

# Computer-Generated Teaching Materials

by David Lisgo

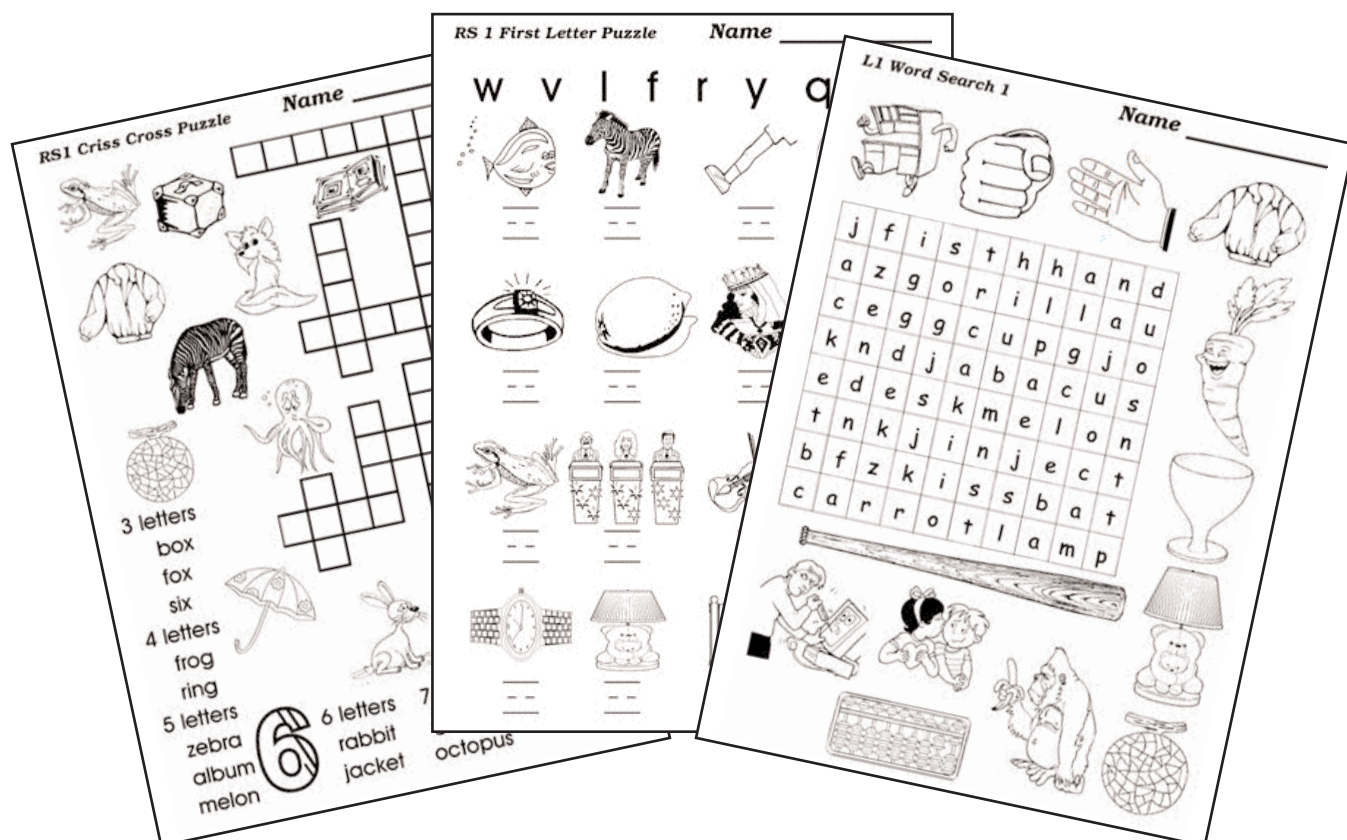
There are many reasons for creating your own materials. Finding suitable materials is often difficult and expensive but by making your own, you can have them when and where you need them. Commercially produced supplementary materials are often unsuitable but when you make your own they are exactly what you want. Store bought materials are often designed for one level, one book or one activity, but when you design your own, only small changes are needed to adapt activities to a new level or book and many different materials can be made from the one basic design. Although it is possible to create materials with scissors, colored pencils, card, pictures and glue, it is far better to use a computer, printer, laminator, clip art and publishing software. The software and fonts discussed here are on the Windows platform but the ideas can easily be adapted for use on a Mac.

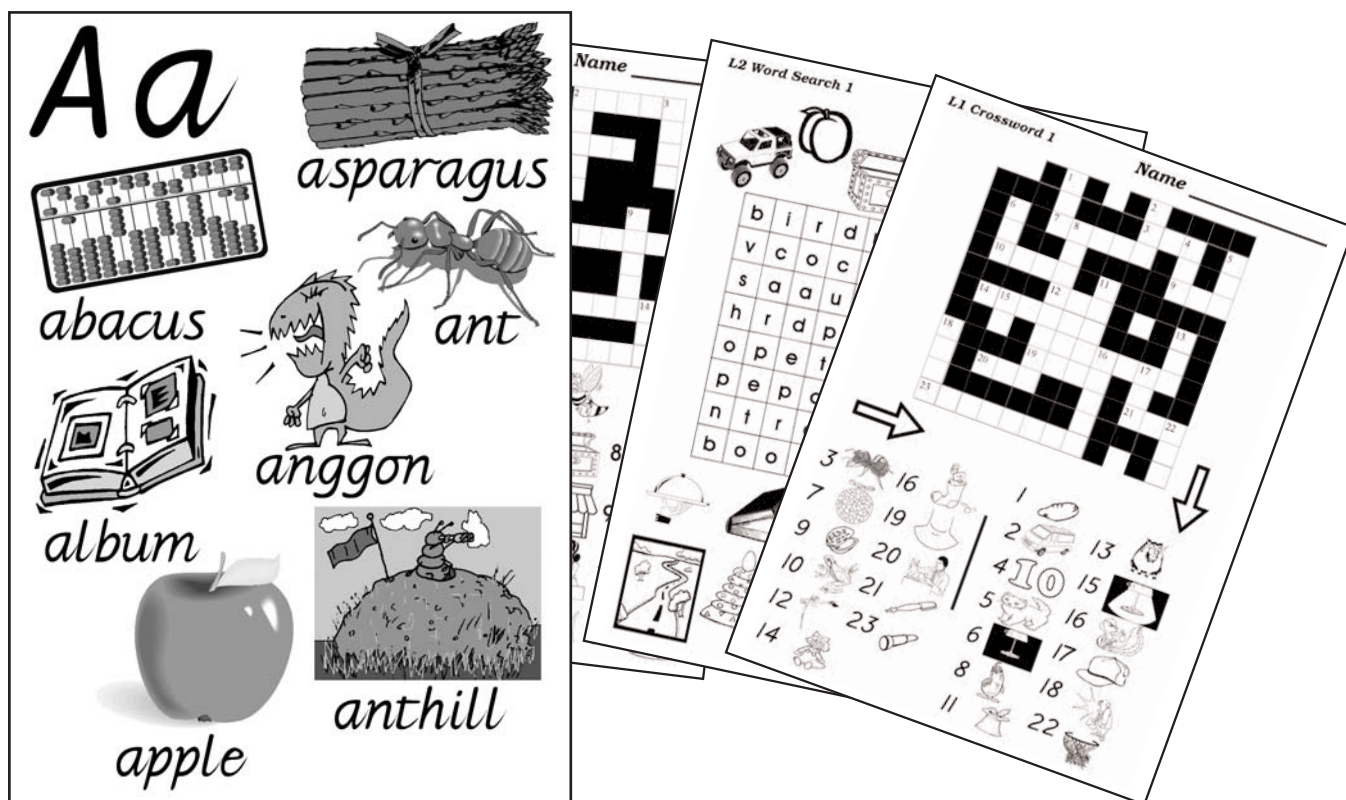
The best source of pictures is your own clip art, though many excellent pictures are available online. Google images and Microsoft Design Gallery Live are great sources, but they can prove expensive as it often takes time to find that special picture. Take care with the format of your pictures; in general I work with Windows metafiles and bitmaps, as they are compatible with many software programs. Keep all

your pictures and folders in the same place and try not to move them around, otherwise your graphics program may not be able to find them. Leave a shortcut to your art and projects on your desktop, so you can check things out quickly. Rename your pictures when you store them because many have numerical or other unmemorable names. For easy access keep your color images in separate folders from your black and white.

## Worksheets and Posters

Begin your worksheets or posters by inserting pictures and roughly positioning them using the layer facility in your software. Select a font and size it, then open a text box under each picture. Experiment with different fonts and sizes. It's important to remember that your students will be reading these letters or words. Once you've decided, slightly reposition your pictures and text boxes. Suitable fonts for worksheets are: Jardotty, Print Clearly Dashed, Learning Curve Dashed, PrecursiveNewDashed and PrecursiveNew (this font has a great underline key). Suitable fonts for posters are: Comic Sans, AvantGarde and Bookman; Color Font, Cooper and Cookie Hollow are useful for titles, but





with a good publishing program, you can change any font into an outline font. Search for fonts on the Internet and download them free. Save your work regularly and back it up on disk to avoid losing your work in the event of a computer crash. Before printing always preview so as not to waste ink and paper. When changing the size of your print, for example from A4 to B5, first save your image as a JPG file and then set your printer to B5 and 'print to page'. To reduce the costs of printing consider using ink jet refills and perhaps set your ink volume to its lowest level.

Let me tell you about my 'Coloring Worksheets'. The title of each worksheet is the appropriate upper and lower case letter and uses a hollow or outline font for coloring. Each picture is in black and white and is accompanied by its word. The words are printed in a handwriting or tracing font. Each worksheet has five pictures that begin with the initial target sound, apart from 'Xx', which uses a medial or final sound and 'Ququ', which is written and sounded as a blend. All of the words are phonically regular and are based on alphabet sounds only, although I have included words with the schwa, since it is not possible to find enough suitable words without it. Most of the words are nouns, and there are a few invented words, verbs and adjectives.

As with any other teaching resource you need creativity and imagination to use these materials effectively. In general, the coloring worksheets should not be used until your students have studied and learned the phonic sounds of the 26 letters of the alphabet; in addition they should have some basic blending skills, so that everything that is written can be read. Give each student a clear file containing the 26 worksheets, have them color them in and trace over the letters for homework; this could be their first 'picture diction-

ary'. I have created 10 picture-clue crosswords and 10 wordsearch puzzles, which the children can complete with the help of their picture dictionaries. Other word puzzles, which encourage the students to use the words on the worksheets, can be created. 'Coloring Worksheets' and the accompanying crossword puzzles and wordsearch puzzles can be downloaded free of charge from [etjaichi.kweto.com](http://etjaichi.kweto.com).

Posters can include phonically regular and sight vocabulary; however, try not to use sight vocabulary that is outside your students' experience in English. A good source of words is your current textbook and workbook. In general, use nouns as these are less open to personal interpretation but do not be afraid to create your own words or to use verbs and adjectives.

My 'Alphabet Posters' are printed in full color using the Jarman font. They have seven vocabulary items, including all the vocabulary from the 'Coloring Worksheets', a 'monster', and an 'anchor word' from the textbook. For example, the 'Aa' vocabulary is: abacus, ant, anthill, album, asparagus (all from the coloring worksheets), anggon (a picture of an angry dragon) and apple (the anchor word).

If possible, have a permanent display of your posters in the classroom. The students can use these to improve their vocabulary and spelling. To prevent copying, choose a font size that is difficult to read from their seats and don't allow the learners to take their pencils with them when they go to check a spelling. A popular game you can play with these posters is 'Word Rush'. There are a number of variations but in this version, you lay your alphabet cards face up on the table. The student chooses a card, finds the poster, reads and remembers as many words as possible. Then he takes the card to the teacher (sometimes a student), recites as many words as possible and receives a chip or point for



each word before proceeding to the next card.

### Flashcards

Got a lesson coming up in a few hours, have a brilliant idea for a new game, just have to lay your hands on some flashcards? No problem — make your own. When choosing pictures, vocabulary and structure, the first place to look is your current student book and workbook. Try producing a companion set of cards to the ones provided by the publisher to add variety and interest to your lessons. Produce gender sets: for each ‘she’ card produce a ‘he’ card. Take it further by producing ‘it’ and ‘they’ sets. After you have exhausted the ideas found in your student book and workbook, move onto other textbooks of a similar level. Nouns and verbs are always easy to do but take great care in choosing pictures for your adjectives and adverbs, ensuring that the words and pictures reflect the same idea.

To make your flashcards, open up a new page in your publishing program, add a table/grid (I usually use a 2x1, 2x2, 2x4 (or 4x2) or 3x3 with A4 size), size the grid to full-page, add a picture and reposition it within the grid. Continue until each square has its own picture, then remove the grid. You can now print directly from your publishing program onto thin card. To add words or sentences to the backs of your flashcards, select a suitable font and size it; if you are making large alphabet cards, then you should enter the font size manually as it is normally only selectable up to 72. Add the text boxes to your grid (a 2x2 grid would have four text boxes if you are inserting sentences or two if you are using words). Position the boxes and type in your words remembering to mirror the positions of your words so as to get the words on the backs of the appropriate pictures. Now print the text on the reverse of the pictures; if you are printing more than one sheet, it is best to remove the cards from

the printer as soon as they are done to prevent smearing.

Next, laminate your cards. This brings out the colors and makes them durable. Bent cards can be re-laminated to iron out the creases. With careful shopping, a laminator and laminator pockets are an excellent investment. My own preference for cutting is a guillotine because it is easy to use, gives a uniform and professional look to your cards and is virtually maintenance free. I bought one about ten years ago at a second hand shop for 7000 yen; if it ever breaks I will certainly buy another. For storage I buy boxes from the 100-yen store and use colored card for printing, this helps with the storing and sorting. Color code your cards with small round stickers. Index them so they are at your fingertips when you need them.

Cards are always good for introducing or recycling vocabulary and there are an endless number of games that can be played with them. These can be found in your teacher’s manuals and you can learn about them at most teaching presentations.

You do not need a high level of computer skills to create the materials you need, only patience, creativity and imagination.

‘An Illustrated Guide to Making Your Own ELT Cards’ by Peter Warner is available at [etjaichi.kweto.com](http://etjaichi.kweto.com)

For more information please feel free to contact me at: [david@minos.ocn.ne.jp](mailto:david@minos.ocn.ne.jp) or see <http://etjaichi.kweto.com/davidlisgo/BAH/index.html>.

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