher to easily edit the front page and show it in full screen (8).

Let’s click on a hyperlink:

This is a link to a Forum.
To answer it, in fact; to create almost any sort of content or contribution in Fronter, we use the editor.

**The editor**
The Fronter editor is much more than a text editor. It can be used for inserting images and multimedia content and for creating hyperlinks.

The editor will automatically appear when you click *Insert text* in a page or article, if you create a Fronter document, if you click *New* or *Reply* in a forum, if you *Add question* in a test, if you create *New news* or if you *edit* any of the above.

**How to write text in the editor**
Just start to type directly in the editor. Style the text in different fonts and sizes (1) and colours (2). Insert table or special characters (3).

You can paste text from other documents. It is recommended to use the special button for pasting texts from Word (4).
How to insert images in the editor

The image can be stored on your computer (alternative 1) or in a folder in the Fronter room (alternative 2). Do NOT copy and paste. Click the icon called **Insert & Upload Media**.

**Alt 1, if image is stored on your computer:**
1) Click tab **Computer**.
2) Browse and open image.
3) Observe a copy will be stored in nearest folder in Fronter.
4) Customise as required.
5) Click **Upload & Insert**.

**Alt 2, if image already uploaded in folder in the room:**
Default tab is **Room**.
1) Click the tool the image is in.
2) Click sub folder if required.
3) Select image by clicking title.
4) Customise as required.
5) Click **Insert**.

Image is now inserted.
How to embed a video clip in the page

Click the Insert content icon.

1) In the search field; type your key words.
2) Click the Search button.
3) Click the Play icon to preview. (A light box will appear, and you will need to click Play again).
4) Click Add video to embed (or Create link to add a link)

The clip will not be visible until you Save.

How to create a hyper link to an external page

Any object – like a piece of text or an image – can be a hyper link. You can link to external web pages or objects within Fronter.

To link to an external page, collect the URL (copy the address on top of the page).
1) In the Fronter editor; highlight the element you want to be a clickable link (or just click the cursor in the editor to make the URL the clickable link).

2) Click the icon Insert link.

3) Paste (or type) in the URL.
4) Advisory title and Open in a new window are optional.
5) Click Ok.
6) Image is now a clickable link.

How to create a hyper link to an element within Fronter

Sometimes you want to create direct links in Fronter for example from a front page to a task. In this example we will link to a test which we have already created.

1) Highlight the element that is going to be the clickable link (in this example a piece of text).

2) Click on the icon Insert internal link.
Select tool in which the element is stored.  

Tick the element you want to link to.  

Often it is a good idea NOT to open in a new window.  

Save.  

The text is now a clickable link.  

You can create a link and upload a copy of a file from the computer to Fronter in one go:  

Click + Upload file.  

Browse and open file.  

Note where the copy will be stored in the room—option to change location.  

Click Upload & Insert.  

A link is created to the copy in the Resource tool. Click Save.  

How to manage the room  

Quite often the teachers are assigned the task of managing their own class rooms. It is practical not to have to ask the administrator for help. Managing a Fronter room is an easy task. Just remember when you see a pop-up asking if you are really sure you want to delete; think before clicking Ok.
Members
Click the people icon on the tool bar to the left to see an overview over the members in the room.

The lists displays names and some contact info for the members. More info in the Contact card view (2).

The access rights a member can have in the room (3) are: Read/guest (can see but not contribute), Write/student (can also upload and create documents, collaborate, answer tests and forums etc), Delete/teacher (can also create, correct and comment tasks and track students in portfolio), Room owner/main teacher (can manage the room with all its content and members, can even close and delete the room).

From members list there can be sent personal messages from the action buttons at the bottom (4). If you want to tick all members, remember that there might be more than one page (5).

To make changes in the members list; click Edit (6).

Note: If you cannot find the groups you are searching for, it might be you do not have access to that group. Contact your administrator.
How to send personal messages from the room member list

From the members list in a room you can send a sticky, an e-mail or a SMS if these options are made available to you by the administrators. You are probably familiar with the e-mail and SMS already. A sticky is a short note that can be sent within your part of the Fronter building with no address or number required. It’s like a post-it note.

1) Click the Members tool and select recipient(s) by a) searching individually, b) ticking all or some from a list, or c) select the box Choose all (as the list of members might be more than a page long).

2) Click Send e-mail to selected or Send sticky. (If you are allowed to send SMS from Fronter, you still need to click Send sticky.)

If sending a sticky: 1) Make sure all recipients are selected, add more if required. 2) Type message. Add links if required. 3) Click Send text message or Send sticky. (If you select to send a text message –you can still send a copy as a sticky.)

Read stickies from your Today page or E-mail /messages in the top menu.

The Room drop-down menu

Click the room icon to access the menu to the top right. From this menu you can edit the room’s Today page, and description. By clicking Edit tool package –you can add, remove and customise tools. The activation of Student view lets you see the room with write access. From Edit properties you can change name, description, entrance hall icon etc. It is still a good idea to ask before you make these changes.
Note: From this menu you can also close, and eventually delete; the room. Don’t perform this action unless you are sure you (or others) don’t want any of the content.

Room tools
By clicking Customise tool package in the Room drop-down menu (see image above) you can add, remove and customise tools. The edit page is white, on the left side is a list of the tools as they appear in the tool package (1). Click the title of the tool to edit it.

You can replace the tool (2) which you seldom want to do, edit title and description (3). Note that if you change the title, it will not translate for users who are selecting another language. You can hide the tools for members with a lower access right (4). In this example we are hiding the Resources tool for all but teachers. We have therefore added (hidden) to the title for our own reference. Note: Hiding is not the same as making inaccessible. Students and guests might access content in this archive via Today page or linking. It is also possible to set an access right in the tool that differs from the general rights in the room (5). Use the little arrows to move the tool up and down the tool package (6). When finished; click Save (7).

To add a new tool –click New tool at the bottom of the list, and select the tool you want to add. Save.
The various tools are described in the quick help and in separate manuals (see the end of the document), but we will take a look at the most versatile of them all: **The Resource tool**.

**The resource tool**
The Resource tool can replace other tools in the sense that you can create Links, Hand-ins, Tests and Forums. In addition you can upload any files and create Fronter documents, pages, learning paths etc.

**How to create an element/document in the Resource tool**
Click the *Create* button inside the Resource tool (or folder), and from the drop-down menu select what sort of element you want to create.

1) The Fronter documents are: *Fronter document* with one or multiple authors, *page, article, test, learning path, link, sound recording, forum and list* (of hyper links). Please note that these are “alive within Fronter” and not for downloading to a storage device.

2) Click *External document* to create a Microsoft Office or Open Office document, providing you have at least one of these options installed on your computer. These can later be downloaded and stored on a physical device.

3) The document can be a 3rd party item –like *Creaza or EQUELLA* which are integrated with Fronter as part of a plus pack agreement, and are not available to all. These elements will exist in Creaza/EQUELLA and there will be a link in the Resource tool.
For details about the elements; see the quick help (described in the end of this document).

**How to create different sort of folders in the Resource**

Click the *Folder* button from inside the resource tool, and select folder type from the drop-down menu:

Select folder type. **Regular folder** creates a sub folder that is a replica of the original. **Hand-in** gives an overview of all the students in the room (write access) whether they have submitted anything or not and gives an option for the teacher to comment and grade. **Hidden folder** is invisible for all but teacher accesses but content may still be accessible for students. Ticking the option **Individual folders** automatically creates a folder for each student in the room, to which only the student and the room owner(s) have access.

After selecting folder type, you can customise further:

1) Give a title (mandatory). The description field is often used for explaining the task or listing assessment criteria.
2) Customising is optional and described in next paragraph.
3) Attach to a learning goal, if any goals are provided.
4) Save.
5) If the folder is to contain visual files, like images, it can be a good idea to tick for Enable thumbnail view to see miniatures of the images.

How to customise the folder:
Depending on what folder type we have selected, there are different options for customising.

- **Customise opening hours**

If hand-in folder: Opening hours determines when students can submit their tasks. After end date – folder is read only. Notification is to set a time for a reminder to appear on student’s Today page (providing student/admin has added it).

If regular folder: Default is always open. If you tick for The folder is open in this period, there will appear a menu for selecting from and to.

- **Customise access**

Select by room access and select from drop-down menu which access rights in the room should get access to the content.

This folder is available to:
- Copy access limitation from the folder above
- **Select by room access:** Read/guest, Write/student, Delete/teacher, Room owner/main teacher
- Select from participant list.
- Copy access limitations to this folder to all subfolders

Or tick Select from participant list to make the folder accessible to individuals or groups. This is practical for group work and personalised education. Select the contacts that should have access to the content/to add content in the folder. **Note:** Room owner has always got access. In the example below the students Rita and Keo and the teacher Mattis will have access to the folder, while the rest of the room participants will not.
This will not change the fact that one has access but will limit or increase the options to contribute in the folder.

What a folder can contain depends on what kind of folder it is. Remove ticks if you want to prevent the uploading/creating of certain elements.

If learning goals have been provided by administrator, or teacher has created goals herself, these can be connected to the folder (or indeed any element).

Click the goal in the left frame to see the description (1). Double click or drag and drop to the right pane to select the goal.
Further help

There will be tasks to which you don’t find the answer in this guide. Fronter has a quick help system, and sets of tutorial videos as well as several pdf/html guides for special tools and functions. To access these resources, Click your name on the top menu, and then click Help.

All help files are available to all users, regardless of role and access within Fronter. There are local variations, so selecting different languages will provide different content.

Most countries provide training for teachers. See your local Fronter website, which can be accessed from http://com fronter.info. The website also features tips & tricks, sharing best practice etc.

Version control

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