

# Terrific Ideas for a Smart Tool (AlphaSmart, that is)

## By Maurene Stapel

1. Book Talk: Gather a selection of novels with dialog passages and ask the students to select and type a quoted passage from a book, exchange books and enter another quoted passage, and continue until they have created a conversation.

Another variation might be to have each student type a given number of selected quoted passages from different novels and then partner with another student to read aloud as a two-way conversation.

2. Have students make a list of their favorite books, songs, and movies and use those as part of a story they draft on the AlphaSmart. The titles would be part of the regular text in the story and not refer to the actual book, etc.
3. What a Tale: Students will rotate from machine to machine for the first part of this activity. Ask them to enter a particular item each time they are switched.
  - a. Rotation One: a special number
  - b. Rotation Two: an animal
  - c. Rotation Three: their favorite food
  - d. Rotation Four: a type of building or structure (store, hut, bridge)
  - e. Rotation Five: the "name" of an animal like Duke or Rusty (pet or famous animal character for those without a pet)
  - f. Rotation Six: a color
  - g. Rotation Seven: a danger (natural disaster, something scary, a fantasy monster, etc.)
  - h. Rotation Eight: an object you would find at school

(Other ideas might be something that begins with a particular letter, a landform, a kind of weather, a season, a body part.)

Students will rotate one last time and write a story using the list of items typed into their AlphaSmart. Stories can be read aloud or printed for sharing.

4. Demonstrate something to the class without speaking and have students keep a list of sequenced steps on their AlphaSmart as they observe the visual clues.
5. Keyboarding practice - Divide the class into two groups. Each group will have an AlphaSmart. One group will list as many words as they can that can be typed with only the right hand and space bar. The other group will list as many words as they can that can be typed with only the left hand and the space bar.

Now give each student an AlphaSmart and have the group leaders take turns calling out the words while the class members type them at their AlphaSmart.