

Inspiration 8

Inspiration is a software program that helps students organize their ideas in a visual manner as a part of the writing process. Students can diagram and outline facts and ideas to become more efficient writers. Inspiration is appropriate for students beginning at grade 3 through high school. Kidspiration is a parallel product that has an interface more appropriate for younger students. By using the “Listen” tool, students can have text from their graphic organizers, outlines or documents read out loud.

Getting started:



Open Inspiration: On MCPS computers, you will find it in the Programs window or the Programs menu item on the Start menu.

Magnify your view:

The opening screen will show an oval “symbol” with “main idea”. The page can be magnified by clicking on the mountain symbol on the bottom left corner of the screen.

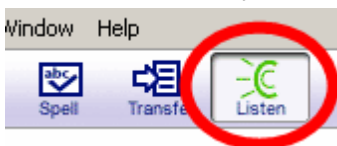


This will make the symbols appear bigger on the screen, but not in the printed version.

Using the “Listen” tool:

To turn on the “Listen” tool:

1. On the “Utility” menu, choose “Preferences”.
2. Click “Audio”.
3. Select “Listen” tool, then click OK.



The “Listen” tool is displayed on the Main toolbar when a check appears in the “Listen Tool” check box.

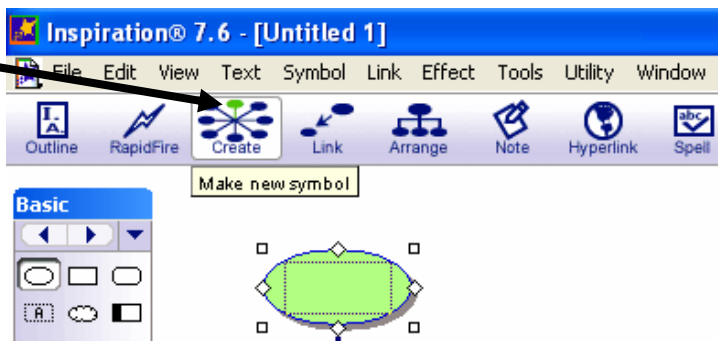
To listen to symbol or topic text in a document:

1. Click the “Listen” button.
2. To listen to the text in an item, select it.
3. To turn off the “Listen” tool, click the “Listen” button.

Add more idea symbols:

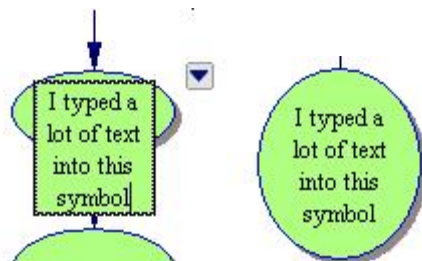
Notice the “create” button on the tool bar. As you pass your mouse over the various symbols radiating from the center of the button, they turn green.

1. Click on the Main Idea cell
2. Hover your mouse over the create button until the highlighted symbol is in the direction that you want your next symbol to go, and then click on the button.
3. To add additional symbols, make sure you first click on the symbol you want the new symbol to link from.



Write in a symbol:

Double click inside the symbol and a text box will appear. The symbol size will automatically adjust to the amount of text. When text is completed, click outside the symbol and the size of the symbol will increase if needed.



Change symbol color:

Color can be added to the symbols to help visually separate the ideas. Colors are added by clicking on the “fill color” icon on the bottom toolbar.



Formatting Symbols:



- Change the symbol shape to help visually separate and subordinate ideas. Click on the symbol you want to change and then click on the desired shape in the symbol pallet.

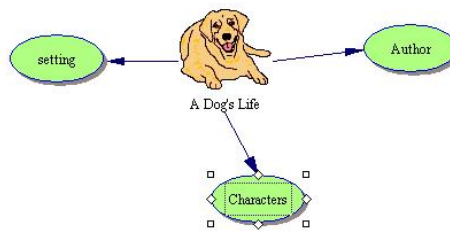


- If your symbol palette does not appear on your screen, go to the “View” menu and choose “Symbol palette.”
- You can change the shape of multiple symbols at one time by pressing and holding “shift” while clicking on multiple symbols, then click on the desired shape in the symbol palette.
- Click and drag to move the symbols around on the page.



Add pictures:

On the symbol palette, you can select pictures to illustrate your graphic organizer. Click on the library tab on the symbol palette and scroll through the categories and library of pictures.

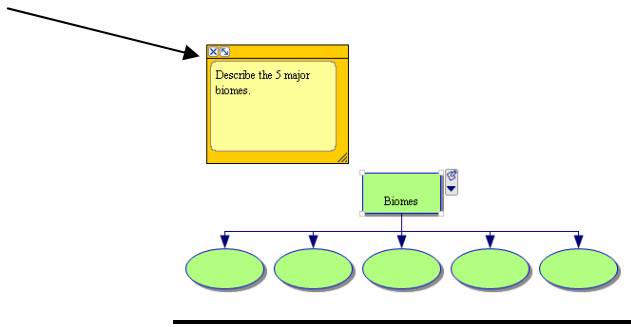


Add Notes:

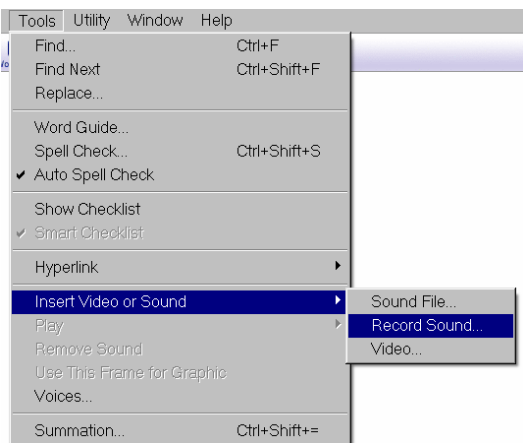
You can add an electronic sticky note to any of the symbols in the diagram. Click on the symbol and then click the “Note” button on the toolbar.



When you click on a symbol that has a note attached to it will have a small note icon next to it. Hide the note by clicking the “X” in the upper left of the note. You can also minimize it.



Add sound:



You can add sound to a symbol. To add directions or to read the text within the symbol. Click on the symbol, Go to Tools > Insert Video or Sound > Record Sound.

Use a plug in microphone, then click on record. You can record a voiced message up to 30 seconds. Click Stop at any time to end recording. When you finish recording, click Save.



To play the recorded sound, click on the speaker icon.



Outline view:



When brainstorming and idea formation is complete, an outline can be viewed by clicking on the "outline" button on the top left of the toolbar. The Outline button turns into a Diagram button. You can return to the diagram to add more ideas.



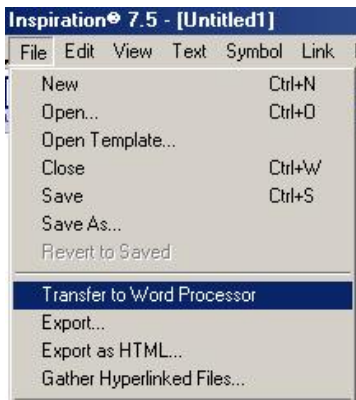
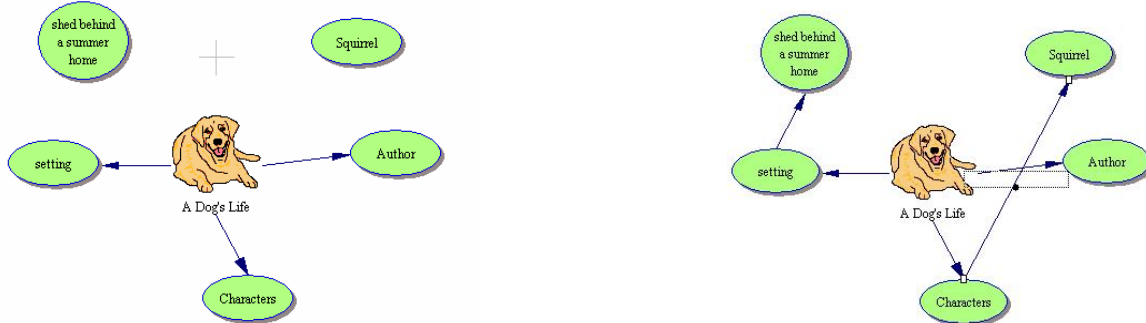


Tech Tip: Free form brainstorming

Some students like to “get their ideas out” without linking them initially. Click anywhere on the screen – cross hairs will appear. Just start typing and an idea symbol will automatically surround what you type. Students can freely brainstorm ideas.



To then group ideas, use the “link” icon on the top toolbar to connect ideas. Click on “link”, then on the symbol you want to link from, then on the symbol you want to link to.

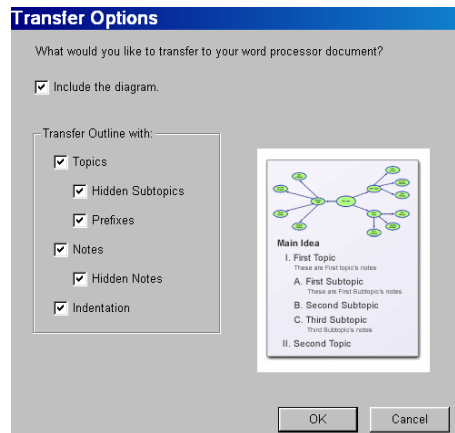


Transfer your graphic outline to Microsoft Word:

When you have finished your outline, you can transfer it to the word processor (MS Word) so that you can use it to begin writing your draft.

Click on File > Transfer to word processor.

You will see a Transfer Options window. You can choose to include the diagram or just the outline with or without notes. You will also be prompted to save (and name) your Inspiration file.



**MCPS holds a county-wide license to Inspiration software. If you have questions about availability, contact your media specialist.*