1 Teaching with Minecraft

Hey there!

So, when it comes to teaching Minecraft, picking the right platform is a big deal – it's like setting the stage for an awesome learning adventure.

Your choice directly shapes how students dive into in-class sessions, collaborate on projects, get engaged, and even explore the coding side of things. But don't worry, in the upcoming chapters, we're going to chat about all of this. I'll be sharing some tips and insights to help you choose the perfect platform that suits your teaching goals.

We'll talk about things like accessibility, collaboration features, and how it supports coding activities. Setting this right turns Minecraft into an incredible teaching tool that just clicks with what you want to achieve in the classroom. It's like making sure every student's learning journey is top-notch and exactly how you envision it.

Let's make Minecraft an amazing experience for your students together!

2 Java, Bedrock or Education Edition?

Minecraft comes in three versions: **Java Edition**, known for versatility and modifications; **Bedrock Edition**, designed for cross-platform compatibility; and **Education Edition**, tailored for educational environments. Each version offers unique features to cater to diverse needs and preferences, from flexible gameplay to accessibility and specialized educational tools.

The choice depends on individual preferences and intended use.

2.1   Java Edition:

You know, Minecraft Java Edition is really something special. It's not just a game; it's like a canvas for your imagination. The versatility and modification options give you this freedom to create your own Minecraft world, tailor-fitted to your wildest ideas.

It's the version where the Minecraft community comes alive with creativity. I mean, the mods people come up with – it's like a whole new game every time! There's this magic in Java Edition that captures the essence of Minecraft, turning it into a personal adventure where you're not just playing; you're crafting your own story.

It's no wonder it's the version that players love the most – it's not just a game; it's a place where your imagination takes the lead.

2.2   Bedrock Edition:

Now let's talk about Minecraft Bedrock Edition – it's like the chameleon of Minecraft versions, popping up on Windows 10, Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo Switch, and even our trusty mobile devices. The cool thing is you can play with pals on different platforms, thanks to its cross-play support. It's got this consistent vibe across devices, and the performance? Top-notch.

Here's the thing – when it comes to teaching coding, Bedrock Edition is like the minimalist cousin. It doesn't come with its own coding interface like in the Java or Education Edition. Microsoft even pulled the plug on the original MakeCode thing for Bedrock. So, if you're looking to dive into coding adventures, Bedrock is not the go-to – it's more about the gaming experience than coding lessons.

Just thought you'd want the heads-up!

2.3   Education Edition:

Alright, let's chat about Minecraft Education Edition. It's like Minecraft, but with a backpack full of educational goodies. Imagine stepping into a world where learning is an adventure, and every block is a chance to explore something new.

What sets it apart is that it's tailored for classrooms, making it a perfect sidekick for teachers. You get this toolbox filled with features designed for learning, like the ability to spawn specific items and manage student interactions. It's like having a classroom in the Minecraft universe, where lessons become interactive quests, and students get to unleash their creativity while picking up some serious skills. Plus, it's got this built-in coding interface, making it a fantastic playground for introducing coding concepts.

So, if you're into turning education into an epic journey, Minecraft Education Edition is the game-changer you've been waiting for … but

… keep on reading!

𝟑 Finding the Right Fit

I was initially convinced that Minecraft Education Edition would be the perfect fit for my remote classes. I mean, it's designed for education, right?

But, truth be told, I've run into some significant roadblocks. The multiplayer experience is a bit wonky, and getting everyone on board for remote online sessions has been a real struggle. It just doesn't quite capture the essence of standard Minecraft that we all know and love. I've found myself thinking that, in some cases, going back to the Java version might have been a better call. It's tough, because I really wanted Education Edition to be the hero, but the reality is, for remote classes, it's not delivering the seamless experience I had hoped for.

Setting up Minecraft Education Edition can also be quite a challenge. The process involves navigating complex network permissions within the school network, which often proved to be intricate and time-consuming.

It's been a bit of a learning curve, figuring out what truly works best for my students, and sometimes, the unexpected turns out to be the better path.

Minecraft Java Edition, as awesome as it is, doesn't come with a block coding interface. But guess what?
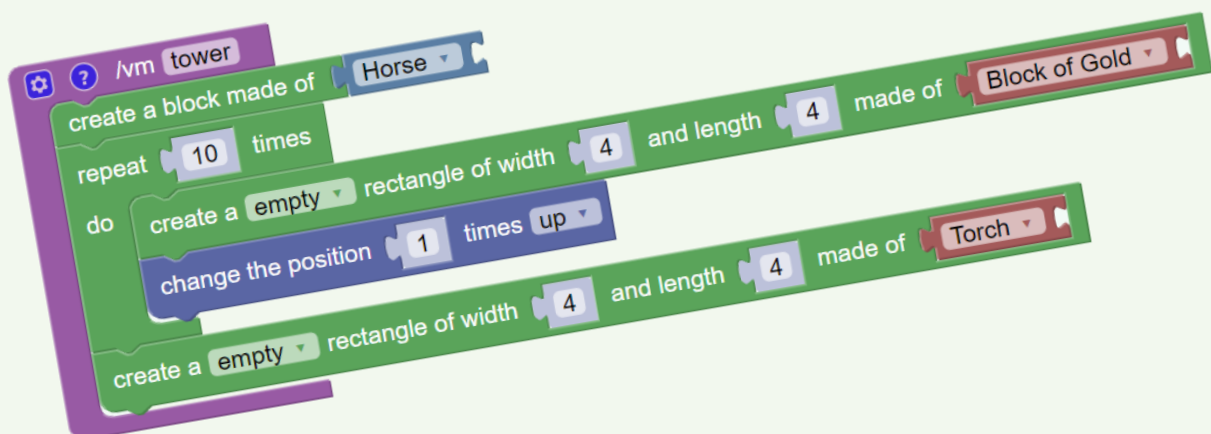
There is an alternative!

3.1   The VisualModder alternative

Over at VisualModder.org, we've got your back! We've rolled up our sleeves and developed a block coding interface specifically for Java Edition. The VisualModder coding interface uses a standard webpage generated by a simple java plugin.

You can dive into the software for free, whether you're testing it out or just curious as a parent. But if you're like me, wanting a more robust and professional coding experience, check out our hosting service. It takes things to the next level, offering an extended and enriched coding environment specifically for us Minecraft Java Edition users.

Choosing our hosting service not only extends the coding experience but also simplifies the process of starting your teaching endeavors. The service streamlines the setup, making it remarkably straightforward and quick. This efficiency allows educators to concentrate more on teaching and less on technical intricacies.

In the chapters ahead, we'll personally dive deep into the nitty-gritty details and help you figure out which version of Minecraft is suitable for your needs.

4 Teaching Environment

Choosing between online and in-class instruction involves distinct considerations. In-class teaching provides immediate interaction and fosters a sense of community but may lack the flexibility of online learning. Online instruction offers accessibility and collaborative tools, yet challenges like technology issues and potential communication limitations may arise.

	Java Edition	Education Edition
In-Class Instruction	✔ Ideal for in-class teaching	✔ Ideal for in-class teaching
Remote Learning	✔ Suitable for remote learning	✘ Limitations for remote learning, all students must be on the same network of the school

5 Student Engagement:

Engaging children in learning involves various strategies. Encourage Single-Player Exploration for independent thinking, foster teamwork through Multiplayer Collaboration, provide structure with Teacher-Led Activities, add motivation with Competitive Gaming Scenarios, and open new horizons through Virtual Field Trips. Integrating these approaches creates a dynamic and immersive learning experience.

On top of this, in the pursuit of the perfect fit, the significance of 24/7 availability becomes increasingly apparent. Beyond its practical convenience, the constant accessibility plays a pivotal role in motivating students. The ability to engage with educational content at any hour not only accommodates varying schedules but also fosters a motivational environment.

	Java Edition		Education Edition	
Single-Player Worlds	✔	Local server on student's computer	✔	Suitable for single-player worlds
Multiplayer Collaboration	✔	Allows scalable multiplayer servers	✘	Limited multiplayer, suitable for a few players on the local network
Teacher-Led Activities	✔	Supports teacher-led activities	✔	Supports teacher-led activities with additional management tools
Availability	✔	Student access 24/7	✘	Student access limited to on site time

6 Student Motivation

Motivating students in the context of Minecraft involves ensuring game acceptance by aligning educational content with the engaging aspects of the game. Using a standard Minecraft Java License provides autonomy and flexibility, allowing students to explore the Minecraft environment at their own pace. The Extensibility of Minecraft, with the ability to modify the gaming environment, adds a creative dimension, enhancing personalization and overall student motivation within the Minecraft learning experience.

	Java Edition		Education Edition	
Game Acceptance	✔	Widely accepted and loved by kids	✘	Constrained to a class setting, offering less gameplay
Student License	✔	Available for individual purchase. Allows student to play with Java and Bedrock versions	✘	School license suitable only for education edition. Not transferable for home use
Extensibility	✔	Highly extensible with a vast array of free plugins	✘	Limited extensibility with no independent plugins

7 Teaching Coding: Blocks or text

Coding with blocks and text represents two programming approaches. Blocks, seen in visual environments, offer an intuitive, beginner-friendly experience with drag-and-drop coding blocks. It fosters visual understanding and eases error identification. Text-based coding, using languages like Python, provides precision and versatility for more complex algorithms. While blocks suit beginners and emphasize visual understanding, text coding offers deeper, advanced programming skills. The choice depends on the learner's skill level and specific objectives

	Java Edition	Education Edition
Block Coding	✔ Supported by the VisualModder plugin	✔ Supported by the Makecode editor
Teaching Python Coding	✘ Not supported	✔ Supported via the code editor
Teaching Java Coding	✔ Possible without block coding, but more suitable for advanced students and teachers	✘ Not supported

8 Support

Setting up and running hardware requires robust support. Initial technical assistance ensures proper and smooth setup. User-friendly guides enhance autonomy, and ongoing support addresses troubleshooting and maintenance issues. Timely updates and responsive customer support contribute to the overall efficiency and performance of the hardware.

	Java Edition		Education Edition	
Technical support	✔	With VisualModder hosting solution	✔	Microsoft Support
Setup	✔	Easy, the VisualModder hosting team will setup a server in the internet	✘	Complex, setup of network permissions inside school network
Teacher Community	✘	Limited teacher community support	✔	Strong support from the Minecraft Edu teacher community
Student License	✔	Available for individual purchase. Allows student to play with Java and Bedrock versions	✘	School license suitable only for education edition. Not transferable for home use

9 The final decision

As we navigate the realm of Minecraft for educational purposes, the ultimate decision boils down to your specific context and role. If you find yourself in a traditional in-class environment and possess the technical expertise, Minecraft Education Edition could be your go-to solution. It's tailor-made for the classroom, offering features designed for educators and the management of student interactions.

On the flip side, if you're not operating within a traditional classroom structure and you're aiming for an easier, joyous experience for the children, the VisualModder plugin is a game-changer. The simplicity of the plugin designed for Minecraft Java Edition makes coding accessible to all, bringing a sense of delight to the learning process. Whether you're a tech-savvy educator or a parent looking to spark curiosity, the VisualModder solution ensures that coding becomes an engaging adventure for the young minds exploring the Minecraft universe.

The final decision rests on your specific role and the learning environment you aim to cultivate. Let's embark on the path that aligns with your goals, making learning a truly joyful experience.