

11. School Setup

Centralized Pupil files and Test files for Networked Lab Macs

It is possible to keep an entire school's pupil files on one file server and have students use Master Spell from any Mac that is on that network to access their pupil files and tests.

To do this, put the "Pupils" folder and "Tests" folder on the file server. On each of the users Macs, access the "Pupils" folder and "Tests" folder that are on the server in the Finder. Make aliases of both folders and store these in the same folder that Master Spell is located in on the users Macs. In OS8 and up, you may command-option drag to create aliases without disturbing their names. Make sure the names of the aliases are "Pupils" and "Tests". Obviously, actual folders cannot remain if the aliases are placed in this folder.

When Master Spell is launched on the users Mac, Master Spell will look at the "Pupils" folder and "Tests" folder on the file server.

A few caveats about this use:

In my own tests using 10Mb Ethernet with a very slow server, there is about a one-second delay everytime the menubar is clicked before the menus drop. This is because Master Spell does a quick check of the contents of the folders before listing the menus. On a local drive this is unnoticeable, but on a network it is noticeable. I believe the one second delay is tolerable but if you encounter longer delays and find those delays intolerable, let me know. In fact, if you find that the delays are less than what I describe, please let me know.

If the server volume is not mounted, Master Spell will convince the MacOS to try to mount the volume. If the volume cannot be mounted, Master Spell will crawl, constantly looking for the volume.

Pupil files are not locked as in-use. This means that a user can load the same pupil file on more than one machine at once. The last one to unload the pupil file records the pupil file data. The best solution for this is to enforce the pupil passwords.

Class Subfolders and Class Selection

Pupils may now be subdivided into groups called "classes". Each class is a subfolder in the Pupils folder and works identically to the Pupils folder. To use this,

create new folders within the Pupils folder and name them the class names. Then drag the Pupils into their appropriate class folders.

Use the "Select Class..." menu item in the Pupil menu to select an active class. If no class is selected, Master Spell will default to using the Pupils folder itself. There is also an option in the Preferences (in the Edit menu) to "Select Class at Startup" so that when Master Spell is launched, the user is immediately asked to select his/her class.

The Class Editor always uses the selected class and all new pupils created while a class is selected are kept within the selected class.