▶An introductory guide to the Second Life® 3-D virtual world

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An introductory guide to the Second Life® 3-D virtual world

Second Life ® (SL) is the 3-D virtual world owned and operated by Linden Lab. Now in its sixth year of operation, it is regularly used by educators and businesses from all over the world as a venue to hold classes, meetings, and conferences.

SL is not a game in the sense that World of Warcraft® is a game (although people *do* play that kind of role-playing games in some areas of SL). It is a world, created by its users (usually called residents). Linden Lab provides the servers and 3-D software that makes SL possible, but almost 100% of what you see around you (buildings, landscape, furniture, clothing etc) is created by other residents, using the building tools provided inside SL. This makes SL unique, and is one of the main reasons for the huge variety of uses that you will find here. Just as in the real world, there is almost everything here that you can think of (and some you probably can't). There are (to name but a few) shops, nightclubs, forests, flower gardens, post-apocalyptic landscapes, desert islands, Caribbean beaches, art galleries, coffee shops, cathedrals, campuses, and classrooms.

SL also has a thriving economy, including the buying, selling and rental of "land", and the buying and selling of virtual goods and services.

This guide covers only the most basic things that someone new to SL needs to know in order to function. It does not include anything about the purchase of land, or about building or scripting or the creation of educational facilities. Links to additional resources on these topics will be available from the VIU Teaching and Learning Centre.

1   How to get into Second Life

This section will cover the basics of downloading and installing the SL client (the viewer), registration, including accounts, avatar selection and what to expect in those first, perhaps bewildering, minutes "in-world"

1.1   Create an account

1. There are two account types, Basic and Premium. You should sign up for a basic account. It is free, and gives you full access to SL. You can upgrade to a Premium account at any time – the only real advantage is that it gives you the right to buy land.
2. Go to http://secondlife.com and select the *Get Started – Free Download* button
3. **Choose a starting look.** You will appear (to yourself and others) as an avatar, or digital representation of yourself. Select a basic avatar from the choices given – this is what you will look like when you first enter SL. Once you are in-world you can completely customize your appearance, in any way that you can imagine, and as often as you like, so you are not stuck with looking like this! Many people use avatar customization as an avenue for creativity and self-expression.
4. **Choose a community.** If you check this box you will, in the next step of the registration process, be presented with a list of community start locations. It is not necessary to select one of these.

5. **Create a first name and select a last name.** Take some time to think about your name. Unlike your avatar appearance, this is something you cannot change later. You can have any first name you like (between 2 and 31 characters), but you have to choose a last name from the ones listed. Each avatar name is unique, so you may have to play around with first name / last name combinations to get the one you want.

6. **Enter an email address.** This should be a valid email address, as it will be used to confirm and activate your account, and (if you wish) your SL instant messages will be sent there when you are off-line.

7. **Real life name, birth date, and gender.** You should note that although many people probably provide false information, it is against the SL Terms of Service to do so. This issue is an important one when considering student account creation and privacy protection.

8. Once the registration page is complete, you will be sent an activation email. Click on the link in the email to return to the SL website, where you will be asked to download the SL client (viewer).

1.2 Download the SL viewer software

In order to use SL, you need to download and install the SL viewer software. SL does not run well (and sometimes doesn't run at all) on older, or extremely low-end computers. As this is a 3-D environment, your graphics card and RAM are important. The current system requirements are available from the Second Life website at http://secondlife.com/support/sysreqs.php. Once you have installed the software, you are ready to go "in-world".

1.3 Experiencing SL for the first time – arriving on Help Island

Once you have logged into the SL viewer using your avatar name and password, you will arrive at Help Island, probably at the same time as other newly born residents. Those other avatars you see – they are all just people at keyboards too.

Help Island has some basic information and tutorials. It is a good place to practice basic functions such as moving and flying for the first time, but is otherwise pretty dull.

From Help Island you can go anywhere else in SL that you like.

Once you feel comfortable with the basics you will be ready to leave Help Island. You will see a large sign that says "Ready to explore more of Second Life? Click Here". You don't have to leave Help Island this way (and it's probably better if you can plan to go somewhere else), but if you left-click the sign a blue window will appear at

the top right of the SL viewer offering you a landmark (usually to one of the Welcome areas). Click the *Keep* button, and the landmark will open. You can then click the *Teleport* button to go to your destination. See Section 2.3 for more information about teleporting.

You will see a very simple tutorial when you first land on Help Island that you may find it useful to look at in addition to this guide (it is also available from the Help menu if you decide to close it). Spend some time playing with the viewer controls to get a hang of the basics. The following sections of this guide will introduce you to walking, flying, teleporting, sitting, communicating with other people, using the maps, getting dressed, managing inventory, and looking around (using your camera).

2   Moving around in Second Life

2.1   Walking and running

Use the *Arrow* keys on your keyboard to walk. Unless you are a gamer, you may find this a bit tricky at first. Just have fun – almost everyone walks into things at first. Even if you walk off a cliff, you will come to no harm….try it! If you bump into another avatar, you should apologize (in public chat – see Section 3.1), just as you would in real life.

To run, use Ctrl R on your keyboard, then use the arrow keys as you do in walking. Use the same key combinations to stop running.

2.2   Flying

The fastest way to get around….just like in your dreams. To fly, click the *Fly* button at the bottom of the SL viewer. Use the *Page Up* and *Page Down* keys on your keyboard to go higher and lower, and the *Arrow* keys on your keyboard to move and change direction.

When you want to stop flying, either click the *Stop Flying* button at the bottom of the SL viewer, or press the *Page Down* button until you land (if you stop flying from high up, you will go into free fall, so the latter gives you a more graceful landing!)

2.3   Teleporting

Teleporting (TP for short) is how avatars move quickly and seamlessly across distances in SL. There are several ways that you can access the teleport functionality:

1. From a Landmark (LM): double click on a LM from the Landmark folder in your inventory, then click the *Teleport* button. You can collect LMs from other people (people frequently ask one another for them), or create one yourself from a place that you like by selecting *World > Create Landmark Here* from the menu bar at the top of the SL viewer

2. Via a teleport request: you can ask a friend who is already at your destination to offer you a teleport. Your friend will open your profile and click on the *Offer Teleport* button. You will see a blue window appear at the top right of the SL viewer. Click *Teleport* to TP. You can offer to TP your friends to your destination in the same way.

3. From the map: click the *Map* button at the bottom of the SL viewer. Click anywhere on the map, then click the *Teleport* button. (See Section 5.1 below, for more information about the map)
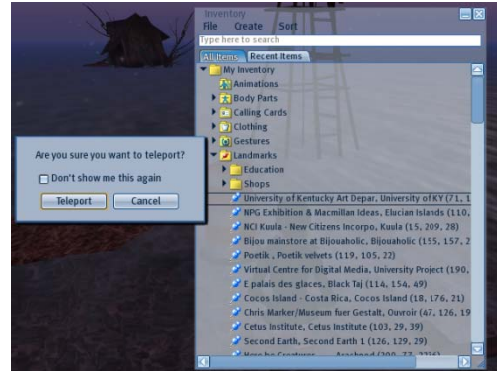
2.4   Sitting

To sit on a chair, simply right-click the chair, then select *Sit* from the pie menu that appears. Sometimes seats are scripted so that your mouse-pointer will turn into a chair when you mouse over the seat. In this case, you can just left-click to sit.

When you want to stand up again, click on the Stand Up button at the bottom of the SL viewer.

3   Communicating with other people

There are several ways to communicate in SL, using both text and voice. Public conversations, both in text and voice can be seen or heard by other people (avatars) in the vicinity . Private IM or private voice chat can be seen or heard only by the individuals or groups of individuals involved, who may or may not be physically adjacent to one another in SL.

3.1   Local text chat (public conversations)

Local text chat has a range of 20 metres, which means that anyone further away than that will not be able to see your message, and conversely, because this is public, everyone within that range will be able to read it. To converse in local chat, click on the balloon icon at the bottom of the SL viewer, and the Local Chat bar will open. Just type in the local chat bar, and press enter on your keyboard to send the message.
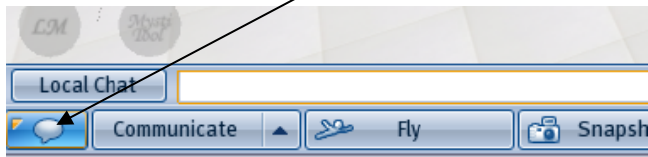

You can also click on the Communicate button, and a larger window will open. Select the Local Chat tab, type in the bar at the bottom, and hit the Enter key on your keyboard. Using the Communicate window for chat means that you can see the thread of the conversation rather than just one line at a time. Following public chat in a busy place can be difficult, as you may be seeing several conversations simultaneously. It is, however, the easiest way to communicate between a small group of people who are all in the same place (although remember what you say is public).

3.2   Instant messaging (private conversations)

Instant messaging (IM) is used for private conversations and / or conversations with people who are further away than 20 metres. You can use IM to contact someone wherever they are in SL. If the person is not online, they will see the IM next time they log on (and/or they will receive it by email if they have selected that option in *Preferences*). To IM someone:

1. Open your Contacts list (aka friends list) by clicking on the *Communicate* button at the bottom of the SL viewer and selecting the *Contacts* tab. Click on the name of the person you wish to IM, then click the *IM/Call button.* The IM window will open. Type your message and press the *Enter* key on your keyboard (or click the *Send* button). You will see the name of the person you are talking with on a tab at the bottom of the Communicate window. When you receive a new IM, the tab will flash
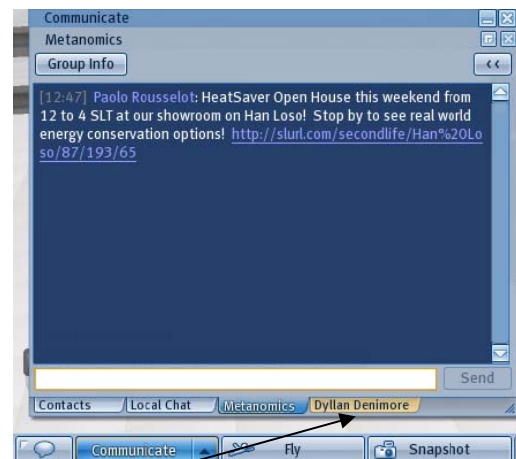
briefly and turn yellow.

2. If you can see the person you want to talk to, you can right-click on them, and select *Send IM* from the pie-menu. As an alternative, if you open their profile from the pie-menu, you can click on the *Instant Message* button from there.

3. If a person is not on your friend's list and is not in visual range, then you can use the Search function to find them (so long as you know their SL name). Click the *Search* button at the bottom of the SL viewer, and select the *People* tab, enter the person's SL name, and hit Enter. The person's profile will open. Click on the *Instant Message* button in the profile to open the IM window.

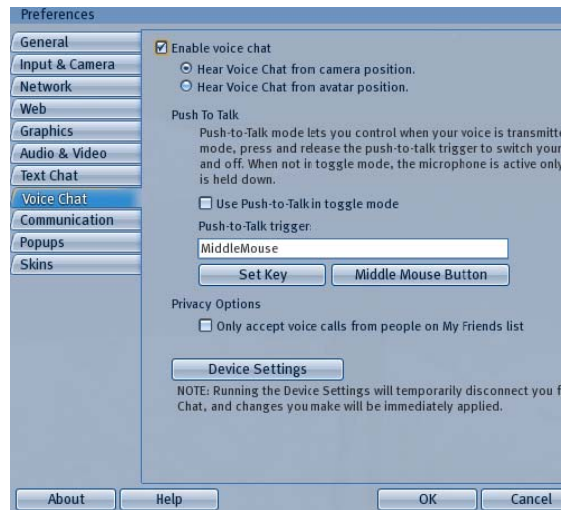## 3.3   Voice chat (public conversations)

Voice connectivity is built into SL (it works in a similar way to Skype). All voice calls are free. You will need a headset and microphone for voice chat. Test your voice functionality by choosing *Edit > Preferences* from the menu bar at the top of the SL viewer. Then select the *Voice Chat* tab. Voice is enabled by default, and you can turn the functionality on and off by simply checking or un-checking the box labeled *Enable voice chat*. Test your microphone and headset by clicking the *Device Settings* button. When you are done, click OK.

When you have voice enabled, you will see a small white dot over your avatar's head. To talk, press and hold down the Talk button. If you press the small lock symbol, it will lock your microphone open until you click the lock symbol again.

When you speak, you will see green waves radiating from your avatar's head (if they are red, it means your microphone is turned up too high).

The green waves are a good reminder to you that you are speaking in public, and that everyone nearby can hear you, and you will hear them if they are speaking. See the next section for private conversations.

3.4   Voice chat (private conversations)

Private voice chat works in exactly the same way as public (spatial) chat; the main difference is that you can select the people who will hear and be able to join in the conversation.

Starting a one-to-one voice conversation is almost exactly the same as sending the person an IM (see Section 3.2). When you have the IM window open, you will see a telephone symbol at the top of it. Just click on it, and this will initiate a voice call by sending an invitation to the person you are calling. If they accept, you will be connected. In private voice calls, you will NOT see the green waves over your head when you speak.

To start a voice call with more than one person, open your Contacts list and select the names of the people you want to include in the call (you can select multiple names by holding down the *Ctrl* key on your keyboard as you click on them). Then click on the *IM/Call* button to initiate the conference call.

4   Looking around, using your "camera", and changing the lighting settings

The default "point-of-view" in SL is from behind your avatar (yes, that person in front is you!). You can also adopt a "first-person" viewpoint, where you see the world as through the eyes of your avatar. This is called *Mouselook* in SL. Which point-of-view you use is mainly a matter of personal preference, although the default position is the one that most beginners find easier to manage. You can go into Mouselook by choosing *View > Mouselook* from the menu bar. Just press the *Escape* key on your keyboard to return to the default view.

One of the most useful tools in SL (and one of the things that makes the experience unlike the real world) is the "camera". This allows you to be able to view things that are at a distance from your avatar position, and to zoom in on interesting details. You will be surprised how far away the camera can travel. There are two ways to move the camera, both of which require a bit of practice; the best way to learn how to use these controls is by playing around with them.

1. Using your keyboard and mouse. Hold down the *Alt* key on your keyboard, then click on something with your mouse. If you have a scroll wheel on your mouse, you can use this to zoom in and out on the object. The up and down arrows on your keyboard will do the same thing. The left and right arrow keys and the Page Up and Page Down keys will move your camera to the left or the right, up or down. To get back to your default point-of-view, just press the *Escape* key on your keyboard.
2. Using the built-in camera controls. Select this method if you are more comfortable with mouse controls. Choose *View > Camera Controls* from the menu bar in the SL viewer. The control on the right moves your camera up and down, left and right. The central control lets you zoom in and out (if you have a scroll wheel on your mouse, it does the same thing), and the control on the left lets you rotate around an object you have focused on. To get back to your default point-of-view, just press the *Escape* key on your keyboard.

SL has its own natural day and night cycle, and some places have their own ambient light settings. If you find it too dark, or too light, or you simply want a nice sunset, you can use the environment settings. Choose World > Environment Settings from the menu bar in the SL viewer, and experiment with some choices.

5   Geography and maps

The SL virtual world is built on the metaphor of geographic "place". Each "place" is really just space on the SL servers, and is known as a simulator (usually called a sim). Each sim in SL has a name, and a set of coordinates. SL is now pretty big, so it can sometimes be a challenge to find interesting places or things to do.

5.1   Using the map

Click on the *Map* button at the bottom of the SL viewer, and a map of the world will open up. Each green dot you see is a person. You can use the zoom control to move closer or further away (if you want to see more of the world). If you click on the map, then the place name and coordinates will change, and if you click the Teleport button on the map, you will be taken directly there. This is a fun way to explore….but be aware that you never know where you might end up! If you don't like the place…..just teleport somewhere else.

If you know the name of the sim you want to visit (in this case it is Error Island), you can type it into the relevant box on the map, then click the *Search* button. You can then teleport there.
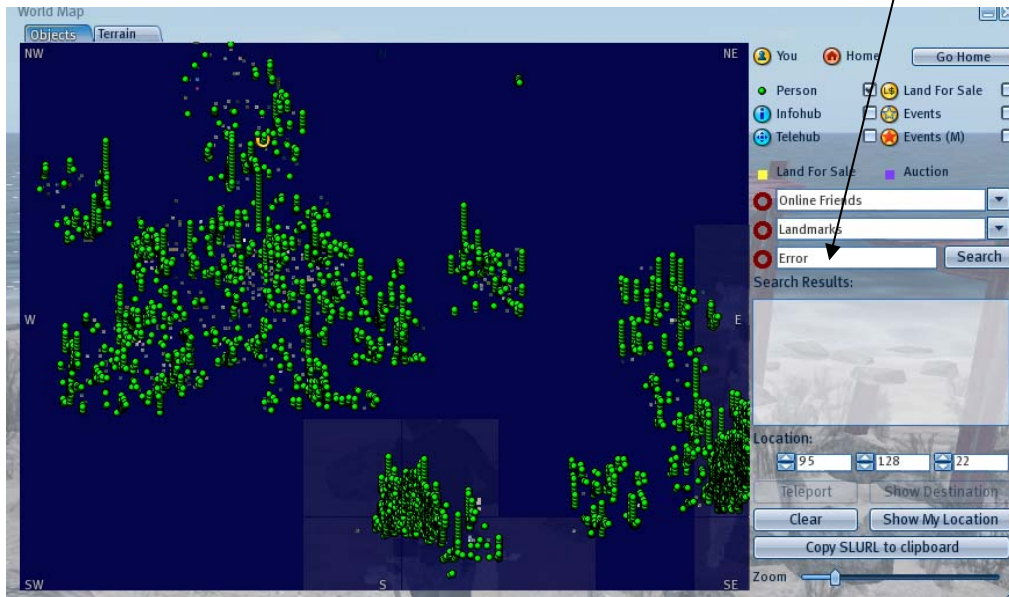
5.2   Using the mini-map

Click on the *Mini-Map* button at the bottom of the SL viewer, and a smaller map of the place you are in will open up at the top right of your SL viewer. The yellow dot on the map is you, and the green dots show you where other people are (if they are on your friends list, they will show as yellow dots). The mini-map also shows your own and other people's movements, so you can get an idea of where you are going.

6   Managing your inventory

Click on the *Inventory* button at the bottom of the SL viewer. This is where you can access all your "stuff"…landmarks, clothing, hair, etc. Inventory very soon gets out of hand as you will probably add new things all the time.

You can create folders and subfolders to help you manage your inventory. You can use your mouse to simply drag items or folders into new folders. Typing in the white bar in the inventory window acts as a search filter to help you find things. Try typing *worn*, and you will see a list of everything you are wearing.
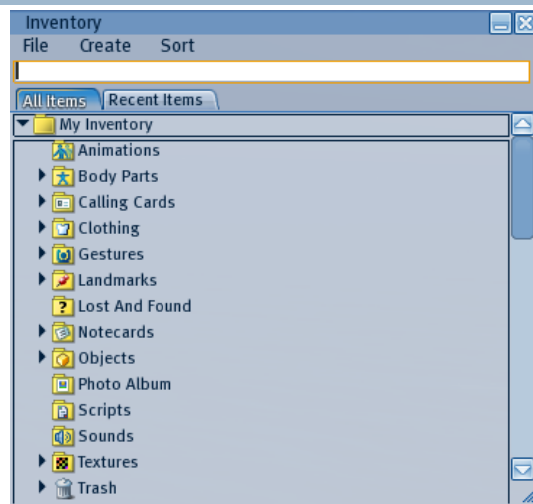
7   Changing your appearance

As mentioned above, the avatar you get when you are "born" is completely customizable, including body shape, skin, hair, eyes, clothes, gender, and species.

7.1   Altering your body and clothing

You can change your (humanoid) appearance yourself if you want to. Right-click on your avatar, and select *Appearance* from the pie menu. Your avatar will freeze, and stand with its arms out, and a dialog box will appear with body parts and clothing items listed. You can use the sliders to make changes. It is a good idea to make a copy of something (do this from your inventory) before you start to play with it, in case you don't like the results!

Or…you can go shopping. Everything you can imagine to change your appearance is available within SL….many residents make a reasonable living by creating and selling body shapes, hair, clothing, and even complete avatars (always wanted to be a dragon? Now's your chance). If you hunt around, you can also get "freebies". To buy things in-world you will need money (see Section 9)

7.2   Getting dressed

Yes, your avatar body is naked under those clothes (although not fully anatomically correct)! This means that you can take your clothes and footwear on and off, and replace them with others. You can remove your clothes by right-clicking on yourself and selecting *Take Off* > from the pie menu. You can remove selected garments this way, or remove everything, although you might want to be careful where you do the latter. This is a quick way to remove, say, your jacket, but if you want to change your outfit, then you need to use your Inventory.

Clothing works by being applied to "layers". There are sock, pant, shirt, jacket etc layers. To wear something from your Inventory, just right-click on the item, and select *Wear* from the menu that appears. The important thing to remember is
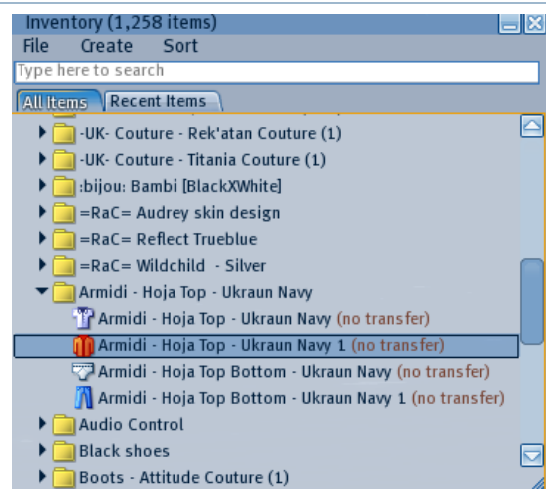
that when you wear something it automatically replaces what you already have on that layer, so there is no need to get undressed. This means you can change your underwear without removing your pants!

8 Profiles

Your profile is important in SL. It is your way of telling the world about yourself, and your interests. People will often IM others who look interesting based on what they say about themselves in their profile.

It includes a photograph (of your avatar), your SL birthdate (also called your rez date), a list of the groups you belong to, a statement about yourself and your interests, your favourite SL places (Picks), and if you want to include it, information about your 1st life. Most people put very little personally identifying information here, although some include a real-life photograph.

Reading profiles is often very interesting, and looking at other people's Picks is also a good way to find new and interesting places to visit.

You can access your Profile by right-clicking yourself and selecting *Profile* from the pie menu (click on someone else in the same way to see *their* profile), or select *Edit > Profile* from the menu bar at the top of the SL viewer. When you make changes to your profile, click the OK button to save them.
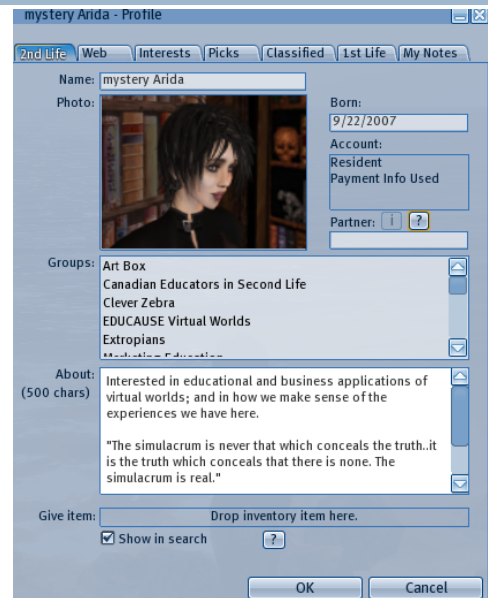
9 Money

SL has its own currency, the Linden dollar. These can be bought from the SL website using a credit card or PayPal account, or in-world from the $ icon on the menu bar at the top of the SL viewer. The current exchange rate is around 260 $L to 1 $US. To put this into some kind of perspective, spending $10 will get you 2,600 Linden dollars, and with a typical item of clothing costing around 50 – 200 Lindens, it goes quite a long way. Although you don't need money in SL (you can find things for free if you hunt around), most people eventually buy some Lindens.

10   Multimedia and notecards

Part of the power of SL is that media of all types can be imported and made available to others. Most sims have some kind of music playing, plus ambient sound. However, you can also watch movies, view PowerPoint slides, and visit websites.

To turn media on and off, use the media and volume controls at the bottom right of the SL viewer.

One other, very simple, way in which information is disseminated in SL is via Notecards. These are just text, and often contain instructions or information about a sim and what you can do there. Sometimes when you arrive at a sim, a message will appear asking you if you would like a notecard. If you accept, it will open and will also be automatically saved to your inventory.

11   Finding places to go

Because SL is so large and diverse, and new and interesting places are being added every day, it can sometimes be challenging to find good places to go. Some ways to help you explore:

1. A list of SLurls™ (Second Life URLs) for places of interest to educators will be made available via the VIU Teaching and Learning website. SLurls are a special type of hyperlink that will take you to the slurl.com website from where you can teleport directly to that location in SL.
2. Click on the *Search* button at the bottom of the SL viewer, then select the *Showcase* tab. Here you can browse among selected places in the categories of Arts & Culture, Education & Non-profit, Fashion, Hot Spots, and Music. Once you find somewhere that looks interesting, just click the *Teleport* button to go there.
3. Using Search, you can also browse Events, and find People, Places, and Groups.
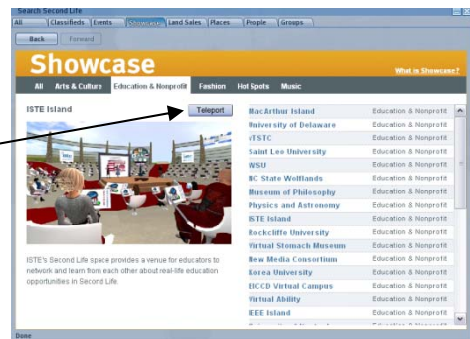
12   Groups

Groups are an important part of life in SL. They are a way to find and communicate with like-minded people. Some groups are open to anyone, and some are invitation-only. You will be invited to join the VIU Virtual World Explorers group so we have a way to easily connect in SL.

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