USER MANUAL

Activities for mastering writing, typing, and reading skills

ABC Maestro

CONTENTS

WHAT IS ABC MAESTRO?

ABC Maestro is an education and rehabilitation software for mastering writing, typing, and reading skills that perfectly accompanies the Clevy keyboard. It brings activities for learning letters, words, and numbers. The activities support traditional literacy acquiring methods, but with more innovative and comprehensive approach to learning, by teaching how to use keyboard.
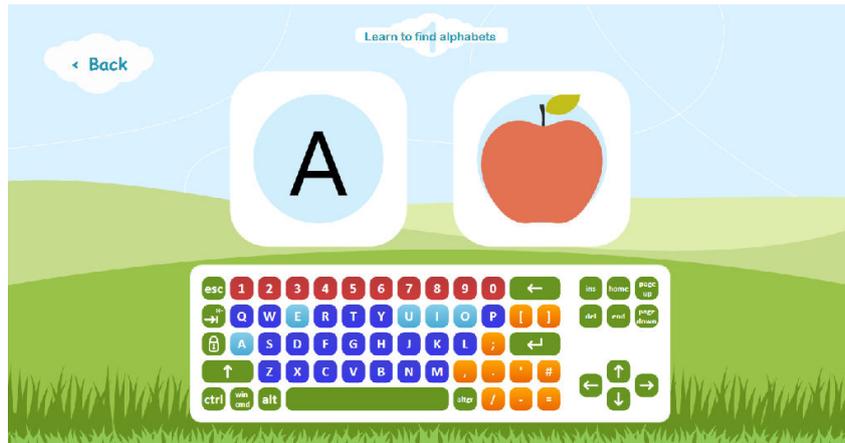
Some of the advantages of **ABC Maestro** are clear, visually adapted pictures, the possibility to match voice with letter, number, or number symbol on the screen (connecting picture and sound), and encouraging audio attention and comprehension of speech.

At the beginning levels of each game there are signs on virtual keyboard or written templates for the required letter in the circle to support users in learning. This means that the user will get precise instructions on where the key they need to press is and when they should press it. The **ABC Maestro** program offers personalised settings that are fully adjustable to each user, depending on their needs. The tasks are levelled from the easy to the more difficult ones, and the adequate feedback is provided after each answer.

The benefit of learning letters on the keyboard is clear if you have in mind that even users with psychomotor difficulties can take part in the process, as there is no requirement for previously acquired graphomotor skills, and the positive aspect of the process is increased motivation and attention of the user.

The ABC Maestro program was designed to offer faster learning through play.

INSTALLATION OF ABC MAESTRO

This manual guides you through the whole process of using the ABC Maestro program. In the first part there is a step-by-step explanation of internet download and installation and the second part gives an overview of program features and the instructions for use.

1. Go to www.abc-maestro.com and click the green **"Try it for FREE"** button, as shown in the picture below.
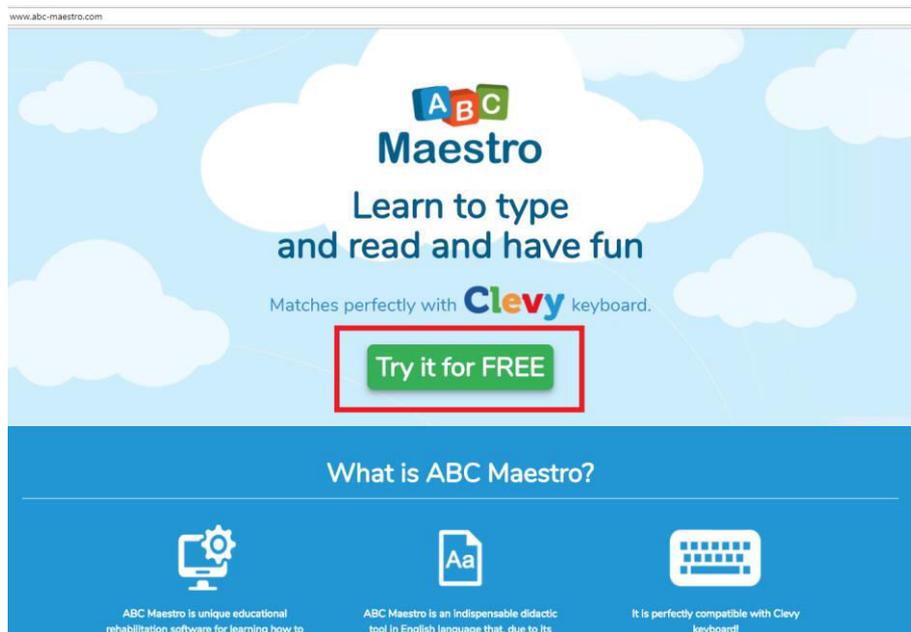
2. After having clicked the "Try it for FREE" button, you will need to click the white **"Download FREE trial"** button (number 1 in the picture below) to start internet download of the installation file for ABC Maestro (number 2 in the picture below).

After completion of the download process for the installation file, click the labelled tab in the bottom left corner (number 2 in the following picture)[1].

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[1] This applies to users of Google Chrome internet browser only. If you are using another internet browser, you will have to find the ABC Maestro installation file in your **Downloads** folder (possibly in some other folder, depending on your computer settings)**.**
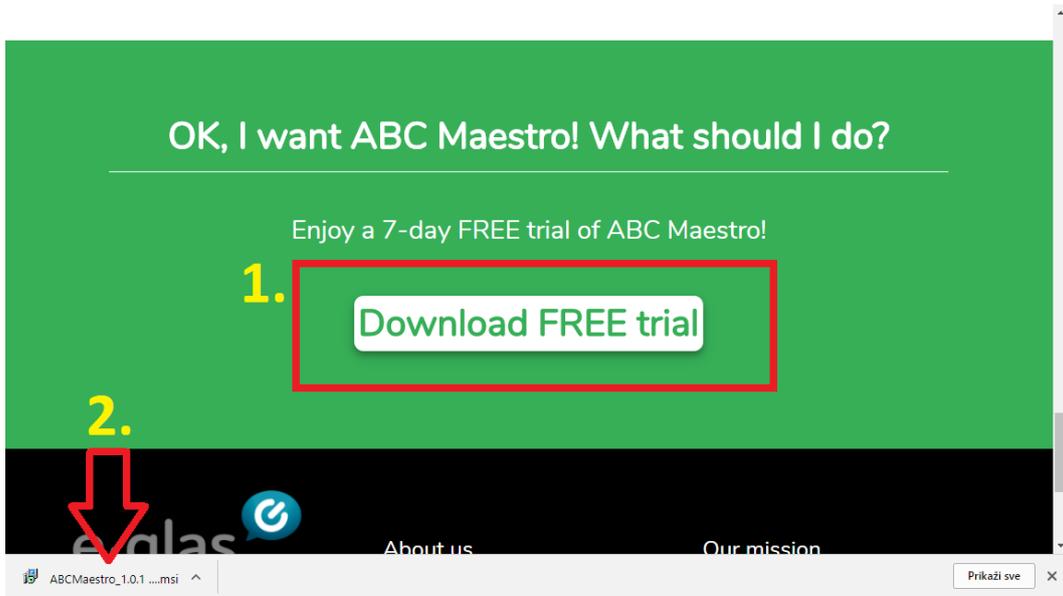
3. After running the ABC Maestro installation file, the installation starts. Select the acceptance of licence terms check box and click **"Install"** (see picture below). After completing the installation, click **"Finish"** and the ABC Maestro icon will be created on your desktop.

![ABC Maestro logo]
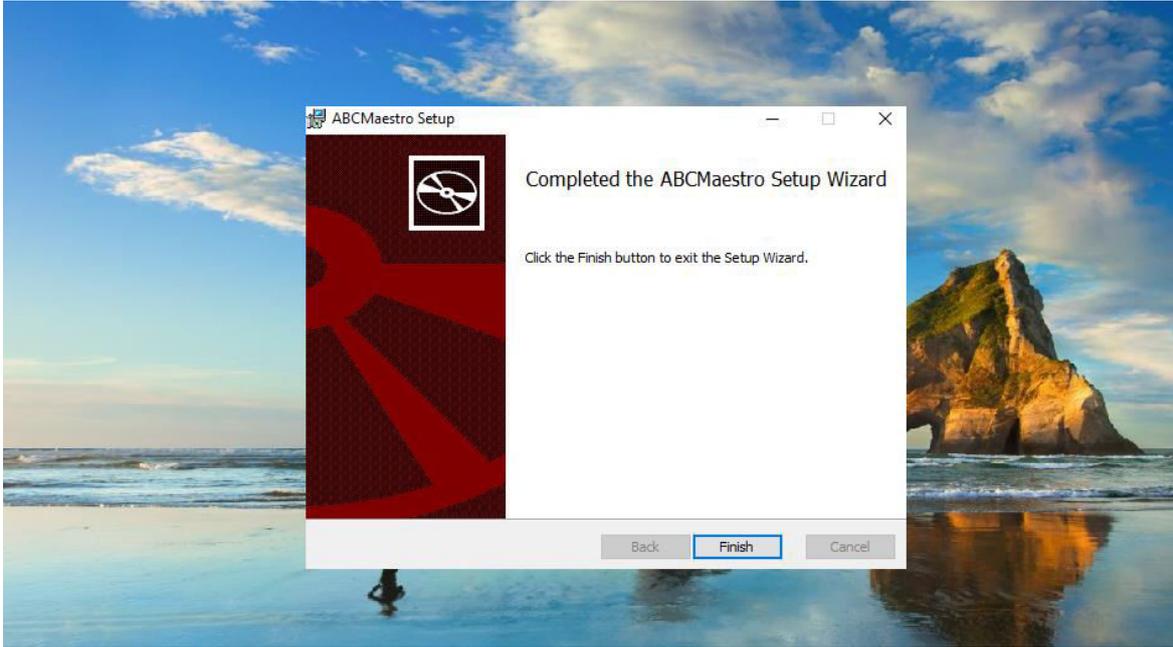
ABC Maestro

HOW TO USE ABC MAESTRO

The following picture shows the ABC Maestro home screen.

Click the **"Register"** cloud to access the page where you can enter the activation code for the full version of ABC Maestro.

Click the **"Settings"** cloud to be able to change language and voice used for speech in ABC Maestro.

Click **"Start"** to enter page in the picture below, where you can select the **letter learning games** (the "*Letters*" cloud), the **word learning and spelling games** (the "*Words*" cloud), or the **games for learning numbers** (the "*Numbers*" cloud).

Note: Click the **"Back"** cloud to exit a game/group of games.

LETTER LEARNING GAMES

Click the **"Letters"** cloud to enter the page where you can choose between five letter learning games (see picture below).

In this group there are five games:

1. Explorer
2. Choose Key
3. Alphabetically
4. Random
5. Find Key

Learning letters with ABC Maestro follows the **analytical and synthetic voice method.** This means that the users are getting acquainted with all the voices (phonemes) and letters (graphemes), they can recognise the connections between these voices and their respective symbols (letters), and they are able to define the initial phonemes of the words. In the period of acquisition of letters it is very important to understand the difference between phonemes and letters and to discern individual phonemes clearly, because that will enable users to memorise, read, and articulate letters faster and more easily.

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Note: Each letter learning game offers two options: **small letters** or **capital letters.**

EXPLORER

The "Explorer" game is the introductory activity of the ABC Maestro program, offering a chance to **explore freely and get acquainted with the keyboard.** Pressing any key, the user will get the feedback in the form of a grapheme and phoneme of the pressed key, as well as the accompanying picture and sound. There is no set task, which emphasizes fun and play even more, resulting in **accidental learning.**

This game is ideal for users with difficulties because it **provides success,** therefore additionally encouraging motivation and interest.

ABC Maestro
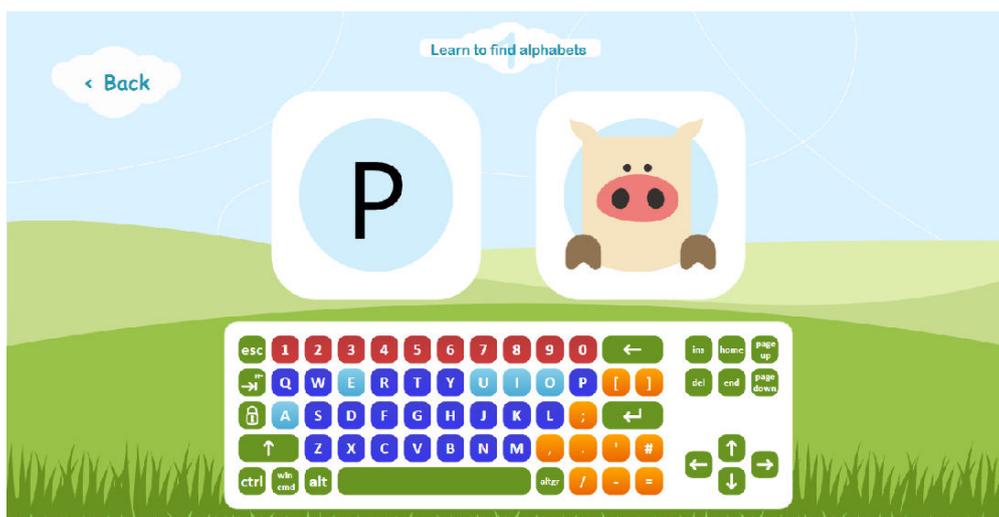
CHOOSE KEY

The "Choose Key" game provides **direct interaction** of the teacher, therapist, or parent with the user or child. Except having support on the virtual keyboard (marking the required key), the user is **additionally supported** by watching the teacher, therapist, or parent to see what key they will press and choose on the virtual keyboard. The game, therefore, provides **model learning.**

The most important feature of this game for users with difficulties is **the possibility of individualising the order of learning letters and phonemes,** with the **functional approach** governing the choice of letters and phonemes *(e.g. if the user's name is Mark, we will start the lessons with the letter "M", because this letter could be already familiar to the user).*

One example of the "Choose Key" game:

1. The teacher, therapist, or parent highlights the letter "u" with the mouse and instructs the user to press the letter "u" on the physical keyboard. The user presses the letter "u" on the keyboard.
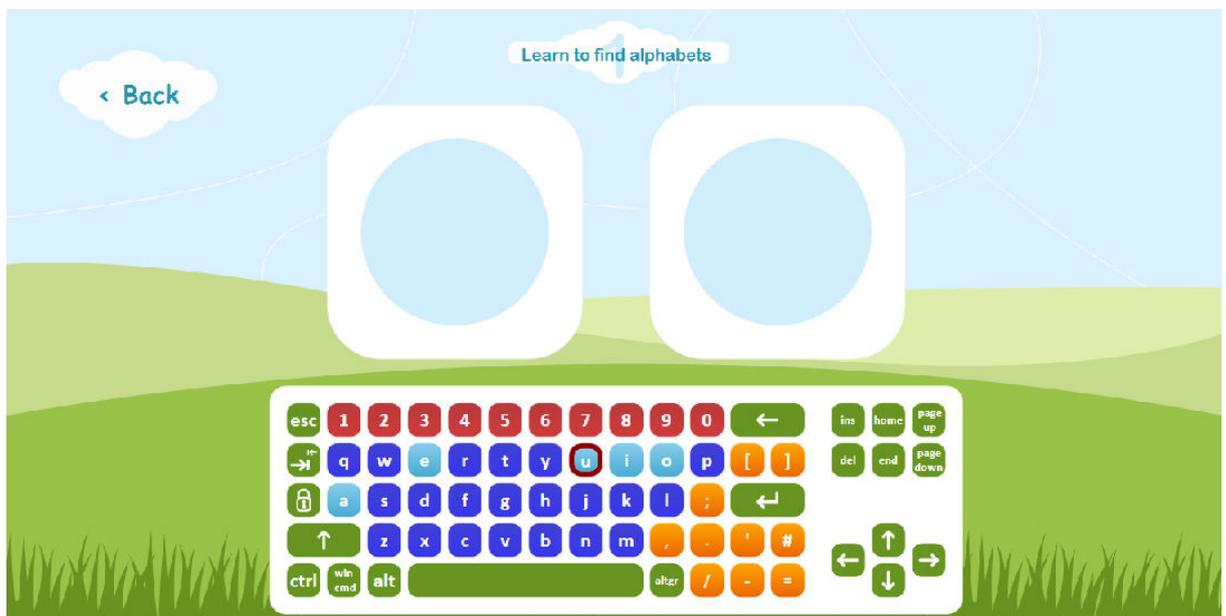
Computer plays the words: "u is for umbrella", and the letter "u" and the picture of the umbrella appear on the screen.


2. The teacher, therapist, or parent highlights the letter "O" with the mouse and instructs the user to press the letter "O" on the physical keyboard. Instead of "O", the user presses the letter "P" on the keyboard. No sound is played and the letter "O" does not appear on the screen. Teacher, therapist, or parent warns the user of the mistake. The user presses the letter "O" on the keyboard. Computer plays the words: "O is for owl" and the letter "O" and the picture of the owl appear on the screen.

ALPHABETICALLY

In the "Alphabetically" game, the letters are displayed and highlighted on the screen automatically, in alphabetical order. This means that the user, after having pressed the letter "A" on the physical keyboard correctly, should press the letter "B", the letter "C" after that, and so on.

The greatest advantage of this game is **learning the alphabetical order,** which is one of the prerequisites of successful reading and writing, with the support of the virtual keyboard.
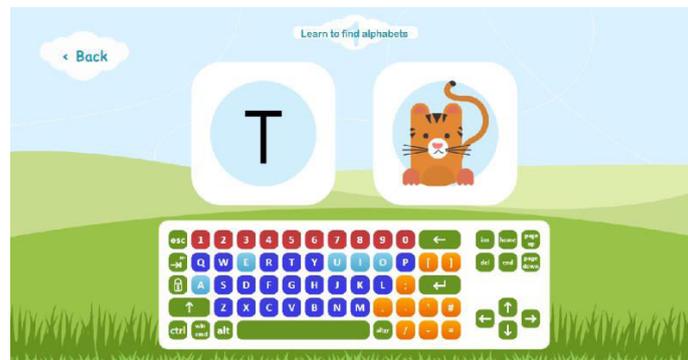
RANDOM

The "Random" game is very similar to the previous, "Alphabetically" game. The only difference is that the words in this game are not displayed in alphabetical order, but randomly. This game provides a **higher activity level that enables you to track child's learning progress – how much it was acquired with the help of previous games** and to what extent this knowledge is applicable and operational.

PICTURE: The letter "N" is highlighted on the on-screen keyboard indicating that the user should press the letter "N" on the physical keyboard.

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FIND KEY

In the "Find Key" game, the letter that the user needs to press on the physical keyboard appears in a circle on the screen. As opposed to the other games, where the letter is shown on the on-screen keyboard, in this game the letter appears in a circle, so that the user is unaware of its position on the keyboard. This game encourages **comprehension of the relationship between phonemes and letters** – it demonstrates that we hear and pronounce phonemes and see and write letters, which is **the most important prerequisite for successful reading and writing.** A perfect introduction for word games. This game is perfect for exercising **visual skills and match making.**

PICTURE: In the "Find Key" game the letter is displayed in the left-hand circle and the user needs to reproduce it on the physical keyboard, after which a sound is played and the picture appears in the right-hand circle.

ABC Maestro
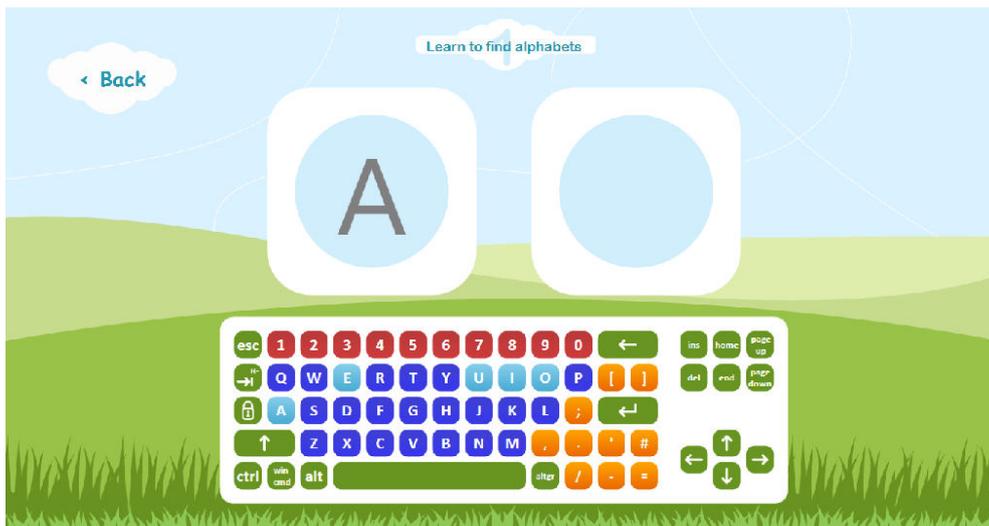
WORD LEARNING GAMES

Click the **"Words"** cloud to enter the page where you can choose between six games for word learning and spelling (see picture below).



There are six word learning and spelling games:

1. Choose and Type
2. Type Alphabetically
3. Missing Letter
4. Two Missing Letters
5. Type Master
6. Solve the Riddle

The acquired phonemes are now synthesized into words. In each of the six word learning and spelling games, the user must type all the letters or some of the letters of the chosen word on a physical keyboard. Here is an overview of the game rules and features.

Note: Each letter learning game offers two options: **small letters** or **capital letters.**

ABC Maestro

CHOOSE AND TYPE

Choose the "Choose and Type" game to enter a menu where you are able to choose a word for the user to type. In this case, we will click the word apple (see picture below).
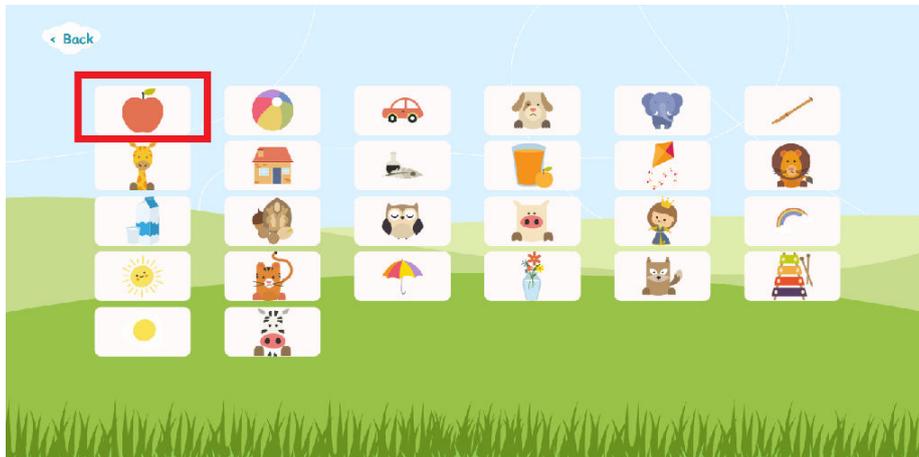
After having clicked the picture of an apple, the familiar page opens. This page was used in all the previous games and will be used in all the games to come.
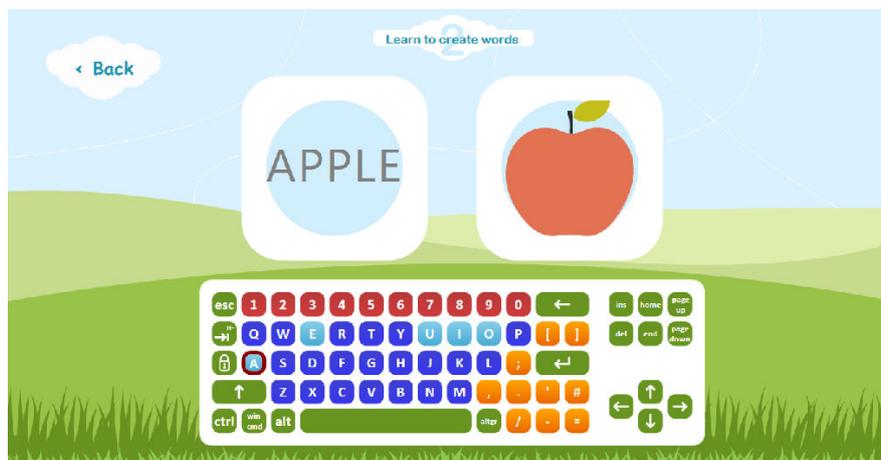
The user needs to type all the letters of the word "apple" now, and each letter is highlighted on the virtual keyboard on the screen (notice the letter "A" on the virtual keyboard in the picture above). After having pressed the key for "A" on a physical keyboard, the sound "A" is played on the computer, and after the user has entered all the letters of the word apple, the word "apple" is pronounced by the computer and the program takes you back to the previous menu where you can choose the word for exercise again.

TYPE ALPHABETICALLY

In this game, the words for exercise appear automatically and their letters are highlighted on the virtual keyboard in alphabetical order. This means that the user, after having typed all the letters of the word "APPLE" on the physical keyboard correctly, will have to press all the letters of the word "BALL", which is followed by the word "CAR", etc.

The greatest advantage of this game is the **alphabetical approach in acquiring word writing.**

MISSING LETTER

In the "Missing letter" game, the player needs to complete the set word with one missing letter. For example, for the word "apple", the left-hand circle will display "_pple", with the letter "A" highlighted on the virtual keyboard (see picture below). The task is completed when the user presses the letter "A".
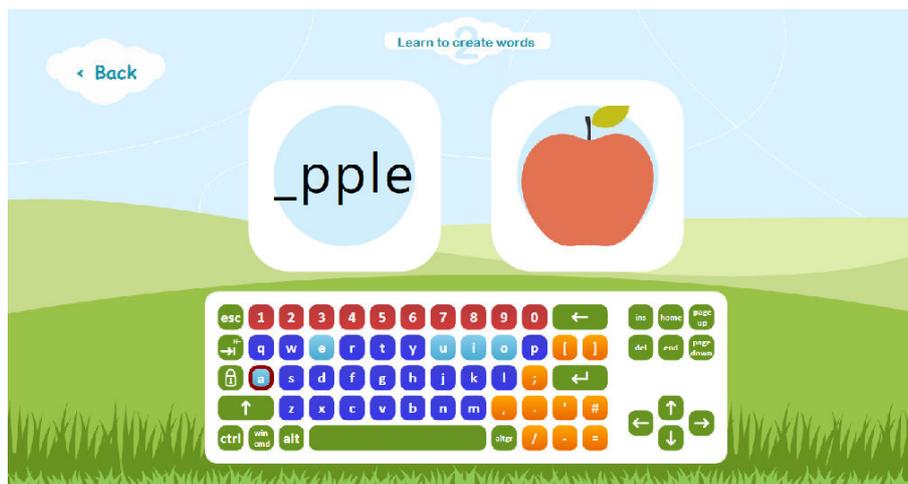
This game encourages broader noticing of the phonetic word structure with the isolation of phonemes, perception of their position within word (not solely in the initial position), and their marking by letters. For users with difficulties, this activity is made easier with the support of the virtual keyboard and with clear visual support of the image of the object in the right-hand circle on the screen.

TWO MISSING LETTERS

In the "Two Missing Letters" game the user needs to complete the set word with two missing letters, and everything else works exactly the same as in the previous game.
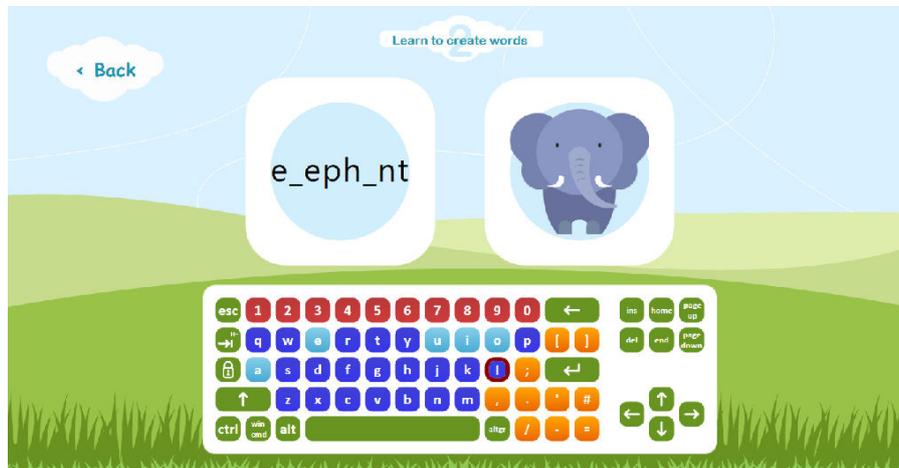

TYPE MASTER

The "Type Master" game is very similar to the previous games. The difference is that, at the beginning of the task, the picture, and not the word, is displayed in the left-hand circle on the screen. When the user starts typing the letters correctly, they will appear in the left-hand circle, gradually revealing the word. The support with the highlighted letter on the virtual keyboard still remains.
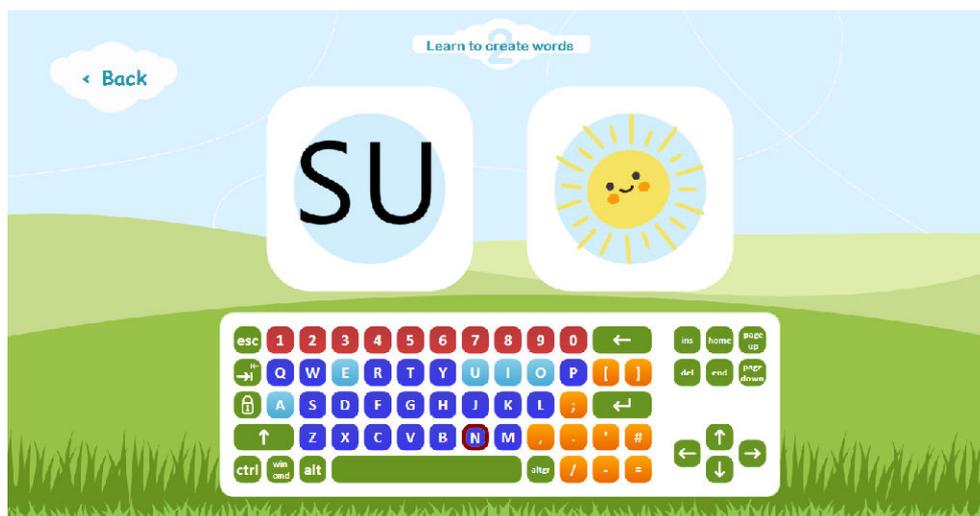
THE RIDDLE

The "Riddle" game brings the **initial picture riddle** and emphasizes **learning through play,** therefore additionally motivating the user. The left cloud displays pictures of the already acquired words and the user needs to isolate the **initial phoneme for each word** and build a new word with them. After the user had typed all the initial phonemes for all the displayed pictures, the right cloud displays the picture of the item representing the newly-built word and the new word is played by the software.
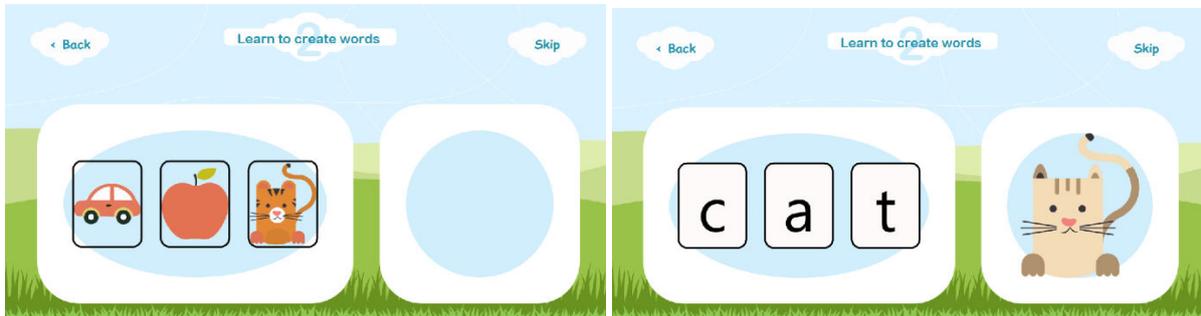

This activity is the crown activity of the word learning games. It broadens the **vocabulary,** the **initial phoneme for each object** is isolated, its **different position within new word** is perceived, and it is **marked by letter** to build a new word, **without support on the virtual keyboard,** which makes this activity **the most demanding one** in the word learning games set.

Note: In the top right corner there is a **"Skip"** cloud which enables the user to skip current riddle and move to the next one.
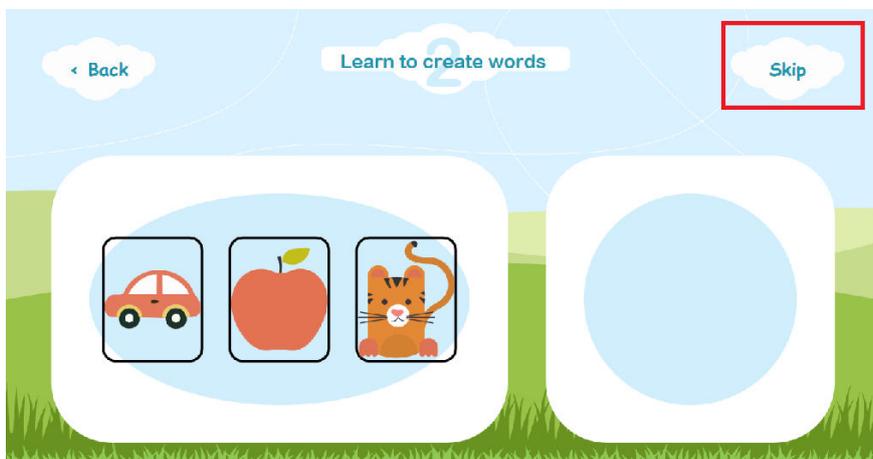
NUMBER LEARNING GAMES

Click the **"Numbers"** cloud to enter page where you can choose one of the three number learning games, as seen in the picture below.
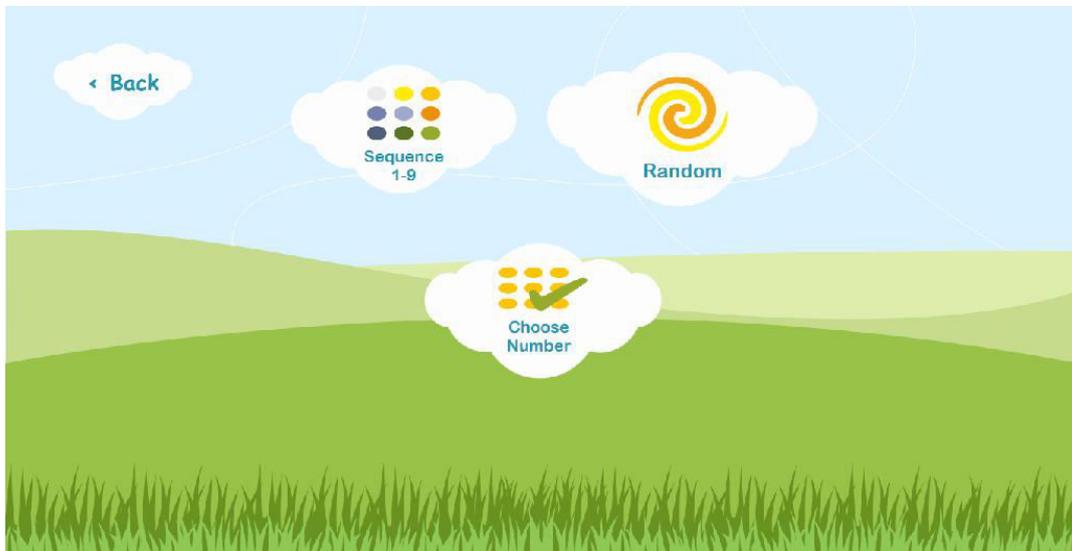
These are the games for learning numbers:

1. Sequentially 1 – 9

2. Random

3. Choose Number

In each of the number learning games the user needs to type the chosen number symbol on the physical keyboard. We bring an overview of the game rules and features.

Note: Each of the games offers a **"Count with Help"** option where the user is supported by the highlighted key on the virtual keyboard and **"Count by Yourself!"** option where the user finds the required key on the physical keyboard by herself or himself, without help of the virtual keyboard. **"Count with Help" is the beginning level** with the emphasis on **learning the position of the key on the keyboard,** while the **"Count by Yourself!"** shifts the emphasis to getting acquainted with **the concept of quantity.**


SEQUENTIALLY 1 – 9

This game develops **the notion of quantity from one to nine,** following the **prescribed order of all the members of the sequence.** The user learns positions of numbers on the keyboard, the notion of quantity, numerical symbols, and words for designating numbers, with the help of sound reproduction. All the games for learning numbers use simple pictures representing black dots on white background, just like the dice in popular games. By comparison with familiar and common patterns like dots on playing dice, the users will acquire **visual grouping of numbers** faster, instead of counting one by one. This approach of number learning is good for **partially sighted children,** who can practice **pre-Braille skills** at the same time.
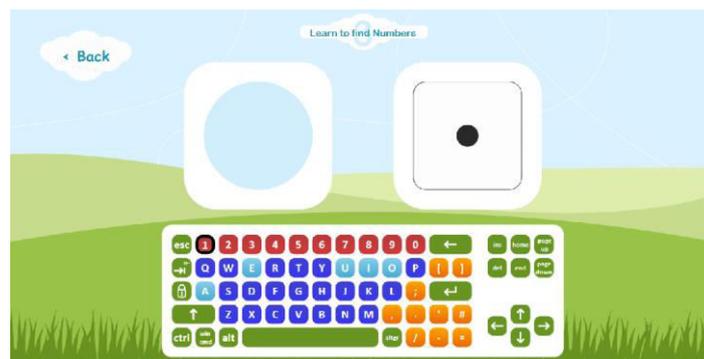
RANDOM

This activity is similar to the „Random" activity with letters, and the user is required to **apply the notion of the correct position of keys on the keyboard or the knowledge of numbers and quantity** in the random number order, without help of mere mechanical counting without understanding. The effect is redoubled with the option of "Count by Yourself!".
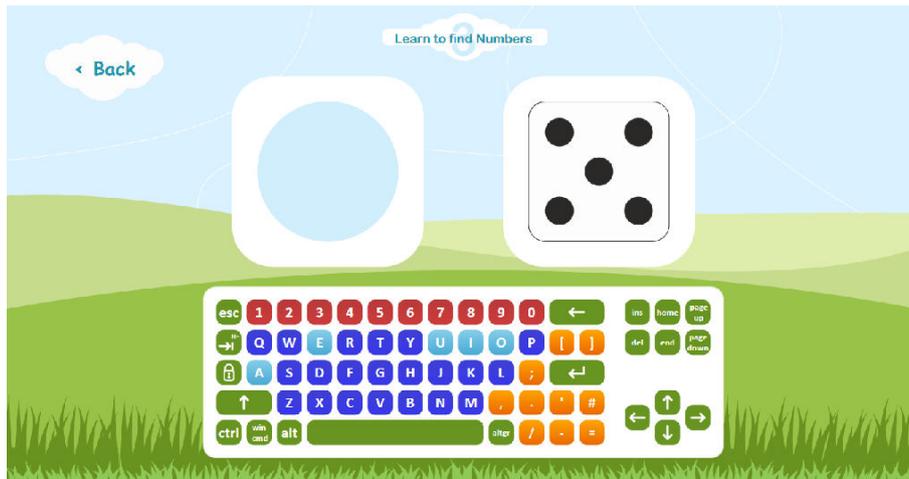
CHOOSE NUMBER

This activity is similar to choice in the letter game. The user interacts with a teacher, therapist, or parent directly, which enables direct monitoring of user's progress by the facilitator.
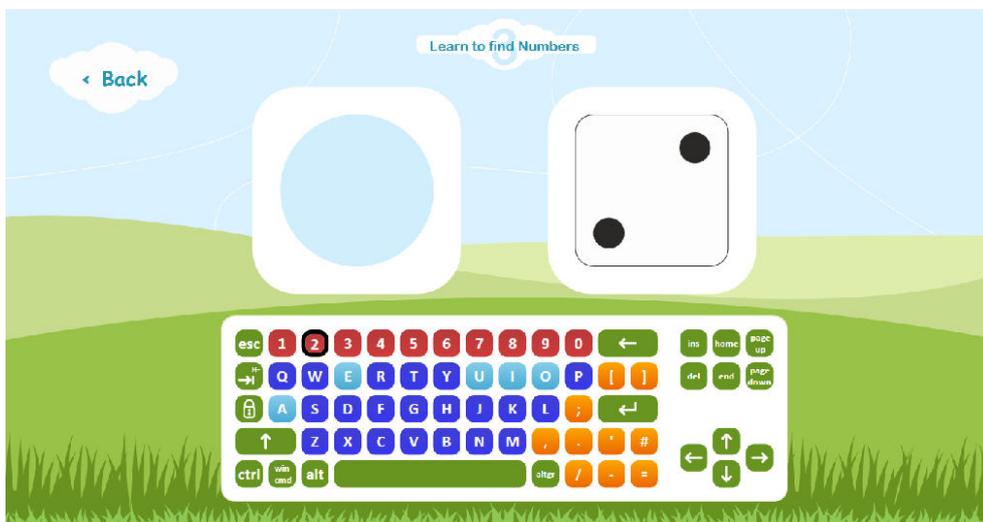
ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Double-click to change view from full screen mode to window mode on the ABC Maestro pages.

To exit ABC Maestro:

Double-click + click the "X" button in the upper right corner on the ABC Maestro pages.

Feel free to contact us at info@eglas.hr for any questions or problems, and we will contact you by phone and try to make the use of the ABC Maestro software easier for you.

We would also encourage you to use this e-mail to comment on our program and tell us about your wishes and new possibilities that you would like to see in one of the future versions of the ABC Maestro program.

It is our desire and our aim to keep developing this program in order to facilitate learning and play for all users.

The E-Glas team