



Top Ten Tips for Stick Around

Stick Around is one of the best new apps we've seen lately which is why we spotlighted it in our Redefining The Task again ebook last month. It offers users the ability to create, share and play their own labelling puzzles.

The design of the app is very user friendly but broad enough to include some brilliant little touches too. So what we have here is our own top tips for getting the most out of Stick Around.

TEST YOUR PUZZLES CAREFULLY

I can't stress this enough. Before publishing, the app is quite intuitive and will let you know if there are issues with your layout/answer keys etc. Nonetheless, beta-testing your work to ensure it works as you intended is an integral part of the real-world design process and as such should be spotlighted as a key component to students creating content in Stick Around.

Which leads me to -

CONSIDER YOUR ANSWER KEY CAREFULLY

Any time I've seen a student have a problem with their puzzle, my first point of call is their answer key setup. The answer areas can be designated using a circular, square or freeform shape. Where I find the problem often lies is that they make the size too small - ie exactly the size of the sticker that should go there. This makes for an unrealistically precise degree of accuracy.

There are three options. Naturally you can make the answer areas larger if that is appropriate. You could also include some sort of guideline element within your background. There's a good example of this second one in the sample puzzle based on Mount Rushmore. The areas intended for the presidents' names are clearly indicated and thus the user cannot fail to place the stickers in the correct places.

Another solution can be found via the Info tab. Here you can set the answer key areas to be visible or, if you prefer, to have their centers marked by a question mark icon.

SHOW THE ANSWER FIRST

A simple but potentially crucial feature is offered when you convert your project into a completed puzzle - the ability to display the solution on the splash screen that preceeds playing the puzzle. This is great for younger students as it helps them visualise what they're aiming to do.

It could also be used as a form of differentiation - export the project twice, one with the solution shown and one without (you just need to ammend the file name.) That way different ability groups can be catered for OR you could return to the same puzzle in a follow up session but without the answer key displayed.

ADD A TIMER ELEMENT

Another way to differentiate the content is to integrate the use of the timer or countdown function in a puzzle. By setting a time limit (or several - using the same trick as above) you can challenge different abilities effectively. Alternatively you can opt to have the timer count up so that students can clock a time to try to beat in their following attempt.

ADD A WEBLINK AND AUDIO PROMPT

Another pair of gems that you can find on the Info page for a project. Add a weblink to a site that contains the information needed to solve the puzzle. Now record an audio instruction directing the user to visit the weblink prior to beginning the actual puzzle itself. Of course this link could easily be to a Dropbox file of your own creation - opening up an even wider range of possibilities!

This is a brilliant addition to the app as it means it can be used to assess comprehension. It also makes for a perfect independent task for small groups (or individuals) during a guided reading session for example.

If the content you set them to absorb before completing the puzzle has enough depth, it could also be a valid option for a complete homework task. Of course you'd need to share the puzzle itself via the cloud to accomplish this.

EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TUTORIALS

Stick Around also features the ability to integrate screencasts made in Explain Everything (.xpl files) as tutorials. Again, this means that a Stick Around file can include absorption content that infers the actual puzzle. The difference here is that the teacher could construct a whole virtual session in Explain Everything and frame it with the Stick Around puzzle. Perfect for flipping the classroom.

COMBO WITH IT

I featured Stick Around in part 2 of my [Chemistry of Combos](#) article series. It's a natural fit for an app combo as you can import images made in other apps as the background element for your puzzle. There are literally dozens of apps you could combo with it including:

Color Splash - drain the colour from part of an image before using it in Stick Around.

Foldify - create your model and screengrab then use Stick Around to label shape vocabulary (vertex, edge, face etc)

Moldiv - colage first, puzzle later. :)

Kids Discover range - screengrab a page from a Kids Discover ebook to use as the base for a puzzle

Write About This - an unorthodox one this. Choose a writing prompt in Write About This and complete a piece of writing but deliberately leave several mistakes in it. Now create a Stick Around puzzle to edit the text for error types (eg missing capital letter, misspelt word etc)

COLLABORATE VIA THE CLOUD

Not only can you share completed puzzles via cloud-based storage (Dropbox, Google Drive, WebDAV) but also your actual project files. This sets you up for some great collaborative puzzle building as parts can be added and then the project shared to others to add their own elements. So a group could set up a template for a puzzle type, share it via the cloud then all open a version of it to create a personalised variation on their puzzle type.

MAKE A BANK OF REVISION AIDS

This is how I'm going to be using Stick Around over the next month - as a revision tool before the Year 6 SAT tests. Having learnt how to use the app, the students are going to be allowed to create puzzles to support ANY topic covered in the upcoming tests. We're then going to be storing them on the school Dropbox, which the students have 24hr access to, so they can use each other's puzzles to revise with. With 90 students in the year group and many of them bound to create several puzzles, this makes for one large bank of revision aids!