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Blank Endorsement

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Logo LinX

by Judi Harris

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Let's start the school year with the ◻️📊■ 's.

Do you recognize this?

It has 26 members; 6 of one type and 20 of another. It is also sung to the tune of a "pre-school golden oldie."

AHA! "Now you know your abc's...."

Mine's a Blank

This alphabet may have been difficult to recognize because it was written with BLANK-WRITER, an unusual Logo letter-writer program that can help students with phonics, syllabication, and spelling.

I was inspired to write BLANKWRITER after working with Mrs. Rosalie Saul, a learning disabilities specialist from Danbury, Connecticut. Mrs. Saul created a teaching tool called "Alphablanks"; a modified wooden pegboard onto which students place colored plastic pieces representing letters of the alphabet. After seeing the power of the tool in action with Mrs. Saul's students, I enthusiastically borrowed her ideas and "computerized" "Alphablanks" in Logo.

Let's first examine the patterns in the blank alphabet to decipher the letter coding system.

You probably have already realized that the shapes of the BLANKWRITER letters are based upon a lower-case alphabet.

"Up Letters,"   or   b, d, f, h, k, l, and t

"Down Letters,"   or   g, j, p, and q

"Middle Letters," or   a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z

Fill in the Blanks

Notice that some "middle letters" are represented by solid color squares, and others by square outlines. Look at the alphabet to determine the difference.

Consonants are depicted as blue solid-color rectangles

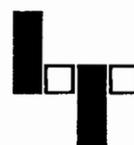Vowels are depicted as white outlined rectangles.

But, of course, to every good rule there is always an exception. The letter "y" sometimes behaves like a vowel, and at other times, like a consonant. It, therefore, is "blanked" as a solid WHITE rectangle
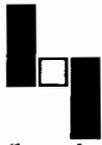
@#&%* Blankety Blank Rules!

It's fascinating how easy it is to read words spelled in the blank alphabet. This, for example, is a word near and dear to our hearts...

...that looks much the same in blanks as it does in letters.

Some blanked words could be spelled several ways in letters,

■
■□■

(bag, beg, big, bug, dig, dip, dog, dug, fig, fog, hag, hip, hog, hop, hug, etc.) while others can only be spelled in one way.

□■

(up)

■□

(go)

Five "vowel rules" help children to see phonetic patterns in spelling, and therefore assist in decoding words.

1. bō ■□ An open syllable ends with a vowel, which is usually long.

2. ŏb □■ A closed syllable ends with a consonant, and the vowel in the syllable is short.

3. rŏb ■□■ Another type of closed syllable begins and ends with consonants.

4. bōx ■□⊠ "When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking, and it always says its name."

5. rō bx ■□■⊠ When a syllable contains this pattern, and the second vowel is a silent "e," the first vowel is long.

Students can learn to recognize these patterns by spelling out words that they know how to read in the blank alphabet. Then, when they are ready to tackle new words, they can use these syllabication rules before the vowel rules.

Pattern 1: □■ ■□
Divide between consonants.

Pattern 2: ■□ ■□
If there is one consonant between two vowels, put the vowel with the first consonant if it is long.

Pattern 3:

□ ■ le Give the consonant to the LE syllable.

Drawing a Blank

The procedures for making the BLANKWRITER are simple to code in Logo. Notice that each uses two tool procedures: RECTANGLE and OVER.

```
TO RECTANGLE :LONG :SHORT
REPEAT 2 [FD :LONG RT 90 FD :SHORT RT 90]
END

TO OVER :AMT
SETH 0
RT 90
PU
FD :AMT
PD
LT 90
END
```

RECTANGLE takes two inputs (the two side lengths,) and draws a rectangle of any size. Note that a square is coded as a special case of a rectangle in these procedures; one with the two side lengths of equal size. OVER takes one input, and automatically moves the turtle over after drawing each blank letter, so that it is in position to draw the next one.

The different types of blank letters are drawn with these procedures:

```
TO UP.LETTER
SETPC 1        <--Sets the pencolor to blue
SETH 0
RECTANGLE 30 10
SOLID.COLOR
OVER 12
END
```

```
TO DOWN.LETTER
SETPC 1      <--Sets the pencolor to blue
SETH 0
PU
BK 20
PD
RECTANGLE 30 10
SOLID.COLOR
PU
FD 20
PD
OVER 12
END


TO MIDDLE.LETTER
SETPC 1      <--Sets the pencolor to blue
SETH 0
RECTANGLE 10 10
SOLID.COLOR
OVER 12
END


TO VOWEL
SETPC 3      <--Sets the pencolor to white
SETH 0
RECTANGLE 10 10
OVER 12
END


TO DOWN.VOWEL
SETPC 3      <--Sets the pencolor to white
SETH 0
PU
BK 20
PD
RECTANGLE 30 10
SOLID.COLOR
PU
FD 20
PD
OVER 12
END
```

Consonants are filled in with the SOLID.COLOR tool:

```
TO SOLID.COLOR
PU
RT 45
FD 5
```

```
PD
FILL
PU
BK 5
LT 45
PD
END
```

Note: The above procedures were written in IBM Logo, but can easily be adapted to any version of Logo which includes a FILL command.
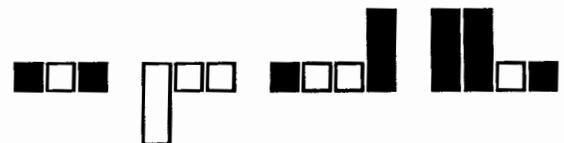
Blanking Out

I would like to extend a "point blank" offer. I have combined the procedures listed here with others to make a "blankwriter," or Logo-based letter coder that draws letters in the blank alphabet as the user types letters in the customary alphabet. The program allows up to three lines (of any length) of blankwriter words on the screen, and prints their translations at the bottom in lower-case letters. It also has built-in functions for spaces and erasing mistyped letters.

You may download this program from CompuServe's LogoForum (type go logoforum at any ! prompt); it is in Data Library 13. Or, you may send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and I'd be glad to send you the procedures in printed form. Finally, if you use IBM Logo or Logo II on the Apple, you may also send me a disk in a mailer with return postage, and I will put BLANKWRITER on it for you to use.

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Now, please tell me:

Judi Harris was an elementary school computer use facilitator, graduate education instructor, and computer consultant for a number of public and private schools in Pennsylvania. She is now a doctoral student in education at the University of Virginia. Her CompuServe number is 75116,1207.