Second Life Guide for Learning Group Participants

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Second Life is an online, 3-D Virtual World, sometimes referred to as a Multi-User Virtual Environment (MUVE), imagined and created entirely by its residents. Since opening to the public in 2003, it has continued to grow and is now 'inhabited' by millions of residents from around the globe. We have prepared this guide with our best knowledge as teachers and researchers in other online environments.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This training guide has been split into three parts. Part 1 takes you through your first steps in achieving a Second Life by setting up your account and creating your avatar (your virtual persona in *Second Life*). Part 2 reminds you of the basic skills you require to operate in *Second Life* and enjoy the experience. Part 3 is about taking part in groups for learning in Second Life.

PART ONE: ACHIEVING A SECOND LIFE

Before you can start living your *Second Life* you need to set up your account and download the software onto your machine. The following link provides an overview to the entire process; each step has its own resource:

1.1 Creating an account

You can create and online through the *Second Life* website. The process can take up to 10 minutes. Be ready to choose a name for your avatar (which cannot be changed), bearing in mind that you will be using it for learning and teaching purposes. Your choice of surname is restricted from a set list; these will be offered to you as you register. You will need to have access to your email account as you will be sent an activation email.

1.2 Downloading the software

You need to download software (this is called 'client software') onto your machine to run *Second Life* through your broadband Internet connection. You can download it for your PC or Mac direct from *Second Life*.

1.3 Installing the Software

Installing the software is quite quick depending upon your machine specifications. You can find information on the minimum systems requirements visit on the under download on the Second Life website. Please make sure that you have administrative permission (if required in your institution) on the PC you wish to use before you begin the installation.

1.4 Logging On

To log unto second life make sure you have you second life name and password read. Enter this information is the boxes provided and click submit.

1.5 Orientation Island

This is the first island (environment) you encounter in *Second Life*. It has been designed to teach you the basic skills required to move, interact and engage in *Second Life*. Once you have acquired these skills and you choose to leave Orientation Island please be aware that you cannot return there! There are four basic skills required to enable you to leave Orientation Island. An on-screen tutorial will guide you through the stages to acquire these skills: be prepared to spend 30 minutes on this process.

1.6 Getting Help

Getting help is easy both in these initial stages and once inside the *Second Life* environment itself. You can find more information on the support in Second Life page. There is also a whole complex in *Second Life* ready to help known as "Help Island". You can ask your fellow avatars, they are usually forthcoming with useful advice.

PART TWO: OPERATING IN SECOND LIFE

At this stage you should have successfully set up your account, downloaded the software and acquired the basic skills on Orientation Island. Part 2 of the guide will help you practise some of the key skills required to live productively in *Second Life*.

2.1 Familiarisation with the Media Zoo

This is one of the first things you should do upon leaving Orientation Island. You can watch the short Youtube video (http://youtube.com/watch?v=y7TMQzzFFdQ) but for a real experience (even in a virtual environment!) there is nothing like actually visiting the Media Zoo Island itself: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Media%20Zoo/170/150/17

2.2 Tool Bars

Tool Bars in *Second Life* can be found at the top and bottom of the screen. We focus on the 'Bottom Bar' as these are useful shortcuts. It consists of the following buttons:

- **IM** — opens the Instant Message panel. If you have any unread instant message from other Second Life residents, you'll see their names on tabs along the bottom of the panel. Click on the tabs to read the instant message from the named resident.

- **Chat** — opens the chat box for typing text, but pressing the Enter key is much simpler and has the same effect.

- **Friends** — opens a panel listing all the Second Life people who've agreed to be your friend and tells you who is currently online. It acts as a small administrative tool for common Second Life actions such as sending instant messages and offering teleports to your current location.

- **Fly** — is quite useful despite the convenient keyboard shortcuts (F=Fly, E=Up, C=Down). Clicking on it to stop flying will let you watch an animation of your avatar falling for a hard landing!

- **Snapshot** — opens the Snapshot Preview panel for taking snaps of the virtual world. Set all the options, such as snapshot size, resolution, image quality etc.

- **Build** — opens the Build panel, and it's active only if the land you're on allows building a sandbox area or your own land.

- **Mini-Map -** opens a mini-map, it can be useful when trying to find your way to somewhere, or in busy, crowded areas such as commercial or entertainment complexes.

- **Map** — opens a resizable map of the SL world. It includes search functions and is an interface for instant travel; double clicking on any spot teleports your avatar to that location.

- **Inventory** — opens the Inventory panel and shows your content "i.e. things that belong to you and you can use. CTRL + I is the shortcut.

2.3 Movement

Movement is not restricted in *Second Life*, you can walk, run and use vehicles just as in real-life but you can also fly. If you are new to *Second Life*, movement is a tricky but important skill and needs practice and patience.

2.4 Communicating

Communication in *Second Life* is made easier with people generally being friendlier than in real life. There are various methods for communicating, but for the purposes of this guide we'll stick to text and audio.

- **Text** communication is in the form of synchronous chat, by typing in the field and pressing 'Enter' you can have a conversation with avatars around you. This is limited to about a 20 metre radius. There is also the ability to Instant Message avatars so they receive messages even if they are not online at the same time as you.

- **Audio** communication is rather new to *Second Life* and is marginally used at present, but is a powerful tool. You need to change some settings and

have access to some speakers and a microphone in order to take advantage.

2.5 Searching

Searching is an important skill you need for exploring fully the opportunities available to you in *Second Life*. There are various ways to search, but remember to choose the correct tab from the search options, as you can search for groups, people, places, classifieds, etc.

2.6 Inventory

This is your storage system in *Second Life* where note cards, landmarks, clothes and objects are all stored. It is important to keep this organised because the more places you visit and the more objects you interact with the more information you will be offered.

2.7 Objects

Objects are common in *Second Life,* and most are interactive. You can tell by hovering your cursor over the object and it will tell you to either left or right click (Mac equivalent is 'Command' Click). This will bring up the Pie Menu which can differ depending upon the objects.

2.8 Identity

The identity of your avatar is very important in *Second Life.* When you first register you will have chosen from a set list of appearances. If you'd like to change your appearance at any time you can find information from the HELP page. Your profile can also be developed. If you right click on any avatar you can view its profile from the Pie Menu.

2.9 Teleporting & Landmarks

Teleporting and landmark are useful skills to develop. If you come across a useful place then save it as a 'Landmark' for easy return journeys. Teleporting to and from places saves a lot of travel time. If you visit the Media Zoo Island, for example, there are interactive maps that allow you to teleport across the island so this is not just something to be used when moving around or between different islands.

2.10 Snapshots

This is the term used when you want to take pictures of your activities in *Second Life*. Using the camera controls you can be very creative in taking a variety of different snapshots.

2.11 Camera Controls

Camera control enables you to view objects and avatars around you as well as to take close up snapshots. As you begin to increase your skills in *Second Life* you will find more and more benefits to using this tool.

2.12 Events

Many events take place in *Second Life*. It is important that you spend the time engaging with some of these different events before you start to facilitate your own.

2.13 Code of Conducts

We point you to the computer codes of conduct, but of course you must expect to behave across the board as you would in any learning or social environments. Bear in mind that harassment and non-discrimination policies also apply to code of conduct.

2.14 Some SL-netiquette from experience:

What's special about *Second Life* is that each individual can represent themselves as an avatar in the way they wish. Demanding that they tell you who they really are, why they have chosen to represent themselves in a particular way, why they have chosen a particular name and so on is considered inappropriate (however curious you are). It's a great lesson in tolerance for us all to relate to others as they choose to show themselves.

2.15 Some minimum rules for everyone:

The Second Life developers, a company called Linden Labs, have outlined their own terms and conditions for using their software. The rules and etiquette in *Second Life* are similar to those in other environments: there are "Community Standards", or, looked at another way, six cardinal sins, which, if you commit any of them, may result in your account being suspended or terminated.

- **Intolerance:** just like in real life, being derogatory or demeaning with regard to another person's race, ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation is a big no-no.

- **Harassment:** can take many forms in a virtual world, but the forms have a common denominator: someone gets upset. If you see your actions or words are upsetting someone, stop.

- **Assault:** this includes pushing, shooting and shoving another *Second Life* resident.

- **Disclosure:** information about another resident can be freely shared only if it is displayed in the resident's profile or if you have the affected resident's consent to share extra information. This includes residents' real life data as well as their conversation logs with their prior consent.

- **Indecency:** if what you want to do can be offensive to other people do it on private land in matured areas.

- **Disturbing the peace:** don't be a pest. Every resident is entitled to an enjoyable, peaceful *Second Life.*

3.1 Group Roles for Avatars

It's helpful and inclusive for all avatars if you lightly assign some roles to help the group working along. We suggest you check at the beginning of the activities that each of the following roles are covered, either by a student or a tutor.

Role	Responsibilities	Tips
Facilitator	Include all participants, remind at beginning and occasionally throughout of objectives of event.	Try and make sure every avatar 'speaks' (or writes) once before anyone speaks for a second time. Invite specific responses if anyone has been quiet for a long period. Encourage everyone to be clear about what point they are referring to. See below for weaving and summarising
Technical supporter	Offer technical help or point to help.	Try to avoid offering a 'technical' fix for every issue or intervening unnecessarily. Follow up on anyone who drops out during the event.
Pacer	Secure a brief agenda and try and help the group get through it.	Let the group know 5 minutes and 1 minute before the end of the event. And the end.
Summarising	Get permission for any recordings and postings. Secure the recording or transport. Post it and let people know where it is.	Remind everyone what happens following the event. Remind anyone who has offered resources or follow up.
Contributor	EVERYONE	Acknowledge and admire contributions of others. Be concise with your own. Weave.

3.2 Communicating in SL

Method	Characteristics	Suggested Use	Action
Personal IM	Asynchronous, private, awaits the log on of recipient	One to One	
Text Chat	Synchronous	Groups	Say the avatars name or a word or two about the issue you are responding to, use gestures too, e.g. waving

Audio Chat	Synchronous, proximity required (similar to first life)	Groups	Say the avatars name or a word or two about the issue you are responding to, use gestures too e.g. clapping
Presentation	Synchronous, proximity required. May be time lags between visuals and voice.	Ione to many	

3.3 Referencing and acknowledging:

All the usual rules and courtesies apply in Second Life, as in any other face to face or online environment. For example:

3.3.1 Lifting and copying:

Everyone who is contributing to a group discussion should be aware of whether the dialogue is being recorded, who will have access to it afterwards and for what purpose, and agree to it or ask to be excluded if necessary. Ask permission of the owner of a Second Life site if you take a photo. Either block out the name of the avatars or ask their permission.

3.3.2 Referencing:

If you then wish to refer to the discussion be 100% clear on the source of information, and use all the usual protocols. You may need also to ask whether or not an avatar wishes to be represented as his/her own name. Here's an example:

> A major change on Second Life compared to the face to face environment is that each individual is able to create a visual representation of him or herself with which to interact with others. Indeed, people with experience in online games claim "...my experience over three years as a gamer is that identity is by far the biggest issue in establishing working groups where the participants are represented as avatars" (Paulette Pratt, as Lioness Rider 2008).

Pratt, P. (2008) Stated by avatar Lioness Rider in LR100 group discussion in the Media Zoo Island on Second Life on 20th April 2008.

3.4 Group building

Each avatar can help to establish a more productive group by:

· Creating a sense of belonging

· Generating a sense of trust and openness

· Handling conflict in a constructive way

· Establishing a spirit of cooperation

- Creating interest in, commitment to and enthusiasm for the subject and learning more about it, all of which contribute to everyone's engagement and willingness to learn.

Note: Always let someone know in advance if you cannot attend or might be late for a SL event.
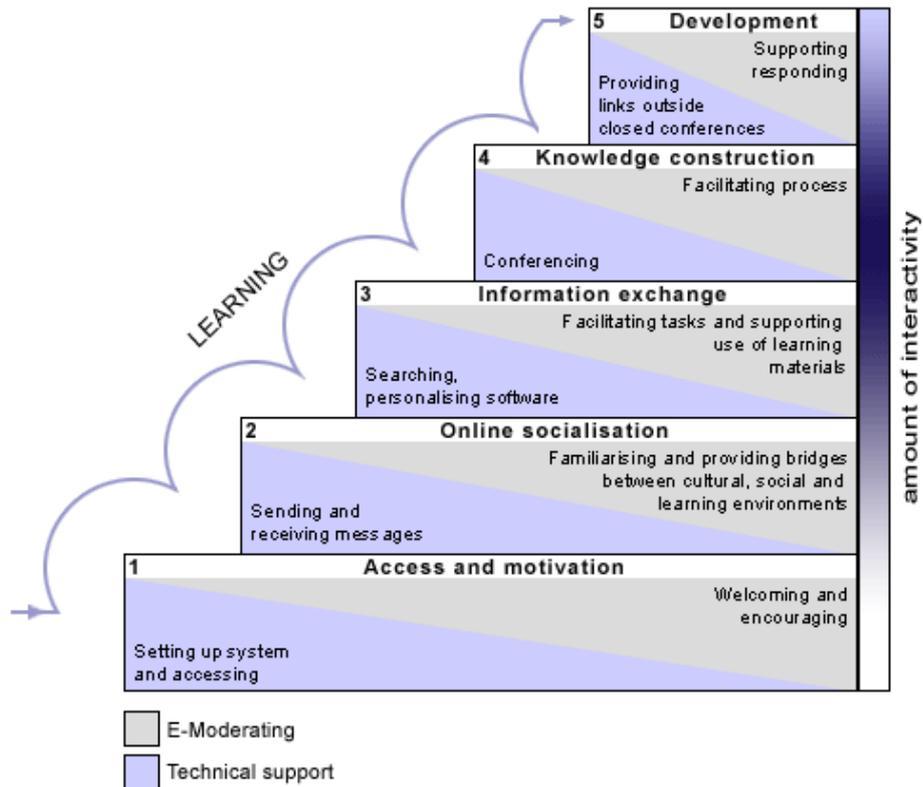
3.5 Culture in Second Life groups:

There are two motives for groups of people to work together. One is self-interest and the other common interest. The first can be promoted through extrinsic factors, such as incentives, but the second needs trust and mutual respect. So from the start your group will need to seek a climate of strong enhancement of the well-being of the whole group, based on respect and support for each other's avatars rather than corner cutting in the service of instrumental personal goals. In this way, intrinsic motivators will gradually emerge and learning be promoted.

Some people assume that varying cultural backgrounds and experiences from participants in learning groups result in very different approaches to learning and make group work difficult. But it is extremely difficult to get to know and understand someone else's culture and attempts to do this can result in unhelpful stereotypical views. Instead we hope that in SL where each individual is represented as an avatar it will be easier to promote interest and respect for the backgrounds of all participants. What we know about SL so far is that avatars are very adaptable and able to respond to challenges and new opportunities. Our aim is to build a 'third culture' within SL which values different perspectives and strokes. We suggest that you aim for such a culture in your avatar group.

3.6 Structuring Group work:

Any group, whether in real or *Second Life,* needs structure to help the members work together. We use two structures and a set of guidelines. The **five-stage model** has 15 key components, three at each stage:

5 **Development**
Supporting responding
Providing links outside closed conferences

4 **Knowledge construction**
Facilitating process
Conferencing

3 **Information exchange**
Facilitating tasks and supporting use of learning materials
Searching, personalising software

2 **Online socialisation**
Familiarising and providing bridges between cultural, social and learning environments
Sending and receiving messages

1 **Access and motivation**
Welcoming and encouraging
Setting up system and accessing

LEARNING

amount of interactivity

☐ E-Moderating
☐ Technical support

Gilly Salmon, *All Things in Moderation*, <http://www.atimod.com/e-tivities/5stage.shtml>

·   Technical understanding of the platform (enough to use it for an activity)

·   Benefits for learning

·   Benefits for moderating

3.7 SL-tivities:

SL-tivity stands for Second Life learning activities. The key features are:

·   A small piece of information, stimulus or challenge (the 'spark')

·   Online activity which includes individual avatars posting a contribution

·   An interactive or participative element such as responding to the contributions of others

·   Summary, feedback or critique from an SL-moderator

Note: We suggest that groups of 4-6 initially. But this does mean you must commit to turning up for each event! You can expect feedback to your group from your SL-moderator and time left for this.

There are some skills you may find helpful to practice:

3.7.1 Acknowledging and 'hearing'

- 'Listen' carefully to other avatars (this might mean hear or read)

- Take opportunity to acknowledge- you can do this 'physically' in Second Life, e.g. nod, clap, jump or dance!

3.7.2 Weaving:

The purpose of 'weaving' is to extract and then pull together contributions from different participants and re-present them for examination by the group. Look out for opportunities to do this. You will find other avatars are very appreciative and admiring of people who can do this.

3.7.3 Summarising:

The purposes of summarising are to:

- Refocus discussion

- Signal closure

- Acknowledge contributions

- Reinforce and highlight issues

- Provide a 'spark' for a new SL-tivity

- Provide resources for an archive

In SL, the advantage of using text chat is that you can cut and paste the whole group interchange from the SL text chat box into a word document for summarising later.

How to summarise

- o Collect all the relevant messages up into one document (e.g., copy and paste).

- o Look through it to identify the most commonly occurring theme and copy one entry that captures this best to the top of the page or precis it in a sentence or three (maximum).

- o Delete all references to that theme from the copied messages. Repeat the process until you have all the common themes from the contributions.

- o Edit the emerging summary: shorten the sentences, delete all unnecessary material.

- o Add further information if you wish, making your sources clear.

3.9 Referencing and acknowledging

All the usual rules and courtesies apply in Second Life, as in any other face to face or online environment.

3.9.1 Lifting and copying:

Everyone who is contributing to a group discussion should be aware of whether the dialogue is being recorded, who will have access to it afterwards and for what purpose, and agree to it or ask to be excluded if necessary.

Additional comments and recommendations:

- Ask permission of the owner of a SL site if you take a photo. Either block out the name of the avatars or ask their permission.

- Avatar identity: SL offers wonderful opportunities for exploring individual identity, and every effort will be made to accommodate these opportunities. Students will be allowed to choose the avatar that they prefer, including animal shapes and/or opposing genders; however, an avatar should not be offensive or unduly distracting. For example, avatars should wear appropriate clothing at all times; or to cite a second example, if a student decides to come to class as a dragon, he/she should not be shooting flames at other students.

- Avatar Movement: You may want to practice moving your avatar or character in SL before you begin class (see earlier in this guide). Be sure to check the "Camera Controls" and "Movement Controls" options under the View menu at the top of the screen. These controls will help you see yourself and move around more easily. Avoid bumping into other avatars.

Appendix

__Developing Protocols__

The following have been creatively swiped and adapted from the University of New Orleans. http://www.cola.uno.edu/secondlife/protocol.cfm

At this stage they are suggestions from us- we'd appreciate your discussing them and letting us know how they work for you in practice.

- The student shall take responsibility for having access to the technology required to work in SL, including voice communication, and for addressing any technical issues that arise. The University may make available some computers for work in SL, but the student should not rely on this option.

- Students shall comport themselves in the SL classroom in a manner consistent with established University guidelines for regular classrooms, and the sanctions for violation of these guidelines that exist in the real-life classroom setting will pertain to SL. In addition, specific to SL, students shall not show or use in class any device or script that can be used to damage the site or distract other students.

- The usual University privacy policies shall remain in effect for SL students.

- All existing University provisions regarding academic honesty pertain to SL—to wit, the student enrolled in the class must in fact be the student operating the avatar during class.