

Wordmaker[®]

Introduction

Wordmaker[®] by Don Johnston (<http://www.donjohnston.com>) has been designed around Patricia Cunningham's "Systematic Sequential Phonics" system which helps students who are struggling with decoding and reading develop their phonics and spelling skills. The program has 140 lessons, each with a number of activities, designed to teach phonics patterns in a sequence. The program has a high level of auditory support, with modeling, prompting and verbal instructions throughout. Letters and words are presented multiple times, helping with comprehension and understanding. Teachers are able to set student options and track student progress through viewable and printable reports. The program also comes with accompanying print resources for deskwork or homework. This tutorial will give you an overview of the program, its features and the Wordmaker[®] support materials that are available.

Case Study

Wordmaker[®] can be used by any student at the beginning stages of literacy development. It is particularly useful for students who require strong auditory support and structured phonics instruction with a great deal of repetition. The program's voice is digitized and the user interface is consistent and easy to understand providing a pleasant learning environment for most students. The program also has built in scanning options and full keyboard shortcut support for students who are using alternate access methods.

"Cory" is a Grade two student who was having difficulty making the transition from letter recognition to word formation. His team decided to try Wordmaker[®] to help build his understanding of phonics and to help him start building simple words. He was already comfortable using computers and used conventional access methods (mouse and keyboard). His team started him on the first lesson and set aside regularly scheduled time each day during Language Arts to complete the sequential lessons. Cory would often work with a peer during these times and he was able to repeat lessons as necessary. His team would often observe him completing past lessons to monitor his use of the program. Each week they would print out a progress report and determine which lessons he would complete in the following week. In addition, every few lessons they printed out the support materials and had Cory work at his desk building words as a "change of pace". His confidence and motivation for reading increased dramatically within a few weeks as he began to understand how words were constructed and for the first time independently chose reading as a choice activity during his school day.

Strengths of Wordmaker[®]

This reading support program, 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 pattern instruction.
- c. The user interface is very clean with little visual clutter. Students can see where they are in the lessons and activities through indicator “lights”
- d. The structure of lessons and activities is very consistent and predictable making it easy for students to use the program independently
- e. The program’s voice is digitized and pleasant and 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
- f. Student progress is tracked throughout and teachers can print off progress reports to help assess student performance and development.
- g. Letters are supported with picture icons in the first 29 lessons for students who need some extra visual support – this can be turned off if not needed
- h. The program CD has numerous printable documents like the Getting Started Guide, a full User Guide, as well as Teacher materials (blackline masters) and clip art which support the program.

Limitations of Wordmaker[®]

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

Installing Wordmaker[®]

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...**
 - b. Double-click **My Computer** to see your computer drives.
 - c. Find the CD drive and double-click to open it.
 - d. Double-click the **setup.exe** icon to begin installing the program.
 - e. Follow the prompts on the screen to complete installation.
 - f. **For Macintosh...**
 - g. Double-click the CD-ROM icon on the desktop
 - h. Double-click the **Installer** program
 - i. 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, blackline masters and so on, open the contents of the CD-ROM and look for the **Wordmaker Documentation** folder. The “**Read Me**” file also has helpful installation instructions and “known issues” for troubleshooting.

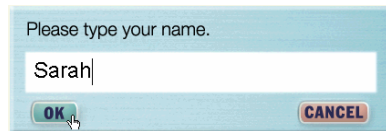
Starting the Program

1. Launch Wordmaker® 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.

Adding a New Student and Signing In

The first screen you will see when Wordmaker® opens up is the Sign in screen. Here you can add a new student to the student list.

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



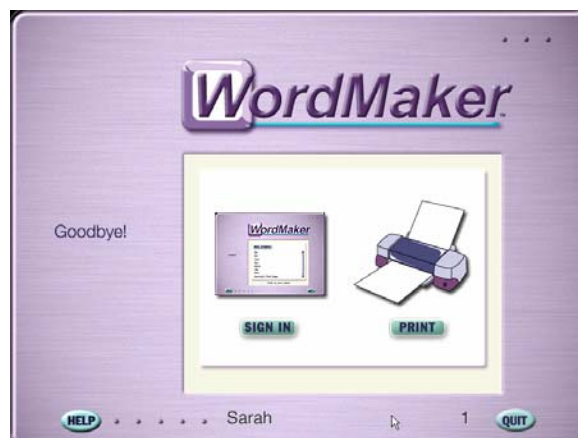
3. Back on the Sign In window, click on the new student’s name. You will be asked to verify your name. Click “**Yes**”.



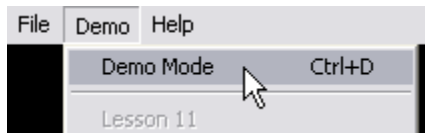
Turning on Menu Mode and Demo Mode

Before you begin using Wordmaker® with your student, you will want to have a look at some of the Lessons and Activities so you can get a sense of how they work and what letters are presented in each.

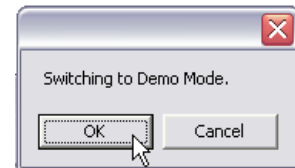
To get an overview of Lessons and Activities, you need to go into “**Demo Mode**”. You do this from the Sign In or Out screen (not while you are in an actual lesson). If you are in a Lesson, click the “**Quit**” button in the lower right corner to be returned to this screen...



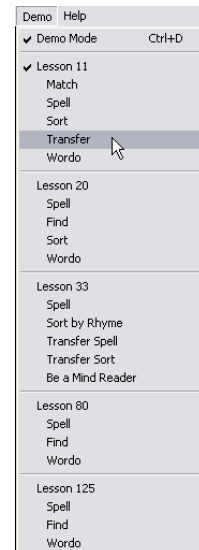
1. From the Sign in or Sign Out screen, turn on the Wordmaker menu (go to Menu mode) by pressing “**Ctrl-M**” (Windows) or “**⌘-M**” (Macintosh). You should see that a menu bar has appeared at the top of your screen.
2. To start Wordmaker® in Demo Mode, go to the “**Demo**” menu and select “**Demo Mode**”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



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 lessons and activities under the “**Demo**” menu. You should explore the various lessons to see how they work. The “**Wordo**” and “**Be a Mind Reader**” activities are challenge activities appearing at the end of lessons. Successfully completing these will earn the student points.

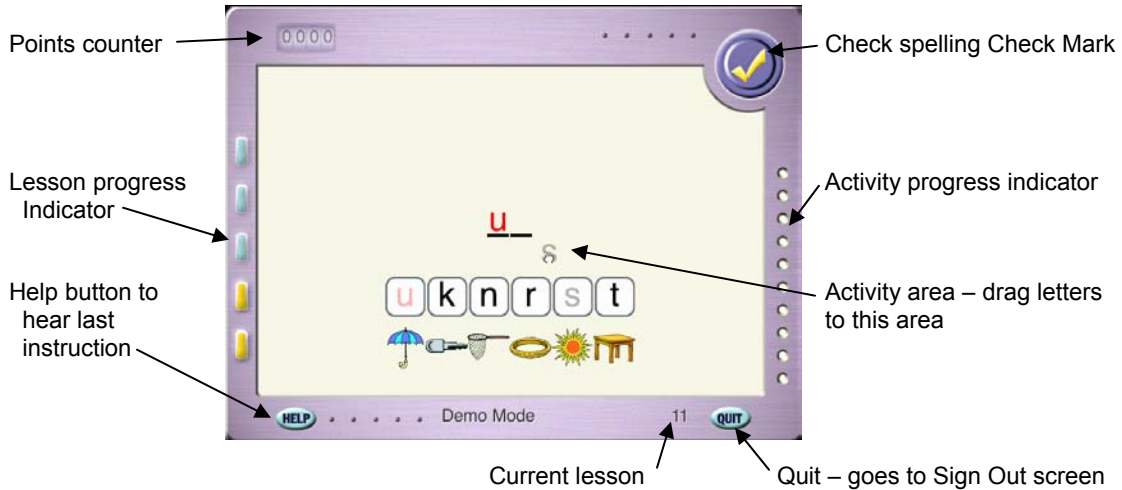


If you want to see an overview of the lessons and activities, refer to page 8 of the “**Wordmaker Getting Started Guide**” that comes on the program CD. This .pdf document is located in the “**Wordmaker Documentation**” folder on the CD.

If you would like to see a Lesson Scope and Sequence which lists all the letters and words for each lesson, refer to page 4 of the “**Wordmaker Appendix Index**” also located in the “**Wordmaker Documentation**” folder on the program CD.

The Lesson Activity Screen

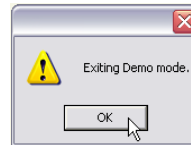
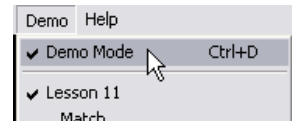
The activities in Wordmaker® have a very consistent user interface so students can use the program as independently as possible. The screens have the following areas or buttons...



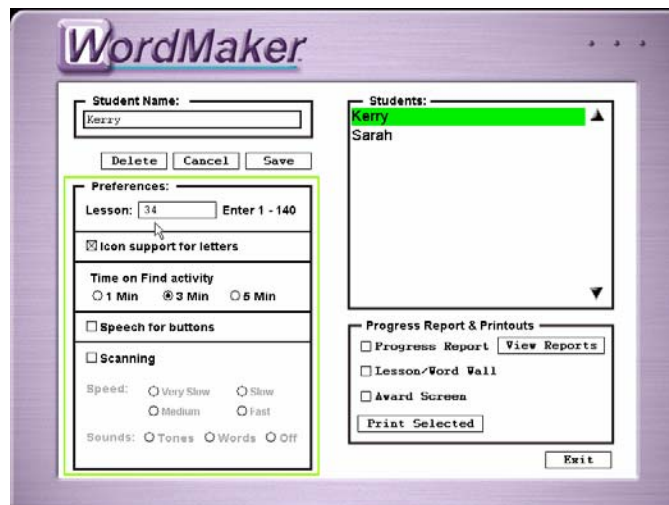
Teacher Options

There are a number of teacher options, including the ability to view and print student progress reports, available in Wordmaker®.

1. If you are in Demo mode you must exit that first. Go to the **"Demo"** menu and deselect **"Demo mode"**. 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. Notice that the name is placed in the **"Student Name"** field. Any Preferences or Reports you now select apply to that student only.



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

- Add or Delete students
- Type in a specific lesson that you want the student to go to immediately or when they start the program – this is very helpful if your student is completing the lessons in a non-sequential fashion or if they need to skip certain lessons
- Select or deselect picture icons to go with the letters in the first 29 lessons
- Set the amount of time given to the student for completing the “Find” activity in the lessons
- Select or deselect speech prompts to remind students of what the activity buttons do in the lessons
- Turn on and adjust Scanning if your student will be accessing the program with switches or mouse clicks only

Finally, the Teacher Options screen has an area called “**Progress Report and Printouts**”. For the selected student, you can view and print a “**Progress report**”. For the selected lesson, you can print the “**Lesson / Word Wall**” blackline master and the “**Award Screen**” that comes at the end of the lesson. The Lesson and Word Wall documents are also available as .pdf documents in the “**Take Home**” and “**Word Wall**” folders in the “**Wordmaker Documentation**” folder on the program CD.

4. To exit the Teacher Options screen, click “**Exit**” in the lower right corner.

Quitting the Program

To quit or leave Wordmaker®, click the “**Quit**” button in the lower right 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 lesson the next time he or she signs in UNLESS you go to the Teacher Options and type in a different lesson.

Other Resources

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