

Tools of the Trade

Do you use puzzles to teach and entertain? Frequently I create crossword puzzle reviews or short homework assignments based on the lesson of the day or week. Other teachers who use my puzzles in the same course often ask if I also have a word search puzzle creator. Although I'm not certain what the learning objective is for a word search, one can be useful for keeping quiet students who finish an exam early, and if they contain a hidden message

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or are constructed with clues may serve as review exercises. A good source of programs to create puzzles, including scrambled letter puzzles, fallen phrase, word searches with a hidden message, cryptograms, and more is <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/>. You select the kind of puzzle you want to create and are completely guided in its construction with instructional forms. Directions are provided if you want to save the puzzle to your own computer or simply print it. I found that I had to print some puzzles in landscape to fit them on my standard paper-A4.

The puzzle creation programs here are very easy to use. They are not individually versatile. For example, the crossword puzzle permits only short clues and does not permit you to customize by adding squares, also the word search lacks opportunity to choose the word direction and check spelling. For spell checking, you could easily create your word list in a word pro-

cessing program, then paste it into the puzzle creation guide. Together the puzzle programs provide an adaptability you may find useful.

For a special occasion, word search fans might want to use <http://www.mastermakers.com/awn/games/word-search/index.htm> for creating a shaped search grid. How about transport words in the shape of a heart?

The puzzlemaker server is operated by <http://school.discovery.com/>. That server provides other useful resources, some quite puzzle-like and as easily used as puzzlemaker. Short quiz templates of several types simplify creation of opening or closing reviews or introductions on a daily lesson. You'll have fun exploring other aspects of the site, but at the moment, I only want to focus on tools of the trade.

Rachel Hays
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Software Review

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