

Introducing Young Children to the Computer

GOAL: The children will demonstrate age-appropriate competencies when independently using a computer.

Computer Use Objectives

Children will:

- Name the parts of the computer including monitor, keyboard, mouse, cord, and cables.
- Identify “task” keys: space bar, delete key, caps lock key, cursor and shift key.
- Demonstrate use of the identified “task” keys when word-processing.
- Demonstrate ability to successfully use the mouse.
- Locate a wanted file/program using their names or an icon.
- Demonstrate respect for the computer by proper handling of components and by following rules regarding usage.

*****Teachers should be comfortable using the computer/software; know how it works, before this can be used in an intentional way with children.**

It is not necessary/possible to know everything—the children will show you many things they discover, but know enough to use this with intentionality to support children’s learning. Keep the manual handy when practicing and use the help menus.

Introducing the computer (large or small group activities)

1. What do we know about the computer?
 - The teacher documents children’s responses and creates a graphic organizer/image map to group knowledge into categories, to help inform instruction. We don’t want to teach what children already know. Categories of information might include: What does it do? How does it work? What are the parts of a computer? What do the keys do?
 - Keep the original image map, then create another one with the children at the conclusion of the unit and compare to document and assess learning.
2. Parts of the computer: demonstrations and discussions
 - Bring children over to the computer, look at a poster or a big picture of a computer like the one the children will be using (even better...take a photo of your own computer) Name computer parts and discuss what they do: monitor, mouse, keyboard, disk drive, cords, and cables.
 - Bring computer parts to circle to discuss, such as the mouse or keyboard.

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(Programs with access to a document camera or an LCD projector system can use this to project and demonstrate to a large group how different keys work/what they do, such as space bar, delete key, caps lock key, cursor, shift key.) **Tip:** place a piece of colored tape or sticker on the mouse to show children where to tap/press.

- Different components can be featured on different days. Help children to learn vocabulary, function and proper use of various parts of the computer. Provide every child opportunities to practice all identified technology objectives.
3. Computer Use Rules—class generated list of rules might include the following:
- Only paper can be near the computer (no food, play dough, drinks, etc.).
 - Use the computer respectfully (careful not to bang, bump, etc.).
 - Clean hands before using the computer.
 - Take turns/use a sign-up list.

*Printing policies- it is up to the individual program to decide when to print children's work. Clearly explain the printing policy to children.

Assessment informs planning: help children learn basic computer skills

- Use an assessment such as the "Technology Skills Checklist," or create your own assessment forms as needed to observe and document each child's ability to use the computer and software programs. Assessment should align with the program's goals and objectives for technology learning.
- Use observations/the assessment to provide the correct level of challenge to support children's use of the computer.
- Provide group discussion/instruction, then each child practices skills. **Adult support is important at the beginning until children have learned basic skills/proper computer use.**
- Start with introducing one program, when that is mastered, then add others.
- Intentionally use software to support classroom studies and curriculum.

Organize the space: setting up the computer environment

- Consider how to best organize the computer center area by becoming more aware of issues and recommendations, such as use of child-sized, adjustable chairs and tables; a table with enough space for two children to sit together (a "doer" and a "viewer"), and room for the computer, printer, etc.; headphones to reduce distraction; avoid glare on the screen...

Decide what to include in the computer center area that can support early literacy learning. Possibilities include the following:

- Alphabet strip (with upper and lower case letters matched to help children looking at a lower case letter know which upper case letter to select on the keyboard)
- Name cards for each child to help them type their name on their work (variations: name strips with upper case on one side and mixed upper and lower on the other, name cards with child's photo, on front with name or on back, to allow child to self-check.)

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- Turns list (having a white board with a list of the children's names taped next to it—invite children to find their own name and then write it.)
- Gallery area or notebook for displaying children's computer-generated art or stories
- Labels (photo of the computer and its parts, other labels)
- Picture dictionary
- Word wall (might include unit, or high interest words)
- Computer use rules

Set up the computer for children:

- Fully install software programs/no need to put in media
- Create a children's login/account, and restrict permissions
- Hide the hard disk icon
- Lock icons so children can not put files/icons in the trash
- Resize icons to a bigger size if preferred
- Change the settings for the various buttons on the mouse as needed
- Safeguard the equipment: put a piece of painters tape (easily removable) over the slot for the DVD when not using it to avoid unwanted objects such as paperclips, glue, etc. ending up in the drive and damaging the computer.

~End~

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