

Tots and Technology

By Lorrie Jackson

WHY A TECHTORIAL?

What will I learn today?

You will learn some ideas for using (and restricting the use of) technology in pre-K-2.

What hardware and/or software does the techtorial apply to?

No particular hardware or software is required.

Which National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers does the techtorial address?

The techtorial will help teachers accomplish standard II a in particular.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed a set of National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers. Standards or Performance Indicators are included for each techtorial to help teachers and administrators improve technology proficiency. For a complete description of the standards indicated, go to [NETS for Teachers](#).

THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Some early childhood educators fear that technology use in preschool and primary grades will overshadow the kinds of hands-on, experiential learning that young children need.

Most technology experts believe, however, that moderate computer use for interactive, inquiry-based activities can actually support and enhance the pre-K-2 curriculum.

To ensure successful computer experiences in the early grades, teachers need

- patience.
- rules for computer and/or lab use.
- different activities for different ability levels.

To ensure successful computer experiences in the early grades, teachers need to help students develop

- self-confidence.
- enthusiasm.
- willingness to take risks.
- good work habits.
- good interpersonal skills.

Notice that the skills teachers and young students need for successful computer use are no different than the skills needed to be successful in other areas. Computer use can help reinforce classroom behaviors and attitudes!

FIRST THE BASICS

To use computers, students in grades pre-K-2 need to know

- the basic parts of a computer, including the monitor, keyboard, mouse, and printer.
- how to use the mouse to click (left-button only on a PC), double click, and drag.
- how to open and close a software program.
- how to leave a computer workspace (including the chair, mouse pad, and keyboard) when done working.
- how to ask for help.

Clicking Concerns For many children, clicking can be the most difficult aspect of computer use. Due to developmental differences, some young children have difficulty using their index fingers independently of other fingers. When they try to left-click on a PC, those children press with all fingers. To help alleviate that problem, a teacher might

- put stickers on the left-click mouse buttons
- show students how to form an "L" with the index finger and thumb, and tuck the rest of the fingers into a fist.
- provide additional practice by using software that requires a variety of clicking and dragging skills.

WHAT NEXT?

Once they've mastered the basics, pre-K-2 students can use a computer to

- work with content-area software programs.
- create pictures or story illustrations using Paint programs.
- practice typing their names, the alphabet, lower and upper case letters, or

- sentences they have written using word processing programs.
- explore age-appropriate Web sites.

Some Web sites appropriate for pre-K-2 students include

- [Julia's Rainbow](#)
- [Literacy Center](#)
- [KindergartenGames](#)
- [Coloring](#) (Although the ads can be distracting!)
- [StoryPlace](#)

TELL ME MORE!

Where can I learn more about using technology in the early grades?

Early Connections, from the [Network of Regional Technology in Education Consortia](#) Web site is an excellent resource for pre-K-2 teachers wanting to use technology. [KidSmart](#) provides tips for parents and teachers of young children, and [Internet4Classrooms](#) offers a comprehensive list of kindergarten sites. Also, don't miss the Education World article [Tech Tips for Tots](#).

For more tips for teaching tots -- with and without technology -- be sure to sign up for Education World's [Early Childhood Education Newsletter](#).