RM Easiteach

Branch

Easiteach - Minibeasts tree with grasshopper - Page 1 of 1 *

Can it fly?

Yes   No

Can it sting you?   Can it spin a web?

Yes   No   Yes   No

bee   Can it jump?   spider   snail

              Yes   No

         grasshopper   ladybug

User Guide

Contents

Introduction

Branch is a simple-to-use interactive branching database for sorting and classifying information. It encourages observation and discussion, leading to classification via questions.
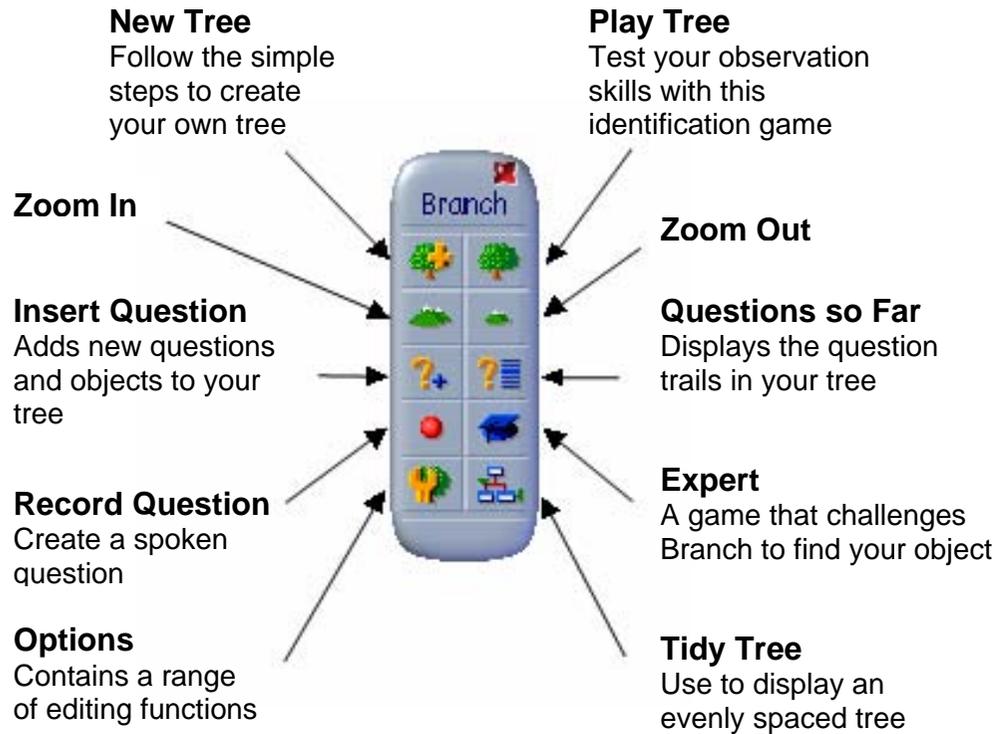
What is Branch used for?

Branching databases sort and classify information using a series of questions with a simple *Yes* or *No* answer. They can be created around a great many subjects. Some databases are very powerful as expert systems. They are used, for example, in the classification of plants and in systems for diagnosing faults.

RM Easiteach Branch is a stimulating interactive branching database for developing sorting and classification skills. The students examine a group of objects presented on the RM Easiteach page, design a question that sub-divides them, and then continue inventing new questions until only unique objects remain. Their findings can be instantly reviewed, displayed, and manipulated.

With Branch you can:

- Sort words, pictures, animations, and even videos on-screen
- Record your own questions
- Play stimulating games that encourage observation and identification skills

The Branch Toolbar

New Tree
Follow the simple steps to create your own tree

Play Tree
Test your observation skills with this identification game

Zoom In

Zoom Out

Insert Question
Adds new questions and objects to your tree

Questions so Far
Displays the question trails in your tree

Record Question
Create a spoken question

Expert
A game that challenges Branch to find your object

Options
Contains a range of editing functions

Tidy Tree
Use to display an evenly spaced tree

Do I Have Branch?

If RM Easiteach Science or Geography is licensed, you are licensed to run Branch.

If you are interested in purchasing Branch, please contact your RM Easiteach distributor or visit www.rmeducation.com.

Reviewing the License Agreement

If you wish to review your License Agreement while you are running RM Easiteach:

1. Click **File > About RM Easiteach**.
2. Select **License Agreement**.

Starting Branch

To run Branch, select **Toolbars** from the bottom of the RM Easiteach screen and click **Branch.** The Branch toolbar is now visible on the RM Easiteach page.

Key Features

Create a Tree

1. Select **New Tree** from the Branch toolbar to display the entry window.

2. Place a group of objects to be sorted in the top box. You need at least two objects to create a tree. It is best to make the tree using solely words or picture objects.

   - To make a tree using pictures, click **Picture Bank** to display the browser. Select the **Home** button to access images in the Multimedia Bank. You can also navigate to other picture or media resources through the window in this browser. Click and drag the images into the box.

   - To make a tree using words, either type them directly into the box or click **Word Bank** to display the Resource Bank. Choose a category and drag words from the pop-up palette. If you wish to use the on-screen keyboard, select the **Keyboard** button.

   Words must be typed or placed on separate lines to be treated as separate objects.

3. When your objects are in the box, close any open browsers and press **OK**.

4. You are now asked to enter a question that divides the objects into two groups. All questions should be phrased to require a *Yes* or *No* answer – for example, *Can it fly?* Try to make the first question as general as possible. When you have entered the question, press **OK**.

5. A **Yes** box and a **No** box appears on the page. Drag each object into the appropriate box. When all the objects have been moved, press **OK**.

6. Repeat this process for each new set of objects until the questions lead to single objects as their answers.

7. When all the objects have been classified, the entry window closes and your completed tree diagram appears on the page.
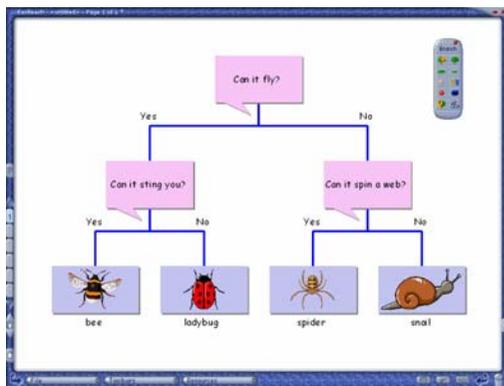
8. If you have used images, their names appear beneath the object boxes. Branch reads these labels aloud in the Tree and Expert games. If you wish to edit the label – for example, to remove a number - see 'Editing Trees' on page 12.

9. To reposition your tree on the page, select the top question box and drag it to the required position.
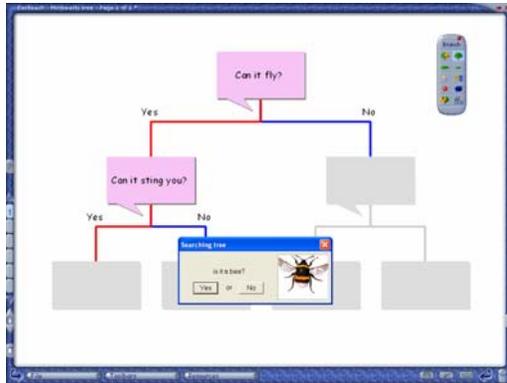
Play Tree

The Tree game is an identification challenge using a completed tree diagram. An object is chosen secretly – either from the tree or a new object - and the students have to identify it using the questions in the diagram. If the object is new to the tree, its image or name can be added during the game.
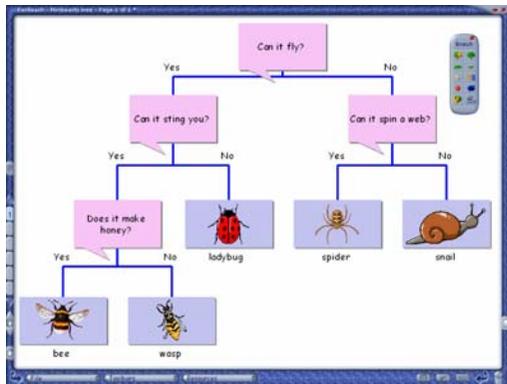
1. Place a tree diagram on the RM Easiteach page. You can use your own tree or play with an example of Branch – select **File > Open > Examples...** and choose **Branch**.
2. Select **Play Tree** from the Branch toolbar. The tree boxes gray out, and the screen scrolls to the first question.
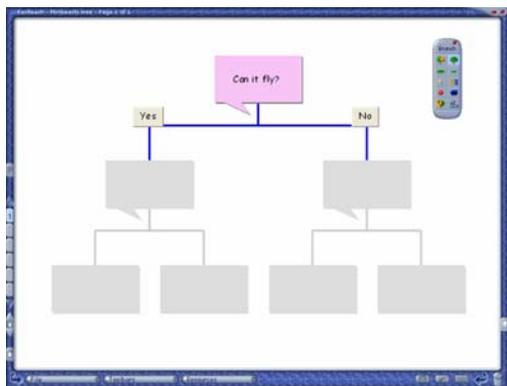
3. Now decide on a secret object – either from the tree, or a new object. Beginning with the first question, use the **Yes** or **No** buttons to track down the object. At the end of the question trail, you are asked, *Is it a …?* Selecting **Yes** displays the tree showing the path taken.

4. Pressing **No** gives you the option to add a new object to the tree using the entry window.

5. To finish the game, select **Play Tree**, or click on a question.

6. The questions and answers in the Tree game are read aloud by Branch by default. If you wish to record your own questions, edit a label so that it is read correctly, or turn off the sound - see 'Editing Trees' on page 12.

Play Expert

In this identification game, Branch asks the students questions to identify an object they have chosen. If the object is new to the tree being used, it can be added during the course of the game.

1. Place a tree diagram on the RM Easiteach page. You can use your own tree or play with an example of Branch – select **File > Open > Examples...** and choose **Branch**.

2. Now decide on the object to be found – either from the tree or a new related object. Click the **Expert** button to begin the game.

3. At the end of the question trail, Branch says, *I think it is a …* If the answer is correct, click **Yes** and another game is offered. If the answer is **No**, you are given the option to add a new object to the tree.

4. The questions and answers in the Expert game are read aloud by Branch by default. If you wish to record your own questions, change an object's name so that it is read correctly, or turn off the sound - see 'Editing Trees' on page 12.

Questions So Far

In this identification game, Branch asks the students questions to identify an object they have chosen. If the object is new to the tree being used, it can be added during the course of the game.

1. This feature displays the question trail leading to any point in the tree.

2. Click on an object or question, and then select **Questions So Far**.
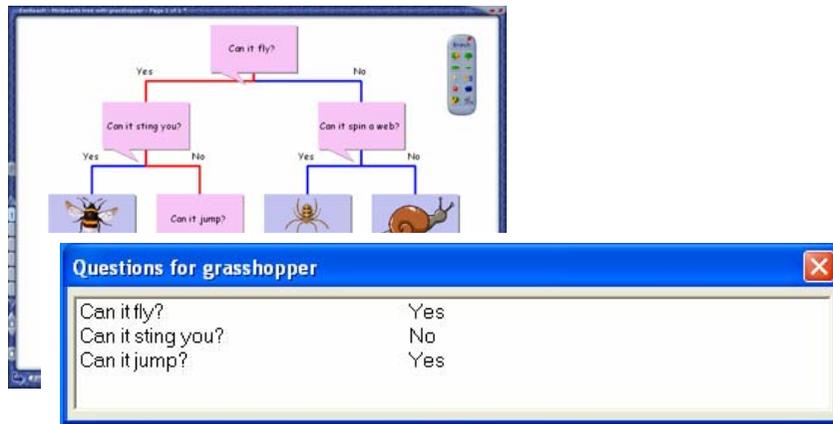
3. A red line shows the path taken by the question trail. Selecting another point automatically changes the display.

Zoom In; Zoom Out

Click these buttons to change the viewing scale so that you can see more or less of your tree. This feature is particularly useful if the tree becomes too large to fit on the page.

You can also alter the size of your tree by using the **Options** feature on the Branch toolbar.

Editing Trees

Insert Question

1. To add a new question and object, click on the point where you wish to insert the new question. In the example, this is the ladybug.
2. Now select the **Insert Question** button. This inserts a question box and object box.
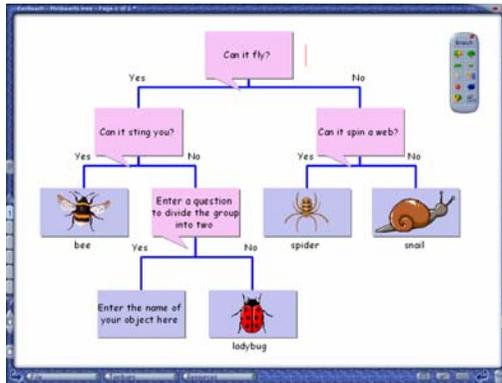
3. Select **Edit** from the Easiteach toolbar. Click the boxes and type the text. To add an image, select **Resources** and **Multimedia Bank**. Drag the image into the box.
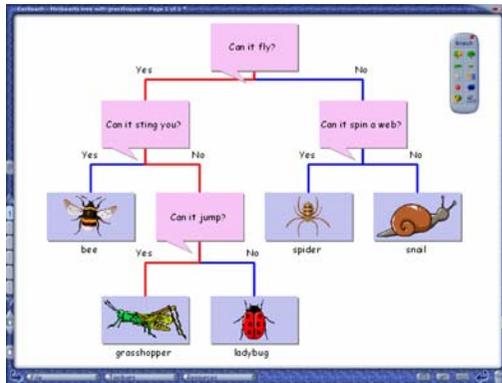
Using Edit Mode

You can use **Edit Mode** on the Easiteach toolbar to amend and manipulate a tree diagram on the RM Easiteach page. Select **Toolbars** and **RM Easiteach** at the bottom of the screen to access the **Edit Mode** button.

Rephrasing text	This could be useful for lining up icons and other screenshot fragments with explanatory text, where the pictures are too large to fit on a box.
Rephrasing answers	You can alter the *Yes* and *No* answers to give options such as *Correct* and *Wrong*. In **Edit Mode**, click on the text and retype it.
Editing image labels	When you use images as objects their names appear as labels on the final object boxes. Branch reads these aloud during the Tree and Expert games. Using **Edit Mode**, you can change the label or remove the numbers given to objects that have multiple images in the Multimedia Bank. Click on the text and retype it or delete the number.
	If the label's text is a plural, you can force the question to appear in the correct form by starting the text with a capital letter. For example, the label *bananas* reads *Is it a bananas?* but the label *Bananas* reads *Is it Bananas?*
Moving boxes	In **Edit Mode** you can move any box with its branch by clicking on it and dragging.

Copying branches

You can copy, cut, and paste branches or trees. Select **Cut** or **Copy** from the Easiteach toolbar. Click and hold near the required boxes, and then drag the cursor across the items to be copied or cut. Release when highlighted. Now click at the point you wish to paste, and select **Paste** from the toolbar.

Using Edit Mode

Use the Undo button on the Easiteach toolbar.

Options

The **Options** button opens the **Tree options** window for a range of editing functions.

Locking Select the **Tree locked** box so that it cannot be changed in error – click again to unlock it for editing.

Sound The **Action sounds** and the **Talk questions** default settings used in the Tree game and Expert game can be turned on or off here.

Tree size Use these arrows to make the tree and its boxes smaller or larger. The size of the text remains unchanged, but can be altered by using the **Text ...** button on the palette.

Styles Using the Style options, you can customize the visual appearance of your tree diagram to make it more stimulating for advanced users.
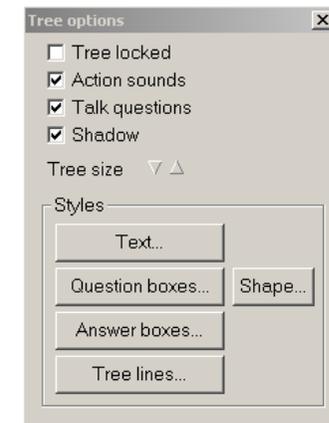
Note that in **Tree lines...**, the color used to show the path to the current object is set by the **Fill** color.

Record Question

In the **Tree** and **Expert** games, questions are read aloud with a synthesized voice by default. Alternatively you can record a human version. You need a microphone connected to the computer.

1. Click the question in the tree to be recorded and select **Record Question.**

2. Press the red button to begin recording, and the blue bar to stop. To check the recording, press the blue arrow.

3. The question box now contains a speaker button. Click this button at any time to replay the recording.
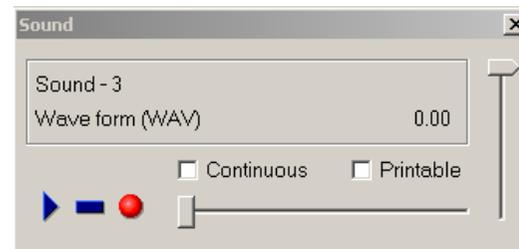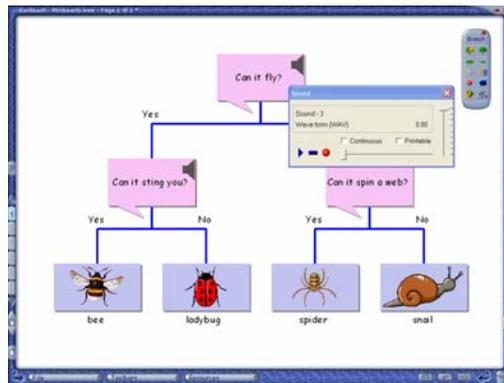
4. The read aloud default can be turned off in Options on the Branch toolbar.
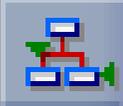
Tidy Tree

If a tree diagram has been extensively edited, it may end up with overlapping questions and large gaps. Pressing the **Tidy Tree** button adjusts the question and answer boxes to make them evenly spaced.

Once the tree has been rearranged, you can reposition it by selecting and dragging the top question.

Printing Trees

To print a tree, select **File > Print.** Enter the number of copies required and check that the **Only this page** option is checked.

If the tree is larger than a single sheet of paper, it automatically prints in poster format. When the sheets are printed they can be assembled into a larger tree by joining the sheets.

To reduce or increase the size of a tree for printing, select **Options** from the Branch toolbar and use the **Tree size** and **Text...** buttons.

Tips for Using Branch

Ideas for Lessons

- With Branch, you can save a tree at any point in its creation – for example, after populating the top box with objects. You can then either:
  - let students create the questions and finish the tree, or
  - create a list of questions and ask the students to decide the best order to ask the questions.

- You can use different branching databases to show the power of this type of database. For example, a Fruit database is useful for learning how to use a branching database but, as the students will already know the fruits, it will be less useful as an aid to identification. However, with a Cheese database, its power becomes apparent since different cheeses can easily be identified, even if the students are not familiar with their names.

- Cheese is a good subject because many types are readily available, their characteristics are varied and distinct, and they can be observed, discussed, and tested in the classroom.

- You can alter the *Yes* and *No* answers to give other options, such as *Good* and *Bad* or *Right* and *Wrong*. Use **Edit Mode** on the Easiteach toolbar to select and retype the answers.

- Branch has many cross-curricular applications, for example, using the Branch system to play Consequences or plan storylines.

Ideas for Trees

Fruit	Footwear	Stars
Cheeses	Automobiles	Wildflowers
Road signs	Rocks	Vegetables
Leaves	Numbers	3-D solids
Pets	Musical instruments	Trees
Airplanes	Shells	Sports
Birds	Minibeasts	Transport
Butterflies	Pond creatures	Teachers
Famous people	Meals	Clothes