

WINK IS FREE SOFTWARE WHICH ALLOWS EASY CREATION OF ANIMATED COMPUTER TUTORIALS

Nickle, Todd C.¹, and Hodson, Robert²

¹Chemical, Biological, and Environmental Sciences,
Mount Royal College, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T3E 6K6

²Biological Sciences, University of Delaware,
225 Mckinly Lab, Newark, DE, USA, 19716

In today's classes, students are more and more often being called upon to use specialized software packages. As all of us probably recall experiencing, getting familiar with new software is often a frustrating experience. It's difficult to follow keystrokes and data entry when new utilities are being demonstrated, and the shorthand conventions we try to create in order to document the process being demonstrated becomes unwieldy. Trying to reproduce login sequences or data manipulation from our own notes reinforces the clumsiness of trying to capture, in a notebook, some of the routine keystrokes and other navigation standards for new software.

Expensive programs such as Macromedia's Captivate can produce animations which are patient and persistent to assist people in becoming familiar with new applications. The skills required to use these programs are not very demanding. Well-designed timelines and easily-recognizable icons allow for rapid production of new instructional materials. Even better, the software to play back these tutorials has been standardized to Flash, a now-ubiquitous player that is supported by most common operating systems.

A new, free (!) piece of software from DeBugMode called *Wink* allows for rapid and easy construction of Flash tutorials demonstrating how to use pretty much any computer application. There is a Windows version and one for Linux (untried by these authors). The output can be tweaked to render in Flash, portable document (pdf), or as a self-executing (exe) file. The captured keystrokes can be annotated with "speech bubbles" (callouts) and frames can have audio files added to them. Tracking of the animated mouse is easily modified as well. Although the source files are quite large (for example, 19 Mb), they compress to a much smaller format after creating the finished files (2.2 Mb).

Wink is available free from <http://www.debugmode.com>

