



A Helping Hand: What to do when a child needs help with the mouse and keyboard

by Marion Blank, Ph.D.

In today's high tech age, most children can usually manage using the keyboard and the mouse. But some, particularly the younger ones, require some assistance.

This is not a cause for concern. Fine motor skills develop slowly and at varying speeds in different children. That's why tying shoelaces and zippering jackets can be so challenging. Fortunately a lack of mastery is no reason to delay the start of the Reading Kingdom. Indeed, if you have any doubts about your child's skill in using the keyboard or the mouse efficiently, then significant benefits can be gained by using the techniques outlined here. Through some short simple exercises carried out over a few days, **your child gets the enormous advantages of becoming a skilled early reader.**

Before doing anything with your child, first read through this article completely. Then when you are ready, bring your child to the computer. Once there, position yourself so that you are sitting or standing next to your child (as shown below). Either is fine. Do what feels most comfortable.

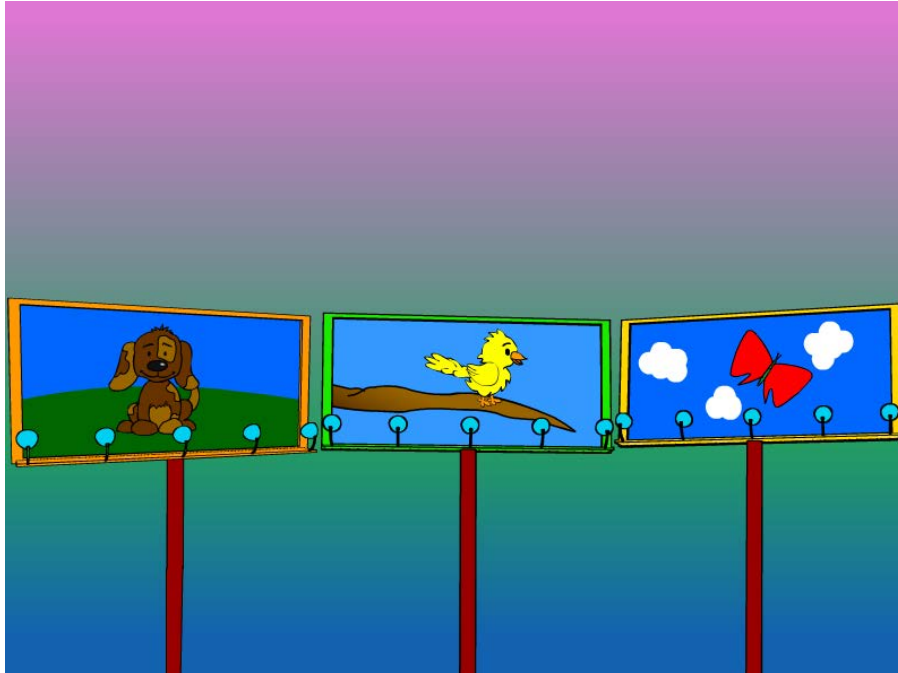


Using the Mouse

Note: Do not plan to use the trackpad that is on some computers because young children generally find it more difficult to manage. Make sure your computer has a standard mouse.

- Start by making sure the mouse is on the side next to the hand your child uses most (that is, on the right for a right hander and on the left for a left hander).

- At the start of the session, your screen will look like this and you will hear instructions such as “click the dog.”



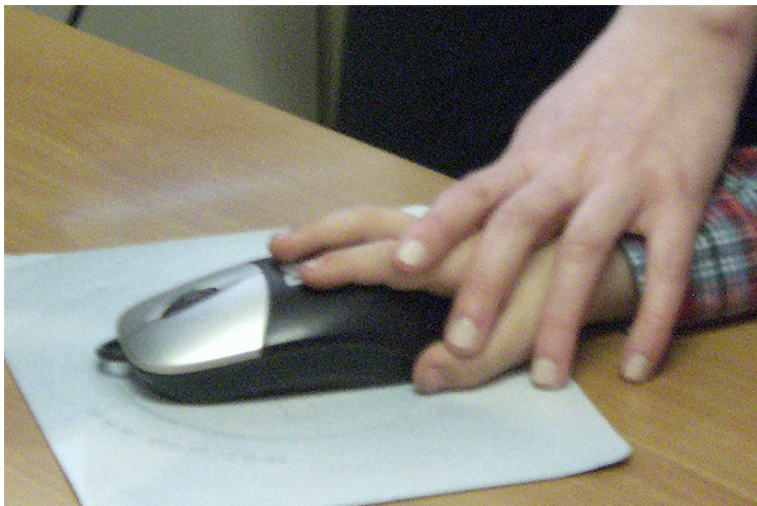
- With the screen in view, have your child place his or her hand over the mouse. Then position your hand over the child’s hand. Ensure that the child’s index finger is on the button on the left and the other fingers are out of the way.



- Do not move the child's hand, but continue to support it as he or she moves the mouse to the desired spot. For example, for the screen above, the mouse arrow has to move over the dog.
- Once the mouse pointer is in the correct position, tell the child to select the desired object (e.g., say "click this.") There is no need to rush. In case a child is not sure of what to do, the first few times, you can gently press on his or her finger so that the button gets clicked.

When Something More is Needed

- At times, children find it hard to coordinate moving and clicking and they merge the two actions so that they end up clicking as they are moving. If this is happening, for each selection, start by positioning the child's hand so that his or her fingers are below the clickable part of the mouse.



- Do not move the child's hand, but continue to provide support as the child moves to the desired spot. Once there, then allow the child to move his or her hand up along the mouse so that the index finger is on the left button.



- At this point, wait until the child clicks. Give your child time. There is no need to rush. Just in case a child is not sure of what to do, the first few times, you can gently press on his or her finger so that the button gets clicked.

Some Other Possibilities

With some children, the hand support outlined here is not enough. In these situations, some other possibilities are available. They include:

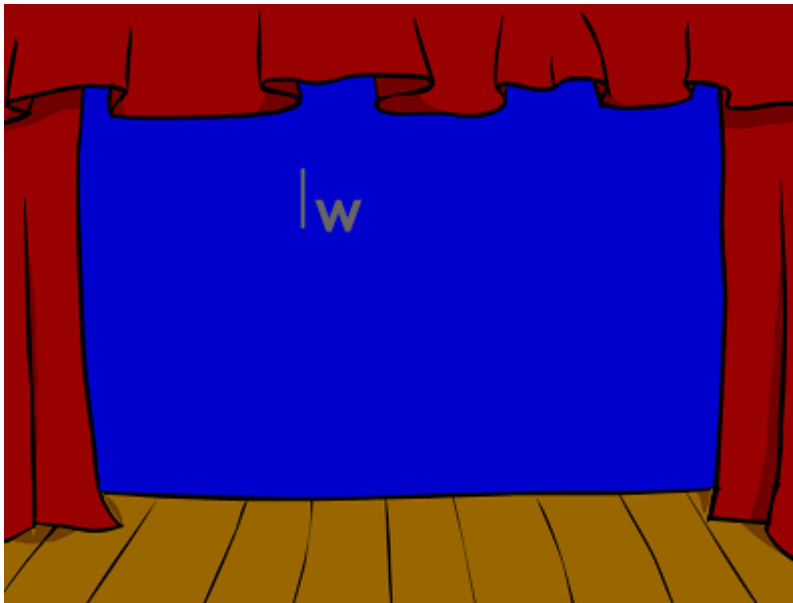
Asking Your Child to Point: For children who are not yet ready to deal with the mouse at all, you can limit your child's role to pointing while you take total control of the mouse. Specifically the child scans the screen and then points to the graphics or words he or she selects. Once the selection is made, you then move the mouse to the selected position and click on the object you have chosen.



Using A Different Mouse: There are versions of the mouse specifically designed for a child’s hands. You might find it useful to try one of these. Even with these devices, it is useful to support the hand in the way indicated above.

Using the Keyboard

- The material to introduce keyboarding involves showing a letter on the screen and having your child select the matching letter on the keyboard. A sample screen looks like this:



and the audio instructions may say “type this on the keyboard.”

- With the screen in view, place your hand so that it is supporting your child’s hand over the keyboard. Make sure that the child’s index finger is “free” to move so that it is possible to click a key.



- The hand should be above the middle of the keyboard.
- While continuing to support the child's hand, wait and give him or her time to search, find and click the key.
- If your child is having difficulty spotting the key, you can point to the correct key and say, "It's this one." It is important that you do NOT say the name of the letter (e.g., do not say "Click w"). Just point to the appropriate key.
- If your child continues to have difficulty, move his or her hand so that it is above the key in question and then say, "Click this one."

Another Possibility: Switching Roles

If the hand support outlined here isn't working, you can try "switching roles" and have your child lead you. To do this, you put your hand over the keyboard and have your child place his or her hand over yours.



Then your child guides you to the correct key. Many young children enjoy the experience of “reversing roles” where they have the opportunity to “lead” the adult. After a week or so, you can try going back to you supporting the child’s hand and having him or her do the clicking.

An Overview of the Sessions

- To get to a training session, you do the following. If you have not yet begun the Reading Kingdom program, you will see the following screen. To do keyboard and mouse training, select the option on the right.



START

For children who easily & swiftly type all letters on the keyboard, start here.









START




For children who are not smooth with the keyboard or require time finding the correct letters, start here.
To find out more, please read [this PDF](#).

If you are not sure where to start, choose the option on the right.

- If you have already started the program and want to go back and do keyboard and mouse training, you can click the option in the reader report to “Do More Keyboard and Mouse Training.”

Getting to Know the Mouse & Keyboard		
This is a set of exercises to help the child use the mouse and keyboard.		
Do More Keyboard & Mouse Training		
Introduction to Reading & Writing		
Section	Progress	Performance
Skills Survey Part 1 Assessment to determine whether Seeing Sequences and/or Letter Land are required.		
Seeing Sequences If the Skills Survey determined that Thibodeaux will benefit from learning visual sequencing skills Thibodeaux will be taught the Seeing Sequences format.		
Letter Land If the Skills Survey determined that Thibodeaux will benefit from learning keyboard skills Thibodeaux will be taught the Letter Land format.		

- You will then be taken to a page where you can choose to do keyboard training, mouse training or both. Each training session involves a set of 16 screens. Then the session ends. A session generally takes ten minutes or less. You can choose to do more sessions.

Keyboard and Mouse	Keyboard Only	Mouse Only
		

- It’s helpful to do four to six sessions a week. In other words, short periods of repeated practice offer tremendous advantages and results.
- Typically, with hand support, most children master the keyboard somewhat before they master the mouse. When this occurs, simply continue the training on both the mouse and the keyboard until your child has sufficient skill in each.

- The length of time that the training takes naturally varies from child to child. Some will need only a week; some will need a bit more. **Remember your goal at this point is NOT to get your child to work independently of hand support.** Your goal is to have your child smoothly and effectively use the mouse and keyboard with you providing a helping hand.
- The sessions repeat - with new material - until the process is working smoothly so that with the hand support you are providing, your child is readily handling the mouse and keyboard.
- If after a month, a child is still struggling even with the hand support, it's best to stop for a period of two to three months. After that time, you can try again.
- Once your child is comfortable with both the mouse and the keyboard, you can move on in the program.
- **Make sure to continue supporting your child's hand in the way just outlined for however long your child can benefit from the help.** In other words, the start of the teaching part of the program does not mean the end of hand support. Generally, at a minimum, a period of several weeks is required. Within a couple of months, most children are able to work independently of hand support. If you have any questions about what to do, you can always contact us at

<http://readingkingdom.com/contact/>