

Introduction

Sharing not staring

Like many powerful tools the interactive whiteboard can be used well or badly. It can be used to increase the power of the teacher and to reinforce didactic methods whereby 'I speak, you listen'. (Not necessarily 'you learn'.) By dominating the classroom it can privilege the words, thoughts and decisions of the user and leave the rest of the class as mere onlookers. However, if approached more democratically, it can provide a space for everyone's ideas. It can enable everyone to share, for instance, in the creation of a piece of writing, in the critiquing of students' work as well as in the investigation of shared texts.

By its very nature much of the work we do in the classroom is transient. We gather responses and ideas and jot them on the board. When the class leaves the room or when we move on to the next stage of the lesson, these are removed and forgotten. One of the key features of whiteboard software is the facility for us to keep those notes and to return to them later in the lesson or at any time afterwards. Not only that, the ability to turn our handwriting into readable script will make life easier for many a baffled pupil.

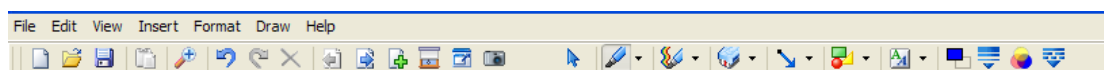
We also need to think about the placing of the whiteboard and the projector in our teaching areas. How easy is it to access the board – and by whom? Do pupils need any kind of training in order to use it effectively? If text is to be entered, is it easier to use a computer keyboard and if so, where is that keyboard situated?

Notebook software: features and functions

Notebook software works in a similar way to a word processor or PowerPoint. The basic unit is a screen rather than a page (even though Notebook calls it a page) so it has more in common with PPT than Word. We will use the term page but employ quotes so you know we are referring to a Notebook page.

Unlike a word processor, you can place objects (text, pictures or other objects) anywhere on the screen.

Of the array of buttons along the notebook toolbar the first half dozen or so (Save, zoom, Undo and so on) will be familiar from other applications.




Then they get more interesting.



- There's an icon to take you back a 'page' and one to take you forward.
- The one with the plus sign adds a 'page'.
- Next comes the blind, which can be drawn across the 'page' to hide things. It can be drawn from any of the four sides.



- You can use the  button to maximise the 'page' and then toggle back.
- The camera icon opens a sub menu which offers three useful options:
 - Capture any part of the 'page'(user chooses which part).
 - Capture the current active Notebook 'page'.
 - Capture the current complete computer screen.
 The default setting saves these captures to a new note book 'page'.



The arrow pointer is your most useful tool. With it you select whatever you wish to make active. It tends to be active by default but you will have to click on it again if you have been using something else, like the pen or eraser.

The next buttons give you access to pens and the eraser; then you have the buttons which activate arrows and shapes of different kinds.

The pen is worth giving some attention to as it is the way you will annotate or scribble on the screen. You can customize it here or by using the four buttons at the far right of the toolbar:

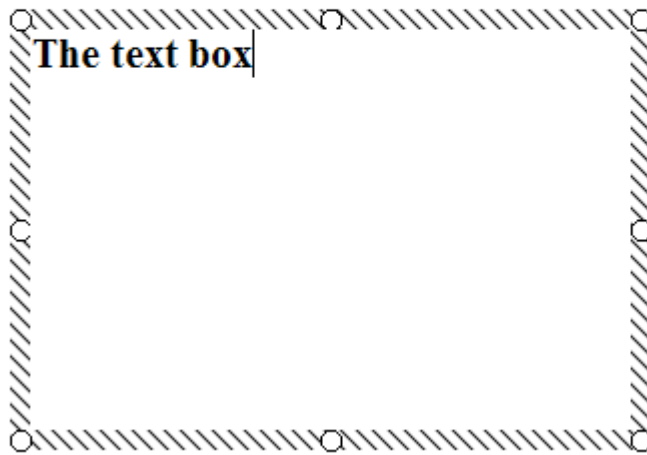


The next icon is of particular interest as it controls the way we write on the 'page'.

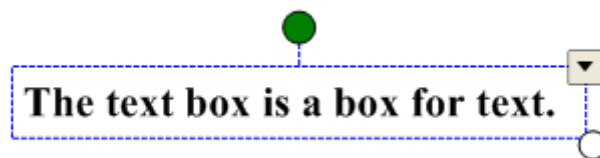


You can customize this to any font, colour and transparency.

To enter text, click on the font icon and then on the 'page'. A text box will open, together with a text toolbar and you can enter text as you would in any other application:



When you return to a text area and click it will look like this (i.e. like any other item, text or picture or object):



The green circle will allow you to rotate the area, the bottom right circle to expand or contract it. The drop down arrow at the top right gives other options most of which are self explanatory, though two deserve special mention.

‘Lock in place’ is useful. This makes sure that whatever else you do you can rely on that item being exactly where you left it.

‘Order’ will allow you to place items one behind the other and determine which order they are stacked in.

If you wish to edit your text, click twice on it and it will revert to being a text box.

Finally...

The tabs on the side of the Notebook can be sent to the opposite side by clicking on the arrow underneath.