

no. A-164



fun from a to z

instructional computing courseware
for the **apple® II** computer



a product from the
mecc early learning series



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This manual is compatible
with
the Fun from A to Z diskette
Version 1.x

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INTRODUCTION

Fun from A to Z is a collection of three programs designed to give preschool and kindergarten children individual practice in a variety of early reading skills involving the alphabet.

In **BIRDS**, students practice discriminating among the letters of the alphabet and matching upper- and lower-case letters by helping a bird find its house.

DOTS gives students practice in learning the sequence of the alphabet while connecting dots in alphabetical order to create a variety of pictures.

RUNNERS helps students sharpen their knowledge of the alphabet sequence. Students help a team of animals win a race by selecting the missing letter that will complete a randomly selected alphabet segment.

Management Options are available that enable teachers to tailor the material to the needs of individual students or classes by specifying certain program parameters. See page 2 for information on how to use the Management Options.

A hand-shaped pointer allows students to enter their answers easily. They need to move the hand to the answer they wish to choose and then press the Return Key. They can move the hand to their next choice by pressing the Space Bar, the Right-Arrow Key, or the Down-Arrow Key. If they wish to move to a previous choice, they can press the Left-Arrow Key or the Up-Arrow Key. Students familiar with the keyboard can also enter their responses by directly typing the letter keys if the Management Options have been set to this.

Each program ends with a Score screen that graphically shows how many items were presented and how many were answered correctly.

Sound effects may be turned on or off **before** starting a program by selecting Option 5 on the main menu or **during** the program by pressing Control-S (hold down the Control Key and press the S Key).

Students can exit the program at any time by pressing the Escape (Esc) Key twice whenever the computer is waiting for a response.

Fun from A to Z is a product from the MECC Early Learning Series. This series presents opportunities for children to practice a wide variety of readiness skills. Additional products currently available include Paint with Words, First-Letter Fun, Counting Critters, and Arithmetic Critters.

This program requires an Apple II series computer with 64K memory, one disk drive, and a monochrome or color monitor.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Fun from A to Z has Management Options that enable teachers to customize the presentation of the material to the needs of their students. To access the Management Options menu, type Control-A when the main menu appears. To do this, hold down the Control Key and then press A. The Management Options menu that is shown in Figure 1 will then be displayed.

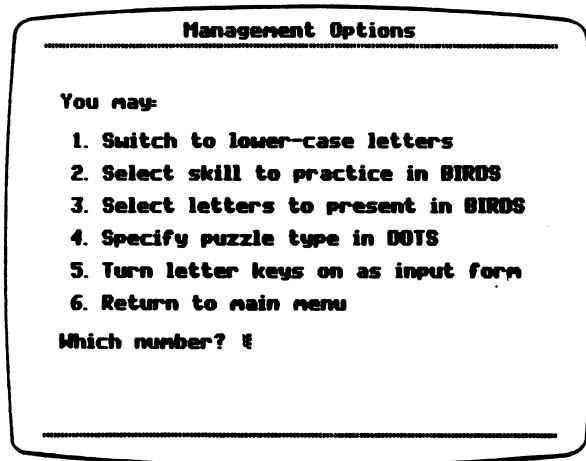


Figure 1

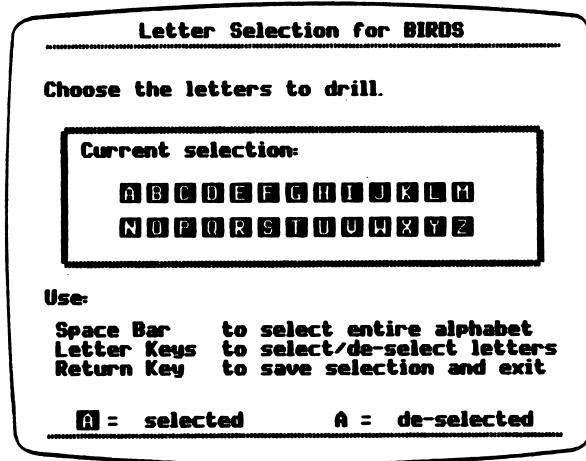


Figure 2

Option 1 in this menu enables you to specify whether all three programs should display upper- or lower-case letters. If you do not use this option, the program will display upper-case letters.

Option 2 lets you select which skill to practice in the program BIRDS: letter discrimination or upper- and lower-case matching. When drilling on the association of case forms, students match upper-case letters with their lower-case counterparts if Option 1 has been set to display upper-case letters. If Option 1 has been set to display lower-case letters, students match lower-case letters with their upper-case forms. If you do not use this option, the program will drill on letter discrimination.

Option 3 allows you to select the letters that will be presented in the program BIRDS. The standard setting is to present all the letters of the alphabet (Figure 2).

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS (continued)

Option 4 lets you specify the type of puzzle students will do in the program DOTS. You can indicate how many dots a puzzle should have (6, 12, 18, or 26 dots) and also select the number of dots that should be labeled. The program can prompt students to label each dot that is drawn, every other dot, every third dot, or a random combination. You can specify whether all the puzzles presented during a session should start with the same letter or whether the starting point of the various puzzles presented should vary. Finally, you can determine the number of consecutive puzzles (1-5) that the program should present. The standard setting for this program is to present one 26-dot puzzle with students being asked to label every dot drawn (Figures 3 and 4).

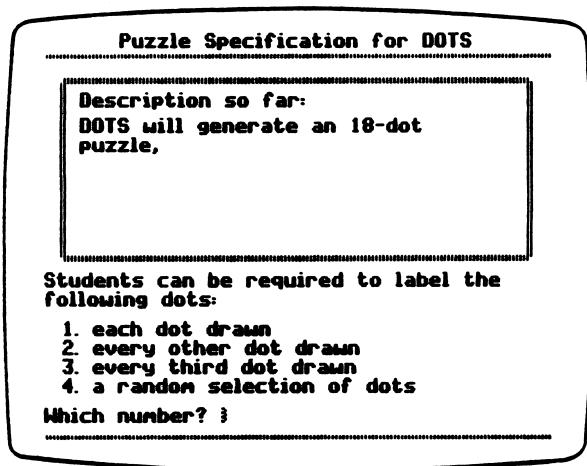


Figure 3

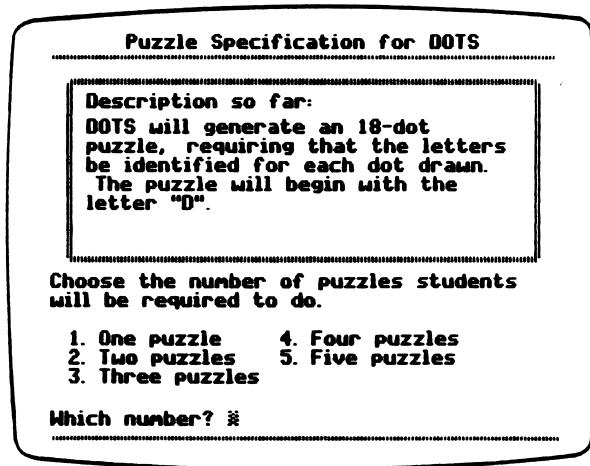


Figure 4

Option 5 allows teachers to activate or de-activate the letter keys as a form of entering responses. Even when the letter keys are turned on, the Space Bar and the arrow keys are functional. If this option is not used, the programs only accept the Space Bar or the arrow keys as a form of input.

DESCRIPTION

BIRDS gives students practice in two different skills: discriminating letter forms or matching upper- and lower-case letters. Before students use this program, teachers need to select the skill and letters that they want students to practice and use the Management Options to set up the program accordingly.

Curriculum Area: Language Arts

Subject: Pre-reading

Topics: Upper- and Lower-case Matching,
Letter Discrimination

Type: Drill and Practice

Grade Range: Preschool-Kindergarten

Classroom Use: Individual

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After using this courseware, the student will have received practice in:

- distinguishing each letter of the alphabet by its form;
- matching upper-case letters with their lower-case form and vice versa;
- recognizing that there are two different forms to represent the same letter.

PROGRAM PREVIEW

BIRDS requires students to match one of four letters displayed in the door of birdhouses with a letter on a bird's breast. Three of the letters are randomly selected distractors which include, when appropriate, letters very often confused with the letter on the bird's breast. When drilling on letter discrimination, the letters in the houses and on the bird's breast are in the same case (Figure 1). If practicing upper- and lower-case association, the letters on the bird's breast and in the houses are in a different case (Figure 2).

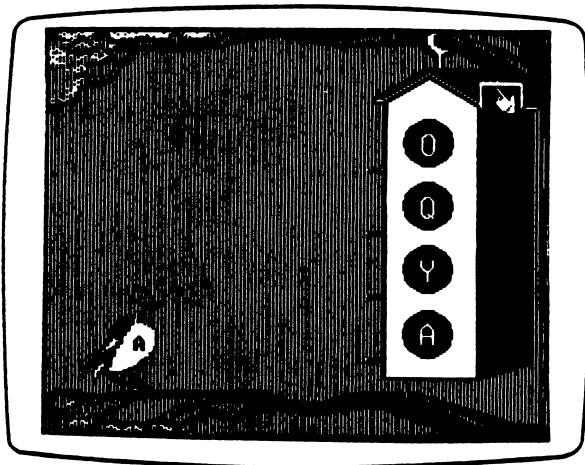


Figure 1

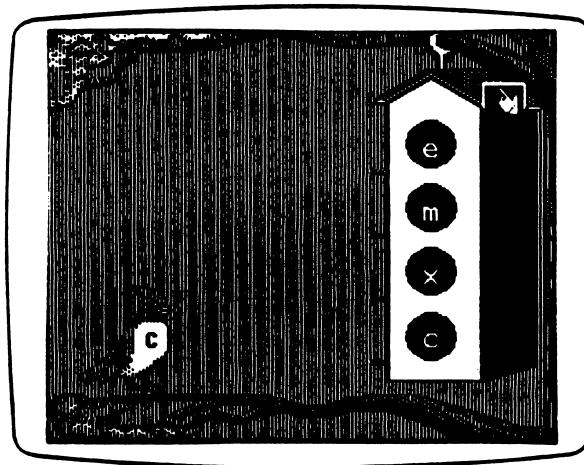


Figure 2

Students have two opportunities to answer a question correctly. When drilling on letter discrimination, correct answers are rewarded by having the bird perform tricks and then fly to its house (Figure 3). When an upper-case letter is correctly matched to its lower-case counterpart, a bird comes out of the house, does a trick, and then flies to the tree (Figure 4).

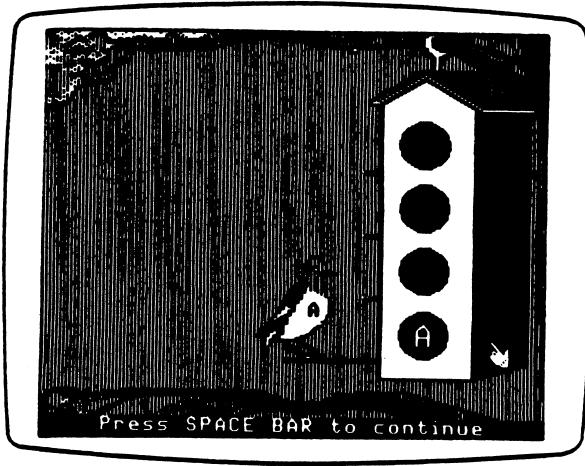


Figure 3

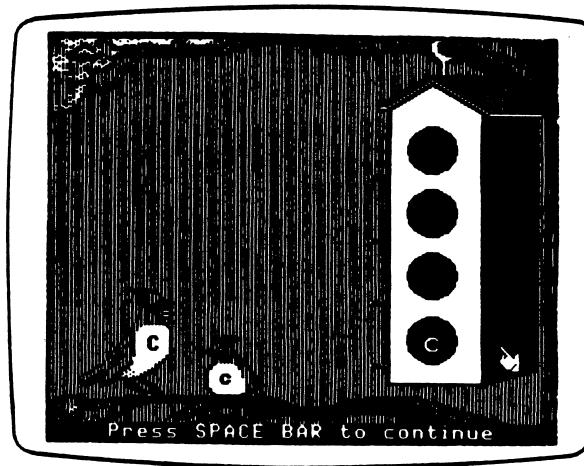


Figure 4

PROGRAM PREVIEW (continued)

On the first incorrect attempt, the door opens to show an empty nest if drilling on upper- and lower-case match (Figure 5). When drilling on letter discrimination, a slash is drawn across the letter. The letter is redrawn before students can try again. On the second incorrect try, a slash is drawn through the answer and the distractors are erased. The correct letter and the letter on the bird's breast then flash twice (Figure 6). Letters that are matched incorrectly are presented again later.

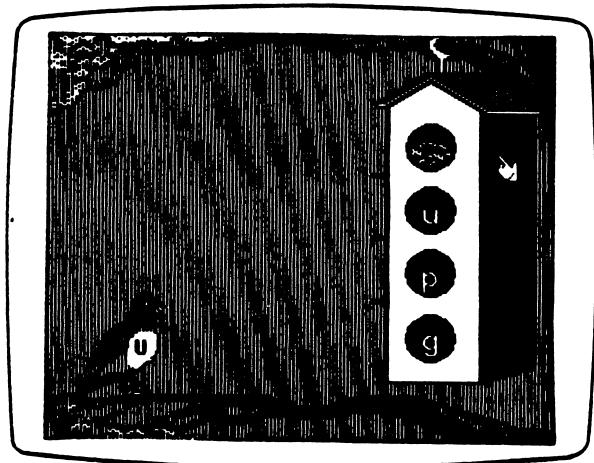


Figure 5

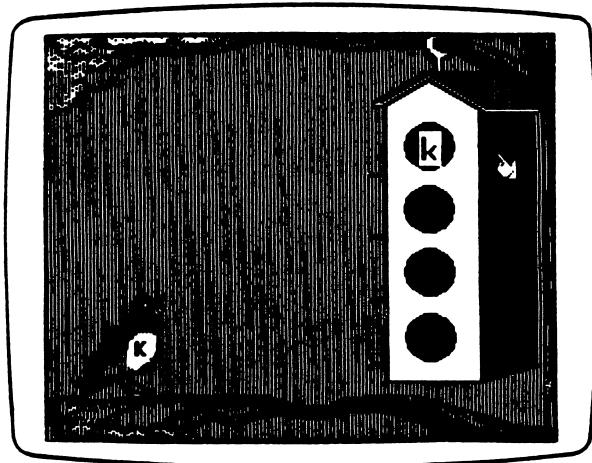


Figure 6

After ten problems, the program ends and the Score screen is displayed. The boxes with a birdhouse indicate correct answers on the first try. The letters that were missed will appear in boxes without graphics (Figure 7).

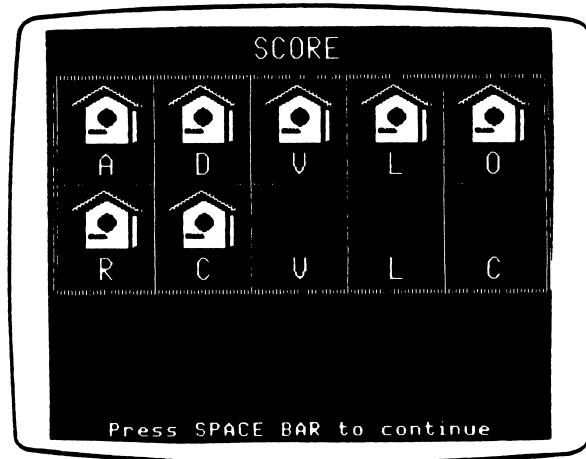


Figure 7

USE IN AN INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING

Preparation

Before students use this program, they should be familiar with the capital and small representations of letters and they should be able to name the letters.

Use the Management Options to select the skill and letters you want the program to drill on.

Give a large-group demonstration or explain to individual students how the program works. As you introduce the program to students, give special attention to clarifying the following points:

1. Introduce or review the location of the Space Bar, Return Key, and each of the arrow keys. Since students often have difficulty locating the Return Key, you can highlight it by placing on the top of the Return Key a self-sticking label on which a colored dot or big "R" has been drawn.
2. Explain the method of input that you want students to use. To indicate their selection, students can choose a letter in the selection box by moving the hand in front of the letter of their choice and then pressing Return. Alternatively, students can enter their answers by typing the letter directly from the keyboard if the Management Options have been set to this. Start by showing students how to move the hand by using the Space Bar only. Introduce students to the use of the arrow keys at a later time. First, show students how to use the Up- and Down-Arrow Keys. A little later demonstrate the use of the Left- and Right-Arrow Keys. As your students' familiarity with the location of keys on the keyboard increases, you may give them the option of typing the letter keys. Remind students that when typing the letter keys, they do not need to press Return.
3. Caution students not to press the Space Bar or arrow keys for too long because the automatic repeat feature will make the cursor (hand) move too fast. If students press a key for too long, tell them to lift their hand from the keyboard and wait until the cursor (hand) comes to rest. Then, they can press the Space Bar or arrow keys again.
4. A program can be selected from the main menu by pressing the program number or the letter key for the first letter in the program title.
5. Help students see the relationship between their performance and the information given on the Score screen. Tell them that the boxes represent the number of letters they had to match. A birdhouse in a box indicates a correct answer. Boxes without a birdhouse indicate incorrect answers. The letters in the boxes indicate letters the students had difficulty with. Encourage students to try to fill all of the boxes.

USE IN AN INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING (continued)

Using the Program

Students should begin by discriminating among letters printed in upper case and then move to discriminating among letters printed in lower case. Once they have demonstrated "proficiency" in each of these discrete skills, they can practice associating upper- and lower-case letters.

Follow-up

On a piece of paper draw a bingo board (3x3 grid) and write a lower-case letter in each of the nine squares. Distribute a bingo board to each student. Prepare a set of cards with large upper-case letters printed on them. Hold up a card showing an upper-case letter. Ask the students to find the lower-case counterpart on their board and to cross it out. The first student to cross out all the letters on the board is the winner.

DESCRIPTION

DOTS helps children learn the alphabet sequence by connecting dots in alphabetical order to complete a dot-to-dot puzzle and reinforces the upper- and lower-case forms of letters. Before students use this program, teachers should use the Management Options to specify the size of the puzzle, the segment of the alphabet that should be drilled, the number of dots that students must label, and the number of consecutive puzzles to be presented.

Curriculum Area: Language Arts
Subject: Pre-reading
Topic: Alphabet Sequence
Type: Drill and Practice
Grade Range: Preschool-Kindergarten
Classroom Use: Individual

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After using this courseware, the student will have received practice in:

- identifying the next letter in an alphabet sequence;
- recognizing the upper- and lower-case symbol for a given letter.

PROGRAM PREVIEW

As the program starts, students see the first dot, already labeled, of a dot-to-dot puzzle (Figure 1). Depending on the teacher's specifications, the program may draw, connect, and label various dots before it prompts students to label the next dot or it may prompt students to label each dot that is drawn. When a question mark appears next to a dot, students must provide the letter for that dot (Figure 2).

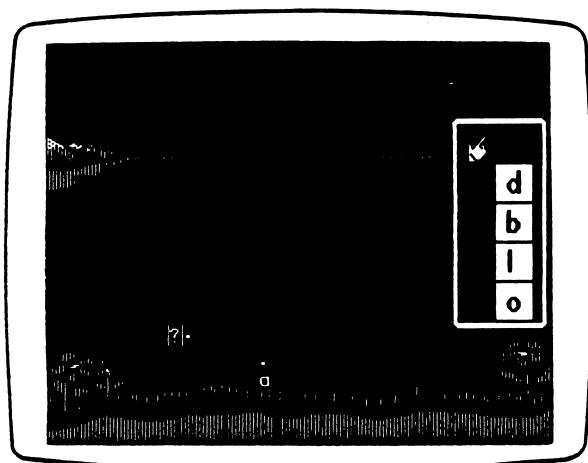


Figure 1

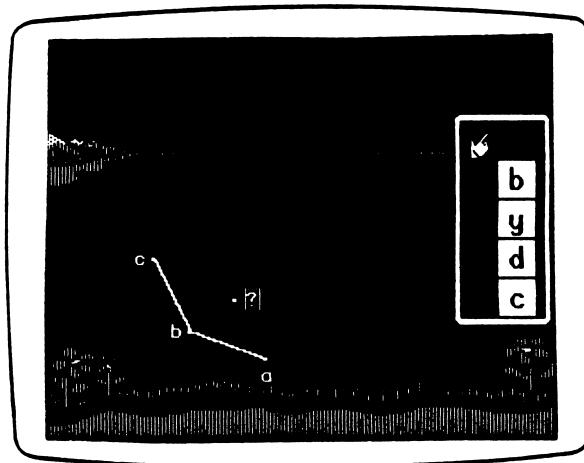


Figure 2

Students have three opportunities to select the correct letter to label the dot. When the student answers correctly, the letter replaces the question mark, and a line is drawn connecting the last two dots as a brief note is played (Figure 3). On the first incorrect attempt, a slash is drawn across the letter. An alphabet segment, showing a question mark in place of the letter, is displayed at the top (Figure 4).

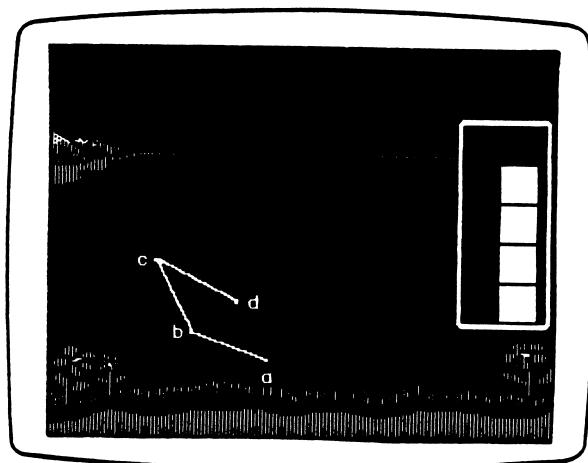


Figure 3

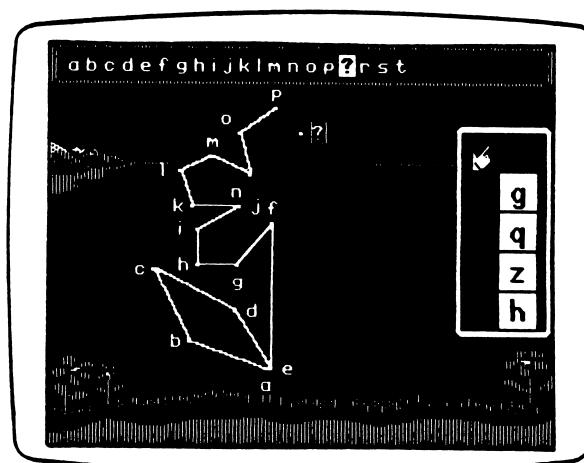


Figure 4

PROGRAM PREVIEW (continued)

If students answer incorrectly on the second attempt, a slash is drawn across the letter and the alphabet segment, including the letter, is displayed again. On the third incorrect attempt, all the distractors are erased and the correct letter and the letter in the alphabet segment flash (Figure 5).

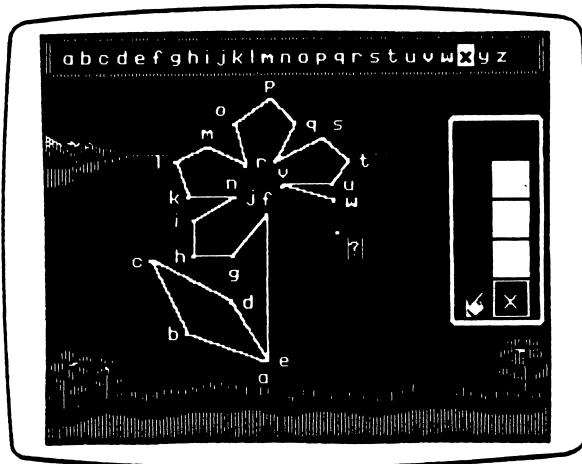


Figure 5

When all the dots have been connected, some detail, color, and animation is added (Figure 6). If students have missed any letters, there is no animation. The Score screen appears, showing a different display of objects for each of the three puzzle backgrounds. The total number of objects shown represents the letters students were asked to label. The appearance of each object changes when the moving figure lands on it. The figure will go only as far as correct responses were given by the student (Figure 7).

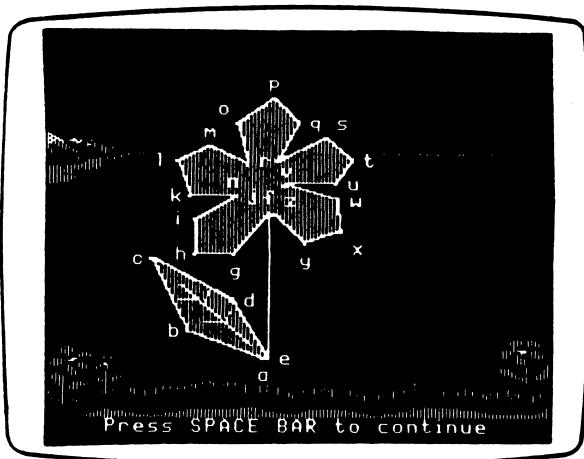


Figure 6

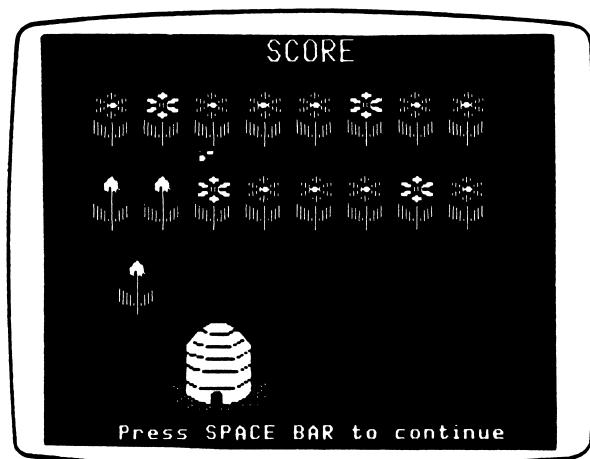


Figure 7

USE IN AN INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING

Preparation

Before using this program, explain to students that they will be doing dot-to-dot puzzles, but instead of drawing lines between dots marked with letters they will have to supply the letter that goes with a dot. The computer will then connect the dots.

Use the Management Options to specify the length and number of puzzles, the alphabet segment to be presented, and the number of letters that students must label.

Give a large-group demonstration or explain to individual students how the program works, paying special attention to the five points mentioned on page 7.

Using the Program

Start by reviewing discrete segments of the alphabet using six-dot puzzles. As students' proficiency increases, change the program settings so that students have the opportunity to deal with larger segments of the alphabet at a time and identify a greater number of letters.

When students have difficulty determining the letter for a new dot, have them go back several dots and name the letters up to the missing point.

Follow-up

1. Ask students to cut out pictures that begin with different letters of the alphabet. Distribute sheets of construction paper with holes punched in them and ask students to glue a different picture on each sheet. When they are finished, instruct students to organize the sheets in alphabetical order. Give them a piece of string to tie and bind the sheets into a book. Students can use their alphabet books to write new words that they learn or to glue other pictures.
2. Discuss with students the importance of knowing and using the order of the alphabet to locate information quickly. Demonstrate how information in telephone books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and even some books in libraries and stores is arranged in alphabetical order.

DESCRIPTION

RUNNERS gives students additional practice in sequencing the alphabet and reinforces the upper- and lower-case forms of letters. In contrast with DOTS, this program randomly selects any five-letter segment of the alphabet. One of the letters in the segment is missing and students must provide it in order to complete the segment.

Curriculum Area: Language Arts
Subject: Pre-reading
Topic: Alphabet Sequence
Grade Range: Preschool-Kindergarten
Classroom Use: Individual

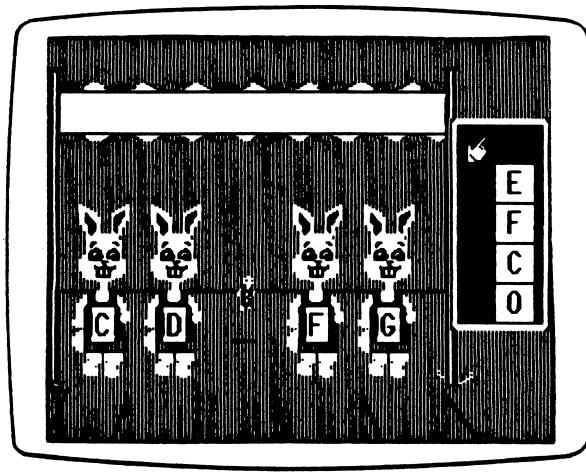
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After using this courseware, the student will have received practice in:

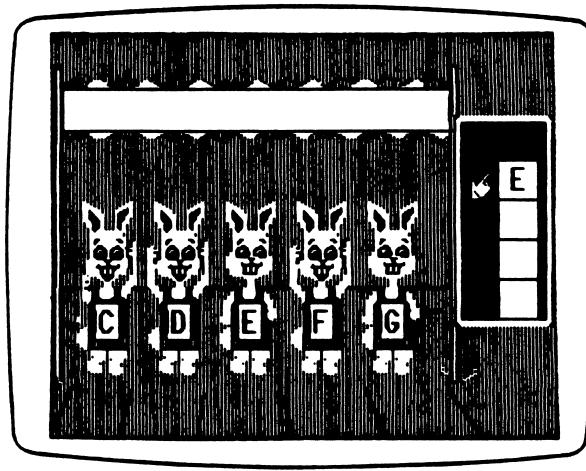
- providing the letter that completes a sequence of the alphabet;
- recognizing the upper- and lower-case symbol for a given letter.

PROGRAM PREVIEW

A team of five running animals, wearing a t-shirt with a letter on it, races to reach the finish line. Four of the animals make it, but the fifth one lags behind (Figure 1). In order to help the fifth animal finish the race, students must select the letter that completes the sequence from among the letters to the right.

**Figure 1**

Students have three chances to select the correct letter. When students answer correctly, the fifth animal runs forward, performs a brief animation, and is cheered by its running mates (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

PROGRAM PREVIEW (continued)

If the first answer is incorrect, a slash is drawn across the letter, and the entire alphabet, showing a question mark in place of the letter, is displayed (Figure 3). On the second incorrect attempt, a slash is drawn across the letter and the entire alphabet, including the letter, is displayed at the top. The third time an incorrect answer is given, a slash is drawn across the letter and the distractors are erased. The correct letter and the letter at the top flash twice (Figure 4). Letters that were missed are presented for review later.

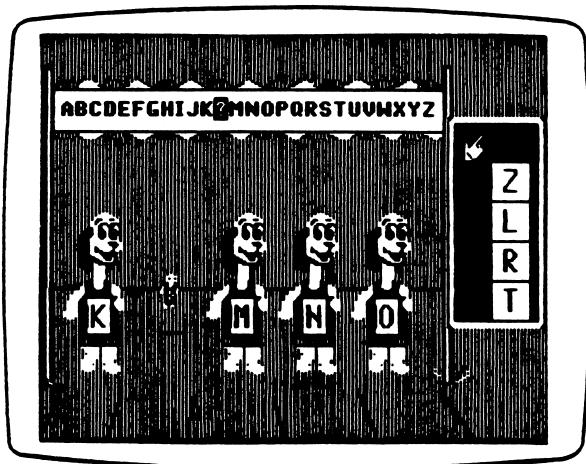


Figure 3

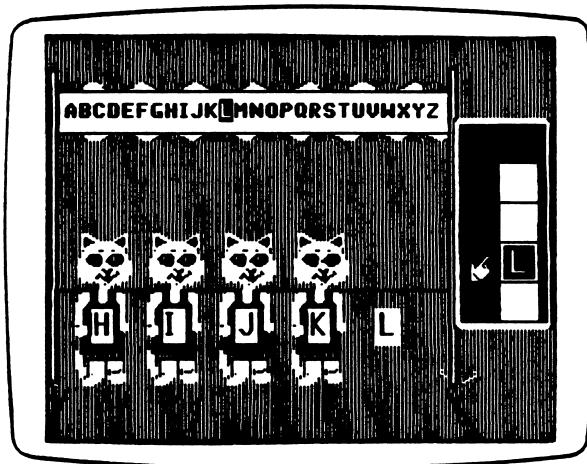


Figure 4

The program ends after ten segments have been presented. The alphabet sequence and a t-shirt will be shown for problems answered correctly the first time. Boxes without a t-shirt represent incorrect responses, and the letter missed is highlighted (Figure 5).

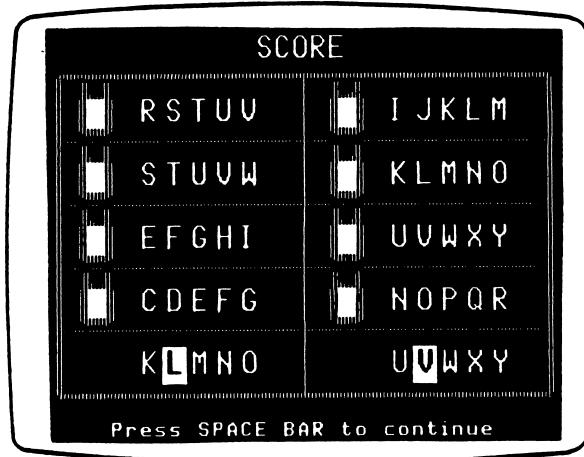


Figure 5

USE IN AN INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING

Preparation

Make sure students know the alphabet sequence well before doing this program.

Give a large-group demonstration or explain to individual students how the program works. Give special emphasis to the five points mentioned on page 7. Point out the differences in the approach followed in this program compared to the one used in DOTS.

Using the Program

When students have problems identifying the missing letter, have them go back a few letters or, if necessary, to the beginning of the alphabet and name the letters up to the missing letter.

Follow-up

Have students arrange a set of books in alphabetical order. Involve them in deciding what piece of information they will use as the basis for alphabetizing. Should books be alphabetized by the first name of the author, the last name, the title, or the publisher? Why is it important to know how the books will be alphabetized?

APPENDICES

CREDITS

Fun from A to Z was produced by a MECC development team consisting of Miryam Acevedo-Bouchard, Sherry Luedloff, Charolyn Kapplinger, and Kevin Neff.

MECC wishes to extend a special thanks to the teachers, the staff, and students of the following schools for their assistance in classroom testing this package: Carol Wessel and Janis Peterson, D. Emmet Williams Elementary School, Roseville, Minnesota; Cheryl Cain, L. D. Jacob Elementary School, Coon Rapids, Minnesota; Cheryl Bennet, Caryl Bloem, and Karen Reuter, Pinewood Elementary School, Mounds View, Minnesota.

TO THE READER:

MECC has made every effort to ensure the instructional and technical quality of this courseware package. Your comments—as user or reviewer—are valued and will be considered for inclusion in any future version of the product. Please address comments to:

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- 1) make note of the *name* and *version number* of the product;
- 2) note the *brand* and *model* of the equipment involved, as well as the type of *printer card* used if the problem concerns a printer;
- 3) write or call the Help Line to describe the problem (612/481-3660).

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