



Designing an Overlay

Designing Overlays

To provide successful ways for students to interact with software programs, OM works like a drawing program. Simply draw keys on the computer screen. Choose from any available font in any size and various styles. Add background colors and patterns. Use Overlay Maker to customize switch settings for your favorite switch program: Overlay maker allows you to:

- Create any-size, well-spaced keys in any layout design
- To label the keys with pictures, objects, textures, text or any combination
- Have the keys act as letters, phrases, mouse movements, even special IntelliKeys settings.

Purpose and Plan of the Overlay

You need to first identify what activity the child needs or wants to do with the overlay – communicate ideas, basic needs and choices, or participate in a social or curricular activity either individually or in a group. The clearer you are about the activity and the abilities of the student, the more useful the overlay will be. The overlay will be printed on legal size paper (8X14”) - so sketch it out there.

Before you Begin... Consider

The User -her age, motor abilities, sensory skills, communication and cognitive functioning

The Software - What software will the overlay interact with? What are the keyboard commands needed for the activity? How many will the student really need to use?

Design Examples

Users with a physical impairment

- Large, separated keys
- Small tightly grouped keys
- Keys grouped on the bottom of the keyboard; to one side
- Control mouse movements with keys

Users with a visual impairment

- Large keys with thick outlines
- Large, simple (sans serif) fonts
- Outline drawings for key labels
- High contrast of label and background
- Braille or tactile overlays
- ESL students

Users with a cognitive impairment

- Fewer, well-spaced keys
- Key labels with pictures and text
- Colored backgrounds to cue key function
- Logical grouping of keys