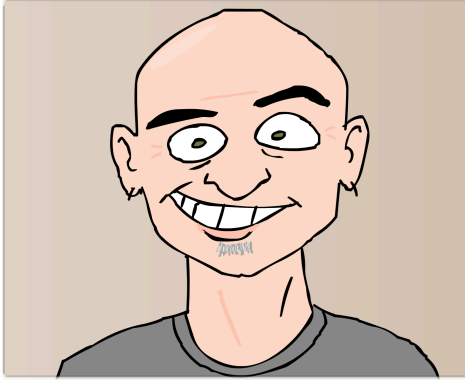


Virtual Author Visits With Ken Derby



Let's embrace the digital age and conduct an author visit on-line! Of course, nothing can replace meeting face-to-face, but if your author visit budget is tight, I can do a visit via the Internet.

If planned as carefully as an author visit is usually planned, this can be an effective way to give your students the benefits of a conventional author visit (improved motivation for reading and writing, a personal connection with the author, etc.) at a fraction of the cost.

Thanks to a webcam and some free software, your students will be able to virtually meet and talk with me, ask questions, and learn about my books and the writing life. Of course, this visit will still require planning and preparation on the part of each class involved. Ideally, all the students should have read at least one of my books (or have it read to them), and kids would need to plan the questions they'd want to ask me, to make best use of our time together. Let's start by answering some of the more common questions you might have.

What equipment do I need for the virtual visit?

- Skype, Google Video Chat, FaceTime, or iChat software installed on your computer
- A computer connected with the Internet (preferably via high-speed modem)
- Web camera and microphone
- If you've got the technical know-how, it would also be nice to project the computer's video display onto a large screen with a data projector. This will enable more students to participate in the session by seeing me. External speakers should be attached to the computer, so that all students can hear me as well. Also, if possible, a second projector (attached to a separate computer) can be used to project my autobiographical PowerPoint presentation.
- Also, it is helpful if the web camera is aimed at the audience. This makes it easier for me to connect with the entire audience. The microphone can be arranged so that when I speak to individuals I will still see the audience in the background and the individual in the foreground.

Do I use my phone line for this visit?

No. The Virtual Author Visit is conducted entirely on-line, via your computer's Internet connection. Using one of the three applications I mentioned, we can videoconference without tying up the school's phone line.

What are these applications?

Skype, Google Video Chat, FaceTime, and iChat are free, downloadable applications you can install on your school computer. With these applications we can hold a free videoconference over the Web. That's right, free. Unlike a long-distance phone call, these programs allow you to communicate for free.

Where do I get Skype or Google Video Chat? FaceTime or iChat?

Here's the link:

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<http://www.skype.com/>

<http://www.google.com/chat/video>

Just click on the DOWNLOAD icon and choose the appropriate version (Mac or PC) for your operating system. Simple as that. If you have a Mac, then FaceTime and iChat are already installed on your computer.

How do I set up Skype?

A detailed Skype overview is available at [Skype an Author Network](#). It is very helpful and I would recommend checking it out if you aren't familiar with Skype. Basically this is what you need to do with Skype: Install the software on your computer, following the Installer prompts. This will walk you through setting up your account, including your Skype Name. (You'll later need to give me this name, so that I can call you.) Once the software is installed, make sure to check PREFERENCES to ensure that your correct video input/output and audio input/output have been selected. If you have an external webcam plugged into your USB port, you should select the "Unknown USB Audio Device" for audio input, and the "USB Video Device" for camera. A detailed explanation about how to use Google Video Chat can be found at this link:

<http://www.google.com/support/chat/bin/answer.py?answer=159499>

FaceTime instructions can be found at this link:

<http://support.apple.com/kb/ht4319>

iChat instructions can be found at this link:

<http://support.apple.com/kb/ht2515>

What's your Skype contact information?

My Skype Name is:

kenderby

My Google Video Chat Name is:

ken.r.derby@gmail.com

My FaceTime name is:

ken.r.derby@gmail.com

My iChat Name is:

kenderby@me.com

(And be sure to type it all lower case with no spaces.)

Make sure that you add me to your Contacts.

How do I use a web camera?

It's not complicated at all. Most cameras clip onto the computer screen and plug into the USB port. It's as simple as that. You can use any web camera that's compatible with your computer, and some computers come with a webcam already built in. No extra software is needed. As long as you've selected your audio and video inputs and outputs in Preferences, you're good to go.

How can I be sure this will work?

I will test the transmission with you the school day before the visit, so that we can make sure the set-up works properly. We can talk by phone as we're setting up, to walk you through it and make sure that everything is smooth. On the day of the visit, I'll call a little bit early, to ensure that the connection works.

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What happens if we have trouble connecting?

Sometimes, no matter how well we prepare, technical glitches occur. If that happens, I will reschedule my Virtual Author Visit for another time, preferably within a week of the attempted visit. No matter what, you *will* get the visit you pay for.

BEFORE THE VISIT...

Preparation is the key to a Virtual Author Visit that gets kids fired up about books and reading. Here's what you can do to ensure a successful experience:

- 1. Read “The Top Ten Ways to Ruin the First Day of School” to the kids who will be participating.** This is crucial to their having a satisfying experience. If they don't know my book, they won't care about virtually meeting me.
- 2. Have the students visit my website, www.kenderby.com.** On the site, they'll find lots of interesting information about me.
- 3. Help the students come up with questions they'd like to ask me.** You may need to guide them to devise questions about the writing process, rather than “Why do you have tattoos?” and “Do you really perform with a rock band?” Of course, these types of questions are acceptable too, as it is good for kids to see the “person” side of an author as well as the “writing” side. If you can send me some of the questions in advance, that will help me prepare my answers.
- 4. Pre-select the kids who will ask me a question during the visit** — at least ten students. I'll answer more questions if we have time for it, but ten is good to start with.
- 5. Give your kids a fun writing project!** Prior to the visit, have your students write a top ten list entitled: *The Top Ten Ways to Drive Your Teacher Crazy*. Pre-selected students can share one or two items from their list with me.

ORDERING BOOKS:

An author visit represents an excellent opportunity to get kids excited about reading. And the best way to take positive advantage of that excitement is to provide autographed books for the students while they're still fired up — on the day of the event. You can obtain the books from your nearby bookstore, or order directly from the publishers. Ideally, the books should be ordered at least two weeks before the visit to ensure that they'll be on-hand that day. You'll find ordering links on my web site. Prior to the visit, I can email an autograph page that kids can slip into their books.

Here's the best way to handle book orders:

1. Read one of my books to the kids;
2. At least 4 weeks before the virtual visit (even earlier for international orders), pass out order forms for students to take home;
3. Collect the order forms and money;
4. At least 2 1/2 weeks before the visit (even earlier for international orders), place the book orders with either your local bookstore or the books' publishers.

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THE VIRTUAL VISIT

Format for the 40-60 Minute Visit:

I'll start by doing a short presentation about my life via a PowerPoint presentation that will be shared with the audience. A school representative will show and click through the presentation as I speak. (I'll share the download link to the slideshow a few days prior to the author visit.) Then we'll take a break for 2-3 questions. After that, I'll read a top ten list from *The Top 10 Ways to Ruin the First Day of School*. Then I'll answer the remaining questions after my reading. After questions have been answered, selected students will share an item or two from their top ten list with me and I will comment on them. To wrap up, I'll have some concluding remarks. If time permits, I may read a short story I recently wrote. *When it's time for the kids to ask their questions, be sure they stand close enough to the mike and camera so that I can see and hear them clearly.*

Format for the 20-30 Minute Visit:

I'll introduce myself to the kids and have a brief chat about myself, Budapest, etc. Then I'll read a top ten list from *The Top 10 Ways to Ruin the First Day of School*. Then I'll answer questions after my reading. *When it's time for the kids to ask their questions, be sure they stand close enough to the mike and camera so that I can see and hear them clearly.*

Format for the 10 Minute "Meet The Author" Visit:

I'll introduce myself to the kids and have a brief chat about myself, Budapest, etc. Then I'll answer questions. *When it's time for the kids to ask their questions, be sure they stand close enough to the mike and camera so that I can see and hear them clearly.*

Group size:

The number of students is limited only by their ability to see the screen. In general, I believe that Virtual Author Visits will be more effective for small groups, single classes, grade levels, or groups of up to 150.

Grade Levels:

My virtual author visit is appropriate for grades 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Cost:

Normally, it costs \$1,000 when I visit schools. However, the Virtual Author Visit costs only a fraction of that.

- Free for up to 10 minutes (Meet the Author)
- \$60 for 20-30 minutes
- \$100 for 40-60 minutes

Payments should be made before the visit, via PayPal on my website's ordering page. Or, if it is better for you, I can I send you an invoice (PDF) by email. The email will have a payment link in it. Just let me know if you prefer to receive an invoice via email and I'll make sure you get the invoice right away.

Here's a link to the ordering page on my website:

http://www.kenderby.com/Vitual_Author_Visits.html

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Are you ready to schedule your virtual author visit?

Send an e-mail to:

ken.r.derby@gmail.com

I look forward to hearing from you soon!