

Dear Seventh Grade Families,

This year, your child is involved in a very exciting program. As you know, Mansfield Middle School has been awarded a grant that allows us to provide all seventh grade students with a personal digital assistant (PDA). Over the past few weeks, your child has become acquainted with the PDA. Up until now, students have not been able to take their PDAs home. As your child is responsible for this piece of equipment, we ask that you help us reinforce the maturity and responsibility needed to properly care for a PDA. We have included several sections in this newsletter on care, educational application, and basic use. Please read through this newsletter with your child to make sure that both you and your child are aware of the capabilities and the safe, responsible use of this handheld computer.

Sincerely,
Julie DiCicco, Tom Swale, & Kristina Westerfield
(UConn Graduate Interns)

Care for the PDA

- ?? **Keep away from water**
 - o This includes food and drinks. Do not even bring the PDA into the kitchen.
- ?? **Keep charged**
 - o 15-30 minutes a night should keep it fully charged.
- ?? **Do not drop.**
 - o Try to make sure that it is always stored away from the edge of a table.
- ?? **This is not a community toy.**
 - o This means one user, and only one user, no friends, no siblings.
- ?? **Do not store in direct sunlight**
- ?? **Protect with a cover.**
 - o You can use the bubble wrap provided or get a PDA cover at Staples or any other office store.
- ?? **Use only the stylus to write on the PDA.**
 - o No pens, pencils, or markers.



Educational Applications:

- ?? Spreadsheets
- ?? Word Processing
- ?? Printing
- ?? Math Calculations
- ?? Simulations
- ?? Ebooks
- ?? and more...

Basic Instructions:

Charging

- ?? Plug the charging cradle into the wall, and place the PDA in the cradle until it "clicks" into place.
- ?? Turn on the PDA and make sure the lightning bolt appears over the battery meter; that means the PDA is charging.
- ?? 15-30 minutes in the charging cradle should keep the PDA charged for daily use, but extensive use may require more charging time.

In the case of fatal errors, crashes, and freezes:

- ?? Take a paper clip or thumbtack and gently insert in the reset port found on the back of the PDA.
- ?? If this does not work, please email us with your problem, and we will get back to you A.S.A.P.
 - o TomSwale@hotmail.com, DiCiccoJL@mansfieldct.org, WesterfieldKL@mansfieldct.org
- ?? If we are not able to help you immediately, bring the PDA to us or Mrs. Robinson at the Library Media Center.

Created by: Julie DiCicco, Tom Swale, & Kristina Westerfield (9/15/03)

* Picture taken from www.palm.com



Frequently Asked Questions

Does my child get to keep this PDA?

?? No. These PDAs belong to the school and are being borrowed by your child. We will be collecting all PDAs at the end of the year.

Are we responsible if my child breaks it?

?? Yes. But do not panic. With the proper care, they will last for the duration of your child's stay at MMS.

What if the PDA breaks?

?? In the event of a broken PDA, please bring it immediately to the Library Media Center, where any of the three interns (Julie, Tom, or Kristina), or Mrs. Robinson can help you. Please do NOT bring the PDA to an outside source for service.

What about hardware? Is it OK to buy a memory expansion chip for my child's PDA?

?? Yes. But remember that the PDA has enough memory built in for school use. The memory on the PDA belongs to the school and should be available for educational purposes. If you find that your child would like memory space for MMS approved software, then a memory chip can be purchased. This chip must be a SD Card that is compatible with the PALM m130. Please remember, you will not own the PDA when your child leaves MMS, so unless you own another PDA or device that uses the expansion chip, it will be useless to you.

Is it OK to buy games for my child to upload to their PDA?

?? As these are educational tools, we ask that you help us keep the game playing to a minimum. Some additional software titles are very acceptable such as Mental Math, and similar programs. Remember, these titles need to be uploaded by MMS staff, and approved by MMS Technology Coordinator, Mr. Tom Kennedy. We advise you to check with us first before purchasing anything. Remember, this additional software must be saved on an expansion memory chip, not the original PDA memory.

How often are these PDAs going to be used for school?

?? We as a school community, and particularly the seventh grade staff, are trying to incorporate the PDAs into everyday classroom and homework life. You can expect to see the PDAs coming home every night. We will expect them back in school every day.

Are Passwords and Alarms necessary?

?? No. We ask that you help us keep all alarms off. There should be no alarms set to go off during school. Also, we ask that you do not set a password for the MMS-owned PDAs. If your child creates a password, and cannot remember it or refuses to allow a teacher to view his or her PDA, we will be forced to reset the whole machine, which may result in a loss of data.