

CD-ROM SEARCH

To search the information held on a CD-ROM encyclopaedia for specific facts from which to draw conclusions.

†† Pairs.

🕒 45 minutes at the computer; 15 minutes discussion/demonstration.

Previous skills/knowledge needed

The children will find it helpful to have worked with a variety of search routines in databases, including a logical search. Doing the CD-ROM activity 'Famous people' on page 33 first would be an advantage.

Key background information

The CD-ROM has almost become a standard classroom resource. There is an ever increasing variety to choose from, including interactive and encyclopaedia-type CD-ROMs. The encyclopaedia type are an excellent classroom resource for reference work and there are CD-ROMs to cover most areas of the curriculum. The ability to access a wide variety of information in textual, picture, sound or video format makes reference and research activities using CD-ROMs enjoyable and rewarding. Usually, the text and images can be selected and placed into word processing or DTP software.

Different CD-ROMs have different ways of allowing you to access the information. The encyclopaedia type usually

Handling information

has an efficient search routine and, sometimes, a logical search facility. Other types may be of the browse around kind where a search routine is not an integral part. With the enormous amount of information available, the children need to develop skills that allow them to search such IT systems efficiently. It is all too easy to browse around irrelevant areas of information within CD-ROMs, jumping from link to link. Clear tasks set by you, perhaps even timed activities, will limit the temptation to wander off course! For this activity, the children work to a set time limit and have clear instructions about what to find out from the CD-ROMs in the form of a question sheet.

Vocabulary

Search routine, AND, OR, limited search, link, section, back track.

Preparation

As with any useful classroom resource, it is essential to have a good knowledge of the contents of the CD-ROM that you plan to use with the children. Search it to identify the type of information that you would like the children to find out about. Prepare a number of question sheets which will help the children to target specific areas of information and to reach suitable conclusions from this, depending on their ability. A typical context may be finding out about nocturnal animals. Your questions could ask the children for information on habitat, food, types of movement, hibernation and so on. The second part of the sheet could direct them towards drawing some suitable conclusions,

such as 'Do most nocturnal animals inhabit woodland?' or 'Are there any special features that nocturnal creatures need to have?' The questions should direct them to use the search routines and links available and to save a variety of images and text for importing into word-processing applications.

A strategy for focusing the children's searches is to limit the number of links used on each page to just two, perhaps. This would mean that from a page on owls, for example, the children must use only two of the links available to access further information on the CD-ROM. This restricts the amount of information they have to deal with, but, most importantly, it forces them to choose carefully the most useful links. You can frame your questions to guide the children into taking particular link routes. It is difficult to be familiar with all the contents of a CD-ROM, but the better your knowledge, the more accurately you will be able to pitch the questions for the children.

Resources needed

A computer with a CD-ROM drive, an encyclopaedia-type CD-ROM, preferably with a search facility, copies of question sheets to focus the children's searches, a printer (preferably colour).

What to do

CD-ROMs present information in an attractive, varied way and can tempt children to start browsing indiscriminately rather than focusing on the task in hand. The object of this activity is to ensure that they use their time efficiently and



search for information in a more discerning way to reach some suitable conclusions. The setting of a time limit for the task is recommended.

Start with a whole class or large group demonstration of how to search your chosen CD-ROM for information. Show the children the search routine(s) available and remind them of how to use the different links and download text or images into other software if necessary. Give each of

Suggestion(s) for support

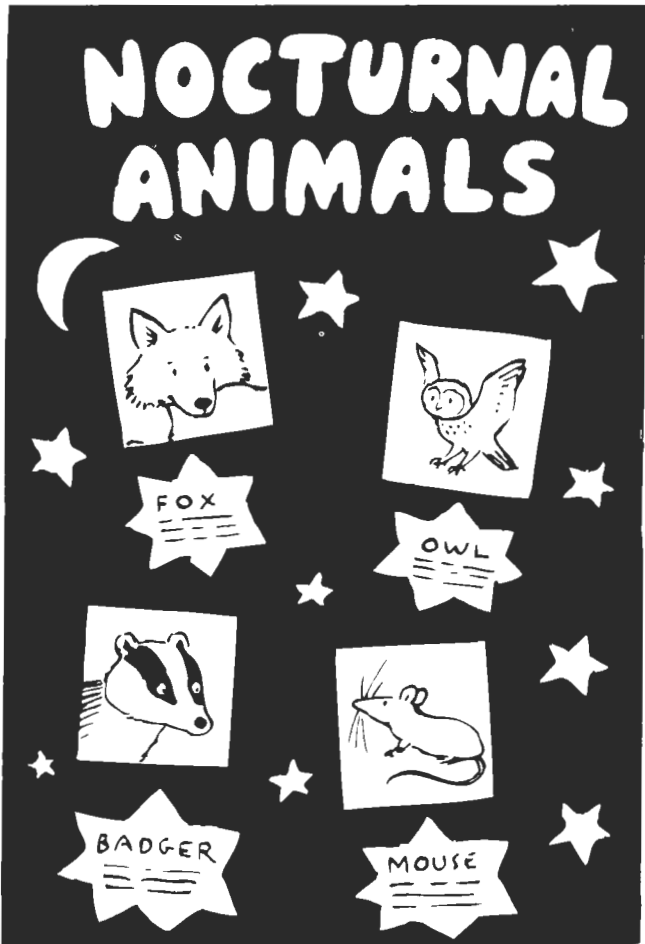
Similarly, the task for less confident children could be simplified by limiting them to simple searches in response to more basic questions such as 'How many nocturnal creatures can you find on the CD-ROM?' or 'Choose two nocturnal creatures, what do they eat?'

Assessment opportunities

This activity will allow you to assess how well the children use IT software to analyse information on the CD-ROM and how well they search and choose elements required to complete a question sheet.

Display ideas

Graphics obtained from a CD-ROM can enhance any display. What your children display as a result of this activity obviously depends on the tasks you set them. It would be helpful if the activity supports an ongoing topic so that the information from the CD-ROM can be used to enhance other work produced by the children.



them a copy of the appropriate question sheet you have prepared (see Preparation) and allow them access to the computer in pairs to complete these. Set a time limit of around 45 minutes for them to complete the activity. If you have framed your questions to limit the amount of links that the children can use, draw their attention to this. When they have completed the questions on their sheets, check that they have accessed the appropriate information before they move on to the next part, where they are required to draw suitable conclusions.

Suggestion(s) for extension

The question sheets should be tailored to the children's specific abilities. This means that you can give the confident children more challenging tasks to carry out, perhaps in the form of a logical search if possible, and the saving of text or pictures to complete their questions sheet.

LOOKING AT SPREADSHEETS

To use a spreadsheet to store information. To use spreadsheet facilities such as total, average, sort and graph to illustrate their findings.

†† Whole class (data collection) and pairs (at the computer).

⌚ 20 minutes at the computer; 15 minutes demonstration.

Previous skills/knowledge needed

The children should be able to make measurements of their own dimensions. It would be helpful to have already covered the activity 'Looking at us' on page 66.

Key background information

Computer spreadsheets are powerful IT tools which present information in a clear, easily accessible format. All spreadsheets consist of numbered boxes or cells within which data in the form of words or numbers is placed. A single spreadsheet may contain hundreds of cells which means that the whole sheet may be too large to see all at once. However, the cells can be moved around, with the computer screen acting rather like a small window through which we look at one part of the sheet at any one time. Usually, around the top and left-hand sides there are labels which define what each column or row contains.

Spreadsheets have various functions which can process the data held within them. For example, the totalling or averaging of a column is easily carried out. Graphs of the column contents can also be produced to illustrate patterns within the data and enable conclusions to be drawn.