

Insider Secrets & Cheats

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Last updated: 04/04/2012

If you've ever attended a seminar or workshop hosted by Adaptivation then you know that there are a number of tips, tricks, secrets, cheats and other such useful tidbits to help you use your Adaptivation products to their fullest capabilities. Below is a growing list of such ideas that we hope you'll find useful. **If you have a simple tip or technique that you think should be in this list, please [email Adaptivation](mailto:info@adaptivation.com) with your idea. If it is both unique and appropriate to this list, we would love to add it.** The list below is in no particular order. Check back periodically for updates to this list.

- To remove the "clunk" sound from the end of a recording on a **Sequencer, Chipper** or **Randomizer**, record your message using an external switch. Message playback can then be done with either an external switch or with the built-in button on the top surface of the device.
- **Sequencers, Chippers, Randomizers** and **VoicePal Levels** have a switch output that is used to activate a toy or other switched-adapted device. This greatly aids in teaching cause-effect. The toy will be activated for the duration of the message. If you want the toy to be activated for an extended time, you can do this by recording silence at the end of each message. That is, when recording a message, stop speaking at the end of the message, but continue to hold down the button, thus recording silence. When the device plays the message, the toy will be activated for the duration of the message, *including the silence at the end.*
- To make a **VoicePal Levels, VoicePal 8, VoicePal 8K** or **PalPad** more tolerant of spilled liquids, seal the device in a Ziploc plastic bag. You can still access the switches through the plastic.
- With the **VoicePal Levels**, each level can be configured for a different number of messages, for example, Level-1 for 2 messages, Level-2 for 3 messages, Level-3 for 5 messages and Level-10 for 10 messages. The only requirement is that when changing levels, you will also have to reconfigure the VoicePal Levels to the appropriate number of messages. This trick is useful if you have students with different abilities who are sharing one device.
- The **VoicePal Levels** has auditory scanning. It can be configured to insert a delay of up to four seconds between each message, thus slowing the scan speed. However, you might be working with a student/client with a slow response time, and the four seconds is not enough, that is, you need to slow the scan even more. This can be done by recording silence at the end of each message. After recording the desired message, continue to hold the button, thus recording silence. When the Voice Pal Levels is scanning, each auditory cue will be played, along with the silence at the end of the message. This is an easy way to 'fake out' the device into scanning more slowly. Keep in mind that as you configure your Voice Pal Levels for more messages, you will have less time available for each message. For example,

if the device is configured for three messages (Long Play mode), you will have 1:19 minutes for each message. Ten messages (Short Play mode) will allow only 0:09 seconds for each message.

- The **VoicePal Levels** has a jack (SCAN SPK) for connecting an external pillow speaker or headphones for use during auditory scanning. This allows the auditory cue to be heard in a private manner. When the desired message is selected, the main speaker plays the message. It is important to remember that the SCAN SPK jack accepts only stereo headphones or other speakers with a stereo plug. If you want to use a pillow speaker (such as Radio Shack #33-209) or other mono speaker, then a stereo-to-mono adapter (Radio Shack #274-374) will be needed. Keep in mind that the pillow speakers by definition are not very loud. If you need an external scanning speaker that is louder consider Radio Shack's Mini Audio Amplifier (#277-1008); a stereo-to-mono adaptor will be needed. Radio Shack also has several portable stereo speakers, (40-1441, 40-1442, 40-1469, 40-1472, 55005467). These speakers are stereo, and do not need a stereo-to-mono adaptor.
- You can use an external speaker with the **VoicePal Levels**. This is useful for connecting your device to amplified speakers or to a public address system. This speaker plugs into the jack labeled "EXT SPK," and can be a mono speaker or a stereo speaker. If you use a stereo speaker, sound will be produced on only the left side. To get sound on both the right and left sides, use Radio Shack's Mono-to-Stereo adaptor (#274-368). Any of the speakers listed above should work.
- If your **SwitchBoard** is inadvertently activating, check the overlay symbols that you have inserted into the overlay pockets. They should NOT be laminated. Laminating your overlay symbols increases their thickness which can cause the circuitry inside the device to activate. This is also true of paper that is very thick. Use standard weight paper, and don't laminate it.
- Did you know that your **SwitchBoard** can be used with more than symbols inserted into the overlay pockets? Instead of, or in addition to the symbols, you can attach objects to the switches of the SwitchBoard. Place the objects directly on the top surface of each switch, or use Velcro to attach them. If it is attached with a sufficient amount of Velcro, you can activate the switch simply by removing the object from the SwitchBoard. In the same manner, you can use objects on **Pal Pads**.
- **Taction Pads** are sensitive to the moisture in the skin of your hands. If your hands are too dry, the Taction Pad will appear to be lacking sensitivity. Use hand lotion to restore moisture to your skin. This will increase the sensitivity of the Taction Pad. Be sure that you do not have residual lotion on your hands. If you do, it may rub off onto the Taction Pad, causing it to continually activate. If this happens, wipe the Taction Pad with a clean cloth.
- If you want to use an object to activate a **Taction Pad** by pressing the object against the Taction Pad, it will not work if the object is nonconductive. Attach aluminum foil (or [Conductive Foam](#)) to the part of the object that will be making contact with the Taction Pad. This also works well for pointer sticks and arm cuffs.

- **Taction Pads** are not true switches. They work by detecting the moisture in your hands. If you attempt to use a Taction Pad in a device from a manufacturer other than Adaptivation, it will not function properly. Special electronics are needed to make the Taction Pad 'act' like a switch. If you want to use a Taction Pad with another manufacturer's device or with a switch-adapted toy, you can do so by using the [Link Switch](#).
- To increase the durability of a **Taction Pad**, do one or more of the following. 1) Tape the cord to the surface where the Taction Pad is adhered. This will prevent the cord from flexing at the point where it joins with the Taction Pad. 2) Drill holes in the surface of your picture board or object board. Route the cables through these holes to the back side of the board. 3) Wrap the Taction Pad around the edge of the picture board so that the cables are on the back side, but most of the Taction Pad will be on the front side.
- Increase the reusability of your **Taction Pads** by placing clear transparency film on the adhesive side. Then use Velcro in the corners to attach your Taction Pad to a picture or object. Or, you can attach [Reusable Adhesive](#) to the adhesive side of the Taction Pad. This will make the Taction Pad act more like a Post It Note than like tape.
- The adhesive on a **Taction Pad** is very aggressive so once you have attached it to something, it is likely that it will be permanent. When making a picture board or object board or when adapting objects, do detailed planning of the layout of the Taction Pads, cords and objects before committing to a permanent placement. Once you are satisfied with the layout, make it permanent by removing the paper backing, and attaching the Taction Pads in their proper locations.
- **Taction Pads** can be cut with a scissors, but there is a right way and a wrong way to do it. Refer to the [instruction manual](#) for the right way. After the cut is made, the portion **with** the cord is your 'new' Taction Pad. The other portion is not usable and can be discarded.
- If you have a squeeze toy that you would like to adapt with Adaptivation's **Pneumatic Switch**, but there is no whistle hole in which to mount it, you can drill or pierce a hole in the toy, then insert the nozzle of the Pneumatic Switch into the new hole. If there is a whistle hole in the toy but it doesn't fit the nozzle, you might be able to plug the hole with hot-melt glue, then drill or pierce a new hole to fit the nozzle.
- After time, you might accumulate many adapted-book and adapted-toy applications for use with your Adaptivation equipment. Keep your applications well organized by placing each one of them in its own Zip Lock bag. Then, hang these bags on the wall on a peg board. Place into each bag very detailed, step-by-step instructions for how to reconstruct the application. This is useful for others who are not familiar with your application. Be very explicit and very complete in your instructions. Include such things as: for whom the application is intended; the assistive device

that is needed; the actual words to be spoken (in quotes) for each message, alternative activities, words or equipment; etc.

- Normally when printing a **Success Stories** story, one prints to a regular printer to obtain a hardcopy. If you have Adobe Acrobat (not the reader, but the real thing) and Microsoft Power Point you can convert your story to an accessible story, complete with sound -- the story can speak! The process to do this works well, but has multiple steps. For details, go to www.adaptivation.com.
- For older versions of **Sequencers** and **Randomizers** (serial #'s of the form SEME-XXXX and RAND-XXXX), special consideration needs to be taken when recording messages. All Level-1 messages must be recorded first, and then Level-2 messages can be recorded. It must be done in that order. If you record Level-2 messages, or try to re-record Level-2 messages, then the devices will not record on Level-2, and all Level-1 messages might be lost. **Sequencers** and **Randomizers** with serial #'s of the form SE90-XXXX and RAND90-XXXX are much easier to record. Messages can be recorded on either level at-will. That is, you can record on level-1 or level-2 as you wish; recording on level-2 is entirely independent of recording on level-1. In fact, you can record an application on level-1, and part of another application on level-2. You can play messages on level-1, and rerecord messages on level-1 without it affecting the partial application on level-2. As long as you don't play any messages on level-2, you can return to level-2 to record the remaining messages for your application.