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Welcome to LarKen's Living Letters ABC, version 3.0! We hope your child enjoys this demo.

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About LarKen Software

LarKen Software Inc. is a small company (located in Washington state) of professionals devoted to the pursuit of quality, affordable, non-violent educational software. It was founded in response to the large number of low quality, high priced products currently on the market. LarKen's founders considered many of these products to be either boring for children, with little educational value, or too violent.

Our goal is to create quality wholesome software that both teaches and entertains.

For comment or questions, we can be reached at:

E-mail: sales@larken.com

USA Telephone: (360) 452-2852

USPS:

LarKen Software Inc.

PO. Box 3033

Bremerton, WA 98310

Other Products by LarKen Software Inc.

Currently we have just 1 additional product on the market. "Living Numbers 123" is a pre-school Math program that teaches number recognition and counting. It's design is similar to Living Letters ABC. There are 3 different activities ("Counting and Number Recognition", "Dot-to-Dot" {unlimited expandability}, and "Number Dress-up") to keep kids amused and learning.

Check out our web page for the latest product information:
www.larken.com

How to Play

LarKen's Living Letters ABC was designed to be *highly interactive* for children. They are much more likely to learn by doing, rather than just watching. We made the program easy enough for a 2 or 3 year old to operate themselves (we've heard of some kids as young as 18 months using our program), but some children may require occasional directions from parents. Encourage them to click the mouse on areas of the screen other than the obvious buttons (e.g. pictures, words, the large letter). Each time they learn something new about the program, they'll have a renewed enthusiasm to play and learn.

LarKen's Living Letters ABC has 4 separate activity screens to provide almost endless hours of learning and fun. The activities are explained below:

Letter Learning Activity

Word Puzzle Game

Word Match Game

Letter Dress-up Activity

Phonics are integrated throughout the program. LarKen's Living Letters ABC utilizes the "Writing Road to Reading" phonogram list to teach and reinforce phonics. By clicking on a displayed word the selected letter(s) enlarge and the appropriate phonetic sound is played. To encourage kids to click on the letters, we have added some random animation's that play when they do. This learning is then reinforced and tested by playing the **Missing Letter** game.

Letter Learning Activity:

This activity is where the real teaching of letters and words occurs. Younger children should be directed to this screen first. This activity is reached by clicking the upper-left balloon on the main activity menu screen. The child will learn to recognize both upper and lower-cased letters, phonics sounds, and over 200 words. The child is free to explore the letters and the sounds/words they form. By clicking on the large letter the child will be greeted with a friendly, newly awakened number. By clicking on the Camera button a series of photographs of things starting with the currently displayed letter are shown. Clicking on the Word button (visible only after a picture is displayed) will cause the item displayed in the photograph to be spelled out. Clicking on the photograph will cause a sound, animation, and/or video to be presented. Clicking on.... well you get the picture, let the child click all over the place to see what happens.

The lower-case letters have an additional fun/learning activity. Occasionally, a letter (in the word spelling area) will appear in a goofy position. The child will then be instructed to click on the "mixed-up letter". The eyes and mouths of the letters should give sufficient hints for the children. The principle of this activity is to help children become more conscious of correct letter formations.

Word Puzzle Game:

This activity will test the child's phonics and spelling ability. The same words presented in the **Letter Learning** activity will randomly be shown here. When the Word button is selected, the word will be spelled out with 1 letter missing. The child is to find the missing letter from the buttons located below. As each words missing letter is found, a puzzle is slowly unveiled. When the child correctly finds 9 missing letters, the full puzzle is visible and a humorous video is available for their reward.

Word Match Game:

This activity tests the child's ability to distinguish between words. The same 200+ words that were presented in the **Letter Learning** activity are again here utilized. This time, the child is shown a picture and 3 possible words. By selecting the correct word, the child is rewarded with an encouraging sound file and a progress indicator. After accumulating 5 progress indicators, the screen transforms into a theater and a cute mini-documentary video is played.

Letter Dress-up Activity:

We added this activity to our Living Numbers 123 product and have received countless praises for it (it seems many parents enjoy it more than the kids). This screen is just a whole lot of fun. The child (or adult) can dress up any of the letters (upper or lower-case) with any combination of eyes, mouths (yes that's plural), arms, legs, glasses, hair, hats, etc. that they want. Some incredibly goofy characters can easily be created. Then, if wanted, the screen can be copied to your printer and the characters used to decorate the walls. Have the child spell out his/her name with these characters and place them on the wall of their rooms.

Adding Custom Pictures

LarKen's Living Letters ABC is set-up to allow you to easily add your own pictures and words. Imagine your child's delight when they come across a picture of Grandma or the family Dog. The steps necessary to add custom pictures/words are as follows:

- 1) **Get Digital Image** - The first thing you need is a bitmap or GIF (digitized image stored on your computer). If you have access to a scanner, you can scan your own photographs into a bitmap image file. If you don't have scanner access you can often find images on BBS's or by purchasing a digitized photo collection. If you are artistic (or even if you aren't) you can draw your own bitmaps using the windows accessory PBRUSH.EXE. Many photo developers now offer the service of providing your prints on a computer disk (which would be perfect for this application).
- 2) **Resize or Crop Image** - Once you've acquired your bitmap, you should size it to be 320x200 pixels. It can be either 16 or 256 colors. If the photo is smaller than 320x200 pixels it will still work, but won't fill up the entire picture area. If the photo is larger than this, it will be cropped from the upper-left corner. The Windows 95 Paint program, or one of the numerous shareware and commercial graphics programs can be used to resize and touch-up bitmaps.
- 3) **Get Sound Effect Files** - If you want sound files to say the word or provide sound when the picture is clicked, you'll need to record them (or obtain them on-line or from a CD). Most sound cards have the ability to record if you just get a microphone. There are up to 2 sound files associated with every picture/word. One is played when the photo area on screen is clicked with the mouse (a sound effect), the other is played when the Word button is selected (after the word is spelled a voice should say the word).
- 4) **Using the Custom Configuration Screen** - Once everything has been collected, now you're ready to add it into the program. A special custom picture configuration screen has been provided for this purpose. The button is located at the bottom of the main activity menu screen. The screen is pretty self explanatory, just use the bottoms located on the bottom of the screen to specify which files (bitmaps, sound) you want to use and enter the Word to associate with the picture into the white text box (note: you must hit the ENTER key after typing the word into the white text box). You can use the Finger Buttons to go forward or backward in the list of custom words that you add. The image and sounds you specify can be tested right on the configuration screen (just click the camera or word button like normal).

Limitations:

You cannot use words longer than 8-characters and a maximum of 50 custom words can be active at one time (you can always delete and add words at will).

Technical Support

If you are having problems running LarKen's Living Letters ABC the information contained here should help.

The answer to some commonly asked questions are given below (updated technical support is available on our web page at www.larken.com). If you are unable to resolve your problem with LarKen's Living Letters technical assistance can also be obtained via E-mail or Telephone. Please give us an opportunity to help solve your problem, our customers satisfaction is important to us.

1) Why are the pictures not of very good quality?

2) The music button doesn't do anything?

3) How come the music drowns out the sound of the rest of the program?

4) Nothing appears in the upper right part of the Letter Learning screen when I click on the camera button?

5) What is the minimum equipment requirements for Living Letters?

6) How come I don't hear any sound?

support@larken.com

Toll Call:
1-360-452-2852

The photographs look best if you are running in 16-bit or higher color (65,000 colors on your video setting). If you are running in 256-color video mode the pictures will be visible but their quality is reduced. Try changing to a different video setting.

In order for the music to play, you must have a sound card that is capable of playing MIDI files. Any windows compatible card should work. You also must have the MIDI Mapper installed in your control panel. If you have a sound card capable of MIDI, check the installation manual to make sure everything was installed. Also verify that the "Name" field is set to Extended FM or Extended MIDI.

Your sound card should have come with a "mixer" or "control" program that has volume adjustments. The music is controlled by your MIDI volume. Try adjusting these levels until the desired level is achieved.

Photographs and/or clip art are suppose to appear in the upper right part of the screen when you click on the "Camera" button. If nothing happens, you must be missing some resource files. Verify that the directories referenced in the "LIVE_ABC.INI" file (located in the windows directory exist on the drive listed.

Minimum:

486 processor; 8M RAM; MS Windows 3.1, 95, or NT; windows compatible sound card, 256-color VGA, 2xCD, 11M free disk space

Recommended:

4xCD, and 65,000 color VGA

Most of the sound files are compressed to enhance performance and preserve disk space. The ability to uncompress these files must be present in your computer to hear them. Some older machines may not have this. Install Video-For-Windows from the LarKen's Living Letters CD, located in the VFW11E directory.

Copyright & Credits

LarKen's Living Letters ABC is owned by LarKen Software Inc. and is protected by United States copyright laws and international treaty provisions. This copyright protection includes all bitmaps, sound, and video files.

Some of the pictures utilized were obtained from Corel photo CD's and are the property of Corel. They are used by permission under the criteria of the Corel licensing agreements and may not be copied or used separately from LarKen's Living Letters ABC.

Ordering Information

The size of the full version of **Living Letters** (nearly 130 Mbytes uncompressed), is WAY too large to distribute intact via shareware. But we desired to give the customer a good product for the best price (with minimal distributors fees or store mark-ups). Thus, we chose to distribute this demo version via shareware channels (our savings in marketing are passed on to you in a very reasonable price). We hope we have included enough of the program to give the flavor of the real thing.

Money Back Guarantee:

We are so confident that you'll be satisfied with Living Letters that we are providing a full 30 day MBG. If for any reason you are not satisfied with the complete version of Living Letters simply return the CD for a full refund. No questions asked. This guarantee is good for 30 days after you've received your full version.

{With a guarantee like that why not order today?}

Features of Full Version:

- All upper and lower-case letters
- Phonics sounds for each word
- 200+ 256-color entertaining photos (with the ability to add your own)
- Over 30 MB of fun sound files
- 30 fun and educational video files (used throughout the program)
- More background music files
- More funny items to use in the Dress-up Screen activity
- 11 full color background scenes
- Ability to add your own pictures and sound files
- Ability to print the creations on the Dress-up Screen activity

For your convenience, Living Letters can be ordered in several ways.

Ordering by Mail

Order on-line (with credit card) by going to <http://www.larken.com>

Order via e-mail (we will ship the CD to you C.O.D. - **US orders ONLY**) by sending name, address, and product information to: orders@larken.com

Order from your favorite educational software supplier. If you like the product and your regular software supplier doesn't carry it, please ask if they would consider doing that.

Ordering By Mail

To order by mail send this order form (click on Print Topic in the File pull-down menu) and a check or money-order (US funds or equivalent foreign funds) to:

LarKen Software
PO Box 3033
Bremerton, WA
U.S.A. 98310

Living Letters 3.0 Order Form

Living Letters single user License (\$24.95) = _____

- or -

Multiple-copies (2 - 5): _____ at \$22.95 each = _____
(site licenses and larger orders are negotiable)

Shipping & Handling (\$3 in USA, \$4 Canada, \$6 overseas) = _____

Total: = _____

Please specify the following system info:

Computer Brand: ___ Gateway ___ Dell ___ Micron Other: _____

Processor: ___ 486 ___ Pentium ___ Pentium II Other: _____

Sound card: ___ Sound Blaster Other (specify) _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Where did you find Living Letters: _____

E-mail: _____

Comments:

