

GETTING STARTED WITH THE SDLAP NING

A resource for the participants in Richmond's Self-Directed Language Acquisition Program is The SDLAP Ning (<http://sdlapur.ning.com>). Participants use the blogging function of the ning to keep their personal learning journals for MLC 105. Cultural posts can be made as blog posts or as discussions. Participants' personal space on the ning is their electronic portfolio—the space where they collect all the reflections and artifacts they produce while they learn. Speaking samples can be uploaded as 'music' or videos; PowerPoint and other documents, e.g., one's learning plan, can be uploaded. Useful RSS feeds are featured on the Main page; participants can add their own preferred feeds to their personal pages.

A ning is a social networking web. **Every member of the ning can create a blog, contribute events, add photos, point to interesting links, and start discussions.** Nings can be public or private. Anyone can join a public ning, although only the main page is visible to non-members of The SDLAP Ning. (The creators/administrators of any ning have the right to ban people if necessary.) *Even though The SDLAP Ning is a public ning, only the home page is visible to outsiders and members must be approved by the Ning administrator, i.e., the SDLAP program director.*

Participating in a ning is an excellent way of maintaining a personal learning network. The other members of the ning can help you learn. **Note: Ning supports languages other than English, so you may type in the language you are learning.**

Signing Up and Signing In

To join the ning, go to its home/main page, i.e., <http://sdlapur.ning.com>, and click on the **Sign Up** button. You'll be asked to supply an e-mail address and create a password. You'll also be asked your age (although you needn't display it) and some questions about yourself in order to join. These questions form the basis of your profile, but you can edit the answers later.



Once you are a member of the ning, you can sign in at any time by clicking the Sign In button. **Note: Once you join one ning, you can use the same identity to join others.**

Once you have joined the SDLAP Ning, you should also join the **group** for the language you are learning. The group page is a place to share language-specific information.

Your Profile

Once you have signed in, you will see your name (here it's 'Global Studio'), a Sign Out link, and other useful links in the upper-right corner. **Your Inbox** is where you will find messages others have sent you. From the Inbox, you can also compose messages to send to others.



Click **My Settings** to change your profile, upload a (new) picture, etc. There is also a **Set Privacy** function, if you want to restrict content more than the ning's default settings. You can also **Set E-mail Notifications**. If there is not much activity on the ning or you won't log in often, you might want to be notified when anyone adds content. Just remember which e-mail address you used to join, since that's where the notifications will be sent!

If you haven't hidden the big green box on the main page, you can also get to your profile by clicking **Edit profile**.

Navigating the Ning



The easiest way to navigate the ning is to use the tabs under the title.

To see content contributed by others that is not featured on the main page, click on the member's picture.

Your Page = Your Learning Resources and Journal

When you click the **My Page** tab, you arrive at a page where you can organize all the content you contribute. The content navigation is on the left. You can customize this page as you like. You can even add an RSS feed that interests you.

This is where you will keep your personal learning journal. Because of the personal nature of these blogs, none will appear on the visible-to-the-public main page.

Create a Blog Post

To quickly create a blog post, use the pull-down menu on the main page: Quick Add... > Blog Post. You can also add a post from the **My Page** tab. Click the **Add a Blog Post** link under **My Blog**.

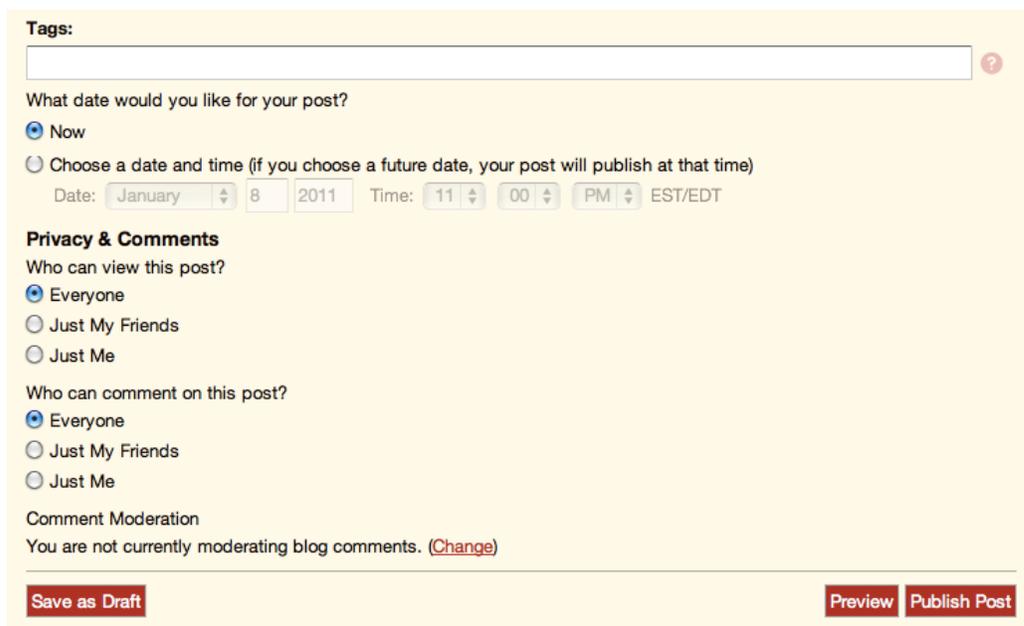


This opens the window in which you will type your text.



When you have finished typing your entry—and you can add links and images or attach files, too—scroll down to choose your posting options. You do not need to 'tag' your entry. **So that your profs can read your posts**

and give you feedback, you need to choose 'Everyone'. ('Everyone' means only the participants in this ning.)



You can save your post as a draft (useful if you need to log off and plan to finish later), preview your post, or publish your post.

Upload Speaking Samples

Use the **Add Music** link in the **My Music** to upload speaking samples in the form of MP3s. Please do not upload any commercial music. There are many ways to record an MP3. The Global Studio has instructions for using the free program Audacity.



Posting Files on the Ning

Sometimes you need to post files (PDFs, Word documents, PowerPoint slides, etc.) to the Ning in order to document your learning. Files can be uploaded wherever you see the little paperclip icon.



Files can be attached to blog posts and discussions. You can also upload a file to the text box and/or the comment wall on your personal page. In the text box, click the 'edit' button; click 'Comment on my own profile' on the comment wall. Click the paperclip to upload a file, which will appear as a link.

What else can I do in a ning?

When you first join the ning, you may see a box that invites you to use some of the basic functions of the ning. **You can close the box by clicking the x in the upper-right corner.** The creator of the ning can add and remove various functions, although the basics will remain. Every ning is a bit different, so don't be disconcerted if something is unfamiliar at first.

Invite Friends Interested in Learning Languages

Use the **Invite** link to invite the participation of any friend for whom you have an e-mail address. Remember, however, that new members must be approved by the ning administrator; this will be done based on the responses to the profile questions. If you have invited friends who are working with you to learn a language, please send a message to sscinica@richmond.edu.

Add Photos and Videos

Use the **Photos** and **Videos** links and tabs (visible only to ning members) to upload photos and videos from your computer. You can also embed video from YouTube and other popular video sites using the 'embed' codes provided by the sites.

Start or Contribute to a Discussion

The **Discussions** link or tab opens a new threaded discussion. To contribute to an existing discussion, click on the discussion's title under **Forum** on the main page or on the **Discussions** page.

Note: Some discussions are not featured on the Main Page. You can find more discussions by clicking on the **Discussions** tab. Groups may have separate discussions.

Add an Event

Add events of interest to the ning's participants, e.g., a film in Farsi. Any member of the ning can **Add an event**. You must, however, have a picture to associate with the event.

Join a Group / Add a Group

Groups are for people who want to focus on specific topics or who have specific interests. The SDLAP Ning has groups for specific languages/language groups. The SDLAP groups have moderated membership, which means that members must be approved before they can join.

What's happening in the ning?

As mentioned in the **Your Profile** section, you can **Set E-mail Notifications** and receive e-mail whenever certain things happen in the ning.

You can also subscribe to the ning's RSS feed and follow what's happening through a 'live bookmark' in your browser or through an RSS reader. Nings generate three RSS feeds: one shows 'latest activity'; another, new posts to the forums; a third, new blog posts. You can subscribe to any or all to keep track of what's happening in the ning.

Belonging to Multiple Nings

Once you start joining nings that interest you, it's easy to forget their names and URLs. If you joined using one ningID, you can log into <http://www.ning.com>, click on **Networks** for a list of the nings to which you belong.