



Learning Magic, Inc. Tricks

for IntelliTools Classroom Suite authors ©2006

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Tricks Revealed (IntelliPics Studio 3®, IntelliMathics 3® and IntelliTools3®)

As an Apprentice Wizard, you have been judged worthy to have the deeper magic of Classroom Suite revealed to you, so that you can edit activities and begin to create new ones.

One of the simplest, yet most powerful tricks you can learn is a key combination: Control+Click. To perform this magic, hold down the Control key and at the same time click on whatever you want to open. (You can also say "Open Sez Me", but that is optional).

This key combination lets you edit and find out the secrets of just about anything in Classroom Suite. You can look at Page Properties, Button Properties, and Text Box Properties by using that Control+Click. It's a real magic wand, especially for digging in behind the scenes to see what actions are producing the effects the user sees. Remember that no activities are locked, so that a little detective work can vastly increase your wizardly skills.

But where to begin? Here are some things to keep in mind.

1. Did the action happen as the page opened or as the activity opened? Chances are the set of actions you want to look at are located in the Page Actions list. Control+Click on the background part of the page to get into Page Properties, and click the Page Actions tab. Be sure you aren't clicking on some hidden button or the transparent background of a text box! Look up at the top of the Properties dialog for the title, just to be sure. Then locate the Page Actions area--it's the bottom rectangle--and read the list of actions from top to bottom. Analyze how these produce what you saw. Remember that one action can interact with another. Example: Select Object "Text Box" followed by "Read All" will read out a text box in IPS3. But "Read All" alone won't do anything--you need to tell it what to read.
2. Did the actions happen when you clicked a button on either a toolbar or on the page? In that case, Control+Click the button to see what set of magic is contained in its actions list.
3. If there is animation, go up to the IntelliPics Studio menu and choose Create IntelliMation to open the timeline. By clicking on each red timepoint on the timeline, and using your Control+Click magic spell, you can find out what is happening at each point. Text may have changed in some of the text boxes. Maybe you will see that new graphics have been inserted, or that graphics have been deleted at some points. Be sure to look at the properties of the graphics, too. Maybe their size, rotation, or design layer has changed within the animation.
4. How can you tell what is background, and what is a floating graphic or even an invisible button? Control+Click on it, and see if you are in Page Properties, Picture Properties, or Button Properties. This may tell you quite a lot about how the activity works. While you are in Page Properties, click Page Background. You can copy that and use it for another page, if all you need to duplicate is the background.

5. Since there is a magical quality to Classroom Suite, you will not be surprised to learn that there may be some invisible elements in an activity. Buttons with the Transparent style may be on top of a background, and they are difficult to detect. Try this magic spell. First, another key combination, Control+A (Control key held down, type "a"). This selects everything floating on the background of the page. Next, Control+L, the shortcut to toggle lock and unlock. Shazamm! If there are invisible buttons on a page, you will see the outlines of all of them. You can Control+Click on one to investigate, and repeat the Control+A whenever you need to find them all again. When you are all done, repeat the Control+A, Control+L sequence to lock everything back in place.

6. Finally, there may be hidden toolbars, too, and different toolbars may be displayed on different pages. To locate all the toolbars, go up to Edit/Edit Custom Toolbars. With this function active, notice that a new Toolbar menu will appear just to the right of Edit. Pull it down, and you will see all the toolbars in the activity listed. You can select any of these to investigate. Some may be hidden, and these appear as little gray squares on the page until you select the square and uncheck the "Hide Toolbar" box on the yellow Toolbar Properties dialog. But once you find and reveal these hidden toolbars, you now know how to get inside and learn their secrets, too!

Try your new magic spells on some of the simpler activities that ship with Classroom Suite. Once you understand how those work, you can try delving into more complex activities. This is a good way to get into an activity where you just want to make a few changes to customize it for your class! But at the same time, you will become a stronger wizard, and in no time will be flying through the Journeyman- and Master- level skills!