

Simon Sounds It Out[®]

Introduction

Simon Sounds It Out[®] by Don Johnston (<http://www.donjohnston.com>) is a multi-level phonics instructional program which helps students learn sounds and build, practice and discriminate between words. Once students have mastered the different levels of Simon Sounds It Out[®], they can go on to build on their skills with another phonics based program called Wordmaker[®]. Simon Sounds It Out[®] comes in two levels (Level I and Level II). Both have excellent sound quality, a recording feature so students can record their own voices as they practice words, and a progress tracking option so educators can check on student progress.

Case Study

Simon Sounds It Out[®] is designed to be used by students at the very beginning stages of literacy development. Each activity in the program builds on the previous one and the activities have a very consistent look and simple user interface making it easier for even young students to work with the program independently. The program is fully accessible so students who access the computer by scanning and switch or mouse selection can also benefit from its phonic instruction.

“Jennifer” is a Grade three student who, until a recent acquired brain injury, was an average student who was developing literacy skills along with her classmates. As a result of her injury, she no longer remembers how to read at grade level and is even having difficulty remembering letters and sounds. Her team is using the computer in her Individual Education Program for a number of tasks and decided to introduce Simon Sounds It Out[®] as an additional strategy to help her regain her reading skills. Her team planned the integration of the program into her daily timetable, allocating fifteen minutes a day during the Language Arts block for her to use the program. Before introducing the program to Jennifer, her Special Education Assistant printed off the support materials that came with the program documentation and organized the blackline masters in a binder, ready for printing when she completed various activities. Her SEA also connected a microphone to the computer so Jennifer could record her own voice during the various activities – a very motivating task for her. Once Jennifer began using the program, her team noticed that she would often need to repeat levels before she had mastered them so her SEA used the Teacher and Report Options built into the program to set her activity level and view and print progress reports. Initially, Jennifer required significant support and prompting from her SEA to use the program, but after a few weeks, she began using it more independently. Her team is anticipating that she will be finished Level I soon and be ready to move onto Level II. They also report some generalization of the skills practiced using the program as Jennifer is now able to identify and sound out some letters and simple words without the computer.

Strengths of Simon Sounds It Out[®]

This phonics instructional software has several helpful features:

- a. It is a simple program to implement with students – the program installs easily on the Windows or Macintosh platform and does not require advanced technical ability to operate.
- b. It is based on solid research and pedagogy on phonics instruction. The levels proceed at an appropriate pace with a variety of practice techniques in each level.
- c. Students can use the program in a very linear manner, moving from level to level sequentially, or they can jump into the program at whatever level is appropriate, completing only those levels that are needed.
- d. The user interface is very clean with little visual clutter.
- e. The structure of lessons and activities is very consistent and predictable making it easy for students to use the program independently
- f. The program's voice is digitized, pleasant and motivating. The level of auditory support is very high – the letter and word sounds are modeled, verbal instructions are given throughout and prompts delivered when needed – there is also a “Help” button on each screen which repeats the last instruction given.
- g. Student progress is tracked throughout and teachers can print off progress reports to help assess student performance and development.
- h. The program is fully accessible for students who use alternate computer access methods like scanning.
- i. The program CD has a helpful Teacher Materials manual that contains blackline masters which support the skills being developed.

Limitations of Simon Sounds It Out[®]

While most programs have some limitations, Simon Sounds It Out[®] has very few. The limitations would surface if there was inappropriate match to student need.

Installing Simon Sounds It Out[®]

To install the program:

1. Insert the program CD into the computer's CD drive.
2. The auto-installation wizard should automatically begin running. Follow the prompts on the screen to install the program.
3. If the auto-installation wizard does not automatically start:
 - a. **For Windows...**
 - i. Double-click **My Computer** to see your computer drives.
 - ii. Find the CD drive and double-click to open it.
 - iii. Double-click the **setup.exe** icon to begin installing the program.
 - iv. Follow the prompts on the screen to complete installation.
 - b. **For Macintosh...**
 - i. Double-click the CD-ROM icon on the desktop
 - ii. Double-click the **Installer** program
 - iii. Follow the prompts on the screen to complete installation.

***** You do not need to register the program once it is installed, but you will need to have the program CD in your CD-ROM drive whenever you want to run the program.**

Note: To locate the program's documentation, open the contents of the CD-ROM and look for the **Simon SIO Documentation** folder. The **"Read Me"** file also has helpful installation instructions and "known issues" for troubleshooting.

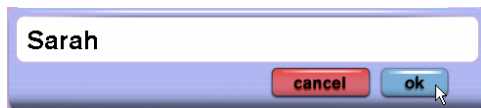
Starting the Program

1. Launch Simon Sounds It Out[®] by double-clicking the shortcut on your desktop (if you selected this option during installation) or by selecting the program from your **"Start menu – All Programs"** list (Windows) or by double-clicking the alias on your desktop or selecting it from your **"Applications"** folder.

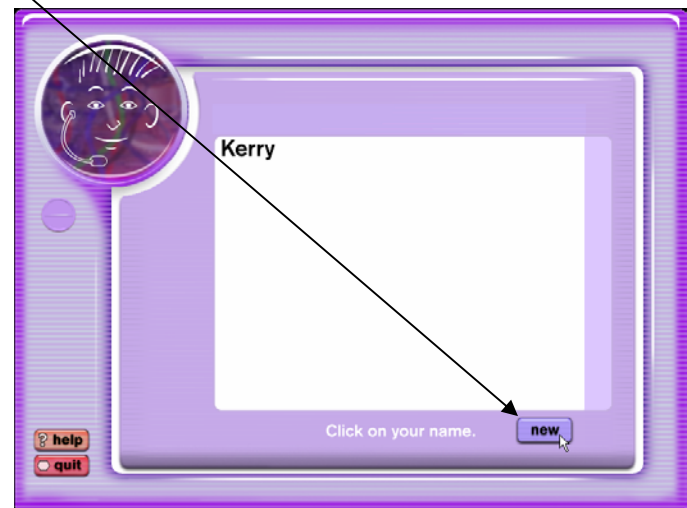
Adding a New Student and Signing In

The first screen you will see when Simon Sounds It Out[®] opens up is the Sign in screen. Here you can add a new student to the student list.

1. Click the **"New"** button.
2. Type in the name of your new student and click **"OK"**.



3. Back on the **Sign In** window, click on the new student's name. You will be asked to verify your name. Click **"Yes"**.

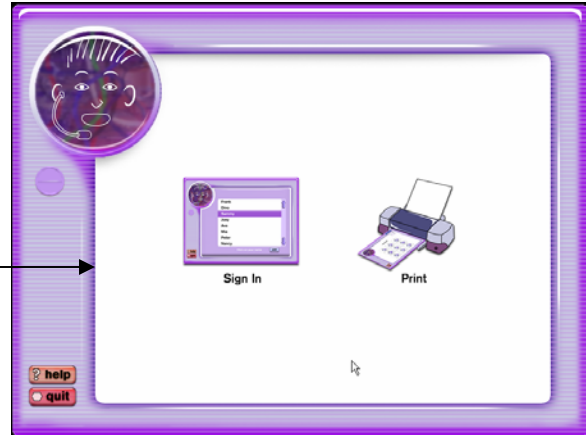


Turning on Menu Mode and Demo Mode

Before you begin using Simon Sounds It Out[®] with your student, you will want to have a look at some of the Activities in each Level so you can get a sense of how they work and what letters are presented in each.

To get an overview of the Activities in the different levels, you need to go into “**Demo Mode**”. You do this from the Sign In or Out screen (not while you are in an actual lesson).

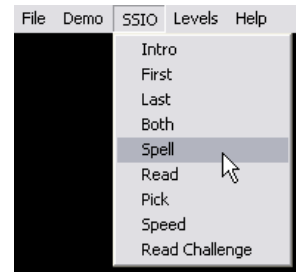
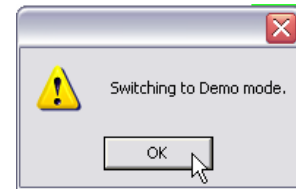
If you are in a Lesson, click the “**Quit**” button in the lower left corner to be returned to this screen...



1. From the Sign in or Sign Out screen, turn on the Simon Sounds It Out® menu (go to Menu mode) by pressing “**Ctrl-M**” (Windows) or “**⌘-M**” (Macintosh). You should see that a menu bar has appeared at the top of your screen.
2. To enable Demo Mode, go to the “**Demo**” menu and select “**Enable Demo**”.



3. A verification window will open indicating the program is switching to Demo mode. Click “**OK**”.
4. Now that you are in Demo mode, you can select from a number of activities under the “**SSIO**” menu. You should explore the various activities to see how they work.



You can change the activity level by going to the “**Levels**” menu and selecting a level from 1 – 33.

*** If you want a quick description of each activity, refer to the “**Getting Started Guide**” section of the “**Simon SIO manual.pdf**” that comes in the “**Simon SIO Documentation**” folder on the program CD.

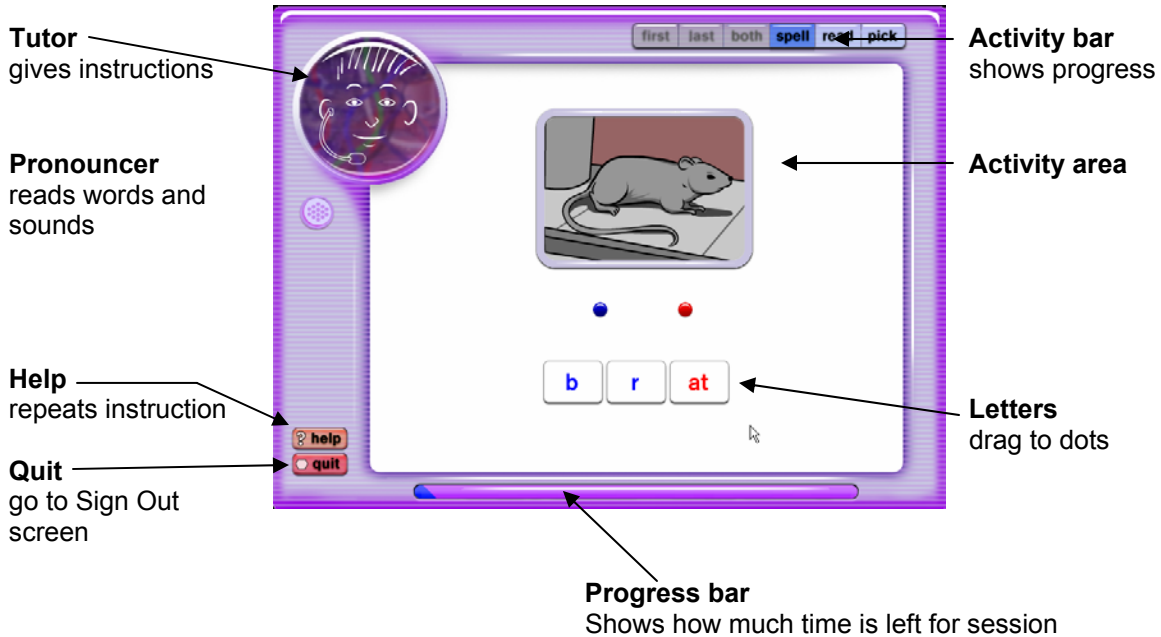
*** If you want to see what letters and words are explored in each level, refer to **Appendix B** of the “**Simon SIO manual.pdf**” that comes on the program CD. This .pdf document is located in the “**Simon SIO Documentation**” folder on the CD.

*** If you would like to see how each activity works, refer to the “**User Guide**” section of the “**Simon SIO manual.pdf**” also located in the “**Simon SIO Documentation**” folder on the program CD.



The Simon SIO Activity Screen

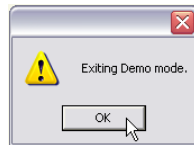
The activities in Simon Sounds It Out® have a very consistent user interface so students can use the program as independently as possible. The screens have the following areas or buttons...



Teacher Options

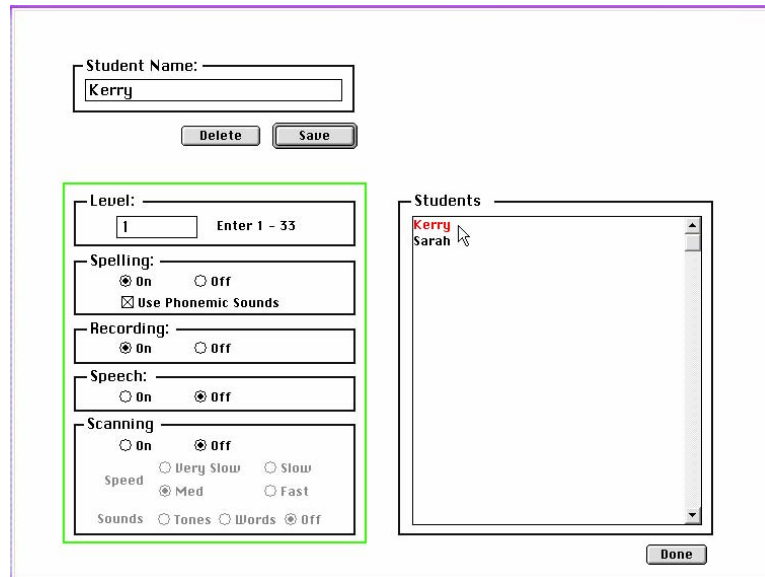
There are a number of teacher options, including the ability to jump to any level when working with a student, available in Simon Sounds It Out®.

1. If you are in Demo mode you must exit that first. Go to the **"Demo"** menu and deselect **"Enable Demo"**. A window will open telling you that you are exiting Demo mode. Click **"OK"**.



2. Under the **"File"** menu, select **"Teacher Options"**. Notice that you can also activate the Teacher Options by pressing by pressing **"Ctrl-T"** (Windows) or **"⌘-T"** (Macintosh). The Teacher Options screen will open up.

3. Click on a student name to highlight it. The name is placed in the “**Student Name**” field. Any changes you make to the options will apply only to that student.



The **Teacher Options** screen gives you access to several helpful functions...

- **Add** or Delete students

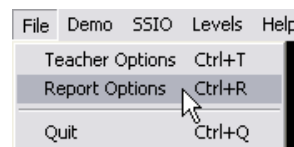


- Type in a specific **Level** (from 1 – 33) that you want the student to go to immediately or when he or she starts the program – this is very helpful if your student is completing the levels in a non-sequential fashion or if they need to skip certain levels
- Turn **Spelling** on or off and select or deselect phonemic sounds (by default both these features are turned on for the most phonics support possible)
- Turn the **Recording** feature on or off – this must be turned on to allow students to record their voice using a microphone
- Turn **Speech** on or off depending on whether or not your student needs additional auditory prompts for buttons when the cursor moves over the button
- Turn on and adjust **Scanning** if your student will be accessing the program with a switch or mouse clicks only

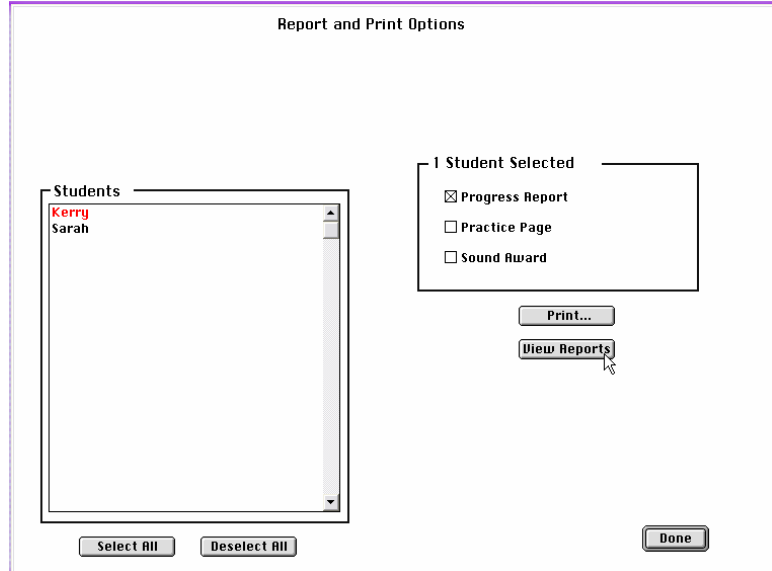
Once you have added or deleted students and adjusted the options for each, click “**Done**” to exit the Teacher Options screen.

Report Options

Finally, Simon Sounds It Out[®] has a number of reporting and printing options. These can be accessed by selecting “**Report Options**” under the “**File**” menu.



1. Select "Report Options" under the "File" menu. The Report Options screen opens up.
2. By selecting one of the students on the Student List, you can choose to view or print a **Progress Report** or print a **Practice Page** or **Sound Award** for that student.
3. Select "**Progress Report**" and then click "**View Reports**".

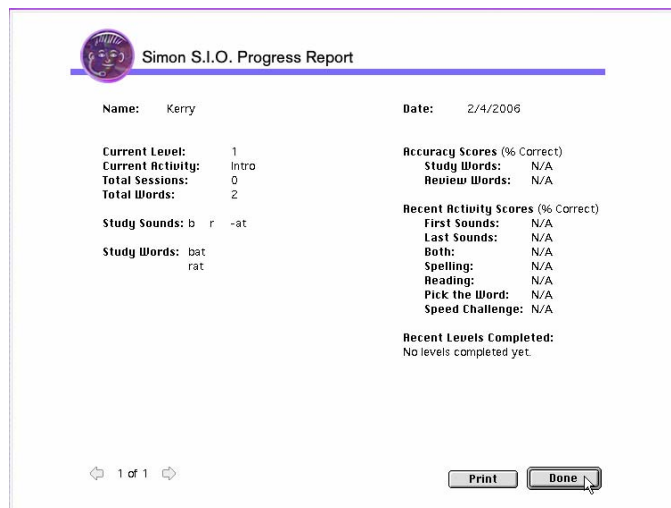


The Progress Report screen opens up giving you a summary of how the selected student is doing.

This screen contains very helpful information on what level and sessions the student has completed, the student's scores, and so on.

You can print this report from here by clicking "**Print**", or you can click "**Done**" to return to the "**Report Options**" Screen.

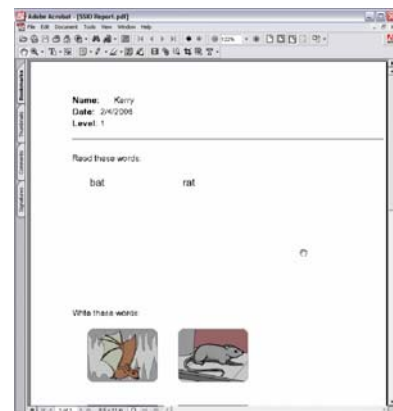
You can print from here as well.



4. On the "**Report Options**" screen, select "**Practice Page**" and then click "**Print**". The program will save the page as an Acrobat .pdf file (name it and identify a destination folder) and then open the file in Acrobat. From here you can select "**File**" and "**Print**" to print the document.

The same can be done with "**Sound Award**". Note that the Sound Award will not print if your student has not completed a level yet.

5. Click "**Done**" to exit the "**Report Options**" screen.



Quitting the Program

To quit or leave Simon Sounds It Out®, click the “**Quit**” button in the lower left corner of the activity screens. Click “**Quit**” again on the Sign out screen. The program will remember where the student was and will return to that activity the next time he or she signs in UNLESS you go to the Teacher Options and type in a different level.

Other Resources

For other training resources, including online program demonstrations, visit the Simon Sounds It Out® resource page at www.setbc.org/psap.