The Drawing Screen

As you've probably seen, the window looks like a blank piece of primary writing paper with a control panel.

the Control Panel

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The Grid

The grid on the left hand side of the control panel has 26 letter buttons, a space bar, and a button for words.

Letters
If you click a letter on the grid on the left side of the panel,Easy Writer will draw that letter for you.   If you want a capital letter, hold down the Shift Key while clicking.   (The caps lock doesn't work.) The preset letters are deliberately non-perfect, but they are properly formed.   If you have not paid for the program, only the letters A-E will work!!

Words
Clicking the WORD button on the grid prompts you for a word, which you can type all at once.   You're stuck with letters A-E if you have not registered.

Space
Clicking the space causes Easy Writer to draw a space, (i.e. move its insertion point to the right.)

The Buttons

To the right of the letter grid are nine buttons.   They are, as follows:

Browse/Draw toggle

The browse/draw toggle   button switches you between browse mode and writing mode.   In writing mode, you may attempt to reproduce the letters on the screen by holding down the mouse button and dragging the mouse while holding.   Children enjoy this, and it is OK, but   the mouse is not a very good pencil. Unless you happen to have a stylus, we suggest that you have children watch the letter movies and then try to write the letters on paper.   The icon will alternate between a pointing finger and a hand with a pencil to indicate which mode you are in.   Known bug: Since the tool palette is available, you can get the Browse/Toggle icon out of synch with reality by choosing the paint tools.   This is not a very serious problem because you can always just click the toggle until it is right.

Blackboard/Paper toggle

Clicking the Blackboard/Paper toggle switches you between the virtual blackboard and the virtual paper. The virtual blackboard is a black background with the same colored guide lines as the paper has and "light-yellow" chalk to draw the letters with.   The icon will change to indicate which mode you are not in.

The Bomb

Clicking the   bomb will blow away all the writing on the screen. Children enjoy this a great deal.

Help

Clicking the question mark takes you an abbreviated online help panel.   To get full online help, hold down the command (cloverleaf) key and click on the abbreviated help panel.   This manual (if available) will launch right from within Easy Writer.

Print Button

There is a print button to print a copy of the current screen.   We suggest you use it sparingly or not at all. This stack is intended

mainly to serve as a model for writing on paper.   Even if you draw on the screen,   is the process, not so much the product, which is important.   If you want to save your work, how about screen dumping it?   (Hold down Command and Shift, then type 3).   Children naturally want to print out everything they do, but if you oblige them you will have reams of useless paper cluttering up the place.   To prevent children from wasting paper, the print key requires a password.   The password is "Fester". Please make it clear to the children that promiscuous printing is a bad thing.

Blab Button

The mouth with the balloon coming out of it can be changed to a mouth with tape on it by clicking it.   When the gag is on, the program will not make any noise.   This is much easier than going to the control panel!!.

Stop Button

This is the only way to exit Easy Writer.

Menu Button

You should not need a menu bar, but if you want one, clicking the menu button will show the menu if it is hidden, or vice versa. To prevent children from causing trouble with the menubar, this option is passworded.   The password is "Fester".

Alphabet Editor

Clicking the Alphabet Editor popup will take you to another panel, where you may alter the shape of the model letters. Currently you can not design new alphabets nor delete alphabets.   The alphabet editor does not work if your program is being run from locked media such as a CD drive.   See the Alphabet Editor chapter for details. You do not want children editing alphabets, so the password to get into the editor is "Fester."

The Right hand Side

On the right hand side you can make selections.

Alphabet popup

The Alphabet popup menu lets you select which alphabet you want to use.   Easy Writer comes with two alphabets: the Manuscript alphabet and the Cursive alphabet.   You can use the alphabet editor to modify these.

Language buttons

You can select either Spanish or English.   This selection governs which letter names are spoken when a letter is drawn.   It does not change the appearance of the letter grid!

Note on Spanish Language: The purpose of this program is to teach the formation of letters—not the alphabet itself.   The Spanish letter "ch" is composed of the characters "c" and "h". Likewise the "ll" is graphically expressed as two "l" characters. The letter "ñ" may be entered from the keyboard if desired, (Option-n, followed by n)   but does not appear on the letter grid. For a program that teaches the Spanish alphabet, try Jardín de Niños by Platypus Software, available through the same channels as this program.

Other Stuff you can do

Keyboard

Typing any letter or digit key on the keyboard (including ñ) will cause that letter or digit to draw.

I-Beam

Clicking anywhere on the drawing window in browse mode will cause the next letter to be drawn in that line. You will see a flashing "I-beam" cursor in browse mode to let you know where the next letter will be drawn.   Drawing letters manually will not alter the position of the I-beam!!   Having Easy Writer draw letters for you will   alter the position of the I-Beam.

Pattern & Tool Palettes

We thoughtfully display   tool and pattern palettes for you.   You

may use the eraser of the drawing palette to erase individual letters.   You may also double-click the brush of the drawing palette to select a different brush style (Different   brushes will produce slightly differently styled letters.)   The pattern palette is inactive in browse mode.   You can switch from browse to draw using either the Easy Writer control (explained above) or the tool palette.

When you are in paint mode (the cursor will be a blob of some shape)   you can click a different pattern from the pattern palette to select it.   Darker patterns work best in paper mode;   Lighter patterns work better in chalkboard mode.   You may also experiment with the other options on the tool palette.   You can't ruin anything with them, so go ahead.

Emergency menu bar
The screen looks cleaner with the menu bar hidden.   If the children want to play with the paint menu they will need the menu bar as well, although playing with the paint menu is really getting away from the purpose of this stack.   The menu switch button on the control palette will do quite nicely except in one case: if the menu bar is hidden and   the control panel is for some reason not visible,   get the menu bar back by pressing Command-Space. (The toggle button is just in case you forget that.)

Emergency palettes
Pressing tab key will show the tools palette and the patterns Palette, in case someone has closed them.