



## Keyboard Crazy

### Introduction

Father of three David Todd stumbled by chance upon an idea which is so simple in its approach it was a wonder no one had ever thought of it before.

Whilst attending a computer course at his son's local primary school, David noticed the difficulties pupils were experiencing when trying to find keys on the keyboard. He later embarked on a journey to help not just his son but all keyboard users to find an easier way to use a keyboard more effectively. As a result of this Keyboard Crazy was born.

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### What is Keyboard Crazy?

Keyboard Crazy is a game that imitates a larger than normal QWERTY keyboard. It is made from sturdy plastic and it contains three activity boards and three sets of colour-coded plastic tiles; blue - uppercase, green - uppercase and orange – lowercase.

The game was originally designed to enable pupils to use keyboards more effectively and efficiently but as recent assessments and evaluations of the product have shown, "Not only does Keyboard Crazy help improve keyboard awareness but it also increases typing speeds at an amazing rate." [Special Needs Computing. Available from: <http://www.box42.com/product/dhk/dhk018.asp> (Assessed August 2005)].

Although initially created to aid pupils to be able to 'find keys on a keyboard', Keyboard Crazy has raised standards in literacy and increased pupils' motivation for learning.

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### Keyboard Crazy in Practice

One of the initial users of Keyboard Crazy was John Bell at Admiral Junior School, Norfolk. John was given the opportunity to use the game as he wanted to support the development of pupils' keyboard recognition skills.

John immediately noticed the potential of the game for also improving word level skills as part of the literacy hour. As a result of his success in using Keyboard Crazy, he not only worked on this concept but also took it with him to Norwich Road School in Norfolk when he later moved to a new school. John, now the Literacy and Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator at Norwich Road School, Norfolk, extended the use of Keyboard Crazy even further and developed "mental literacy" as part of a literacy hour.

Mental Literacy follows on from mental maths, which has been used in primary schools throughout the country since the introduction of the Numeracy Hour. The basic concept is simple and the Keyboard Crazy activity lasts between 10 and 12 minutes.

## Keyboard Crazy and Mental Literacy

Mental literacy works on four major areas: speaking, listening, cementing grammatical knowledge and improving keyboard recognition skills for ICT across the wider curriculum. Added bonuses of using Keyboard Crazy include increasing pupils' motivation and the opportunity for well paced lessons delivered by the teacher.

The aim of Keyboard Crazy for Mental Literacy is to cover any aspect of grammar from plurals to connectives through to capital letters and verbs. Like its maths counterpart, the session is fast paced; however, it is also carried out as a collaborative exercise. Managing the learning environment is easy as pupils can work in groups of 2, 3 or 4.

### What are the benefits of Mental Literacy?

The major impact found by schools that have been following this method is on pupils' motivation in the classroom, producing eager and well motivated learners.

John Bell commented when first using Keyboard Crazy that, during an Ofsted inspection of his school, the standards in literacy were said to be above average in Years 3 and 4 where mental literacy was used. Only 18 months previously, an inspection had stated that these standards were below average. Because John had used Keyboard Crazy for mental literacy as part of his literacy lesson, Ofsted deemed it good enough to be graded as a "1".

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### Mental Literacy in Action

The Mental Literacy session fits easily into the word work part of the Literacy Hour. Starting with a brief demonstration of the concept to be taught, the teacher can move quickly onto their chosen mental literacy game. Due to the fast and full pace of the session there is little chance of becoming bogged down and losing other elements of the Literacy Hour.

The nature of the game benefits the three learning styles:

1. **Audio Learners** - The discussions taking place and listening to instructions as well as talking through the different choices available is beneficial to this type of learner.
2. **Kinaesthetic Learners** - The actual hands-on experience which is required to place the keys into the plastic overlay board means the kinaesthetic learning pupils will enjoy these activities.
3. **Visual Learners** - The vibrant mix of colours as well as the interesting design of keyboard crazy will appeal to the visual learner.

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### How do you play the Keyboard Crazy Games?

By simply following some basic guidelines, users will rapidly achieve the same level of success as John Bell and his pupils. The format of the games played during the mental literacy session follow the same basic rules.

Below is one example of the basic lesson four-part format although there can be may be more or fewer parts.

## **Basic Lesson Sample: Adjectives**

### *Part 1 - recognition of the adjective*

The teacher reads out a sentence such as, "The bouncy ball was thrown over the wall." The children are then given time to key into their boards the adjective in the sentence. It should be noted that this is not a 'first-to-finish' activity; each team is given time to key in their word. There are two questions in Part 1.

### *Part 2 - speaking and listening*

A pupil is asked to come to the front of the class. The teacher then gives the pupils an adjective which they will talk about to the rest of the class for 20 seconds without actually mentioning the adjective itself. After 20 seconds the teacher says, 'Go!' and the first team to key in the word puts up their hands, at this point the teacher shouts, 'Freeze!' to all other teams. There are 2 questions in Part 2.

### *Part 3 - improving the adjective*

Mirroring Part 1, the teacher reads out a sentence with an adjective. Teams need to try and improve the adjective without altering the meaning of the sentence.

### *Part 4 - vocabulary extension*

Teams are challenged to come up with the biggest adjective they can think of. The adjective must be spelt correctly so the bigger the word, the more risk is involved for the pupils. However, teams are awarded one point for each letter in their adjective.

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## **Support for Teachers**

To help teachers new to Keyboard Crazy, a variety of games that can be used during mental literacy sessions covering most areas of grammar for Key Stage 1 and 2 are available on the Keyboard Crazy website ([www.keyboardcrazy.co.uk](http://www.keyboardcrazy.co.uk)).

There is also a variety of other ideas and resources available to download via the SMART Education Website at [www.smart-education.org](http://www.smart-education.org).

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## **Everyone is going Keyboard Crazy!**

Since its launch, Keyboard Crazy has had wide success across the whole of the country as well as across the Atlantic where it is also known as Keyboard Scramble.

### **University of Liverpool**

The University of Liverpool evaluation of Keyboard Crazy demonstrated some staggering results and stated,

It has been concluded that there is a pressing need for the Keyboard Crazy game. All primary children in the age range 5 - 11 can benefit from the game and the evidence collected from statistical analysis was consistent with that produced by the teachers who assessed it, i.e. that playing the game a number of times resulted in:

- Higher speed of information-processing of the keyboard symbols.

- Greater accuracy in the identification of the positions of the symbols of the keyboard.
- Children were thus enabled to become more efficient, and hence more confident, in their management of the computer keyboard.

Extract from Keyboard Crazy Evaluation Report. Available from: [www.keyboardcrazy.co.uk](http://www.keyboardcrazy.co.uk)

### Local Education Authorities

Warrington LEA, Tameside and Wakefield LEA are just three of the LEAs that have taken Keyboard Crazy into their schools and the results have been so astounding they have continued using the resource.

### From a SEN viewpoint Neil McKay from Action Dyslexia reported in March 2005:

This is a deceptively simple activity with the potential to secure impressive gains in spelling, number and keyboard skills across the curriculum. Keyboard Crazy offers a range of multi-sensory activities which require the use of kinaesthetic, visual and auditory skills for successful completion. These multi-sensory tasks accelerate learning and create the “buzz” that always seems to occur when Keyboard Crazy is in use.

### Philip Garner - Advisor for NASEN adds,

What is very apparent is that, using the basic set of equipment provided, together with the instructions for teachers, a whole range of appropriate activities can be developed. At its very basic level it acts as a help in getting children to recognise what a keyboard looks like, and how it is laid out. But many other things ensue from it: letter recognition, hand-eye-coordination, and so on. The children I have used Keyboard Crazy with certainly enjoyed it, and asked for more.

### Summary

Although initially designed to develop the keyboard skills of children, since its launch the Keyboard Crazy game has achieved significant success and the use of Keyboard Crazy for Mental Literacy has successfully raised standards and improved pupil motivation.

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