

KidsVoyager® Online

Learning Center

User's Guide, Version 3.0

Phonic Engine®
Empowering Your Child

Innovism®

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
GENERAL OPERATION	4
Startup.....	4
Searching & Phonic Engine® Spelling	6
Spelling Search Words (Correctly!).....	6
Using Correctly Spelled Words for Searching.....	8
What Has Been Learned?	9
Navigating.....	11
REFERENCE.....	12
Tasks	12
Setting the Home Page	12
Setting Favorites (bookmarks).....	12
Removing Favorites.....	13
Internet settings	13
Parental Controls.....	13
Profiles.....	14
Language Features	14
Alphabet Menu	14
Sound Selection Buttons	14
On/Off Button 1 (Browser Window Control)	15
On/Off Button 2 (Button Hints Control).....	15
Radio Buttons (Language Hints Control).....	15
Initial Sound Box.....	15
Final Sound Box	15
Word Box	15
Find Button	16
Word Grid	16
Browsing Features	16
Back, Forward, Go, Stop	16
Home	16
Favorites.....	16
Print	16
Voice.....	17
Spelling.....	17
Speak.....	17
Help	17
Saving a Web Page.....	17
Opening a Local Web Page.....	17
Setting Up a Double Click Page	18

Hearing Web Pages	18
Hearing One Word.....	18
Hearing Selected Text.....	18
Resuming Speech.....	18
Talking eText.....	18
 NOTES	 19

Introduction

It is often said that in the early elementary grades, a child *learns to read*, and thereafter, *reads to learn*. With the **KidsVoyager®** Online Learning Center, your child will be *reading to learn* starting from age 4 or 5 and, of course, *learning to read* in the process.

The KidsVoyager® Online Learning Center, by Innovism, is a substantial advance in Learning-Through-Technology, combining patented methods which enable your child to *safely* understand and learn from the vast information available on the Internet – and enjoy it – as easily as you. It may be used by your child as a self-teaching tool, or with you or a tutor, in a more structured fashion. The tools provided by the KidsVoyager® Online software are easily adaptable to virtually any literacy curriculum, be it traditional, or specialized, such as the Orton Gillingham approach.

This guide provides usage instructions. It is divided into two main sections: *General Operation*, which discusses startup, searching, and navigation; and *Reference*, which provides information regarding accomplishing specific tasks, such as setting a home page. Additionally, there is a *Notes* section at the end, which discusses some useful information.

This guide does not provide teaching instructions. If you wish assistance using it with your child or student to teach specific skills, or address a specific issue, you may contact our Language/Literacy center (Park Slope Communication Center) where we incorporate KidsVoyager® Online into our language and literacy programs. We can assist you in developing a strategy for your child, creating lesson plans, and so forth. Please call 718.768.3526 if you would like such assistance. Depending on how you acquired KidsVoyager® Online, you may be entitled to this for no charge. If you joined online, for example, you may be entitled – depending on your membership type – to one or more instructional consultations.

General Operation

Startup

When the KidsVoyager Online Browser is launched (by either double clicking its desktop icon or selecting it from the Windows® Program Menu) a login screen is displayed. The login screen is used to log in to the KidsVoyager Online Server, which includes the KidsVoyager Phonic Engine® database. This database contains 10,000+ words, and is accessed by the browser to enable your child – as early as his or her fourth or fifth year – to build *correctly spelled* words (as described below under “searching”), which is a necessity for searching the Web. And, as mentioned above, word building via Phonic Engine® Spelling teaches conventional spelling, reinforces phonemic awareness, and enriches vocabulary.

When the login screen is displayed, enter your user name and password, and press the **ENTER** button. Your child does not need to remember the user name and password, as there is a “remember” check box which will cause this information to be stored. You must be connected to

the Internet to log in. If you are not, or some other problem causes the login process to take a long time – such as some sort of Internet problem – you will be prompted to connect and try again.

All the text on the login screen is “speakable.” That is, if the mouse is moved over any text, the text will be spoken. This is true for all aspects of KidsVoyager Online, and enables your child to enjoy using it independently, even if there are words s/he cannot yet read. KidsVoyager enables your child to hear words in virtually every conceivable way, as described in the “Navigating” and “Browsing Features” sections below. KidsVoyager Online speaking a portion of the “NASA for Kids” website is illustrated in Figure 1. This figure also displays a graphic indicator, “Browse Boundary”, which shows how far the user has navigated within the allowable (parent-settable) navigation space, described in the Parental Controls section.

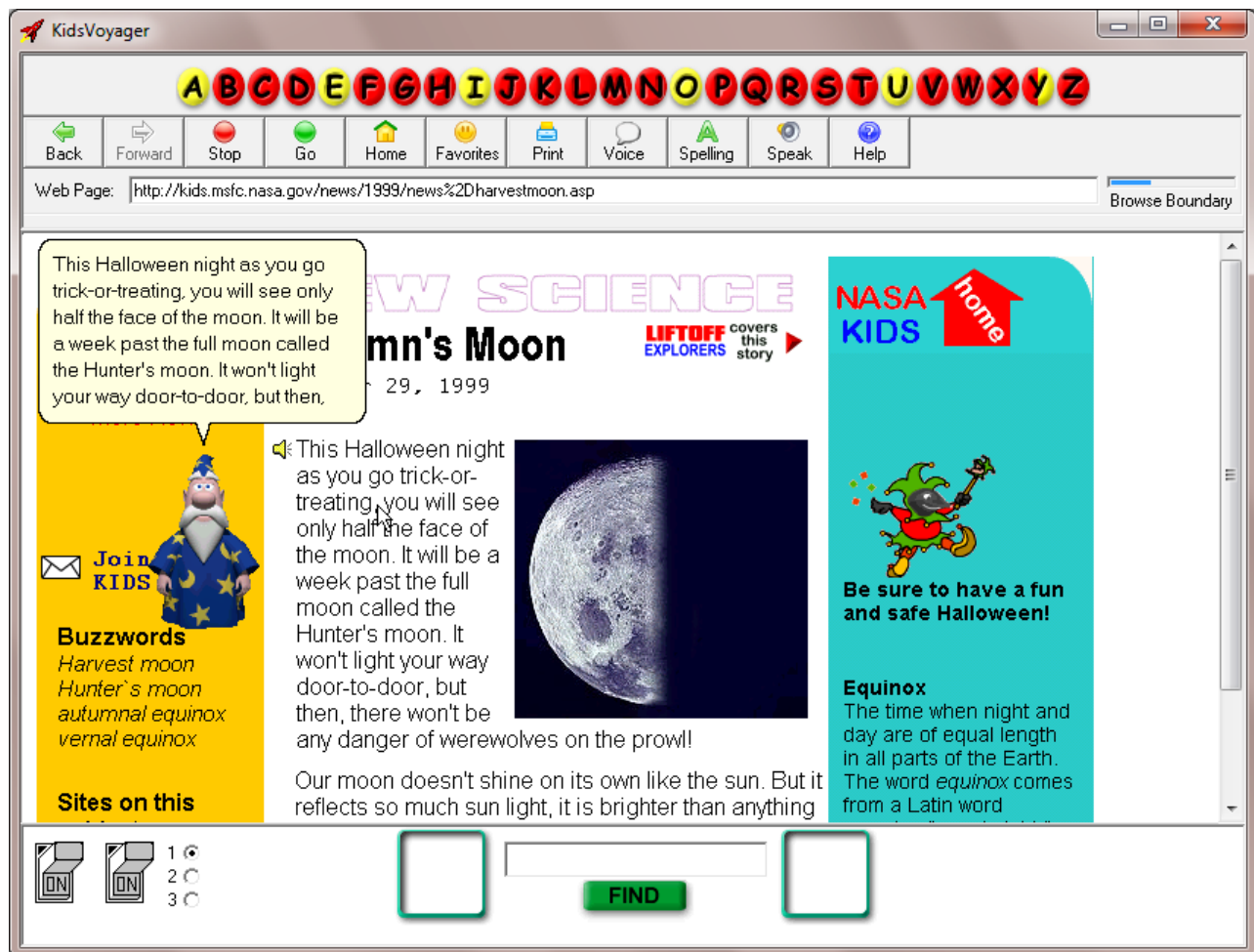


Figure 1

After login, your KidsVoyager home page (which you may select) is displayed, and your child may navigate around, hearing everything that is displayed, or search on a particular area of interest, as described immediately below.

Searching & Phonic Engine® Spelling

Searching the Web using KidsVoyager – even if your child doesn't know how to spell the search terms – is remarkably easy. The use of Phonic Engine® Spelling to correctly spell words (for any reason) is a key feature of KidsVoyager, and may be best shown by example. (It is assumed that the reader of this User's Guide is familiar with using a conventional Web browser.) Figure 2 shows KidsVoyager displaying the KidsSearch website (a mock kids search engine).



Figure 2

Spelling Search Words (Correctly!)

Suppose, for example, your child wants to search KidsSearch using the search term “laugh”, a word that virtually all pre-school and kindergarten children know. By kindergarten, although most children could probably not correctly encode (i.e. spell) the word “laugh”, they would be familiar enough with the alphabet to be able to guess that it could hypothetically begin with an “L” and end with an “F”. This is all they need to know. (And if there is any confusion about the sounds letters or

letter combinations make, they can quickly find out by moving the mouse along the alphabet, hearing the letters pronounced, and clicking on a letter to find out the sound(s) it can make.) *Phonic Engine technology enables kids to use information they already know to assemble correctly spelled words – including difficult words and long words – in as little as 5 mouse clicks.*

To encode, and then search, on laugh:

- 1.) Click the letter “L”; the display of Figure 3 appears, illustrating the *sounds* “L” can make in the initial and final positions of a word. For “L”, this is only one sound. To parallel the composition of words, *icons illustrating beginning sounds are displayed on the left, and ending sounds on the right*. If the mouse is positioned over the picture of the lamp, KidsVoyager explains out loud the sound made by the letter “L” in the word “lamp.” If a letter or letter combination can make more than one sound, there are pictures and spoken explanations for each sound.

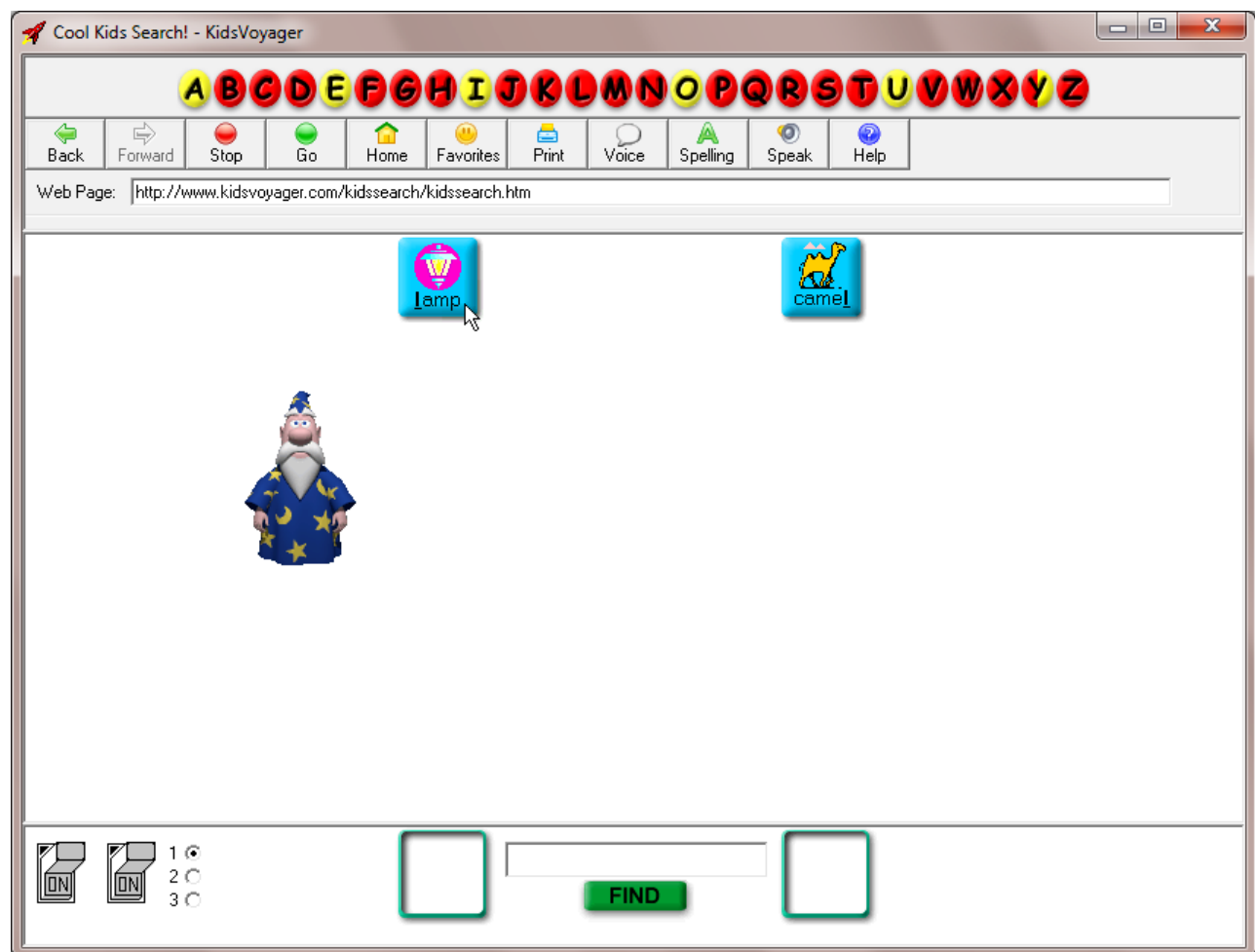


Figure 3

- 2.) Click on the lamp. This tells KidsVoyager that the beginning sound of the desired word is the “L” sound, as in “lamp.”
- 3.) Click on the letter “F.” Pictures of a frog and a leaf will be displayed.
- 4.) Click on the picture of the leaf (not shown). This tells KidsVoyager that the final sound is the “F” sound, as in “leaf” (alternately, the user may click on “G” for “GH”, or “P” for “PH”, which also produce “F” sounds).
- 5.) Click the **FIND** button (if AutoFind is enabled, as discussed later, this is not necessary).

Using Correctly Spelled Words for Searching

The display of Figure 4 is shown, showing all the words that begin with the “L” sound, and end with the “F” sound. There are only six, which is fairly typical. This is part of the beauty of Phonic Engine technology.

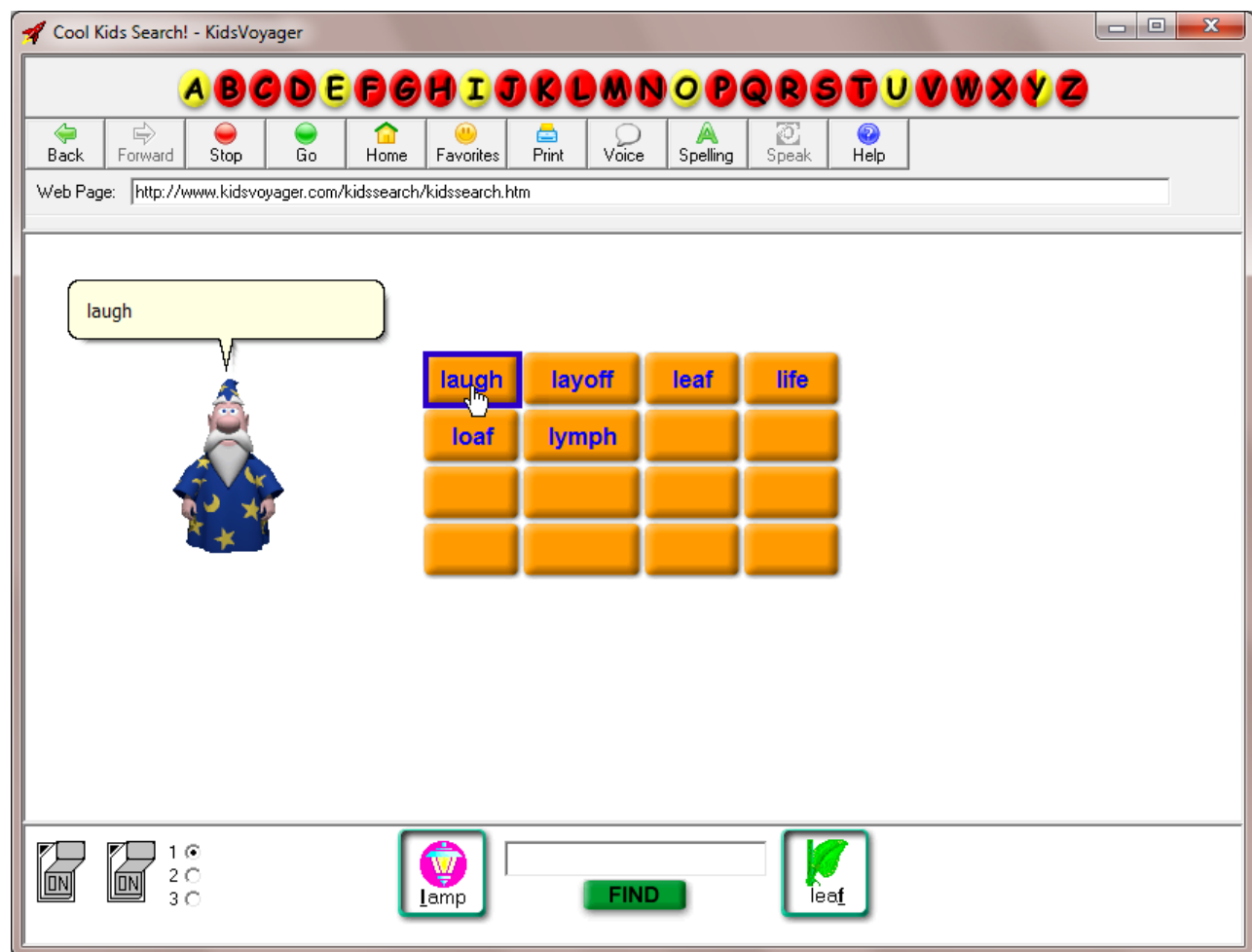


Figure 4

Your child may visually recognize the word “laugh”, or may move the mouse quickly over the words to hear them spoken. KidsVoyager is designed to be highly responsive, and each word is spoken virtually instantaneously as the mouse moves over it, making it easy to quickly hear the words. Note that your child, in the process of spelling laugh, has also spelled layoff and lymph, words with which s/he is probably not familiar. Since groups of words containing the same beginning and ending sounds are usually small, your child will be exposed to, and may easily investigate, words well above grade level, in a fun environment. If your child now clicks on the word “laugh”, the screen will appear as in Figure 5, with a properly spelled word – a *searchable* word – in the search engine's search box, and in the “word box,” between the pictures of lamp and leaf. (If the “Shift” or “Ctrl” key is held down while the word is clicked, it will be capitalized.) This gives your child an opportunity to compare the letters s/he chose to the letters in the word, and discover the different letters that produce the same sounds. (If additional words are clicked, they will accumulate in the search engine’s search box, allowing searching on multiple words. Also, Phonic Engine® Spelling and “regular” spelling may be intermixed.)

What Has Been Learned?

At this point, your child has been exposed to or learned: the names of letters; the sounds letters and letter combinations make; the correct spelling for a specific word; the fact that letters can be combined in various ways to make the same spoken sounds; the fact that sounds (phonemes) can, when placed together, form words (phonemic awareness); and has been made aware of words which s/he probably otherwise would not have known, thus expanding his or her mental lexicon.



Figure 5

From here, your child can press the **SEARCH** button, and explore things having to do with “laugh”: jokes, information about laughing hyenas, and other interesting facts. As he or she moves the mouse around the screen, the contents will be spoken, so your child can effectively navigate, as described in the next section.

As your child navigates, the word box remains filled with the word “laugh” (known as the “current word”), so the spelling can continue to be observed. During this time, if the word box is clicked, any text input box on the current Web page with focus – i.e. a blinking cursor – will display the word. (If no input box has focus, the word will be displayed in any input box on the page.) This provides for easy searching on the last spelled word as your child navigates from page to page. (If the “Shift” or “Ctrl” key is held down while the word is clicked, it will be capitalized.) The current word is reset when a new word is selected, and is cleared when the **HOME** button is pressed.

There are many more things for your child to explore, both within the KidsVoyager Online browser, and on the Web. We strongly recommend that you consider the type of supervision you wish to provide for your child as s/he navigates the Web, and/or filtering mechanism you may wish to use in conjunction with KidsVoyager. KidsVoyager itself provides parental controls, as described below in the reference section.

Navigating

Exploring Web Pages

When a literate adult reader looks at text, he or she may scan, or visually “navigate” the text. For example, when looking at certain types of written materials, such as a newspaper or a Web page, one may navigate the page, and select an article or passage to read because of titles, headings, bylines, bold, italicized, or other special words that catch the eye, and were typically written intentionally to catch the eye. Additionally, a literate adult reader, after noticing emphasized words (or for any other reason), may choose to read surrounding words or, for that matter, any particular word.

On the other hand, when a pre-literate child looks at written material, he or she is typically capable of the same navigation: special words will catch the eye and be noticed. And, like an adult, the child may further choose to look at a nearby word. But the similarity ends there, because although he or she may notice the same special words, these words cannot be read. Thus, a pre-literate child, an individual with no or minimal understanding of a language in its written form (but knowledge of the language in its spoken form), or an individual with certain impairments, may not have any idea about the contents of a written passage. They can see the indicators, but can not understand them.

KidsVoyager Natural Navigation™ technology assists children by allowing them to navigate by ear in the way adults navigate by eye. This is another key feature of KidsVoyager. It provides immediate recitation of virtually all text. All the child has to do is aim the mouse cursor at some text in order to hear it. The text may be a paragraph, a list item, a subtitle under a picture, or “special” text, such as a heading, an italicized word, one or more words in a special typeface, or a hyperlink. KidsVoyager “understands” which words belong together, and typically recites them in the way a person would tend to read them. In each case, the KidsVoyager Browser will speak the text that the mouse cursor is “looking at.” And it will immediately stop when the cursor “looks away.”

For example, if there is a paragraph on a page that contains bold words, italicized words and hyperlinks, and the mouse cursor is positioned over a “normal” word, the entire paragraph will be spoken. If, while it is being spoken, the mouse is moved off the paragraph, the speaking will immediately stop, again paralleling the visual act of “looking at” and “looking away.” If the mouse cursor is positioned over one of the bold or italic words, or the hyperlink, only those words will be spoken, so your child need not hear an entire paragraph simply to hear a link. If the cursor is inadvertently moved off some text while it is being spoken, causing the speech to stop, clicking on the background of the page will cause the speaking to resume from where it stopped. And, if your child wishes to hear a *particular* section of text, that text can be “selected” by holding down the left

mouse button, and dragging the mouse cursor over the text; when the mouse button is released, the highlighted words in the selected section will be spoken. A user may also hear an entire Web page, or sections chosen by the Web page author, as discussed below under “Browsing Features.”

Additionally, if any particular word is clicked, it will be pronounced in isolation (KidsVoyager “learns” each Web page as it is visited; the mouse cursor will be displayed as an arrow over a word that has been “learned”. If the cursor does not display as an arrow (but typically as an “I” bar), the word has not yet been learned, and will not be spoken if clicked. The word learning process can tend to be delayed with certain complex Web pages on computers with slower processors.) The written words are spoken by an animated character – Merlin the Magician – and appear in a word balloon simultaneously, so the child can follow along. To the extent that an individual needs assistance in reading, KidsVoyager can supply it, whether reciting entire passages, or just one word, possibly over and over again. Beyond that, it's great fun. Even kids who can already read, enjoy being read to – as every parent knows.

Learning More About Words

You may specify any Web page to be a “Double Click Page.” If a Double Click Page is set, and your child (or other user) double clicks on a word, a new KidsVoyager browser window is launched, with the clicked word filled in search box – assuming the Web page contains one. This may be used to look up a word in an online dictionary, kids’ search engine, or other online reference. A Double Click Page makes it extremely easy for your child to investigate new words and topics. See the topic “Setting Up A Double Click Page” under Browsing Features, below.

Now, let your child mouse around the screen, experimenting with the various buttons, exploring the Web, and... have fun!

Reference

Tasks

The KidsVoyager buttons that are labeled similarly to standard browsers, typically have the same function. Differences, as well as additional features, are discussed here.

Setting the Home Page

To set the KidsVoyager home page, simply navigate to the desired page and right click the “HOME” button. The home page will be set to that page, and the words “Home page set” will be spoken.

Setting Favorites (bookmarks)

To set KidsVoyager's Favorites, navigate to the desired page and right click the “Favorites” button. That page will be added to the “favorites” list, and the words “Favorite added” will be spoken. Additionally, clicking on the “FAVORITES” button which displays a list of favorites, also contains an “ADD” button, which, when pressed, adds the current page to the favorites list. Placing the mouse cursor over the “ADD” button will cause the favorite-to-be-added to be spoken. Each

Favorite has a smiley face next to it. To add a new favorite in a specific place, click on a smiley face (which highlights the favorite), then click “ADD.” The new favorite will be added above the highlighted favorite.

Removing Favorites

To remove a favorite from the favorites list, press the “FAVORITES” button. Click on the smiley face to highlight the favorite. To remove it, press the “REMOVE” button. Placing the mouse cursor over the “REMOVE” button will cause the favorite-to-be-removed to be spoken.

Internet settings

To perform Internet related functions, such as clearing cache, setting security zones, and so on, launch Microsoft Internet Explorer, and perform the desired function. KidsVoyager utilizes the Internet Explorer browsing engine, and shares these functions.

Parental Controls

The KidsVoyager Parental Controls provide powerful and flexible means through which parents may limit the possibility of their child viewing material they deem inappropriate. Parental Controls are set using Profiles, as described in the next section. Using KidsVoyager Parental Controls, parents have the ability to completely control their child’s browsing, through a combination of:

- a) Preventing a user from changing the KidsVoyager homepage.
- b) Preventing a user from setting KidsVoyager favorites.
- c) Disabling navigation via URL (i.e. disallow navigating to a site via its Web address, such as “www.website.com”), and
- d) Setting a “Navigation Boundary.” Setting a Navigation Boundary is similar in concept to constructing a fence around a playground. Parents may set a Navigation Boundary with respect to the Home Page, which allows their child the ability to browse only a certain distance away from the home page. Many children’s sites, specifically portals and search engines for kids, review sites to which they link. The “Set Navigation Boundary” feature of KidsVoyager Parental Controls, allows parents to set a boundary such that their child may only visit sites within the portal; only visit sites within the portal *and* sites to which the portal links; and so on. As your child (or other user) navigates away from the domain of the home page, the Browse Boundary indicator moves to the right. When it reaches the end, it is apparent to the user that no further navigation (beyond the current domain) is allowed. If an attempt is made, a friendly message is spoken, and navigation is denied. This is in contrast to “white lists”, where all of a sudden, for no apparent reason, a user may be denied access a page. (KidsVoyager Parental Controls is not intended to be a substitute for parental supervision, discussing surfing with children or, potentially, the use of additional filtering mechanisms. Each parent must make his or her own judgement.)

Using these controls, if a parent deems certain kids sites, such as specific kids search engines and portals, and other kids sites to be “safe” sites, with little or no possibility of accessing inappropriate material from that site, and little or no possibility of accessing inappropriate material from sites to which these sites link, the parent may set KidsVoyager’s home page, set up a number of favorites, and then disable these functions, and/or utilize the Navigation Boundary. User’s of KidsVoyager will then only be allowed access to the pre-selected sites,

sites to which they link, sites to which the linked sites link, and so on – all settable by the parent.

Profiles

A KidsVoyager account may contain up to 5 profiles. Each profile has its own username and password, and since these profiles are stored only on your home PC, you may pick any username you wish (except the master username), so that you may use your child's name or nickname, for example. You may also specify a personalized spoken startup message (which is substituted for the KidsVoyager default startup message) for each profile. This may be any message you wish, including a "Remember that we love you" message, a "Happy Birthday" message, a reminder message, a joke, or any personalized message you'd like your child to hear. You may change these messages anytime you wish. Additionally, you may enable or disable the KidsVoyager exit sound on a profile by profile basis. Profiles (which also include personalized parental controls) are set up and managed by launching KidsVoyager, and visiting the "Profiles/Parental Controls" page on the KidsVoyager.com website.

Language Features

Figures 1 - 5 illustrate the KidsVoyager screen display. Below is a description of the features associated with the various screen elements. When the mouse cursor is positioned over any screen element, information about that element is spoken; when the cursor is moved away, the speaking immediately stops; thus, the user is not forced to hear an entire spoken message.

Alphabet Menu

Each letter of the alphabet is displayed: consonants in red, vowels in yellow (and "y" in half red/half yellow). When the mouse cursor is placed over a letter, the name of that letter is pronounced. When a letter is clicked on, one or more picture buttons, as in Figure 3, are displayed illustrating the sounds the letters can make, both in their initial and final positions in words. In certain cases, letters can make a number of different sounds, both in alone and in combination with other letters. For example, the letter "c" makes one sound in the word "cat," another in the word "circus", and still another, when combined with "h" in the word "chair." Initial sounds are displayed on the left, and final sounds on the right, as they appear in the written form of words. Almost all letter and letter combinations are displayed, although some have been omitted, to simplify use in cases where a letter making a particular sound is rare. The picture buttons depicting sounds are referred to as *sound selection buttons*.

Sound Selection Buttons

When an alphabet button is clicked, sound selection buttons for virtually all sounds which include the clicked-on letter are displayed, as in Figure 3, each with a picture illustrating the letter (or letter combination) and the sound it makes. When the mouse cursor is placed over a sound selection button, the sound made by the letter(s) is explained. The explanation may be comprehensive, such as "ch can make the sound /**ch**/, as in cherry"; or simplified, such as "/**ch**/, cherry." Whether the

comprehensive or simplified version is spoken is set using the “language levels” radio buttons on the lower left of the display, as discussed below.

On/Off Button 1 (Browser Window Control)

The on/off button in the leftmost position at the bottom of KidsVoyager toggles the KidsVoyager window between a full size browser window, and a split window, with the KidsVoyager Spelling Machine in the top pane, and a browser window in the bottom. This provides the ability to readily utilize the KidsVoyager Spelling Machine repeatedly on the same Web page, which is especially useful for composition purposes, such as with the KidsVoyager® Animated StoryWriter. When the mouse cursor is placed over this button, the words “Full Browser Window On/Off” are spoken.”

On/Off Button 2 (Button Hints Control)

The other on/off button is used to enable or disable “button hints.” Every screen element on the display is spoken when the mouse is placed over it. The sounds of all buttons which are displayed, but are not specifically used in the process of encoding a word, are controlled by this switch. When the mouse cursor is placed over this button, the words “button hints on/off” are spoken.

Radio Buttons (Language Hints Control)

The radio buttons at the bottom of the display control the level of “language hints” spoken when the mouse cursor is positioned over a screen element directly involved in encoding a word, specifically, the alphabet buttons and the sound selection buttons. When the level is set to 1, and the mouse cursor moves over the alphabet, the names of the letters are spoken, and when the mouse cursor moves over a sound selection button, a comprehensive explanation is spoken. When the level is set to 2, and the mouse cursor moves over the alphabet, the names of the letters are spoken, and when the mouse cursor moves over a sound selection button, a simplified explanation is spoken. When the level is set to 3, no sound is spoken either for the alphabet buttons, or the sound selection buttons. This allows a child to select the behavior which is most useful and/or enjoyable for him or her. When the mouse is positioned over the radio buttons, the words “language hints level” are spoken.

Initial Sound Box

To the right of the radio buttons, is an empty square box, as in Figure 2. This is referred to as the “initial sound box.” When an initial word sound is selected, this box is filled with the picture from the selected button, as in Figure 4. When the mouse moves over this box, the words “beginning sound” are spoken.

Final Sound Box

The other identical square box is referred to as the “final sound box.” When a final word sound is selected, this box is filled with the picture from the selected button, as in Figure 4. When the mouse moves over this box, the words “end sound” are spoken.

Word Box

Between the initial and final sound boxes is the “word box.” After a word has been encoded, it is displayed here, spelled correctly. Your child is given the opportunity to notice the spelling, and compare the letters at the beginning and end with the letters s/he selected to build the word. You may wish to point this out, or let your child make his or her own observations, depending upon how

your child learns best. Children often have a tendency to repeat things so, using the example from the previous section, if your child builds the word “laugh” using “L” and “F” several times, s/he may then begin to build it using “L” and “GH.” When the mouse cursor moves over the word box, the words “spelled word” are spoken. As mentioned earlier, if word box is clicked, any text input box on the current Web page with focus – i.e. a blinking cursor – will display the word it contains. (If no input box has focus, the word will be displayed in any input box on the page.) Again, this provides for easy searching on the last spelled word as your child navigates from page to page.

Find Button

After the initial and final sounds for a desired word have been specified, pressing the **FIND** button displays a word grid containing all the correctly spelled words that match the specified sounds.

Word Grid

The word grid, as mentioned above, contains all the correctly spelled words that match the selected initial and final sounds. Typically, this will be a small number, with a mean average of about 5. In some cases, however, there are more. When more words exist than can fit in one grid, **NEXT** and **LAST** buttons appear, allowing your child to rummage through a number of word grids. In these cases, the most complex words have been pared from the online database, to keep down the number of clicks needed to spell a word. (The maximum number of times your child will ever need to press the **NEXT** button is 4.) As described in the previous section, when the mouse is moved over a word in the word grid, that word is spoken. When a word is clicked on, the word becomes the “current word”, is displayed in the word box, and in any text input box on the current Web page which has focus – i.e. a blinking cursor. (If no input box has focus, any input box on the page will be filled.) If the “Shift” or “Ctrl” key is held down while the word is clicked, it will be capitalized.

Browsing Features

Below is a description of the browsing features provided by KidsVoyager. Some are basically the same as in “standard” browsers, while others are unique to KidsVoyager.

Back, Forward, Go, Stop

The **Back**, **Forward**, **Go**, and **Stop** buttons perform the same functions as in conventional browsers. (The Back and Forward buttons allow you to revisit pages in the original order they were originally browsed; the Go button browses to the page in the address bar; the Stop button stops the current navigation.)

Home

When clicked, the home button navigates to the KidsVoyager home page. When right-clicked, the current page will be set as the home page.

Favorites

Performs similarly to conventional browsers. A detailed description is provided in the “tasks” section, above.

Print

Prints the current Web page.

Voice

When the VOICE button is clicked, you are able to adjust the speaking speed of the animated character. This can be useful if the user is having difficulty understanding the preset speed. In addition, you are able to reload the character. If the animated character stops responding, choosing this option reloads the character immediately, without the need to restart the program.

Spelling

Brings up a menu containing two entries: “Display Spelling Controls”, and “Use AutoFind.”

Display Spelling Controls toggles the spelling areas of the browser on and off. In the “on” position, assistance with spelling is provided. In the “off” position, it is not, and the screen area for browsing is increased.

AutoFind speeds up the use of the KidsVoyager Spelling Machine. When AutoFind is selected, the FIND button is not necessary. The word grid will be automatically displayed as soon as a beginning and ending sound have been chosen.

Speak

Speaks the entire Web page. This can be particularly useful when listening to “linear” text, such as a story. When clicked, the button turns into a “Stop” button. Clicking this button will stop the speaking. Also, clicking on the background of the Web page will stop the speaking.

Help

Clicking on **Help** displays five selections: “Click here to spell a word with me,” “Click here to stop practicing with me,” “How to Use KidsVoyager,” “About,” and “Getting Started.” These selections are spoken as they are “moused over.” Clicking on “Click here to spell a word with me,” launches an interactive practice session which guides the user through the fundamentals of the KidsVoyager Spelling Machine. Clicking on “Click here to stop practicing with me,” terminates the practice session. “How to Use KidsVoyager” displays the User’s Guide in the KidsVoyager browser window. “About” displays copyright and other information. And “Getting Started” displays “How To” links for common KidsVoyager features

Saving a Web Page

Pressing Ctrl+S will bring up a “Save” dialog. This will allow you to save the currently displayed Web page, and its images, to your PC. This is designed especially for saving material, such as stories, which has been created online, as some material created online may not be properly or completely saved using other browsers. Once saved, you or your child may view and hear his or her creation whenever you wish, email it to a relative or friend, and so on. At this time, only pages that are single frames (most Web pages) may be saved.

Opening a Local Web Page

Pressing Ctrl+O or Ctrl+L will bring up an “Open” dialog. This will allow you or your child to open, view, and hear Web pages which have been saved onto (or created on) your PC.

Setting Up a Double Click Page

If you click the “Favorites” button, you will notice a section at the bottom of the Favorites window with buttons entitled “Make” and “Remove Double Click Page. If you wish to create a Double Click Page, simply browse to the desired page and click the “Make” button. To remove a Double Click Page, click on the “Remove Double Click Page” button. (Instructions are also included in the Favorites window itself.)

Hearing Web Pages

As described above, positioning the mouse cursor over text on a Web page causes the text the cursor is “looking at” to be spoken. When the cursor “looks away” the speaking stops. Positioning the mouse cursor over an image will cause information about the image to be spoken, but *only if the image has, what is known in HTML, as an “alt tag”* associated with it. Many images have such “alt tags.” Some words that appear as text are actually graphic images. These words will not be spoken, unless an “alt tag” is associated with them. You can tell the difference by trying to select the text by clicking on it and dragging the mouse. If the text becomes highlighted, it is text in the usual sense of what is known as text in computer jargon. If not, it is an image depicting text.

Hearing One Word

As soon as KidsVoyager navigates to a Web page, it begins a process of analyzing the text on that page. Once a portion of text has been analyzed, the mouse cursor will appear as an arrow when it’s positioned over it. Clicking a word in this text will cause it to be pronounced. (Note: On “slower” PCs, such as PCs with the Pentium 1 CPU, some Web pages that have a complex underlying structure may take a while to be completely analyzed. On faster PCs, or for pages with simpler underlying structures, this analysis will complete virtually immediately.)

Hearing Selected Text

If the left mouse button is held down, and the mouse cursor is then dragged over a section of text, the text will be highlighted. When the button is released, the highlighted text will be spoken. If desired, the speaking of this text can be stopped by clicking on the background.

Resuming Speech

If the mouse cursor inadvertently “looks away” from text that is being spoken, the speaking of that text may be resumed by clicking on the background. This is especially useful if a lengthy paragraph is being narrated, and the user's hand accidentally moves the cursor. (Resumed speech will continue till it finishes, or until the mouse is clicked on the background of the page.)

Talking eText

KidsVoyager provides a feature that allows a Web author to design a Web page such that it displays text “normally” in a conventional browser, but displays a “speak” button next to it when displayed by KidsVoyager. This button may be a picture of a speaker with sound waves, as in Figure 1 (the small speaker just before the words “This Halloween night”) or some other “speak” icon, as determined by the Web author. If this button is clicked, adjacent or nearby text will be spoken, as determined by the Web page author. This speaking may also be stopped by clicking on the background of the Web page.

Notes

Web pages, at the current time, were not designed to be spoken. The KidsVoyager browser performs work “behind the scenes” to be able to speak Web pages. The Microsoft Internet Explorer development platform, upon which the KidsVoyager browser is built, provides what may be viewed as an invisible representation (i.e. a data structure) of each Web page, and it is this invisible representation which is actually displayed on the screen. The KidsVoyager browser analyzes this representation for each Web page, and keeps track of all the text on the page, down to every word. On rare occasions, we have found Web pages, or portions of Web pages which are not spoken. This can be due to several factors. KidsVoyager is slightly more “sensitive” to the underlying HTML of a Web page than is Internet Explorer. Certain HTML errors, which do not impact the visual display in Internet Explorer, may impact the ability of KidsVoyager to speak. This is not typically a problem, because it’s rare. However, if you come across such a page, please let us know.

With respect to text-to-speech: Text-to-speech is an inexact science. A human can typically recognize, from context, the correct pronunciation for two different words that have the same spelling, such as “conflict”, which can be pronounced with the emphasis on the syllable “con” or on the syllable “flict”. Text-to-speech engines use rules for this, and while the rules usually result in the correct pronunciations, they sometimes don’t. KidsVoyager Online provides a means for Web authors to specify the desired pronunciation for any word.

You may occasionally encounter a word which the text-to-speech engine used by KidsVoyager mispronounces, and fabricated words (i.e. words made from combining two or more words) which are mispronounced. We would appreciate feedback on these, as this, more often than not, can be rectified.

We have devoted an enormous amount of time and effort in creating a tool designed to be of immense help in teaching language, while exploring the world through the Internet. We hope we succeed in helping to educate and inspire your child.

If you have feedback for us, please email us at feedback@kidsvoyager.com.

Note: All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.