

Becoming A Classroom Suite Detective

Intellitools Classroom Suite® is such a powerful application that you may wonder how you'll ever learn all that it can do. The answer is, you can't--but you really don't need to learn everything to be a power user. Of course, you do need to know the basics of using the templates and saving activities. But after that, plan to learn new things at the point when you need to use them. One of the best ways to do that is to be a detective and dig into a finished activity that has a function you want to use to find out how it works. Luckily, no activities are locked, so it's easy to dig deeper.

The Master Key

One of the simplest, yet most powerful tricks you can learn is a key combination: **Control+Click**. This key combination lets you edit and find out the secrets of just about anything in Classroom Suite. To use the master key, hold down the **Control** key and at the same time click on whatever you want to open. You can look at **Page Properties**, **Button Properties**, and **Text Box Properties**, just to name a few, by using that **Control+Click**. That lets you get behind the scenes to see what actions and settings are producing the effects the user sees.

Where To Look

You already have a wealth of activities to explore in the templates that ship with Classroom Suite. If you have been downloading activities from Annie's Resource Attic, you have another set of potential new techniques. You also may have activities you've received from fellow Classroom Suite users directly or from conferences and the Activity Exchange. Any of these may be hiding the secret of a function you can learn, once you know how to be a good detective.

Want more free activities, tips, and graphics? Look in the Attic!

How To Mine Activities For Techniques

There are really two ways to use all these activities and templates. First, you can use them for whatever they were intended. But you also can look at them as a detective would, ignoring the specific content to focus on how they work. That means it's worth looking at all activities and templates, even those that were not set up for the subject matter or grade level you need. Your detective skills will enable you to figure out how they function and adapt them for your use. Better yet, once you see how they work you can incorporate those same functions into brand new activities you create!

So let's set out with your master key to discover what makes activities tick. But where to begin? Here are some strategies to keep in mind.

1. Did the action(s) happen as the page opened or as the activity opened? If so, 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. Note: 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. Think about how these produce what you saw.

Quick Tip 1: One action can interact with another, and an action may need the one before it to function. Example:

Select Object "Text Box 1"

Read All

In an IntelliPics Studio page, there could be more than one text box as well as other objects. For **Read All** to work, it needs the **Select Object** action before it to tell it what to read.

2. Did the action(s) happen when you clicked a button on either a toolbar or on the page? In that case, **Control+Click** the button to open its **Properties** and analyze its actions list.

Quick Tip 2: The **order** of the actions in the list is important. Think about the actions sequence. Probably you can see at a glance why they are placed in that order. If not, try switching them around using the **Move Up** and **Move Down** buttons and see what happens, or what fails to function. If you are setting up the actions for a button and it won't do what you planned, double check the order of the actions. It may be that all the actions you need are there, but in the wrong order.

3. Use the **Properties** windows to determine what part of the page is background, and what is a floating graphic, text box, button, region, or in v. 4, a text or math manipulative. **Control+Click** on something, examine the **top** of the **Properties** window that opens, and you'll see if you are in Page Properties, Picture Properties, Text Box Properties, Button Properties, etc. The various **Properties** windows tell you quite a lot about how the item works if you examine settings, actions, appearance, etc.

Keep in mind that you may not be able to see every item on the page. For example, buttons might be transparent, graphic items might be behind something else, and you won't be able to find regions on the page until you choose **Show Regions** from the IntelliPics Studio menu. For a pull-down list of all the page items, both visible and disguised, look under **Edit/Select Object**. This list also helps you to select an item that is behind something else. Then use **Edit/Properties...** to open the its **Properties** window.

While you are in **Page Properties**, click the **Page Background** tab to quickly determine what part of the visual display is really background and what is some floating element. For example, it's possible to lock a floating graphic in place, and set it not to respond to mouse. Unless you look at **Page Properties/Page Background**, you would not be able to detect that the graphic is separate. But it's a handy trick, because you could run part of the animation behind it for a neat effect.

Quick Tip 3: Copy a background and use it again While you are in **Page Properties**, click **Page Background**. You can copy that image and use it for another page, if all you need to duplicate is the background. Control-Click **Page Properties** and the **Page Background** tab in the new page to paste the copied background.

4. Use Control-A followed by Control-L and Show Regions to find the invisible items on a page. Suppose you've already checked **Page Actions** and investigated the visible buttons you see on a page, yet you still can't find actions and/or settings that account for what happens. In some activities, important functions on that page may lurk in hidden buttons with the **Transparent** appearance style. There also may be floating graphics that either match the background or are hiding behind something. These buttons and graphics are difficult to detect and can be on the background or on top of any object. You need two more special key combinations to find them.

Select All

Use **Control+A** to select all items floating on the background of the page. (With the Control key held down, type "a".) At this point you'll see dotted outlines of everything floating on the background. If you see dotted rectangles containing nothing, that's probably a set of hidden buttons or graphics. Remember that there might be a stack of these invisible items.

Lock or Unlock All

Next, without clicking on anything, use **Control+L**, the shortcut to toggle lock and unlock. (With the Control key held down, type "l".) 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.

Detecting Regions

The sneakiest page elements are **regions**. They don't appear with the **Control-A/Control-L** key combinations. The only way to see them is to choose **Show Regions** from the **IntelliPics Studio** menu.

Check the invisibles you locate in this way against the full list you see under **Edit/Select Object** to make sure you've found and checked out all the sneaky invisibles.

5. There may be hidden toolbars as well as hidden buttons. Suspect the presence of these sneaky toolbars if you have checked for invisible buttons but still cannot account for some of the effects you see. Be alert for **Page Actions**, page buttons or regions on the page that are selecting buttons on a hidden toolbar to create some of the effects and functions the user sees.

Choose **Edit/Edit Custom Toolbars** to open the toolbar editing mode. With this active, a **Toolbars** menu will appear just to the right of **Edit**. Pull it down, and you will see a list of the names of all the toolbars in the activity. Some may be marked as hidden.

Hidden Toolbars

You can also locate all the toolbars down in the page area, while you are in this editing mode. The ones that are visible while the current page is open will appear normally, with the buttons showing. Some toolbars may be hidden on the current page or throughout the activity. These appear as **little gray squares** until you select the square and uncheck the **Hide**

Toolbar box on the yellow **Toolbar Properties** dialog. Once you find and display these hidden toolbars, you know how to get inside their buttons using your master key and learn their secrets, too!

Quick Tip 4: Why hide a toolbar? A toolbar might need to hide on some pages and show on others, but sometimes you can use a toolbar that is always hidden. The **Select Button** action can trigger any **toolbar** button, even ones that are hidden. For example, if you needed a series of different sounds, or you needed to have some of the same sounds play at various points in the activity when the user clicked buttons, you might put all these sound buttons into one hidden toolbar. **Regions** can use also these hidden toolbars.

6. If you see different toolbars displayed on different pages, you have toggling toolbars. For example, you might notice a toolbar with page arrows and a **Read Page** button on a page with text, and a toolbar with only the page arrows on a page with no text, plus a separate toolbar to play animation. And remember that a toolbar can have just one button!.

Quick Tip 5: Hide them all! When an activity has many toolbars, and only some need to be displayed on each page, it can get very complicated trying to keep track of what to hide. It's easier, and results in a smaller file, if you begin the action list with the **Hide Custom Toolbars** action to hide them all. Then begin adding **Show Toolbar** actions to list all the toolbars you want showing on that page. It's also easier to edit when you can add a new toolbar without worrying about on which pages you need to have it hidden.

As a detective, you must determine how the toolbar vanishing and appearing scheme is controlled before you attempt to make adaptations to an activity. Since the change happens when the page opens, look first in the **Page Properties/Actions**. You'll find some combination of **Show Toolbar** and **Hide Toolbar** actions.

7. If you see what looks like the same toolbar on each page, but when you click the buttons they seem to do different things on different pages, you're seeing the effects of disguised toolbars. Check out all the toolbars in the activity by using **Edit/Edit Custom Toolbars** and look for several toolbars with different names but what look like duplicate buttons. Investigate buttons with the same name and/or picture on any two of these toolbars and you will find that they have different actions.

Some action, most likely in the **Page Actions** for each page, is controlling which of the similar toolbars will show for that page. To the user, it looks like the same toolbar is always there but that the effects of the buttons change logically throughout the activity.

Quick Tip 6: Disguised toolbars can minimize the number of buttons on an overlay. For example, you might have an activity in which students choose from the same group of objects on each page to build something. Make a separate toolbar for each page with the same buttons, but with only the correct button leading to the next page. On each toolbar the correct answer would be a different button while the remaining buttons could give feedback. Even though you might need many such toolbars for the activity, the overlay would only need one set of the buttons, if you used the exact same button names in all the toolbars.

7. If there is animation, go up to the IntelliPics Studio menu and choose Create Intellimation. The timeline will open, and the points at

which changes were made will be red. By clicking on each red timepoint you can find out what is happening at each point. Maybe you will see that new graphics, text boxes, text or even buttons have been inserted, or that graphics or other objects have been deleted or changed at some points.

Quick Tip 7: In analyzing how an IntelliMation works, be sure to look at the **Properties** of the graphics as well as noting their position. Maybe their size, rotation, or **design layer** has changed within the animation. Think about how those changes in settings affected what you observed when the animation ran.

The actions of **Page Buttons** may be different at different timepoints, too. If a button seems to have two different functions at two timepoints, look at its actions at both points.

Two Ways To Use IntelliMation







There are really two ways to use IntelliMation. One is to run all the points or a range of points on the timeline, to produce the moving pictures we usually think of as animation. The **Play IntelliMation and Page Sound** action controls that effect, and you should check to see if it is playing a limited range of the timeline. An activity also might jump to a specific timepoint. At the timepoint, the page will have something different and the user will be able to interact. Look for a **Set IntelliMation Time** action to control this interactive use of animation.

Use Your New Detective Skills

Try your detective skills on some of the simpler activities that ship with Classroom Suite. Once you understand how those work, you can try more complex activities. Try to figure out how the toggling toolbars work in the [Carving A Pumpkin](#) activity, or work out the disguised toolbars in [Log Cabin](#), both of which you can download from [Annie's Resource Attic](#).

Snooping and detecting is a fun way to get into and understand an activity where you just want to make a few changes to customize it for your class. At the same time, you'll pick up new tricks to use later in building your own activities from scratch. Just think, soon you will be hiding clever secrets for other Classroom Suite detectives to discover!

Summary Of Classroom Suite Detective Strategies

-  1. If it happens automatically when the page or activity opens, look at **Page Actions** by **control-clicking** part of the background.
-  2. If it happens when a button in a toolbar or on the page is clicked, begin by inspecting its **Properties/Button Actions**.
-  3. It's not always possible to tell what is background by inspection, so check the **Page Background**. Plan to **control-click** and check the **Properties** windows of all page items for clues, including item type.
-  4. Be alert for **invisibles** such as transparent page buttons, graphic objects hiding on the page, and regions. Use **Control-A** followed by **Control-L** to find all but regions. Use **IntelliPics Studio/Show Regions** to make regions visible. The **Edit/Select Object** list names all page items on the current page. **Edit/Properties** after selecting an object opens the **Properties** of hard to select items.
-  5. Use **Edit/Custom Toolbars and Buttons** to find **hidden toolbars**. The **Toolbar** menu that appears lists all toolbars in the activity.
-  6. If you see different toolbars on different pages, you have **toggling toolbars**. Check **Page Actions** on each page to see how

these are controlled. If **Hide Custom Toolbars** has been used, you can add a toolbar and a new **Show Toolbar** action where needed.

- ✿ 7. If what is apparently the same button on a toolbar has a different effect on different pages, you have **deceptive toolbars**. Look in the **Toolbar** list for of a set of similar-appearing toolbars whose buttons look the same but have different actions.
- ✿ 8. Investigate **IntelliMation** by opening the timeline, **clicking each red animation time point**, and observing what has changed. Check for items that have moved, been added or deleted, changed size, shape, rotation, and/or **Design Layer**. Look for both **Page Actions** and **Button Actions** that use what you found on the timeline to play all or part of the timeline smoothly (**Play IntelliMation and Page Sound, Play Range**) and/or jump to points on the timeline (**Set IntelliMation Time**)