Putting layers into practice

Layers are one of those hidden features of Activstudio that open up many possibilities in the classroom. Here are ten quick ideas on how make the most of layers. See the companion article 'Can you tell the bottom from the top?' for a more technical discussion of how layers work.

By Simon Green

1. Right or wrong

Layers can be used to create simple right or wrong exercises. Put correct answers on the top layer, incorrect answers on the bottom layer and an image in the middle layer. Move the answers onto the image. Only the correct answers will appear on top of the image.

2. Going home

Place a house on the middle layer, and a person on the bottom layer. Now drag the person over the house, the person goes behind the image – going home. This principle can be used to temporarily delete images/text from a page. Drag them "home" and when the exercise is finished you can move the house to reveal all the images/topics that have been studied.

3. Vocabulary buckets

Write a number of words you want to study on a flipchart. Place the individual words on top of each other. Select an image (eg a bucket) and place it on top of your words. Right-click on the image and select **Edit > Lock.** Now click and drag on the image to pull out words you want to use. Also works with numbers and coins to teach math.

4. Design tool

User layers as a design tool, to help you organize images you have on a page. Placing some images above others, for example, can help to create perspective.

5. Tabs

Write some text, such as the answers to questions, on a square. Add a tab to the square using, for example, a triangle. Use the Camera tool to take a snapshot of the square and its tab. Make sure the snapshot is on the middle layer. Place another square on the page. Place it on the top layer. Cover the middle layer's square with the top layer's square, leaving the tab showing. Select **Edit>Lock** on the top layer's square. Now you can click and drag on the triangle tab to reveal your text at an appropriate moment in the class.

6. Rub and reveal

Type an answer to a question on the page. Use a thick pen, the same color as the background, and write over the text, making it invisible. Now with the Eraser tool you can erase over the answer's area to reveal the text. Remember that erasers only work on the top layer.

7. Before and after

Put your "after" image on the middle layer. Put a "before" image over the "after" image, on the top layer. Now you can use the Eraser tool to erase the "before" image, revealing the "after" image.

8. Study and revise

Place a rectangle on the page and then spread out your study points individually on top of the rectangle. Now, as you teach each point you can right-click on the piece of text and select **Edit >To Back**. The piece of text will be sent behind the rectangle. When you have taught all the points, send the rectangle to the back to reveal all the points once again and revise them. Works with single words or blocks of text.

9. An invisibility tool

Put a circle on the page and erase its contents. Select the circle and the erased contents and group them with the Properties and Actions box. Now, as you move circle around the page it will make anything on the top layer invisible.

10. Get sorted

Using the three layers you can create simple sorting exercises. Place a related set of words and images on the bottom layer. Select them and group them using the Properties and Actions box. Place an image on the middle layer, making it big enough to cover all but one of the items on the bottom layer. Right-click on the one remaining visible item on the bottom layer and select **Edit>Layer>Top** to bring all the images and texts in the group onto the top layer. Works well with multiple groups of items, which you can then bring to the front and send to the back as you explain different topics.

Last revised 07/08/07
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