FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUERIES AND ADVICES

I'm not used to using a computer. Perhaps i-d-e-e is not for me!

When designing and developing i-d-e-e, we gave special consideration to teachers who don't have a lot of experience working with computers! This is why we have strived from the very start to create something that is comprehensive, but at the same time as simple and intuitive to use as possible. For us, the biggest challenge was not choosing which technologies to combine in i-d-e-e, but making sure that the platform itself was easy to use.

As well as having a basic design which is as user-friendly as possible, i-d-e-e includes information (i) at frequent intervals, in order to provide constant help to teachers and students.

- There are also other resources available, which are constantly being developed, that are designed to help you navigate the i-d-e-e platform:
- This comprehensive list of FAQs, which has been compiled with the help of your suggestions.
- Tutorials, which use screenshots to give users step-by-step guidance.
- Video tutorials: a series of brief video tutorials providing users with guidance, which should help to solve virtually any problem they might have in using the i-d-e-e platform.
- Technical support, which you can access by emailing info@i-d-e-e.it.

Our advice is to start using the platform little by little. Don't panic and feel you have to learn how to use all the i-d-e-e functions straight away. Afterall, as we often say to our students, practice makes perfect.

Some of my students don't have a computer or internet access. What should I do?

There will always be some students who don't have computers or internet access, or whose internet connection is slow (i-d-e-e generally works even on older model computers or devices, as well as ones that aren't especially high-powered, and it doesn't require a high-speed internet connection). Therefore, it doesn't make sense to wait until everyone has a computer connected to the web. It'd also be a real shame to deprive those students that do have a computer of the countless advantages offered by i-d-e-e! Our advice is to register for the platform and start using it as early as possible. As the months and years go by, you'll have fewer and fewer problems, and in the meantime you'll be able to improve your lessons and the performance of the whole class, even those students who don't have computers!

What's more, nowadays there are very reasonably-priced solutions on the market, such as tablets (i-d-e-e is compatible with all operating systems) which are very cheap to buy, and smartphones with 3- 4'' screens. Lastly, internet points are always a low-cost option. In some cases, i-d-e-e might even motivate students to invest in a computer or internet connection. However, here are a few ideas of what you can do if your students can't access the platform:

- The students who can't access the platform could continue to complete their word in their paper Exercise Books. Correcting this in class will take less time and serves as revision for students who have completed their work online. Collecting results and statistics – even if this is only for some of the class – is always a useful source of information for teachers and schools.

- The interactive tests could also be printed and distributed to those students who can't complete them online. However, the fact that the online tests are automatically corrected is already a huge advantage for teachers, since it saves a great deal of time.
- Some group activities, such as using blogs, could be assigned to groups of students who have computers. Alternatively, they could be completed by mixed groups, with one member of the group – who has access to the platform – given the task of writing and uploading the results of the group work. The other students could be assigned individual tasks as well as group tasks, just as teachers would have done before i-d-e-e was created.
- The teacher could set a variety of different, personalised activities in class. Students who don't have computers could play a game (which does not usually require the constant supervision of the teacher), while the others could discuss a project that they have completed or are going to complete using the platform. However, the use of i-d-e-e and the huge benefits this brings with it should motivate those who don't have access to a computer or the internet to get connected. i-d-e-e offers a whole host of possibilities and functions. There isn't time to use all of them! One of the aims of i-d-e-e is precisely that of saving teachers time that they would normally spend correcting exercises or tests.

It is true that the i-d-e-e platform offers a huge number of possibilities, but you don't have to take advantage of all of the resources or functions. You can vary the way you manage your classes and experiment, learning about what the platform offers using a targeted approach. In other words, each teacher can decide which tools he or she wants to start using and when. Some teachers will need to create one or two interactive tests a year, while others will need to create one a week. Certain teachers will create a class blog straight away and will upload new materials to it every week, while others won't create a blog or will do it half way through the academic year, uploading materials every so often. i-d-e-e provides materials, tools and advice on how to use all of these resources, but how much use you make of them depends on how much time you have, and on the interests and requirements of your class, amongst other things.

Our advice? Try to use at least one of the platform resources, such as the tests or interactive games (either yours or Edilingua's). If possible, you could try to use a different resource with each class, even if it's just to try them out. For example, you could use the blog with one class, the tests and the interactive games with another.

I don't know where to begin! Plus at the start of the academic year there's so much to do…

The first few times you use i-d-e-e, you are bound to feel bewildered and worried about not being able to use all of the resources offered by the platform. However, you can always rely on i-d-e-e technical support (info@i-d-e-e.it) to help you resolve any difficulties you might be having.

During the first two weeks, the best thing to do is to explore the platform, and then gradually start to create your virtual classes and send messages to your students.

If when you explore the platform the virtual class hasn't been created yet, and the students have started to complete the online exercises, there's no need to worry, because the system will save their results, and when you create the virtual class it will automatically update the Gradebook. You will then have all the information relating to your students.

It is a good idea to start using i-d-e-e early, both for teachers, so that they have time to grasp the resources that are available to them, and for students, so that they can get used quickly to using virtual materials and to this blended approach to learning and studying.

I wouldn't know how to use a blog. Won't it be very time-consuming for me?

Creating a blog is incredibly simple, since we've given special consideration to people who have never created one before. As well as technical support, i-d-e-e also offers useful suggestions and advice on how to make the most of this resource to facilitate learning.

It is up to the teacher to decide how much time to spend on them. Some teachers choose to read everything that their students post and comment on it, while others post things (texts, audio clips, videos) every so often, leaving their students to work more independently. The extent to which the teacher is involved depends on how much time he or she has, but also on the expectations of the students.

Our advice is to limit the frequency of your posts to start with: it is better to give your students a nice surprise when you decide to post something, rather than disappoint them if you don't manage to keep up posting regularly.

If I use i-d-e-e, isn't it possible that I might lose sight to some extent of my students' learning?

We actually believe that the opposite is true! When you correct exercises in class, you only get a very vague idea of your students' strengths and weaknesses, given that you can only listen to the answers of one or two students for each question. However, with i-d-e-e, exercises can be automatically corrected, meaning that, as well as saving a great deal of time, teachers and schools can find out exactly what marks each student has achieved and the percentage of correct answers for each unit, exercise and grammar point. In the same way, teachers and schools can also identify exactly which errors students have made, which is not possible when correcting exercises in class. i-d-e-e contains information and statistics (known as "learning analytics"), which allow teachers to compare their own class with other classes around the world.

I don't believe in technology. Real learning takes place in the classroom!

As teachers, we too believe that real learning takes place in the classroom! And the main aim of i-d-e-e is exactly that: to allow teachers to improve the quality of their lessons. This is achieved by saving teachers time that could be spent on communicative and group activities (since exercises and tests can be corrected automatically rather than manually, for example), as well as by providing learning resources to motivate students. These resources are similar to the ones that students might use outside of the classroom to socialise, and access information and news, such as blogs and student communities. It is important to emphasise that i-d-e-e helps students to become more independent and to get to know each other better, while ensuring that they receive direct feedback about their strengths and what they need to work on.

Technology is not an end in itself. It is always used with the aim of increasing student motivation, creating a more effective and enjoyable lesson for the teacher and students, and improving learning. Educational technologies – and i-d-e-e combines the best educational technologies currently available – have the potential to help us to teach better, but they will never replace good teachers and the role that they carry out during lessons in the classroom. In other words, technology alone cannot motivate students. It is the contents, approaches and topics involved in technology that do this. The resources that i-d-e-e provides can make the journey easier, but will never replace the guide, i.e. the teacher.

There don't seem to be many access hours.

i-d-e-e access time, which is available to students who have bought the paper textbook, varies depending on the book and has been calculated in line with the number of exercises, and their difficulty and length. If the students need more access time, they can easily purchase this on the platform at very reasonable prices compared to the price of a conventional book. What's more, the school can also purchase access time for all of its students, with a discount of up to 30% on the total price and no added fees (the codes are sent via email).

Some of my students are older people, who don't know how to use a computer, and I don't think that they would be motivated by blended learning.
It is important to remember that older people today are different to older people a few years back. Many of them are connected to the internet, and are on Facebook or have a smartphone. Those who have not already been "converted" to technology have probably not had a reason to do so or don't know how to use it. i-d-e-e could be an incentive to get them interested in technology, and it is with these people in mind that we have tried to make everything as simple as possible.
It may be that some students do not realise the advantages offered by i-d-e-e (the facility to correct and mark exercises in real time, statistics showing their progress, interactive grammar and countless other resources), but you, the teacher, could be the one draw their attention to the benefits of the platform and to involve the students, discussing some of the resources during the lesson or demonstrating an example of an interactive grammar activity. With students who are sceptical about blended learning, you just need to remind them that real learning takes place in the classroom and that i-d-e-e allows each student to learn and study at their own speed.
In other words, we think that teachers should explain the advantages of the technologies available on i-d-e-e to their students, as well as the fact that these technologies aim to improve teaching and learning.

My school/institution uses a different platform. What should I do?
i-d-e-e was devised to be a flexible, hybrid system. On one hand, it can be used as the main platform and Learning Management System for your school, regardless of the size of the school or the number of students. However, it can also be used alongside and independently of other platforms.
If the institution where you work uses another system, you can still use one of the interactive Exercise Books or some of the numerous educational materials available on i-d-e-e. The virtual classes created on i-d-e-e, the results (including those for the tests and interactive games) will still be automatically stored in the virtual Gradebook. This information can be imported and saved, so that it the teacher can continue to use it.
i-d-e-e is a multi-platform: it combines educational and digital resources that are not found anywhere else. If this is not enough to persuade your school or institution to start using i-d-e-e, perhaps you could put them in contact with us. Maybe we could convince them!

I think everything seems clear. However, I already get along fine using your books. Why should I change my teaching method?
We will always produce printed versions of our books and will continue to create high-quality educational textbooks. We are not saying that all teachers must use i-d-e-e. However, given that it is a platform that offers countless resources and services, we believe that all teachers can use it. We think that Italian could be taught better and deserves to be taught better. This is also important in terms of how it compares to the way that its "competitor" languages are taught. This is why we have invested so much in creating this platform.
Take a minute to think about this: how many of us thought we needed a mobile phone before owning one? Henry Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Company, once said: "If I had asked my customers what they wanted, they would have asked for a faster horse." And that's just it! If we are not aware of the great possibilities offered by the new technologies available today, we don't realise we need them and therefore we don't take advantage of them.
Edilingua has invested a great deal of time – and will continue to do so – into studying, testing and evaluating new educational technologies, in order to simplify them and adapt them to the discipline of teaching Italian to speakers of other languages. For better or for worse, our students are different from those of 5 or 10 years ago. They have different lifestyles, respond to new stimuli and live in a world that   is constantly changing. If we want to continue to do

our job well and to work closely with our students, and if we want our lessons to be connected to the world that surrounds us, we need to at least make sure that we keep up with the times (but importantly, not with passing fads). i-d-e-e allows all Italian teachers to do this.

Good luck!
The publishing team Edilingua Edizioni