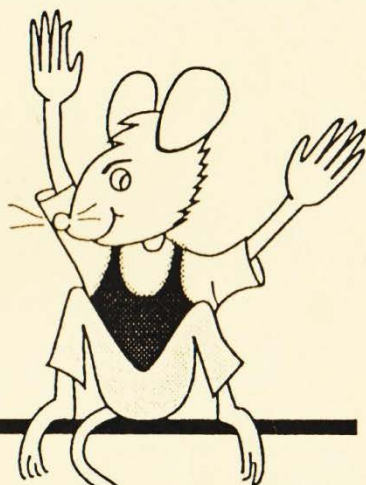


RESOURCE



Albert's House
for the BBC-B/Master/Compact

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Telephone (0302) 340331 Fax (0302) 328735

Albert's House

A RESOURCE program for Infant Children

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Albert's House was designed by Derek Allen,
Head of Snaith County Primary School, Humberside.

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Introduction

Albert's House is a program aimed at children in the age range 4-7, including those with learning difficulties, and children in Special schools. It may also be used at the lower end of Junior/Middle schools. The disc consists of a suite of four programs designed to enrich topic work undertaken on the theme of 'My House'. It is not intended to be a complete topic in itself, but to provide an 'active' series of starting points.

Use of the program aids development of good hand/eye coordination, fine motor control and also gives practice in sequencing. This, together with the opportunities it offers for conversation and discussion as well as art and written work, makes Albert's House a really useful addition to the primary school's software library.

Program notes

Albert is a mouse. He lives with a rather affluent, middle-class family and a cat. He is a very creative mouse, as will be discovered. The computer is used to explore his house and as a means of playing with him and eventually rescuing him.

The program is divided into four parts, each at a more advanced stage than the previous one. The four options are:

- 1. Explore the House**
- 2. Search the House**
- 3. Hide and Squeak**
- 4. Save the Mouse**

The programs are run by pressing SHIFT-BREAK, which loads in the title screen, a picture of Albert's House. On pressing the space bar, the picture of the house dissolves and the Menu appears. Choices are made by pressing a number (1-4).

1 Explore the House

This is by way of an introduction and is the simplest program in the suite. There is no writing on the screen at all and it offers young children an uncluttered exploration of Albert's House. Nine locations are linked together and presented on screen. The initial screen is identical to the start-up screen, a picture of the house, but there is also a small cross in the bottom right corner of the screen. This is the CURSOR and it always appears in the same place as children move from room to room in the house, so they will always know where it is. The cursor is moved by the 4 grey ARROW keys.

To enter the house, the cursor must be placed exactly on the door handle and then RETURN is pressed, which results in the picture of the house dissolving and being replaced by a picture of the hall. There is SOME margin allowed for inaccuracy in placing the cursor, but not a great deal. There are three white arrows in the hall. Placing the cursor on the arrow above the stairs changes the scene to the landing. The arrow on the left of the screen shows the way to the lounge and choosing the arrow at the foot of the screen is the way back into the front garden and to the Menu. From the landing, entry to the bedroom and the bathroom is achieved by using the door handles, or there is an option to go back down to the hall by using the arrow. There is also the kitchen, the back garden

and a chance to look into Albert's hole. He lives behind the skirting board in the lounge.

To get out of the hole, place the cursor in the centre of the purple carpet and press RETURN.

This program gives the teacher and children ample opportunity for discussion and creative work, as well as teaching the 'geography' of Albert's House and giving the children practice in manipulating the cursor. Children will wish to compare this house with their own; it's a time to paint, build, talk, walk and visit.

2 Search the House

Program 2 is an extension of program 1, in that the same procedure for movement is followed, but the program is different because text is introduced for the first time. The essential difference between explore and search is one of detail. Children are good at looking, but have difficulty in seeing. Using this option, it is possible for the children to interrogate the computer, to ask for more information, to use a first 'database'.

The cursor is used both for movement through the house and for pin-pointing items requiring closer examination. On entering a particular room for the first time, the child presses 'H' and several flashing dots appear. These indicate the objects or locations, about which the computer stores more detail. As soon as the cursor is moved, the dots disappear, but pressing 'H' at any time reveals them again. As an example: in the lounge, selecting the cushion by lining up the cursor and pressing RETURN, results in two options being displayed on the screen:

1. Look behind.
2. Look inside.

Choosing 1 reveals a left sock and option 2 tells the child that lumps are inside the cushion!

Progressing in this way enables children to explore the house and garden thoroughly. This activity is an obvious opportunity for children and teacher to have a discussion on what would be found in similar places in the children's own homes.

The positional words used are . . .

behind, upwards, inside, underneath, beside, at, down, through,
in between, in front of, alongside, next to, around, above, left, right.

The objects that may be found are . . .

The Kitchen: thick dust, a spider, an old torch, Shreddies, a candle, bowls and plates, a pile of leaves, a brown stain, an old tea bag, a broken pencil, a sharp knife, brown bread, two stamps, drawing pins, Jaffa Cakes, crumbs, a carrier bag, fluff, washing-up water, a plug, a toy car, saucepans, a cooker, a drawer, a toolbox, pudding basins, washing basket, three marbles, dirty washing, water pipes, buckets and cloths, waste pipe, washing-up liquid, a large crack, flower vases, knives and forks, dish cloths, a bowl of water, a mouse trap, clean pots, writing paper, a letter, photographs, needles and cotton, a thimble, a piece of wire, a torch, a clock, a clean cup.

The Bedroom: Edward Bear, a lamp, a Beano, hair brush, cardigans, crisp packets, underclothes, jeans and shorts, old felt-tipped pens, a long wire.

The Bathroom: a purple towel, talc, bar of soap, yellow duck, dirty water, plug hole, stool, tube of toothpaste, a lot of water.

The Landing: a window sill, three leaves, a small key, a tube of glue, an envelope, a bookshelf, cobwebs.

The Mouse Hole: cracked walls, a drawing pin, sand, cheese, a piece of bread, a peanut, a cotton reel, a thimble, a pair of slippers, a blue flannel, a piece of ribbon, little socks, vests and pants, dead match, jumpers, candle wax, T-shirts, a handkerchief, secret sweets, a bottle top, a flame, a sugar lump.

The Hall: a spider, a reflection, a small table, a note pad, thick socks, a lot of mud, a pair of gloves, a scarf, a telephone.

The Lounge: cheese crumbs, wires, control buttons, sweet wrappers, a wooden shelf, a red pencil, brown envelopes, a cash box, ripe apples, apple pips, a letter, a pot plant.

In addition to the above, five locations may have differing contents each time they are visited.

- The bird table in the back garden: wren, blue tit, robin, sparrow, chaffinch, thrush, dove, pigeon, starling.
- The shopping bag in the hall: loaf of bread, bag of sugar, stick of rock, jelly, tin of beans, dead frog, bag of carrots, packet of butter, bottle of milk, jar of jam.
- The television in the bedroom may be showing: Wide Awake Club, Terry Wogan, Blue Peter, Tom and Jerry, Rainbow, Scooby Doo, Flipper, Disney Time, Playschool, Popeye.

- The cooker may contain: roast chicken, sponge cakes, Yorkshire pudding, apple pie, roast beef, scones, steak and kidney, jam tarts, treacle pud, fish pie.
- Albert's table may reveal: a whisker, cheese crumbs, broken biscuits, a mint with a hole, a crust of bread, a lettuce leaf, sticky jam, a sunflower seed, half a carrot, a sprout.

OBVIOUSLY the use to which teachers put this information will depend on the reading ability of the children.

3 Hide and Squeak

This program enables the child, now familiar with the house, cursor movement and possible hiding places, to play Hide and Seek with Albert. As well as there being text in this program, a new symbol is introduced, a yellow bar, this indicates that the space bar should be pressed.

On selecting this option, a further menu is displayed, there are five choices which appear on screen like this:

- 1. **Hide Albert no**
- Mousemeter**
- 2. **Line no**
- 3. **Numbers no**
- 4. **Return here no**
- 5. **Start**

Pressing keys 1-4 allows a choice between having these options in play or not.

Option 1

If this is selected, and the program is RUN, Albert appears and asks the child to show him a place to hide. The child then moves inside the house, using the arrow keys, until a suitable hiding place is found for Albert and then presses 'H'. The child will be asked to confirm that this is his/her intention by pressing Y or N. If Albert is positioned too close to the margins of the screen, he will politely decline to hide there. Albert will position himself at the cursor position and the invitation to come and find him will be given. If Option 1 is not selected, then the computer hides Albert and one or more children may try to find him.

Options 2 & 3

There are three choices here. If neither 2 or 3 is chosen then no help clues will be given. If 2 is chosen then a white line appears at the top of the screen. This shows how close Albert is by gradually shortening and changing colour. This is similar to the hot and cold games, like Hide the Thimble, that children may have played. Choosing option 3 gives a numerical clue. This starts at 100 and goes down as Albert's hiding place is approached, until 0 is reached and Albert is discovered.

Option 4

If this is selected the child is sent back to the menu screen after finding Albert, otherwise the computer, or a child, depending on Option 1, hides Albert again.

Option 5

This is self-explanatory. Pressing this key starts off the search for Albert.

4 Save the Mouse

This is essentially a problem-solving task. Text is kept to a minimum, but it is important, as it provides vital clues to the solution of the problem. In this final program, selected from the main menu by pressing 4, Albert finds himself in trouble in the back garden and the children are asked to go to Albert to discover how to help him. Because of their past experience with the three previous programs, children should have no difficulty in moving to the back garden. They may notice a cat in the kitchen, which might give them a clue as to the nature of Albert's problem.

Conventional computer programs always begin at the beginning, which means that, if a child is unsuccessful, he/she must repeat all moves and is prevented from using previous experience. This task is somewhat different. The child may use all the information at any time and does not need to repeat most of the problems.

Whilst moving around the house the child may feel like picking up an object and using it in his/her 'adventure'. There are four objects that may be picked up.

To do this, place the cursor on the object and press RETURN. From time to time text will appear with a line underneath. This line represents the SPACE bar. To clear the text and continue, the SPACE bar must be pressed whenever the line appears.

If teachers wish to solve the problems for themselves, they are advised to put these notes to one side, as the solution is given below. It is possible to work things out by using the on-screen information.

On reaching Albert, the children are asked to fetch his at Kit, which is in his mouse-hole. This is the only way that Albert is able to pass the cat and reach the safety of his hole. They must do this as quickly as possible, because, as time goes on, the cat moves closer to the garden and Albert!

The children now embark upon a very simple Adventure game, which should take them several attempts to complete successfully. Their first attempt may be similar to this:

- Move to the mouse-hole, only to discover that they are too big to get in to the hole, but they are told that, in the bedroom, there is something to eat to make them smaller.
- Move to the bedroom, where a message tells the children that the key to unlock the door is in the kitchen.
- Move down to the kitchen and locate the key. Go back up to the bedroom, find the biscuit tin and take it down to the mouse-hole. Eat the biscuits and shrink so as to be able to enter the mouse-hole.
- The Kat Kit is on the wall, but cannot be removed without a pair of scissors, which are to be found in a book on the landing.
- Go upstairs to the landing, take the book and promptly discover a giant bookworm with a very healthy appetite!
- Hopefully, next time the children try the program they will have learned to take the scissors before drinking the shrinking potion and avoid being eaten by the bookworm.

There are several other problems for the children to overcome before rescuing Albert from his dilemma. It is hoped that children will be able to learn from the mistakes they make and build up to a successful solution to this problem. Albert has a nice reward for them if they manage it.

Notes for busy teachers

- a) Albert is in the back garden and needs his KAT KIT, from his hole, to get past the cat in the kitchen. The mouse-hole is too small for a human to enter, but there are magic biscuits in the bedroom, which is locked. The key is in the kitchen.
- b) Get biscuits from bedroom and find a pair of scissors, secreted in the second book from the left on the landing. **DO THIS BEFORE TAKING THE POTION!** Otherwise the bookworm will have a tasty meal!
- c) Go downstairs, taking the hat from the stand in the hall, then proceed to the mouse-hole. Eat the biscuits, go into the hole and take the KAT KIT from the wall.
- d) Leave the hole and wear the hat, by pressing "W". The program hasn't crashed, wearing the hat results in restricted vision, but it is necessary in order to avoid being eaten by the cat!
- e) Go through the kitchen and into the back garden to find a very pleased and grateful Albert.

Classroom suggestions

As the programs are seen as a RESOURCE to enhance a topic the suggestions given below relate only to the programs and not to the general organisation or framework of the topic.

1 Explore the House

The computer allows the children to explore the spatial relationships of the rooms in the house.

Try building a shoe box maze, where 'doors' are cut in some of the sides of each box. The size of the maze would depend on the ages of the children. Each 'room' could be numbered or lettered, thereby allowing routes to be recorded. In a lettered maze, journeys could be designed to spell out words.

Construction could allow more than one route to each location from a common starting point, so searches could be made for 'how many' routes, the longest or shortest route. The links here into the child's own environment are obvious. The idea of boxes as rooms may stimulate the desire to build model rooms with accompanying furniture.

2 Search the House

At its simplest level then children could be asked to:

- Find out what is showing on TV.
 - What kind of bird is in the bird house? What kind of birds come into my garden?
 - What's cooking? What's in the shopping bag? What has Albert been eating?
- A formal question and answer situation could be given . . . Look under the cooker. What did you see? Where are the marbles? etc.

The idea of position could be used as a vehicle for developing observational skills. Look UNDER stones, look INSIDE telephones, take the lid off the computer even.

3 Hide and Squeak.

Using the Mousemeter is a way of receiving a CLUE. The notion of clues could be developed. What clues would tell you that a mouse was loose in the house etc.

The traditional way of giving a clue in Hunt the Thimble is hotter/colder . . . investigate hotter/colder.

The children are able to HIDE the mouse. The general theme of hiding could be touched upon . . . camouflage, stones etc. Why do woodlice hide? We share our houses with all sorts of other creatures. Where do they hide? . . . spiders, earwigs, etc.

To hide, one must keep very still and quiet. There are movement links here.

4 Save the Mouse

Albert escaped by ROCKET. Balloons make very good rockets. What else might a mouse have in a KAT KIT? How else could Albert have got back to his hole?

Albert spent a long time in the garden, how about a mouse-sized garden? What other dangers might a mouse face? Why is it dangerous being small?

Older children could try designing small adventures in a shoe box maze.

Albert's House materials

Thanks to Mrs M. Carr, Wybers Wood First School, Grimsby for the support material.

Although children will be familiar with how to move the cursor about the house after having used program 1, they may not be able to read much of the text which is introduced in program 2. In order to help children make the step between these two programs the extension pack was produced.

This pack consists of A4 master sheets of words and pictures, which the child will meet in Search the House, program 2 on the disc. There are eight sheets of eight pictures and corresponding sheets of words. There is also a sheet of 'position' words. These sheets may be freely copied for use in the classroom.

Suggestions for use of the pack

Two copies should be made of each sheet. The pictures should then be mounted on card and cut out. Colouring the pictures would obviously make them more attractive for the children to use. The words may be used in two ways; either on individual cards as a wordbank for activities a, b, c and e, or fixed to the back of the appropriate picture card as verification in activity d. In this way children are provided with materials which enable them to play several games, which introduce the vocabulary of the program 2.

- **Matching** – the simplest way of using the pack is by matching words to pictures and pictures to pictures.
- **Bingo** – using the same cards, Bingo can be played in four modes: word/word; picture/picture; word/picture; picture/word. There are many ways of playing Bingo and it is left to the teacher to decide which are the most suitable for the children involved.
- **Sorting** – the individual cards may be used for sorting and classifying. Possible classifications are: foods, clothes, utensils, furniture or rooms where certain objects were/are found.
- **Position** – this is a game that would have to be played with the teacher or an older child. The teacher places an envelope or small box on the table and one of the picture cards is then placed somewhere in relation to the box, for example inside or to the right. Children have to choose the correct 'position'

word for the given situation. They must then select the matching word for the picture from the wordbank. The answer can be verified by turning over the picture card. Depending upon the child's ability a sentence could be written with an accompanying picture. A variation on this theme might be giving children a 'position' word card and asking them to place a picture or word card in the correct position in relation to the envelope or box.

- **Vocabulary** – the picture and word cards introduce the vocabulary that the children meet in Search the House. It would be advisable to sort the word and picture cards into sets, relating to the rooms where the objects are to be found. The children can then be given activities introducing the new words they will meet in each particular room BEFORE they have searched it.

