



<http://www.123greetings.com/>

Sending ecards (electronic cards) can be one of the best and easiest ways to break the ice at the beginning of a new school year, even among students who have already been together in previous classes. It can also be an engaging and motivating activity to welcome new students who have just joined the group in a new school.

There are various websites from which students can send different types of ecards to one another, as, for example, birthday greeting cards, thank you cards, invitations, friendship cards, etc.

For the purposes of using ecards as an icebreaker activity, I recommend the ones that focus on general themes such as “have a great day”, “smile and be happy” or “just say hi”, amongst others. Check the ones below.

<http://www.123greetings.com/general/hi/>

[http://www.123greetings.com/cute\\_cards/smile/](http://www.123greetings.com/cute_cards/smile/)

[http://www.123greetings.com/general/have\\_a\\_great\\_day/](http://www.123greetings.com/general/have_a_great_day/)



Figure 1: Types of messages that can be sent



If you want, you can listen to what you've just read about ecards. Access this site: <http://tinyurl.com/123greetings-portal-reinildes>

## First things first

Discuss the idea of exchanging ecards with classmates to get them excited for the new school year. Listen to your students' opinion. Let them express what they feel about greeting classmates through ecards. Ask them if they've already sent e-messages to friends and family before.

Either in the school lab or as homework, ask the students to visit sites from which they can send ecards. The ones above can be recommended. Tell them they are free to visit other sites with the same purpose.

Debate about what they found out on the internet. Did they like the ecards? Who will they send ecards to from now on? Which sites would they recommend? Which will be among their favorites?

Then ask students to exchange email addresses in the classroom. A blank page can be passed around and each student would write down his/her email address. One or two students could assume the responsibility to type all addresses and send them via an egroup to the whole class, for instance.

## Sending the ecard

1. Access the site: [www.123greetings.com](http://www.123greetings.com) (or any other of your choice).
2. Choose the theme: *Everyday cards: Hi* or *Cute cards: smile* or *Cute cards: Hugs*.
3. When the page pops up, choose the card.
4. Fill out the form (see below). Your name; Your email address; Your classmate's name; His/Her email address. Add a short message. Preview your card. Send it.

The image shows a web form titled "Send this ecard now". The form contains several input fields and a button. Annotations with red arrows point to specific fields and the button:

- A red arrow points to the "Message (optional)" field with the text "Add a message if you want to." below it.
- A red arrow points to the "Receiver's name" field with the text "Type here your classmate's name." below it.
- A red arrow points to the "Receiver's email" field with the text "Type here your classmate's email address." below it.
- A red arrow points to the "Send now" button with the text "Click here to send it" above it.

The form fields are filled with the following text:

- Sender's name: Reinildes
- Sender's email: reinildes@gmail.com
- Receiver's name: (empty)
- Receiver's email: (empty)
- Message (optional): (empty)
- Deliver on: 07/14/2011 [Today]

Figure 2: Form to be filled out before sending an ecard

Exchanging ecards can become routine among your students. Encourage them to send e-messages to different classmates on different occasions Easter, Birthday, Halloween or even for the fun of it through “thank you cards”; “best friends” or “congratulations cards”, for instance. Your students will be engaged in true-to-life situations to learn English meaningfully. Meaningful exchanges of messages will motivate them to use English for real communicative purposes. Let’s always remember that they are native speakers of the new language of technology! Let’s give them the chance to use it at it’s full potential to learn English.

It’s also a good idea to discuss the discourse and linguistic characteristics of the genre “ecard”. Students should learn how they are created, for whom, for what purpose etc. Many aspects of this genre can be worked on so students learn how to write them on their own.

**Last but not least:** we, English teachers, should encourage students to use English for communicative purposes. They’ll learn more by exchanging ecards than by doing “fill in the blanks” exercises that have no meaning for them. Let them speak the language they need to really communicate with classmates, friends and family. Let them use their digital skills to learn English. As I always say, *less downloads and more uploads.*

**Digital tools for learning English! Let’s go for them! Our students deserve the best! Less downloads and more uploads!**

