

Using AlphaSmarts for Word Processing

Keyboard differences

- First, go over keyboard. One difference is placement of the **Escape (ESC)** key to the right of the space bar.
- **Applets** key on top row gets into keyboarding; **Escape** gets out of Applets.
- The **Command** key works for many special commands in combination with other keys (Handout available)
- There is no key to delete a character to the right, only **Backspace** to delete a character to the left.

Opening Word Processing (Alpha Word)

- Turn on the AlphaSmart. It automatically opens in the word processing applet. Students will then select File 1 through File 7 in which to work.
- Each teacher has an assigned file in which his/her class saves work.
- Don't assign File 8 (used for progress reports with KeyWords)

Keyboarding

- Even though the main focus is on writing, emphasize the use of keyboarding skills they have acquired in the past.
- Remind students to sit up straight, to use the **Home Row** keys, to use all ten fingers to type, to use the **Shift** key (not **CAPS LOCK**) for capitals, and to press the space bar with either thumb.
- Remind students that when typing punctuation, always type ONE space (even after sentences).
- Remind students not to press **Enter** at the end of lines. Like word processing on computers, AlphaSmarts have the word-wrapping feature.

Entering text and saving files

- ALWAYS have students start each file with his/her name and any other heading information that you require so that it shows on the printed document.
- Work is saved automatically.
- Students cannot change fonts, colors, or add WordArt or ClipArt, so they will focus more on their writing.
- The AlphaSmart will automatically shut off after 4 minutes if no keys are used, but the file will save anyway. The only way to delete a file is to press **Clear File**.

A Few Suggestions for Writing Activities

From Teachers' Guide by AlphaSmart

Questions to Guide Learning

Before taking a field trip, brainstorm with the students and create a list of questions that will be answered or items looked for during the class outing.

- Begin a lesson using the AlphaSmart to do a **KWL**. Students can enter the “What they **K**now” and “What they **W**ant to know” portions.
- Students can record answers during the lesson.

Sentence Completion for Understanding

Following the reading and preliminary discussion of a novel, students develop new insights by completing related statements.

- Determine a set of incomplete sentences to lead the students to deeper understanding of the story.
- Enter the statements into the AlphaSmart.
- Some examples of the kinds of unfinished statements are
 - “I was surprised at...”
 - “I began to wonder...”
- After each student completes the writing and editing, have the text transferred to a computer for formatting.

Guided Science/Social Studies/Literature Lessons

- Load a set of guiding questions/predictions into one of the files to assist the students. The Four Blocks “Prove It” method could be used.
- Have the students enter answers into the AlphaSmart while they are working.