



AlphaSmarts in Higher Education



Note-taking, Writing and Multimedia Design Activities

Students attending institutions of higher education are expected to read and understand information from course textbooks in a variety of subject areas. The multiple files (8 files) offered by the AlphaSmart make it easy for students to organize their notes. The ability to transfer the notes into a word-processing or outlining program allows students to further edit their notes and perfect their note-taking style. Similarly, faculty who work with students on these skills can adopt this approach as an instructional model for teaching note-taking.

Drafting and Editing Presentations:

The use of electronic presentations in teaching, research and learning is widespread. Since many of these programs use an outline format for drafting the content, students and faculty can use the AlphaSmart to write their presentations in outline form and then transfer their work to the computer to lay out the slides. The portability of the AlphaSmart supports the creation of these presentations in a classroom situation, at home or in the field while conducting research.

- Planning Multimedia Projects:

The AlphaSmart can be used in the early planning stages when outlining is often required. Anyone involved in planning multimedia projects will find the AlphaSmart a great tool to draft a plan for their multimedia projects. The AlphaSmart can be used as a portable word-processing solution for development of planning outlines for use in concept mapping. Outlining for multimedia projects are often prepared with concept-mapping programs like Inspiration[®]. Since students don't often have these concept-mapping programs at home, they can compose the outline for their projects using the AlphaSmart without having to go to the computer lab. Anyone can begin brainstorming and planning sessions anywhere—on field trips, in museums or in the design studio. Each of the eight files can be used for separate projects or for different elements of the same project.

- Editing HTML:

Anyone who works with HTML to edit web pages can use the AlphaSmart to create or edit HTML code. You can download HTML code for existing pages that need to be edited, or store each page in one of the eight AlphaSmart files to manage larger projects.

In web page design classes or in other situations where there are not enough computers for students in the class, the AlphaSmart is an efficient and cost-effective way to provide text-processing resources for HTML editing. Whether you are teaching web page design courses or doing the design yourself, you can use the



AlphaSmart to draft your HTML code. Perhaps you are a student working at home, or a researcher working in the field. The portability of the AlphaSmart allows you to write or edit your HTML code wherever you need to work.

Conducting Research Anytime, Anywhere:

The AlphaSmart is very adaptable in a variety of work and computing environments. These activities suggest ways in which you can use the AlphaSmart anywhere your research takes you: collecting survey and poll data, Observing Student teachers in the field, creating annotated bibliographies in the library

- Collecting survey and poll data:

Researchers can use the AlphaSmart to record field data observations, interview notes or even responses to survey, poll and multiple-choice questionnaires in the field.

Anyone who conducts field research will benefit from the AlphaSmart's ease of use and portability.

- Observing Students Teachers in the field:

An important part of all Teacher Education programs is observing student teachers when they teach. Teacher educators conduct field observations of student teachers and must make notes on their performance. The AlphaSmart's portability and long battery life make it an outstanding tool for conducting field observations.

During this time, the field supervisor carefully observes the classroom and records notes to be used during conferencing. Traditionally, these observation notes are written in longhand or on a laptop computer. Writing observations in longhand is difficult. Similarly, using a laptop computer is intrusive to the classroom setting. The AlphaSmart is easy to use and less obtrusive in a field observation situation. Its silent keystrokes allow you to record notes without disturbing the classroom activity and its outstanding battery life means you don't have to be concerned about access to electric outlets in the classroom.

Creating Annotated Bibliographies in the Library:

Researching archival materials and other special collections usually means note-taking by hand or with a laptop. The AlphaSmart is easier to use in library research than a laptop: outstanding battery life means no electrical outlets. It saves everything automatically, so there's no saving, shutting down or rebooting. Just turn it off and take it with you. When working in the library, if you need to take a break or leave your work area to find other materials, just turn it off and take it with you. A laptop is great, but you must take great care not to leave it while you look for other materials or take a break.

Special Needs learners:

The AlphaSmart opens up new possibilities for higher Ed students with special learning needs. Students with special learning needs can succeed in Colleges and Universities if they have the right support services and tools. The most common learning challenges for



these students are taking notes, organizing course materials and managing their time. Note taking is perhaps the greatest challenge for students with special learning needs. Some have physical difficulty with writing and the included advanced features of the AlphaSmart (sticky key, key repeat control, and four keyboard layouts) give them the opportunity to take note, review, organize, and edit notes throughout the day. Because the AlphaSmart easily fits into a backpack, students can take it with them wherever they go.

Public Access Labs:

Consider AlphaSmarts for your public access lab needs. The availability of this versatile writing device in public access labs can maximize student productivity while saving infrastructure and technical support costs. Administrators and staff who manage public access computer labs on campus will find the AlphaSmart to be an outstanding resource to relieve heavy demand for computers in these labs.

Universities make clusters of computers available to the students in public access labs located all over the campus. Departmental computer labs, computers in the library or clusters of computer in dorms provide computing resources to students who might not have a computer of their own, or who need computers away from their desks. During peak times, these computer labs fill up and there are not enough computers to go around. Whether located in the library, dorm, design studio or science lab, the heaviest use for these computers is for writing-related activities. A "resource bank" of AlphaSmarts available for loan can relieve this situation in a cost effective manner.

One of the challenges that public access lab's managers face is cross-platform compatibility. Students and faculty work on different kinds of computers, and the choice of platform in the public access lab further complicates this puzzle. The cross-platform compatibility of the AlphaSmart does not add to this dilemma. All text created on the AlphaSmart can be transferred to any PC or Macintosh computer, or printed directly on any available serial or parallel printer.

Portability for Administrative and Personal Productivity

The portability of the AlphaSmart makes it an invaluable asset for librarians, administrative staff and faculty. These activities demonstrate ways in which the AlphaSmart can increase professional and personal productivity

- Managing Departmental meetings

The AlphaSmart is the affordable solution for those staff members, such as administrative assistants, who need a portable computer for word-processing tasks. The AlphaSmart's ease of use makes it a great tool for managing aspects of departmental meetings or large group writing projects.

The availability of laptop computers for administrative purposes in higher education often is limited. The AlphaSmart is ideal for managing the different stages of



meetings—setting up agendas, creating handouts and recording minutes. All these documents can be easily transferred to a computer for distribution and future reference. Since AlphaSmart is portable and requires no electric outlets, it can go any to any meeting, regardless of location.

- Creating and updating library subject guides:

University librarians must update subject guides to libraries' collections on a regular basis. This can be tedious since the resources are scattered throughout the library. The process usually involves hunting and carting resources back and forth between their desk and the stacks, where they may then discover that some of them aren't really what they wanted. Using an AlphaSmart, librarians can go to the books instead of bringing the books to their desk. The librarian saves time and the materials stay on the shelves during the process.

Portability for Professional Conferences:

Administrators and faculty members usually take a laptop with them to professional conferences, primarily to get their e-mail and take notes. With the prevalence of cyber cafés and computer clusters at conferences, there's almost no need to lug that laptop anymore. The AlphaSmart is an excellent alternative for portable computing when traveling. It can be easily carried in a briefcase and is durable enough that it can be packed in checked luggage. The long battery life allows it to be used for days without worrying about running out of battery power in the middle of a long airplane flight or a full day of lectures. The AlphaSmart is lightweight, never needs an electric outlet and has extraordinary battery life. Anyone who attends professional conferences will find the AlphaSmart's portability an asset over their "luggable."