

FLY Fusion Pentop Computer

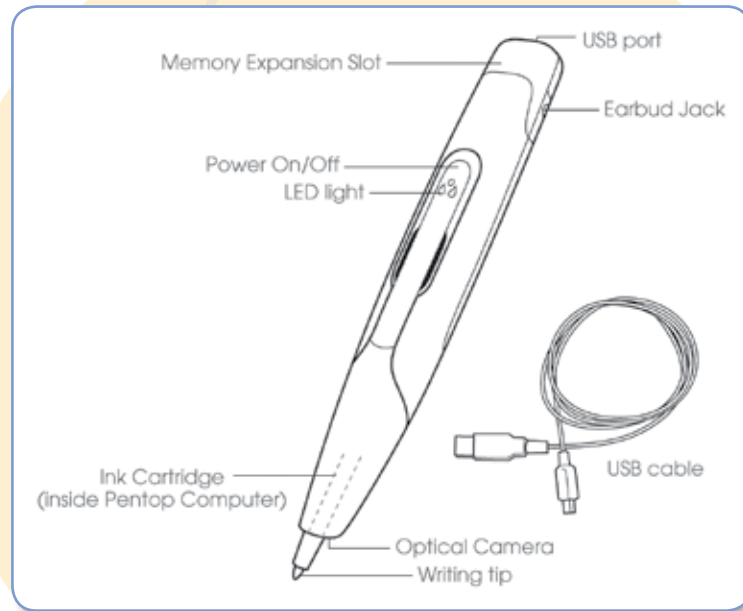
By Richard Yerachmiel Garfield

Most teachers would not think that arming a student with a handheld MP3 player, electronic gaming device, and music maker would help that child learn better during class. The FLY Fusion Pentop Computer by Leapfrog Enterprises may change that perception. Leapfrog has introduced a remarkable product to the ever-increasing market of technologically advanced education tools.

Introduced in September of 2007, the FLY Fusion is an electronic pen whose essential feature is the ability to recognize and record the student's written work when used in conjunction with FLY Paper (sold separately). Through a standard USB interface, the pen then uploads that information to the computer. The work can be stored digitally and converted to a word processing document.

From a technological standpoint, that may be the least impressive of its features. This "pen" can store and play MP3 music, translate written words into other languages, and compute math equations that the student writes. One particularly impressive feature is the ability to draw a musical keyboard and drums, and then play music by tapping in the notebook.

Although I could fill this review with the details of the many features and usability of this pen, I would rather focus on some of the applications that directly relate to the classroom and a teacher's ability to incorporate these features either for individual



Feature	Description	Class Work
Handwriting recognition and transfer to home computer	When writing in a FLY Fusion Notebook (\$7.99 for 160 pages), the pen records and recognizes writing for later transfer to home computer for editing and saving.	An inexpensive alternative to individual laptops. Teachers can have students write essays in class and upload to one computer.
Quizzes	The pen can set up basic quizzes in English, math, languages, or a number of other subjects that can be purchased through Leapfrog's FLY World.	Teachers can give students extra work or independent study using the pen.
Math Application	When writing equations in the notebook, the pen will make the calculations and announce the answer.	
Games	The FLY Fusion comes with 13 challenging puzzles preloaded.	An easy way to challenge an advanced child when he or she has completed work in class.
Translator	When writing words in English on the pad, the pen can announce the pronunciation of that word in Spanish or French (with additional software).	The pen can help students compose more complex sentences by using words they easily translate while using the pen.

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students or an entire group. The table opposite describes various features of the FLY Fusion, how it can be used in class and individual instruction, and my critical views of the function.

All said, the FLY Fusion pen holds promise for helping students in and outside the classroom. The bread-and-butter feature of the pen is the word recognition and recording, which can be extremely helpful for students in note-intensive classes. Although many of the additional features have a certain “wow” factor when using them, they do not seem to directly enhance students’ learning significantly. I look forward to watching the creators of the

FLY Fusion Pentop Computer continue to develop its usability, and I am sure it will find a prominent place in classrooms in the near future.

FLY Fusion Pentop Computer
\$79.99
Leapfrog Enterprises
<http://www.leapfrog.com>



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Individual Work	A Critical View
Students who struggle with spelling and grammar can review work and purchase additional software that will check spelling as they write.	The pen does not read script of messy writing well. Many children (especially those who may be in need of the assistance of this pen) may not have the penmanship needed for the recognition software.
Students can test themselves at home after they complete assignments.	There are already many Web sites and software packages that provide self-quizzing ability.
When doing homework, a student may find the talking calculator more engaging than a standard calculator.	All of the functions can be done easily using a standard calculator.
	Although these games may be fun, many of them can be done on more inexpensive gadgets available at most school supply stores.
Students can practice the pronunciation of many words that they would normally have to guess.	Many handheld dictionaries have a talking feature as well.