"Hi, Friends!" How To Guide

by Erik Smith

What is "Hi, Friends!" ?

If you are an elementary school ALT, chances are you will encounter a textbook called "Hi, Friends!" for your 5th and 6th grade classes.　"Hi, Friends!" is the successor of "Eigo Note," the first ever 5th and 6th grade English textbook made by the Ministry of Education to accompany the introduction of mandatory foreign language instruction in elementary schools. Since the textbook and associated materials have little to no written English (despite being an English textbook), new ALTs often struggle when they are asked to use it in class.　In this document, I will explain how to use the textbook's software's basic but less-than-intuitive features.　Note that not all of the features will be explained here, as with a little bit of trail-and-error and some basic computer literacy anyone can master the basic operations of the software.

Do I have to use "Hi, Friends!" ?

You don't *have* to use the "Hi, Friends!" textbook and teaching materials. ***However***, because many elementary school teachers have little to no experience teaching English as the policy is relatively new, and since the "Hi, Friends!" textbook provides both a curriculum and a set of lesson plans, is cheap, and was tailored by the Ministry of Education in accordance with *its* vision of what elementary school English education *should* be like, many teachers will choose to use it and follow the lesson plans.　If you go to your elementary school(s) once a week and are able to teach all of the 35 hours of class in a year, the teachers will be able to rely on you to design and teach the classes, so you will be able to stray from the text as you desire.　If, however, you do not go often to a given school, it is likely that the teachers will be relying on the premade lesson plans while you are absent and will expect you to do classes that fit to the textbook's curriculum when you do come to school.

How do I use "Hi, Friends!" ?

Lesson Plans : Where to Find Them

Though you are free to make your own lesson plans from scratch or modify the premade ones, please be aware that **__***Not all the activities for each lesson are printed in the textbook itself.***__ If you only did the activities printed in the textbook, you would have too much extra time in class or finish the textbook too quickly.　Be aware that the text expects you to supplement what is written in the book with activities of your own.　From a different perspective, do not look at the lesson plans and expect that there will always be a corresponding section in the textbook.

The lesson plans created by the Ministry of Education (MEXT) are all in Japanese.   If you are already pretty good at Japanese, reading the lesson plans can boost your education-related vocabulary!   For those of use who are busy, though, English lesson plans are the way to go. Luckily, our friends in Akita have made English translations of all the lesson plans, which you can access here: http://akitajet.com/wiki/Hi,_friends!   .   Searching "Hi, Friends lesson plans + English" in Google should also do the trick.

The elementary school teachers you work with _should_ have the Japanese copies of the lesson plans, but as I mentioned previously, there are many teachers who are completely lost when it comes to English and are accustomed to leaving everything up to the ALT.   Please make sure they have the Japanese lesson plans, which can be downloaded at http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/1314837.htm/.

Picture Cards : How to Make Them
An ALT, chalkboard, and a set of picture cards.   These are all you really need for English class, right?
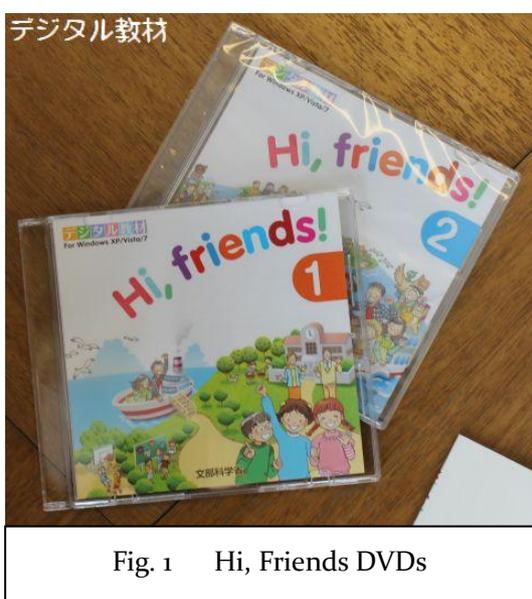

Fig. 1   Hi, Friends DVDs

With the exception of the lesson plans, which can be found only online, all the Hi, Friends teaching materials are found in these DVDs (Fig. 1).   **They can only be used on Windows computers**. Sorry Mac users.   If you have to, use your school's computer to look at the contents of the DVD and borrow one of your teacher's laptops for class.

If you can, try and install the software on your computer with the setup.exe program.   It will take time and a lot of space on your hard drive, but it will run much faster and you won't need the DVD anymore after you install the software.

When you boot up the software by clicking the "start" icon, you will be taken to the screen shown in Figure 2.   This is the same table of contents as the textbook.   At the bottom of the screen, you will see a variety of buttons.   The middle set of four buttons, which are drawing tools used to mark up the screen during a lesson, are grayed out; these can only be used after

you select a lesson.   The right set of three buttons are, from left to right, "Worksheets," "Digital Picture Cards," and a Slideshow/Picture card printing tool.
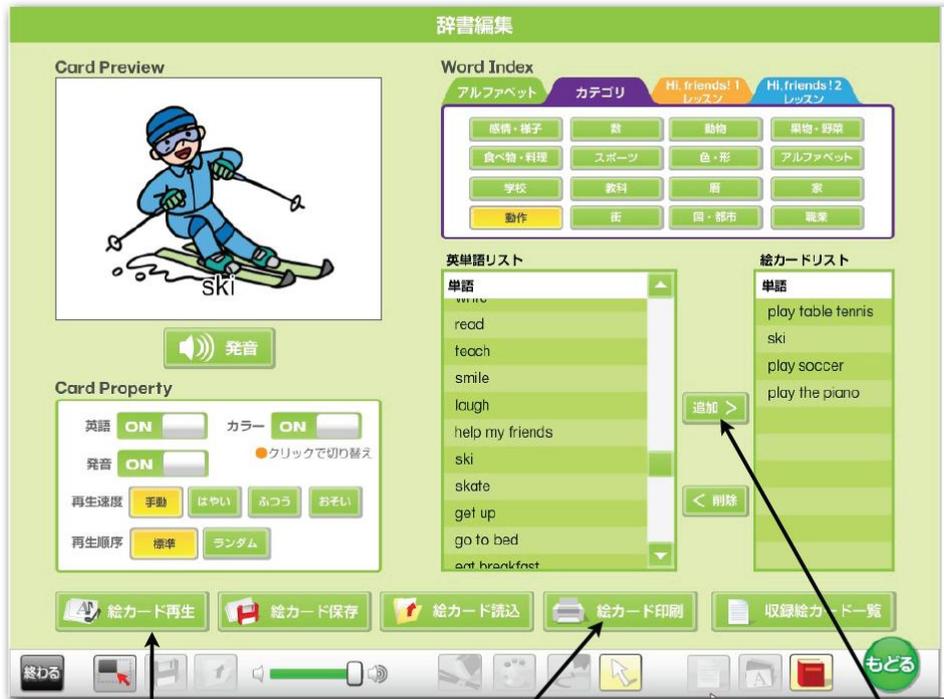

Fig. 2   Hi, Friends Home Screen

When you click on the right button, the red book icon, you will be brought to the screen seen in Figure 3.

In the upper-right hand corner there is a box where you can select a group of picture cards by alphabetical order, category, or lesson number.   Once you have selected a group of picture cards, the list of picture cards in that group will appear in the center box.   From here, you must select each word individually and click the button with the right-arrow that says 追加＞ to add each word you want to use to the list in the right box.   This is incredibly tedious. When you have all the words you want to use on the right hand list, you can click the printer button to print out these words.   You also have the option to make the cards into a slide show: click the bottom-left button to play the cards as a slideshow now, or click the button with the floppy-disk icon to save the slideshow for later.

The left side of the screen, where you see "Card Property," has options you can tweak to change the speed and order of the slideshow/ picture cards (Fig. 4).
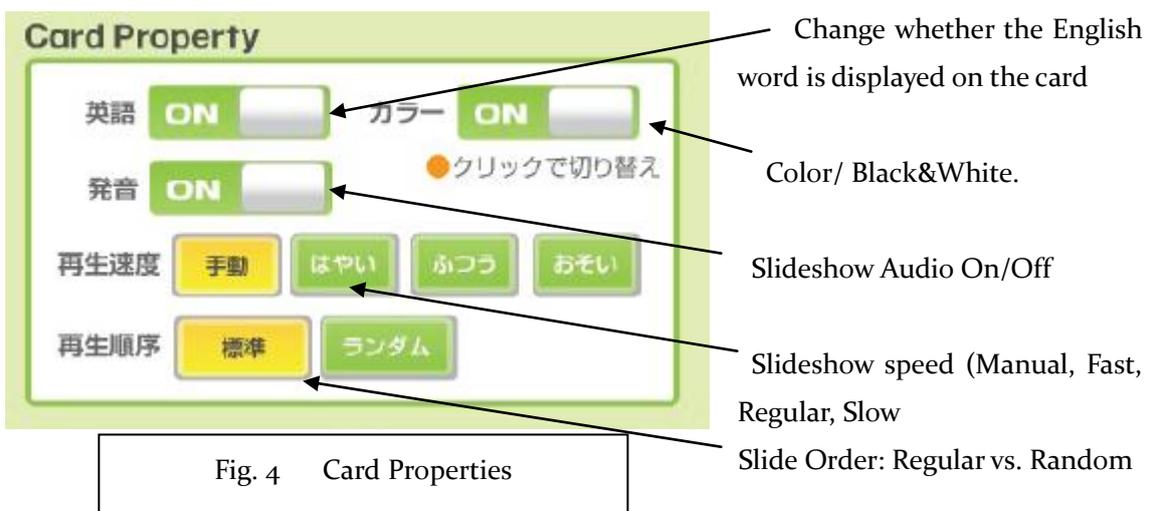

Play words on list as slideshow   Print words on list   Add word to print list

Fig. 3   Making picture cards

Change whether the English word is displayed on the card

Color/ Black&White.

Slideshow Audio On/Off

Slideshow speed (Manual, Fast, Regular, Slow

Slide Order: Regular vs. Random

Fig. 4   Card Properties

Worksheets

The lesson plans will sometimes mention worksheets that are needed for certain activities. These too can be found in the Hi, Friends software. If you click the Worksheets button (left button of the set of three. See Figure 1) you will be taken to a screen with links to the PDFs of all the worksheets used in the lessons.   The titles are all in Japanese but they are categorized by lesson, with the lesson number inscribed in a circle(①、②、③ etc.).   If you want Microsoft word data, click the large purple button at the bottom of the screen.   Being as prosaic as they are, you will probably want to make your own worksheets or spice up the originals with some illustrations before you use them in class.

Digital Picture Cards

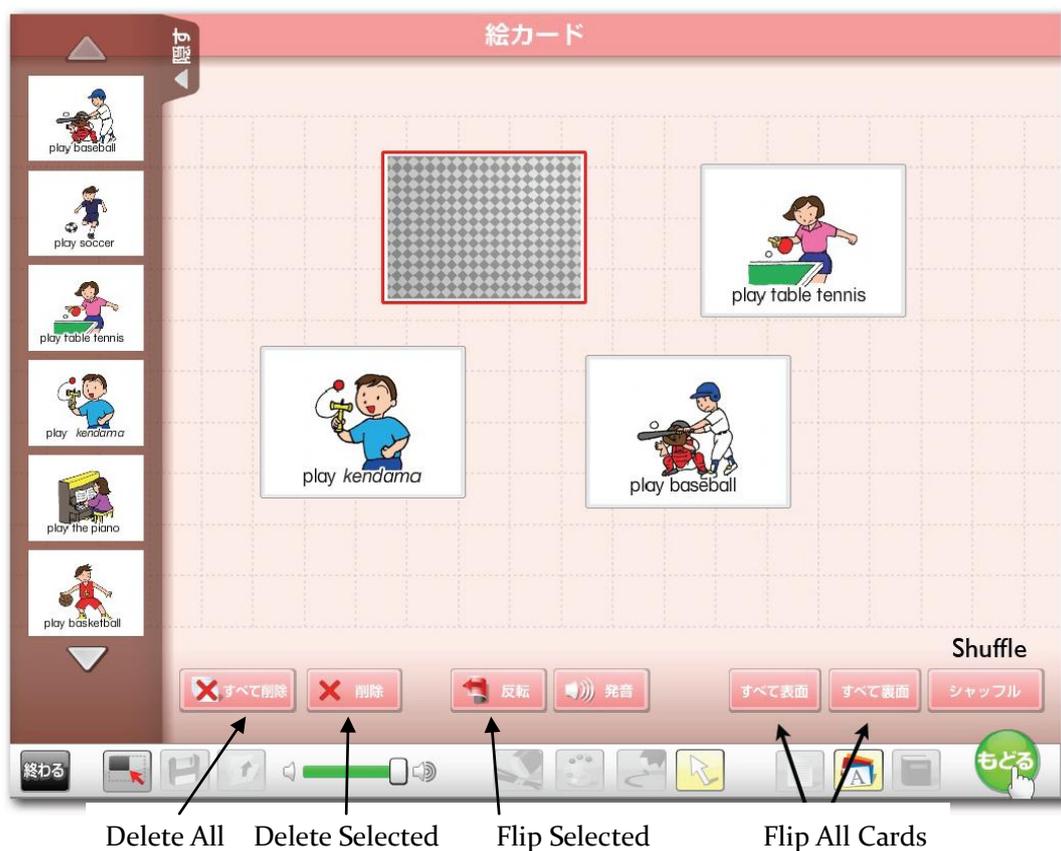Delete All   Delete Selected   Flip Selected   Flip All Cards

Fig. 5 Digital Picture Card Screen

Clicking on the icon with the letter A written on flashcards will take you to a screen where you choose a lesson.   After choosing one, you will be taken to a screen like the one shown in Figure 5.   Here, you can take flashcards out of the drawer on the left side and move them around freely, flipping them over and shuffling them to play various games of your choosing.

I prefer using physical pictures cards, magnets, and a chalkboard to do all the activities in class, but in case you want to go all-digital, know that this is here.

Chants

Every chapter in "Hi, Friends" has at least one song or chant that provides a rhythmic way to remember the chapter's key phrase.   Some are more catchy than others, and you may feel that they are all humiliatingly silly, but if you try to use them reguarly in class, you will be surprised at how your well your students will memorize them.

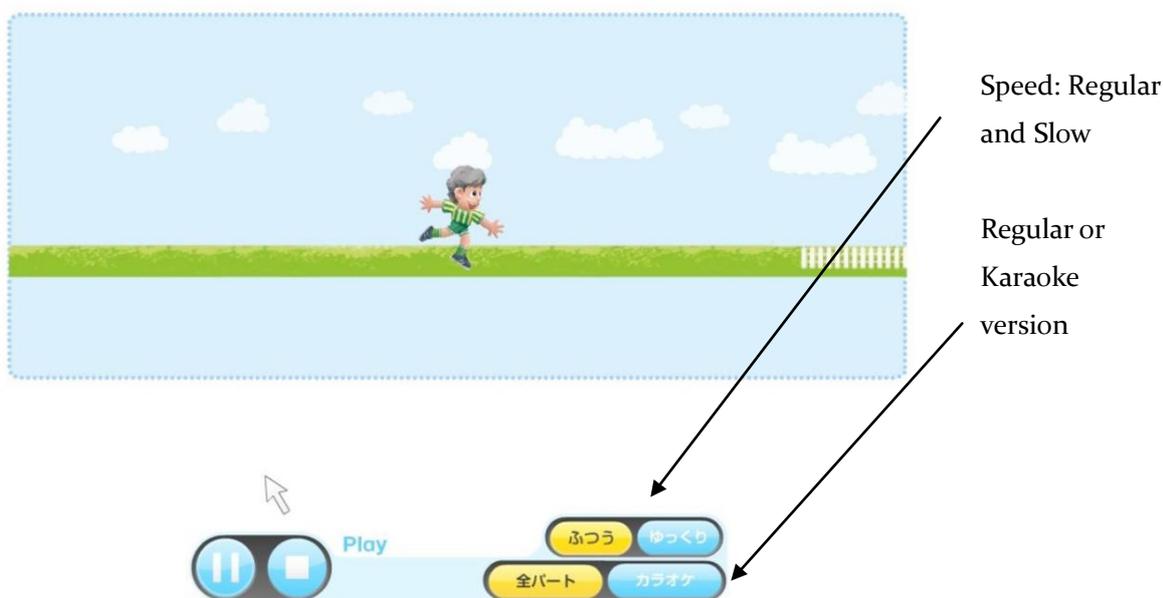Speed: Regular and Slow

Regular or Karaoke version

Fig. 6 Chants Screen

Some chants have multiple variations using slightly different words, but Figure 6 shows one of the basic chants screens which has no variations.   If you use chants, you should do the chants a few times at the slow speed and work the class up to the regular speed by the 3rd or 4th class in the chapter.   Adding the Karaoke version was a good idea by the creators, but the illustrations and visual clues go away when you turn this option on.   Use this only after your students are well accustomed to the chant and you are ready to change the words to make an original chant.

Miscellaneous Features: Things you Might Have Missed

You may feel the software is unncessary for some of the activites in each lesson, but in some parts the software developers included some really useful tools for the activites (e.g. in the activity where the students make their own name cards, the software provides pictures of sample name cards and a table to help the students learn how to right his or her own name in English), so explore everything in the lesson before class!   Here are two features which you will probably never use yourself, but are useful to know they are there in case your co-teacher wants to use them:

Roll-Play Skit: This tiny pink button will be somewhere in each chapter.   Click it to watch videos of creepy-looking children using the lesson's key phrases in robotic voices. You yourself will never need to use these videos because you will be able to do these dialogues with your co-teacher, but if your co-teacher complains about having trouble doing class by herself, show her these videos.   They might became a handy tool for her.

Pronunciation Video: These buttons will be found somewhere in each lesson, usually in a place where new words or phrases are introduced.   Clicking on them will start a video that shows a woman slowly pronouncing each new word or phrase, with multiple camera angles to show the movement of the lips and tongue.   Show this to your co-teacher if he says he lacks confidence about teaching pronuciation without you there.   If your co-teacher uses these videos even when you are in class, then something is wrong.

終わりのことば: Conclusion

Being as computer literate as our generation is, you will be able to navigate most of the features of Hi, Friends without having to be literate in Japanese.   You may end up using Hi, Friends as a reference rather than a tool you use every class, but either way, please spend time playing with the software over summer break.   If you can, do so with your fellow teachers!