<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/connect/resources/2868/preview/>

**Emoticons: Interact**

This is a simple, fun game that allows your child to create "smileys" by combining various facial features to depict a range of emotional expressions.

With a very young child, you can help move the pieces into place and provide (verbal) labels for the parts (eyes, eyebrows, smile, frown) and for the resulting faces (happy, angry, confused). You may find that your child has real preferences for certain facial features.

With a slightly older child who is able to manipulate the mouse independently, you can ask questions about her or his choices: "Why did you choose those eyes?" "How is this one feeling?" These questions might lead you into a discussion of emotions and how they are conveyed by our facial expressions.

Another way to use this activity with older children is to challenge your child to create a smiley depicting a particular emotion. "Can you make a face that looks really surprised?"

Finally, with children of any age, you can have fun together trying to copy, with your own real faces, the expressions you have created online.

### Emoticons: Understand

"Conditions for creativity are to be puzzled; to concentrate; to accept conflict and tension; to be born everyday; to feel a sense of self."   
—psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm

Human faces are able to convey a wide range of emotions. This is part of what makes humans so unique and complex. As our uses of technology increase, our opportunities for face-to-face interaction are sometimes limited. Many people have tried to figure out ways of conveying emotion in situations where people are not able to see and hear each other, for example over email or in writing. Essentially, people are seeking to create a 'code' for conveying emotion in the absence of physical contact.

Sometimes we can use special characters or fonts to convey emotion – **BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS** – seem to say, "This is important."  Another way that people have tried to convey emotion is by creating series of keyboard strokes that approximate human facial expression, like this:   **:-)** which looks like a sideways smile.  Recently, those keyboard strokes have been largely replaced by "smileys"– miley face. Whether letter emphasis, keyboard character, or smiley is "the code," the goal is the same – to adequately and creatively represent human emotion in the absence of face-to-face interaction.