

T.O.O.L.S

“ TimeTabler Options On-Line System ”

for collecting students' choices
over the internet

Installation Instructions for your School

Contact

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www.timetabler.com
<https://www.timetabler.com/mysupport>

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The **TOOLS** System

For gathering students' choices on-line

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Any Questions ?

If you have any questions, please ask: support@timetabler.com
Or contact our Support Centre: <https://www.timetabler.com/mysupport>

Third-Party Hosting – an *alternative* to installing **TOOLS** on your school server

Please note that you do not have to install **TOOLS** on your own server, if you do not wish to.

The timetabling consultants **MIST Services** will host **TOOLS** for you, on their server, for a small fee* - see here for details: <http://www.studentoptions.co/> .

*This hosting is also sometimes provided **free of charge** in the **first year** when you purchase **Options** – contact mist@mistservices.co.uk or visit www.mistservices.co.uk for more details.

See also **page 6** of this document.

1 Overview of TOOLS

What is TOOLS ?

It is a system that you install on your school website, which then allows your students to log-in to your website and input their subject choices. Once all (or most of) your students have entered their choices, you can save them to a file, which you can then import into our standard **Options** program.

Note: if you don't already have our standard **Options** program, you will need that first – please contact our Support Centre: <https://www.timetabler.com/mysupport>

What are the benefits of TOOLS ?

There are several benefits:

- 1) It saves your time in typing all the students' choices into **Options**. It may also eradicate typing errors and so improve accuracy.
- 2) After each student finishes entering his/her choices, TOOLS can email that student's parents, thereby giving confirmation that the choice has been made, and what subjects were chosen.
- 3) Makes the whole Options process appear more modern (to parents and students)
- 4) TOOLS is fully compatible with the established **Options** software from www.timetabler.com, so that data can be imported / exported between the two systems.
- 5) It is intended that later versions of TOOLS will contain further benefits, such as optional links to information on the various subjects / courses, the application of "rules" set-up in **Options**, etc.

Do I have to use TOOLS ?

No – you can continue to use **Options** by entering students' choices manually (or by importing them from your own Excel or CSV file), just as in previous years.

And if you do use TOOLS, then you still have all the same features in **Options** as before, including manually editing student choices if you need to.

You can also have some students enter their choices through TOOLS, and others return their choices on paper. If you work this way, then import all the TOOLS choices into **Options** first, then enter the paper ones. Or of course, you could enter the paper ones into TOOLS yourself, if you prefer all choices to be entered into the same single system.

2 How to Install TOOLS

A. Preparation & Requirements

A1 Preparation:

TOOLS needs to be installed on your school internet / webserver, and as such you will need the help and advice of your network manager or IT department.

A2 Requirements:

TOOLS requires the following to exist:

- a **MySQL database** on the school's server (with whatever name suits you; eg: "toolsdb")
- which runs under **Apache** [other servers should be possible, but so far TOOLS has been tested on Apache].

The TOOLS system itself is largely written in PHP, with some Javascript and HTML. This means that *JavaScript must be switched ON* in the web-browser of anyone wishing to use the system (staff or students). Any version of MySQL or Apache from 2011 onwards should work. The total size of the installation will depend on how many students and subjects you have, and on any custom images you use to replace the default ones – but a typical total size is around 0.5MB. See also "PHP versions" in the Trouble-shooting section at the end of this document.

B. Installing TOOLS

The installation of TOOLS is in two parts:

B1 Programs:

The Programs are a group of .php and .html files, provided as a single zipped-up file: "tools_prog.zip" ... which can be **downloaded from here**:

http://www.timetabler.com/toolsonline/tools_prog.zip

These need to be unzipped into a folder on your school website. You can choose your own folder name, but a good choice might be "**optools**" or similar.

Note: this folder needs to have "**write**" permission for the **Public**. If it doesn't, then although most parts of TOOLS will work, when you come to use Item 8 on the Control Panel to export the file of choices back to your PC for analysing, it will fail, giving an error message and/or an empty file. Or if you are using TOOLS version 3.1 or later, then your PHP installation must have **write access** to your system's **Temp directory** for the same reason.

B2 MySQL login details:

You have to tell TOOLS how to login to your MySQL database.

To do this, go into the folder "**Tools_Custom**" which will be found wherever you unzipped the Programs (see B1 above) and edit the file "**myconnect.php**" (eg: in Notepad). In that file, you need to supply the **URL / username / password** of your MySQL server, and the **name of the database** (eg: "toolsdb") that you set-up (see A2 above).

Any questions – please contact our Support Centre.

3 How to Run TOOLS

Starting TOOLS

Anyone should now be able to run TOOLS over the internet, via their web-browser. If, for example, at step b) in “*Installing TOOLS*” above, you installed the Programs into a folder “optools” on your website, then you would call the TOOLS system by entering this in your browser:

www.myschool.com/optools/

This will call the file index.html within the “optools” folder on your school website, which in turn starts the whole system running.

Once you have **TOOLS** installed and running on your web-server, you login as the administrator by: username = **admin**, password = **password** ... see below for details ... then you will see several choices on the Admin Control Panel (as described in the “TOOLS Manual”). If you have any questions about any of these, please ask our Support Centre: <https://www.timetabler.com/mysupport>

Using TOOLS

Full instructions of how to use TOOLS (for both the *school options administrator* and for *students and parents* appear in the separate “**TOOLS Manual**” – please ask if you don’t have a copy. But as a brief summary to get you started

- > The *school options administrator* can login as:

Username: **admin**

Password: **password** (this is the default, if it is the first time you have used TOOLS – thereafter you use the personal password you set).

This takes you to the **Admin Control Panel**. Its features are described in the “TOOLS Manual”.

- > **Students**: Once you have imported the Students into TOOLS, then any *student* can login as:

Username: **{the student’s username as created in Options}**

Password: **{the student’s password [4 digits] as created in Options}**

4 Miscellaneous

Handling multiple populations

If you have 2 (or more) populations of students requiring **TOOLS**, then you need to install **TOOLS** in 2 different folders on your webserver and run them separately. So, for example, you might have:

www.myschool.co.uk/year10 and
www.myschool.co.uk/year12

You still only need one copy of **Options**, of course, to export/import from/to ... with 2 populations ... then just move between the populations in **Options** as you would normally.

Including Course Information for Parents

You can include information for parents on the courses available (to help them make their choices), as follows:

There is a link on the student choices screen which says: "Click [here](#) for course information". If the parent clicks that link, they are taken to the web-page you entered in **Options** before you exported (see the **TOOLS** Manual for details of how to do this).

This means you can set-up your own web-page, and include in it any information or links you like ... including links to documents about the courses on offer, important information about choice rules, etc.

Note: if you don't set-up your own link in **Options** then the parent will be taken to a dummy/sample HTML web-page that is included with our **PHP** files (called "[courseinfo.html](#)") so another way of providing course information is simply to overwrite this file with one of your own, containing the required information or links.

Third-Party Hosting

For schools who can't or don't wish to host **TOOLS** themselves, there is an alternative to hosting **TOOLS** on your own server ... the timetabling consultants **MIST Services** will host **TOOLS** for you, on their server, for a small fee* - see here for details: <http://www.studentoptions.co/>.

You still have all the same control and features as if you install **TOOLS** on your own server, but you don't have to spend time setting it up, which is why it has become a popular option for many schools to use **MIST**. **MIST** also include full SSL encryption for security. If you would like to use **MIST** please let us know – or contact **MIST** directly at: <https://www.mistservices.co.uk/timetabling/tools/>

If you require more general help, then **MIST** also provide courses on **Options** both in the UK and abroad – more details here: <https://www.mistservices.co.uk/timetabler/>

*This hosting is often provided **free of charge** for the **first year** when you purchase **Options** – contact mist@mistservices.co.uk or see www.mistservices.co.uk for more details.

5 Troubleshooting & further help

Problems logging in

If you have any problems with TOOLS, then see our trouble-shooting ideas here:

www.timetabler.com/kbart/426-hosting-tools-trouble-shooting

If they don't help, contact our Support Centre.

PHP versions

Most schools use PHP version 7 or 8 – here are our notes on these:

PHP version 7: **TOOLS** has been tested with PHPv7.4.

PHP version 8: **TOOLS** (ver 7.2 onwards) has been tested with PHPv8.3.

If you experience any difficulties, let us know.

Documentation on-line

The following files and documentation are available on-line:

- 1) The **TOOLS User Manual** can be downloaded from here:
<http://www.timetabler.com/PDFs/TOOLS-Manual.pdf>
- 2) The **TOOLS Installation instructions** (*copy of this document*) can be downloaded from here:
<http://www.timetabler.com/PDFs/TOOLS-Install.pdf>
- 3) The zipped file "**tools_prog.zip**" (whose purpose is explained in section B1 of this document) can be downloaded from here:
http://www.timetabler.com/toolsonline/tools_prog.zip