

Kinderlogo



Getting Started with Kinderlogo Level 1— a 5-Week Plan

The five years I spent with twenty or more students using Kinderlogo at the same time in a computer lab was fun and exciting. The students always enjoyed seeing the turtle on their screens when they arrived, even though they also used “flashier” Internet activities. We didn’t use Kinderlogo every week, but generally once or twice a month, interspersed with activities on the Web and Bee-Bot robots.

The following strategies proved successful in introducing Kinderlogo to roughly 700 Kindergarten through Grade 2 students. They visited the computer lab for a half hour each week in over 30 different classes. The Kinderlogo sessions were interspersed with other activities during the year, including Bee-Bot robots.

Feel free to adapt these ideas to your own curriculum and techniques, of course.

Week 1

Introduce students to KL1 (Level 1) and let them try to figure out what letter keys make something happen on the screen. Give them plenty of time to explore with the turtle. Many delight in wrapping the lines around the screen. That’s OK!

During this exploratory time, some students figure out how to draw squares and rectangles on their own. Others figure out a triangle, and a few even attempt a circle. I commend the students for their discoveries, but don’t yet suggest that everyone try making the shapes. Not all students will be developmentally ready to do that. Sometimes, children learn how to draw shapes from their neighbors.

To give students a more concrete goal for their turtle wanderings, I introduce the Balloon game. Originally, after watching students spend less time on this activity than I would have expected, I reworked the program so that each new balloon is smaller. The students love the fact that the size of the target gets smaller and smaller as they “pop” each successive balloon. From around the room can be heard, “Look, it’s getting smaller!”, “How small will the balloon get?”, “See how tiny my balloon is!” This small change to the activity kept them both interested and challenged for a much longer time.

Week 2

After a review of the KL1 commands, I again watch what they do with the turtle during free exploration time. I ask them what they are drawing and save lots of pictures.

Then I introduce students to the Level 1 mazes. The students are eager to show how they can navigate the turtle through Maze 2 without bumping into the walls, which leave a telltale line. They exclaim over Maze 3 when it first appears on their screen and are eager to get the turtle to reach the target circle. You can easily see how well the students can control the turtle by watching them go through the mazes.

Week 3

It's fun to challenge the students to draw letters of the alphabet using KL1. I often encourage them to draw the first letter of their first name. Many will be able to complete that easily and will want to draw other letters. Over time, I print out several versions of each letter they draw and hang them up in the classroom. They are eager to help me complete the alphabet by attempting some of the harder letters, such as Q and X. The alphabet project can extend over several weeks and is handy when we don't have much time to spend with Kinderlogo. Before long, you will have a Kinderlogo Alphabet!

Week 4

Now that the students are becoming quite comfortable maneuvering the turtle, I ask them to create patterns to draw shapes in a more formal manner. At each computer is a file card with the student's name on it. Children who successfully figure out how to draw a square receive an orange dot on their file card. Those who figure out how to draw a triangle receive a green dot. Those who draw a circle receive a blue dot. For advanced students, I add hexagon to the list. The students are eager to show what they had discovered so that they can receive the dots. At the end of the year, their cards are souvenirs they can take home.

Students often draw a rectangle and call it a square. I walk the turtle around the shape they drew, and we count the number of turtle steps on each side together. If one side is 5 turtle steps and the next is 4, I ask the child, "Is 5 the same as 4?" They will usually admit that those numbers are not the same. I tell them that they drew a rectangle, which can have sides of different lengths, but to be a square, all the sides need to be the same size. I ask if they can draw a "size 4" square or a "size 6" square, referring to the number of steps on a side.

Students often need help with the concept of a circle. I illustrate the concept by having them walk around the shape of a circle, taking a baby step forward, turning a little, going forward a

little, turning a little, until they return to where they started. This seems to give most of them an experience that they can translate to the onscreen turtle.

Week 5

Now the students meet multiple turtles in the Level 1 Turtle Dance activity. They love making all the turtles move at the same time, and pressing D to make them do the dance again. Some children wrap multiple lines around the screen, while others make more intricate designs, even having them draw letters or squares.

On-going

As I continued to use KL1 with the students, I offered them the opportunity to draw with the turtle in free exploration. We also tried additional patterns, relating them to the shapes they were drawing. Some students enjoyed making hexagons, stars, spirals, and staircases, while others created their own unique designs. I offered new suggestions if they seemed to be running out of ideas. For Kindergartners, Level 1 can consume most of an entire year!