PLAY 'n' LEARN IN WINDOWS - Version 1.0

INSTALLATION

You have already installed the *Play 'n' Learn* software. If your computer has
a sound card, you can now install the sound files used by the Amanda's
Letter Lotto game (this is one of the games included in *Play 'n' Learn*), if you
wish. These sound files use just over 3mb of hard disk space. If you do not
have a sound card, there is no reason to install them.

Click on the icon labelled "Install Sound". This will start the utility that installs
the sound files. This utility can also be used to remove all of the Amanda's
Letter Lotto sound files from your hard disk.

Read the instructions on the screen and push the appropriate letters.

INTRODUCTION

Computers came into our life about the same time as our first
child, Amanda. Eighteen months later Zachary was born. As they
grew they noticed daddy spending nearly every day working with a
computer and they wanted to use the computer like daddy did.
So, I went through the software stores and saw all kinds of
wonderful games and educational software - but nothing for very
young children.

What I wanted was something that would let an 18 month old bang
on the keyboard and be entertained. As he grew older, and his
coordination improved, the software should teach him about
letters, numbers, colors, shapes using the keyboard and multiple
key combinations. Since I couldn't find anything I wrote Play 'n
Learn.

Play 'N' Learn provides several different games and, in some
cases, there are multiple games that can be played within each
main game. For example, with Play 'n' Learn young toddlers can
push keys that change colors and symbols on the screen and get
sounds from the computer. As your kids grow older they progress
to locating specific keys and learning multiple key combinations.
At the most difficult level of play you need to correctly pick
five secret letters to win Letter Lotto. It works just like a
miniature version of the Lotto games run by many states.

In these instructions we'll describe the different games and how
they can be used. You can also invent your own games and we
encourage you to play with and guide your kids so you can all
have fun together.

When using Play 'n' Learn I encourage you to play with your child and cheer her on. We'll describe various games that you can play, and although you can leave your child to play by themselves (a welcome break for parents), also take some time to help her learn them colors and letters.

Play 'n' Learn In Windows includes six games designed for a variety of age levels--from 18 months to 3 years old. The games are.

1) Color Screen

2) Color Match

3) Word Whirl

4) Amanda's Letter Lotto

5) Next Number

6) Black Board Shapes

When you start Play 'n' Learn you'll will see a title screen with six push-buttons. Each button runs a different game.

All of the games have a "Game Options" menu. To exit from the game click on the "Games Option" menu and then click on "Exit."

The "Games Options" menu for each game also includes a "Sound Off" option. Clicking on this option will turn the sound off so your ears can have a rest while your children play 'n' learn.

COLOR SCREEN

This is a very simple game designed for the youngest children. Anytime a key is pushed the screen color changes, shapes splash across the screen and the computer makes sounds. Your child can push any key, or groups of keys to change the image and sound. The purpose of this game is to teach children that the computer will respond when they push keys and helps them to learn that computers are friendly.

This game includes an additional feature to help your child to use a mouse. Each screen will include an icon that is different from the rest of the pattern displayed on the screen. It might be a smiley face, a bell, or one of several other icons. If the child puts the mouse cursor on this icon and clicks the right mouse button, the icon will scoot around. (Pressing the left mouse button changes the screen in the same way as pushing keys on the keyboard).

While this is a very simple game, I've seem many nine and ten year

olds play it for 30 or 40 minutes--even some adults have played it for an hour or more! They are generaly trying to get the timing right to get the hysterical laugh to play on a regular basis.

COLOR MATCH

This is a more advanced game that requires children to be able to match colors and letters. A color will appear at the top of the screen. Four boxes, each a different color will be across the bottom of the screen. Select the box at the bottom that matches the color at the top by pushing the letter that is next to the correct box.

You can also select the matching box by using the mouse to click on the matching color. But watch out, if you pick the wrong color using the mouse, then you must select the correct color by pushing the correct letter on the keyboard.

WORD WHIRL

This game takes a word or short phrase and "whirls" it around on the screen. It is an excellent game for teaching your children how to spell their name or write their phone number.

When you select Word Whirl you will be prompted to enter a word. Have your child type their name, phone number, the name of your city, or any other word or phrase. You can include any letters, numbers or punctuation marks, including spaces. When you push the ENTER key whatever you've typed will be "whirled" around in a rainbow of changing colors.

AMANDA'S LETTER LOTTO

When the introductory screen is displayed you can start playing by just pushing any key. That character will be printed on the screen, along with a picture showing something whose name is related to that letter.

You are now playing Amanda's Letter Lotto at the simplest level. Any key you push will be displayed as a large, bold character on the screen. You can push either upper or lower case letters, numbers, and symbols--although there are no pictures that are displayed for symbol characters.

There are a variety of games you can play using Amanda's Letter Lotto.

As you read through the descriptions of the various games please remember that each requires progressively more skill and coordination. Don't expect an 18 month old child to identify

specific letters or push multiple keys. But, if your 18 month
old can do this, then I'd feel very proud. All children develop
at different rates so keep in mind that today your child may only
be interested in pressing random keys and next week you'll be
teaching him the alphabet.

Also, I'd like to offer a hint for playing Amanda's Letter Lotto
games. When your child gets something right, make a big deal
about it. Cheer. Clap your hands.   Throw a party! Make a lot
of noise! Do it up just as you would if your team just scored
the winning point in the third overtime of the title game.

Let's describe a few games that can be played using the settings
Amanda's Letters Lotto has when it first boots.

GAME 1 - Keyboard Kaos

This game is for kids who have not yet learned the alphabet or
what letters look like. Sit with your child at the computer and
let her push whatever keys she wants. You may need to push a few
keys so she can see how to do it and what happens. Kids like to
feel they control something, and pushing a key (or a bunch of
keys) and seeing a response on the screen makes them feel in
control.

By the way, I've had quite a few kids banging on my keyboard to
test this software and none of them damaged the keyboard or
computer. If your child wants to, you can let her push random
keys and watch the changes on the screen. Very young kids may
get excited and start hitting the keys fairly hard. Don't try to
get them to push individual keys. Let they play, freely. If
they start to get too violent with the keyboard, tell them to
take it easy. Help them learn that violently pounding a keyboard
is not correct behavior and show them that pushing keys gently
will also get results. However, don't expect little kids to be
instant typists or even be interested in pushing individual keys.
Let then go ahead and push five, ten or all of the keys at one
time.

Letting your child to push bunches of random keys starts to teach
them about the keyboard. Your child learns that pushing keys
produces a result on the screen. With your help they can also
learn to push keys softly and one at a time. Most importantly
your child will learn to think of a computer as a friend and to
feel comfortable using a computer.

GAME 2 - Make A Pointer

As your child becomes used to the keyboard you can start to teach
her to push individual keys. One way to do this is to first
teach her to make a pointer (extending the index finger to point
at something). This is something you can work on without being in
front of your computer.

Next sit down at the computer, have your child make a pointer and then guide the tip of her finger to a key and say, "Push a key." Depending on how excitable she is, you may or may not get her to do this right away. However, with some patience on your part, and as your child grows older, she'll eventually be able to do it.

Also, when your child first learns to "make a pointer" and you help her push a few keys, she'll probably become impatient and revert to using all fingers to push bunches of keys. It's to be expected, so let her have some fun for awhile and then come back to making a pointer and pushing individual keys.

GAME 3 - The Name Game

Once your child can push an individual key she can then learn to push specific keys. A good way to start is with the first letter of your child's name. For example, with Amanda I told her to "find the letter A for Amanda."   Then I'd guide her finger to the letter A. It took going over it a few times, and some days she seemed to have forgotten everything we did the day before, but shortly she could find the letter A, which she called Amanda.

Once your child can find the first letter in her name, introduce her to the first letters of the names of other people she knows. You can show her that D is for daddy, M is for mommy, and Z is for her brother Zak. Little kids associate much better with the people in their lives (family, relatives and friends) than they do with objects. Amanda was much more interested in learning that A stood for Amanda and B was her friend Brenda than she was in learning that A is for Apple and B for Barn.

After your child can identify five or six letters for peoples names, then you can move onto other letters. Either let your child name some people and you point out the letter that name starts with, or use the names of objects when you run out of people.

These types of games teach your child that each letter is an individual symbol. For example, kids can learn to sing their ABCs, but many times they just know it as the words to a song. For example, most little kids think LMNOP is one letter because they are sung very quickly all together, in the "Now I Known My ABCs" song. Having then pick out the individual letters on the keyboard teaches than that each is a separate, distinct symbol.

Amanda's Letter Lotto - Game Options Menu

There are a variety of options on the Game Options menu. These include:

Multiple Colors - when this option has a check next to it the software will randomly select the colors for the letters and background.

Set 2 Colors - this option let's you pick the two colors that are always used for the letters and background. This option is important, for example, if your child is color blind.

Monochrome - sets the display to be black and white.

Capital Letters - when this option is turned on, letters will only be displayed as capitals on the screen.

Sound Off - turns off the sound. There is no sound supplied with this version of the Amanda's Letter Lotto game. We are working on an update that will pronounce the word that represents each letter.

Set Award Letter - award letters are not used in this version of Play 'n' Learn.

Letter Lotto - this option is used for the letter lotto game and will be discussed shortly.

MORE GAMES

GAME 4 - Rainbow

The first game is basically the same as described for game number 1. Now add to the game by having your child (or to start, you) name the colors that appear on the screen. Generally children focus on the color of the character, so as each character appears name its color. Of course, kids are all different and it's impossible for me to predict what your child will focus on. It she seems to be noticing the background color first, then name that color for her.

GAME 7 - Color Search

Once your child can identify one specific color by name, then ask them to find that color. Have them push keys, any keys, until that color appears. When they correctly identify that color cheer like your team just won the super bowl. Don't be afraid to get excited and make some noise.

GAME 8 - My Special Letters

Another game with colors is to have your child to find a specific letter or character that is also a specific color. Amanda loved to find the letter "A" in her favorite color, pink.

GAME 9 - Learning To Write

In spite of the predictions that electronic publishing would eliminate paper, a pencil used with a piece of paper remain as useful and popular as ever. Amanda's Letter Lotto can help your

child learn to use these tools.

When you start to play any of the games have a pencil and some paper next to your computer. As the letters appear on the screen have your child copy them. You can also have her look for a specific letter. When that letter appears on the screen have her copy it on the paper.

THE LETTER LOTTO GAME (Games 11 and 12)

The "Letter Lotto" option on the Game Options menu sets up the a Letter Lotto game. Select this option and five letters will be chosen at random. When you start playing the game you'll then have 26 chances to find all five letters. Since only upper case letters are selected, and there are 26 letters in the alphabet, you should be able to find all five just by pushing all the letters on the keyboard. However, Amanda's Letter Lotto will compute a score based on the number of keystrokes it takes you to find all five letters. The fewer key strokes you use, the higher your score will be. Finding all five letters with five key strokes will result in a score of 100. If you use 26 key strokes to find all five, or you can't find all five, you get a score of zero.

When you begin playing Lotto the number of key strokes left will be displayed on the screen. Each time you select a correct letter that letter will be listed in the bottom center of the screen.

That's all there is to playing Letter Lotto. So, here's your chance to test your ESP before you buy your next Lotto ticket. Of course, you'll need to get kids away from the computer first.

NEXT NUMBER

This is a game that teaches counting. A series of three numbers will be displayed on the screen. Push the key for the next number in the sequence. If no number is pushed the computer will display the correct answer after a short delay.

There are several controls you can set using the options on the Game Options menu.

Set Hint Delay - after a time delay you set using this option, a hint (the correct answer) will be displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Set Maximum Value - use this option to set the highest number that will be displayed. For children who are just learning counting, set the maximum number to be nine. As your children advance change the maximum number to 99 and then 999.

BLACKBOARD SHAPES

This is a shape recognition and matching game. It also helps to teach the use of the cursor keys and mouse. A shape will appear at the top of the screen and three shapes will be at the bottom. Use the cursor keys to move the arrows until they are above and below the shape that matches the one at the top of the screen. Push ENTER to select that as the matching shape.

You can also use the mouse cursor to click on the correct matching shape.

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