

17-year-old creates Web 2.0 site for building vocabulary

ALBANY, Ca.—January 17, 2006—Quizlet, a new Web 2.0 site for building vocabulary, will launch today. The innovative website aims to make mastering vocabulary of all kinds fast and fun by allowing students and professionals to collaborate on word sets.

The website, available at <http://quizlet.com>, allows users to learn vocabulary words. After entering a list of vocabulary words and definitions, users are given three ways to study them: a simple flashcard method; a highly-configurable test page including written, matching, multiple-choice, and true/false questions; and a specialized ‘Learn’ mode that tracks the user’s knowledge of individual words and retests the user only on unlearned words. The site’s most innovative features include a live chat box which classmates may use to discuss vocabulary usage (or to gossip about teachers); groups that allow users to alert classmates about new sets they have entered and to edit sets collaboratively; the ability to import data from other websites and documents quickly and easily; and the ability to quickly combine word sets to study large quantities of vocabulary at once.

The site is most directly targeted to students in the middle school to college levels, but has broad applications for many fields. Users may enter information on any subject, and Quizlet gives them the tools to study it. The most obvious application is English terms and their definitions, but foreign language translations, history dates, and scientific terms are also popular on Quizlet.

Quizlet is the work of Andrew Sutherland, a 17-year-old high school junior from Albany, California. Sutherland designed, programmed, and funded the entire project single-handedly. The code for the website was written in his spare time, after school and on weekends. Using his summer earnings from a summer job as a software engineer in Washington DC, Sutherland funded his project, including legal fees, hosting, and the purchase of the Quizlet.com domain. He recently founded Brainflare, Inc., a company to attend to the business aspects of the site.

The project was conceived in October 2005, while Sutherland was still 15. Frustrated in his efforts to learn more than one hundred French animals and their English translations, Sutherland decided to program his way out. In the days since he wrote the first lines of code for Quizlet, Sutherland has seen his project grow to 180 privately invited test users who, combined, have entered more than 25,000 words and logged more than 130,000 study scores.

“My mission for Quizlet is to make learning vocabulary not a chore,” says Sutherland. “I know a lot of teachers assign vocabulary to students, but few students actually ‘absorb’ words into their vocabularies after they take their test. Which kind of defeats the purpose,

right? So Quizlet is my response - it aims to make learning fun, thus make learning effective.”

Quizlet has already proved itself invaluable to its users. Andrey Poletayev, a member of the Albany High School Science Bowl team that recently placed 4th at the national championships, says, “Quizlet has cut my studying time at least in half.

From here, Sutherland intends to grow Brainflare into a profitable company through advertising agreements with universities and college preparatory companies, perhaps obtaining venture capital to do so. He has many features he would like to add to Quizlet, including wiki-like set editing, photo and diagram testing, and automatically generated contextual tests. After high school, he hopes to attend MIT and major in computer science, business, or teaching.

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Related Links:

<http://quizlet.com>
<http://brainflare.com>