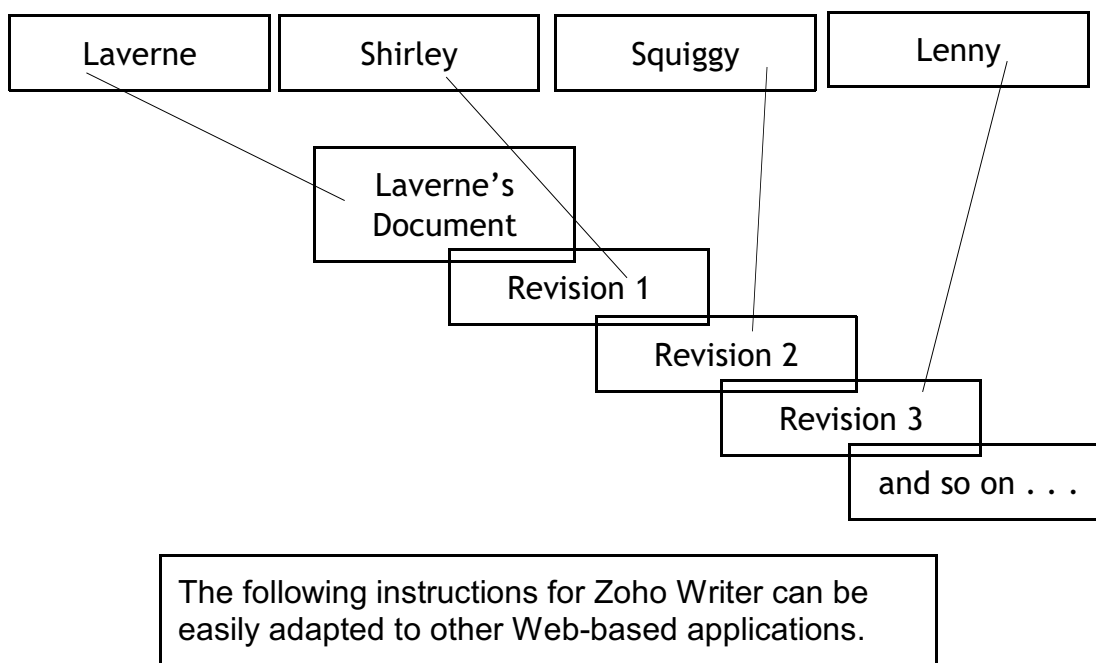


Using Web-based Office Applications for Group Activities

The coming of the Web 2.0 has made available a number of Web-based office applications that can be used for collaborative projects. Google Docs¹ and Spreadsheets and Zoho's office suite provide useful tools for instructors who want to assign group activities but who don't have access to a learning management system or who don't want to spend the time setting up an online course for one Web-based exercise. Web-based office applications are also excellent add-on tools in learning management systems such as SLN that don't have tools that allow students to work together in a single document.

Strategies for Collaboration

There are two approaches to setting up group activities in a Web-based application: you can create one account that all members of the group use, so that any group member can edit any document in the account; or each member can create his or her own account and the creator of each document can control who else has edit rights to that document. In either approach, the editing activity looks something like this:



Setting Up a Group Activity Using Multiple Accounts

Zoho Writer is a Web-based word processor that is ideal for group projects. Documents can be set for shared access and real time or asynchronous editing by the group. Zoho Writer documents can then be exported in a number of file formats, including Word, PDF, and HTML.

Each member of the group works in his or her own Zoho Writer account. Group leaders or instructors import a document file to their own account first, then give other members of the

¹ Google Docs is the Web-based word processor formerly known as Writely.com.

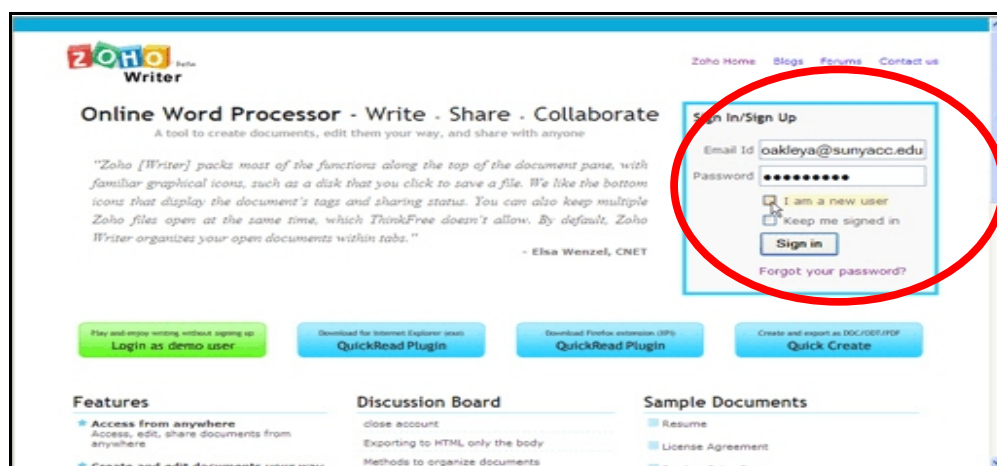
group access to that document using Zoho Writer's **Share** function. Then group members can access that document through a link in their individual accounts.²

Follow these steps to use Zoho Writer:

Step 1: Create a Zoho Writer Account

Each member of the group (as well as the instructor, if this is a class project) needs a personal Zoho Writer account:

1. Open the Zoho Writer home page at <http://www.zohowriter.com> and create your personal account using your college or SLN email address as your Zoho Writer username.
2. Create a unique password; don't use your college network or SLN password.



Step 2: Collect Email Addresses

In order to share documents in Zoho Writer the group leader or instructor needs to know the email addresses that the other members of the group used to create their Zoho Writer accounts:

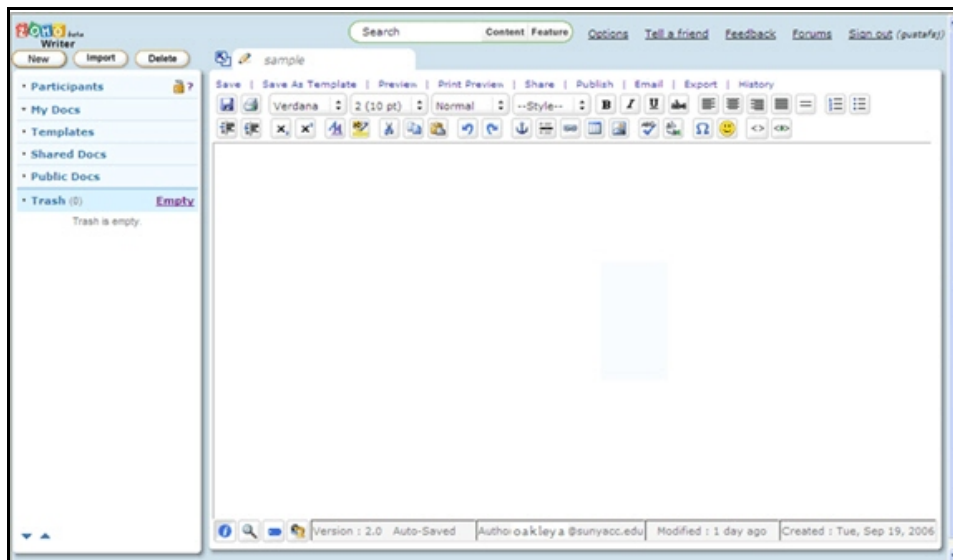
1. The group leader or instructor should collect all the email addresses and create a Zoho file listing the members' names and email addresses to have at the ready.
2. If more than one member of the group will be posting documents for other members to work on, the group leader or instructor should use the **Share** function in Zoho Writer itself distribute this email list to other members. (See **Step 4** for **Share** instructions.)

Step 3: Create or Post Documents

1. Log into Zoho Writer.

² A document file doesn't actually reside in any one Zoho account folder, as it would on the C: drive of your computer, for example; it resides at the Zoho site, where individuals with access rights to that file can open it.

2. Click on the **New** button to create a new document from scratch in Zoho Writer or click on the **Import** button to import an existing file.



Zoho Writer editing interface

Step 4: Share a Document

1. In Zoho Writer, open the document you wish to share.
2. Click on the **Share** tab and enter the email address for each member of the group separated by a comma: shirley@sunycampus.edu, squiggy@sunycampus.edu, and so on. You can copy/paste these addresses from the email list file you saved in Zoho.

Each member of the group will receive an automated message to the email address used with her or his Zoho Writer account: the message will contain the link to the shared document.

Step 5: Let the Group Activity Begin!

Group members can access the shared document one of two ways:

- They can click on the link to the document from the automated email message and log into Zohowriter. The document will then open. Then they should open the **Shared Docs** folder to find the shared document.
- They can open Zoho Writer in their browser from the Zoho Writer URL or from its bookmark/favorite. Then they should open the **Shared Docs** folder to find the shared document.



N.B.! As of this writing there is one significant difference between Zoho Writer and Google Docs: For revisions of shared documents, Google Docs identifies the creator of each revision. Zoho Writer does not. Zoho programmers, aware that customers want this feature, are planning to add it soon. However, like a wiki, both products maintain a revision history from which any previous version of the document can be accessed.

Preliminary Activities

Whether your course is classroom-based or online, give students an exercise to set up their accounts and to introduce them to the technical “how-to’s” of working in Zoho Writer prior to requiring them do graded work in Zoho Writer:

1. Collect email addresses by asking students to use their college email address to send a message to your college or SLN email address.
2. Then asks students to create Zoho Writer accounts using their college email address:
 - In a classroom-based course, **Reply** to the student’s message with your own message containing the link to the Zoho Writer home page.
 - In an online course, follow the email collection exercise with an exercise that provides the link to the Zoho Writer home page.

(Please warn students NOT to use their college passwords when creating the Zoho account. They should make up another password only they know.) Direct students to bookmark/make a favorite of the Zoho Writer login page.

3. Do a dry run to make sure students have created their accounts and know how to access and work in shared documents:
 - In your own Zoho Writer account create a document and name it **Test**. Add instructions similar to the following:

To confirm that your Zoho Writer account is working and that you can access shared documents, add your name to the list, followed by the date. **Save** your work and **sign out** of Zoho Writer.

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- With this document still opened, click on the **Share** tab and enter the email address for each students separated by a comma: jonesj@sunycampus.edu,smithj@sunycampus.edu, and so on.
- Tell students that they will be receiving an automated email message in their college email accounts from Zoho Writer announcing that you have shared a document with them. Direct them to save this message. Then ask students to click on the link in the message to access the **Test** document and add their name and date to the class list.

Walk groups through these preliminary steps for any collaborative activity. Making sure that members understand how to use the technology before they begin any substantive work is always a good idea.

“One for All” Group Activities

A “one for all” activity is the easiest to set up. The group leader creates one account in Zoho Writer and everybody uses that email address and password to access that single Zoho Writer account. Everybody can import and export documents or create documents from scratch in Zoho Writer and everybody can edit everybody else’s documents. Multiple authors drafting a policy statement is one good use of a “one for all” activity. Again, the group leader should create a unique password for use by the group. Don’t use college or personal passwords for a group account!

The “one for all” has the potential to become a free-for-all. To avoid chaos, give group members very specific instructions about accessing documents in the account. For instance:

- Should everybody be working on the same document or should they be submitting individual drafts?
- May all members of the group add comments to documents assigned to subgroups?
- May they write comments directly in the body of the draft as an editor might or should they add their comments to the end of the draft?
- If group members are to export their work, what file format should they use: Word? RTF? PDF?

Also direct group members to identify their contributions. For instance, instruct them to type their name before their comments, for example:

[Annie Oakley’s comments: I like the opening sentence. It really grabbed my attention.]

or after their comments, for example:

[I liked the opening sentence. It really grabbed my attention. --Annie O.]

Members can also use Zoho Writer’s **Background Color** tool to set their comments apart from the draft itself .

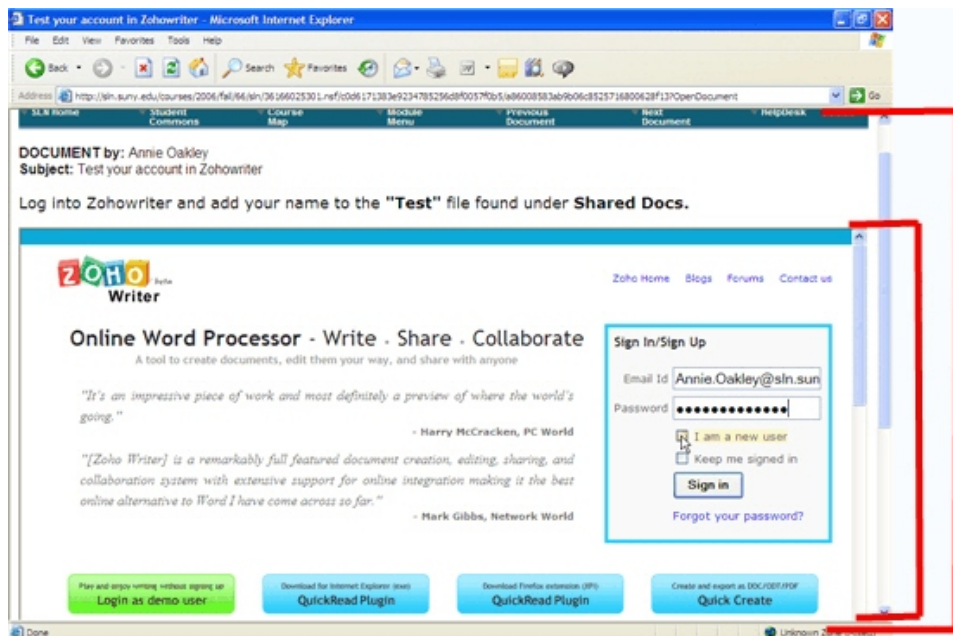
This page was deliberately left blank.

Setting Up a Group Assignment in Lotus Notes for SLN:

If small groups are to submit a group document for evaluation at the end of the assignment, set up the assignment in Notes using a small group written assignment document. Otherwise, use a standard "0" document. Post the instructions for the assignment, including the name of the file they should be working on in their Zoho Writer **Shared Docs** folder and how the group should submit their final draft: They can export their Zoho Writer document in the Word or RTF format, then submit it as a file; or they can copy/paste into a Create an Assignment text box.

Then add a link to the Zoho Writer login page: <http://www.zohowriter.com>

You can also make the Zoho Writer login page open directly into the Notes page. Students can then work in Zoho Writer while never leaving the original assignment page³:



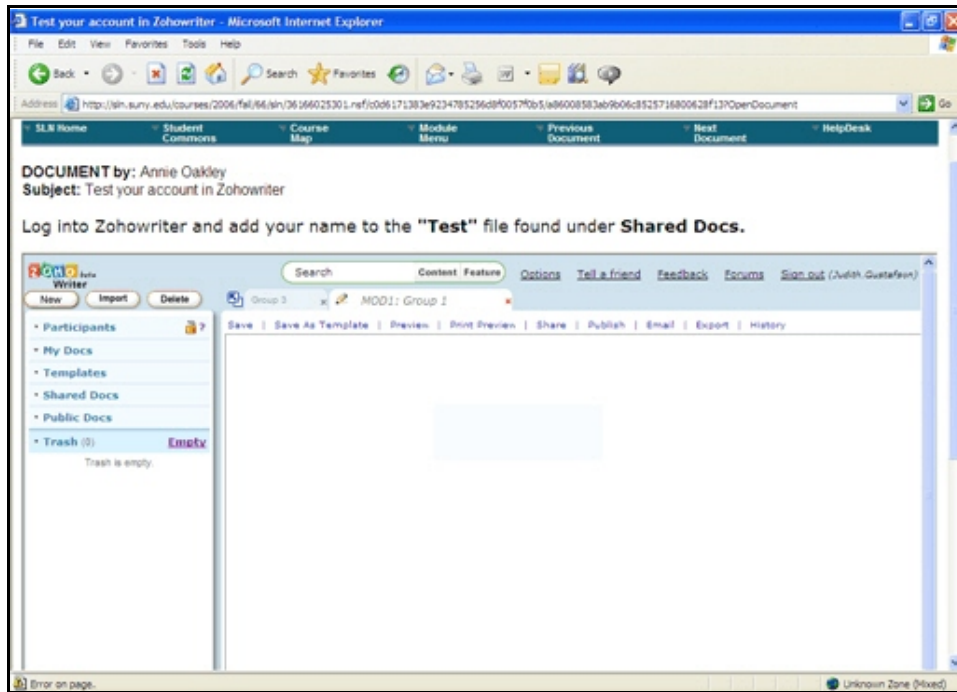
Zoho Writer login page inside SLN course document

To "embed" the Zoho Writer home page into a Notes document, use the HTML `<iframe></iframe>` tags. Type the following code at the point in your Notes document in which you want Zoho Writer to open. You must type this code using the Default sans serif 10pt font:

```
[<iframe src="http://www.zohowriter.com" height=100% width=100%></iframe>]
```

³ At ACC, Zoho Writer instead of Writely.com/Google Docs was selected for use in SLN courses because Zoho pages open and remain in the "frame" of an SLN course page. Writely/Docs pages open into new windows. Any open window is an invitation to leave the course itself. Of course, students can also access Zoho Writer directly from its URL or from its bookmark/favorite in their browser.

After students log in, the editing interface appears in the SLN course page:



Zoho Writer editing interface

SLN Ice-breaker Activities:

Activity 1: Send Email Addresses

Ask students to find their college email address and give it to you in their private folders.

Activity 2: Create a Zoho Writer Account

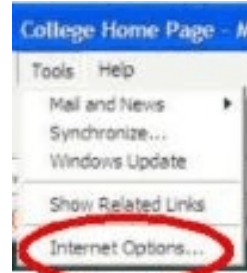
In a new document, post the link to the Zoho Writer login page and ask students to create Zoho Writer accounts using their college email address. (Please warn them NOT to use their college passwords when creating the Zoho account. They should make up another password only they know.) Direct students to bookmark/make a favorite of the Zoho Writer login page.

If you are using the “embedded” login page, direct students to add Zoho Writer as a Trusted Site in Internet Explorer (you can copy/paste the following table into a Notes page)⁴:

1. In the Internet Explorer menu bar, click on Tools .	 <p>Step 1</p>
---	--

⁴ As of this writing, an embedded Zoho Writer login page won't function unless Internet Explorer recognizes it is a “trusted site.” At some point, Zoho programmers will rewrite their code to make adding Zoho as an IE “trusted site” unnecessary.

2. Then click on **Internet Options**.

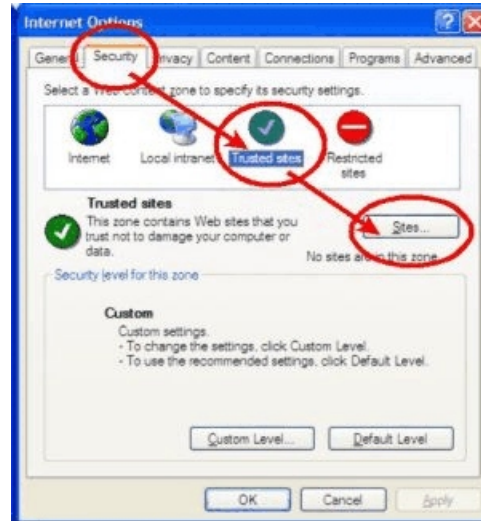


Step 2

3. In the *Internet Options* dialog box, select the **Security** tab.

4. In the *Security* tab, click on **Trusted Sites**.

5. Then click on the **Sites** button.



Steps 3 -5

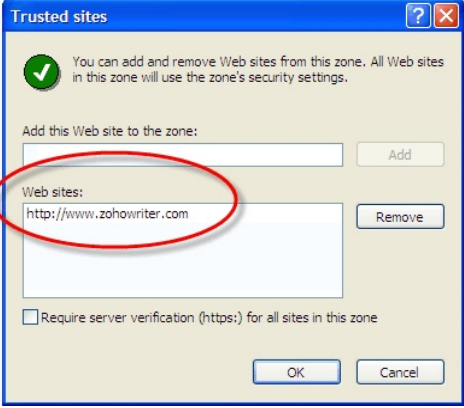
6. In the *Trusted Sites* dialog box, find the **Add this Web site to the zone:** box and type in `http://www.zohowriter.com`

7. Uncheck the *Require server verification* option.

8. Then click the **Add** button.



Steps 6 -8

<p>The Web sites: box should now contain a listing for http://www.zohowriter.com</p> <p>9. Click the OK button.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Step 9</p>
<p>10. Then click OK again to close the <i>Internet Options</i> dialog box.</p>	

Activity 3: Practice Using Documents in Zoho Writer

1. In your own Zoho Writer account create a document and name it **Test**. Add instructions similar to the following:

To confirm that your Zoho Writer account is working and that you can access shared documents, add your name to the list, followed by the date. **Save** your work and **sign out** of Zoho Writer.

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2. In Lotus Notes, create a “0” document⁵ that includes a link to the Zoho Writer login page or the embedded login page itself, along with instructions to
 - open the **Shared Docs** folder
 - open the document named **Test**
 - add your name and date to the list
 - **save** the file and **sign out** of Zoho Writer.

⁵ For other assignments, what type of “0” document or small group starter document you choose depends on what else you want students to do with the Zoho Writer activity: Do they need to discuss content before working on a document? Do groups need to submit a final product for evaluation? Need they do anything at all beside work in Zoho Writer?