

# Mailman Max

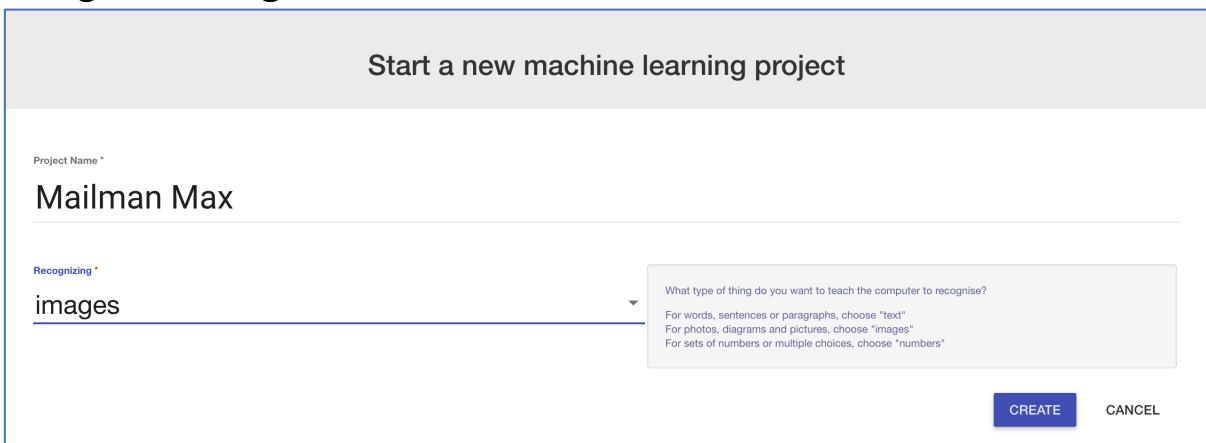
In this project you will make a main postal sorting office. It will need to sort letters so that they can be put into vans going to the right local sorting offices.

The postcode is a great way to work out the next sorting office a letter should go to, so you'll use that.

You'll train the computer to recognise what the different codes at the start of a postcode look like when they are hand-written, and use that to sort letters.



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- 1.** Go to <https://machinelearningforkids.co.uk> in a web browser
- 2.** Click on “**Get started**”
- 3.** Click on “**Log In**” and type in your username and password  
*If you don't have a username, ask your teacher or group leader to create one for you.*  
*If you can't remember your password, ask your teacher or group leader to reset it for you.*
- 4.** Click on “**Projects**” on the top menu bar
- 5.** Click the “**+ Add a new project**” button.
- 6.** Name your project “Mailman Max” and set it to learn how to recognise “**images**”.  


Start a new machine learning project

Project Name \*

Mailman Max

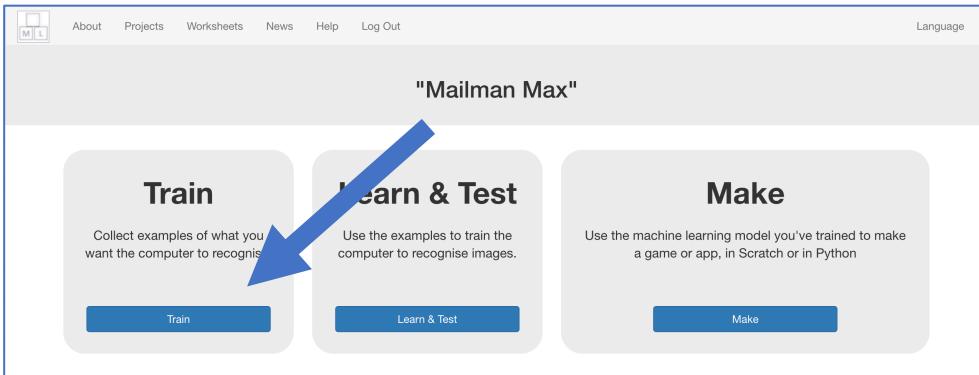
Recognizing \*

images

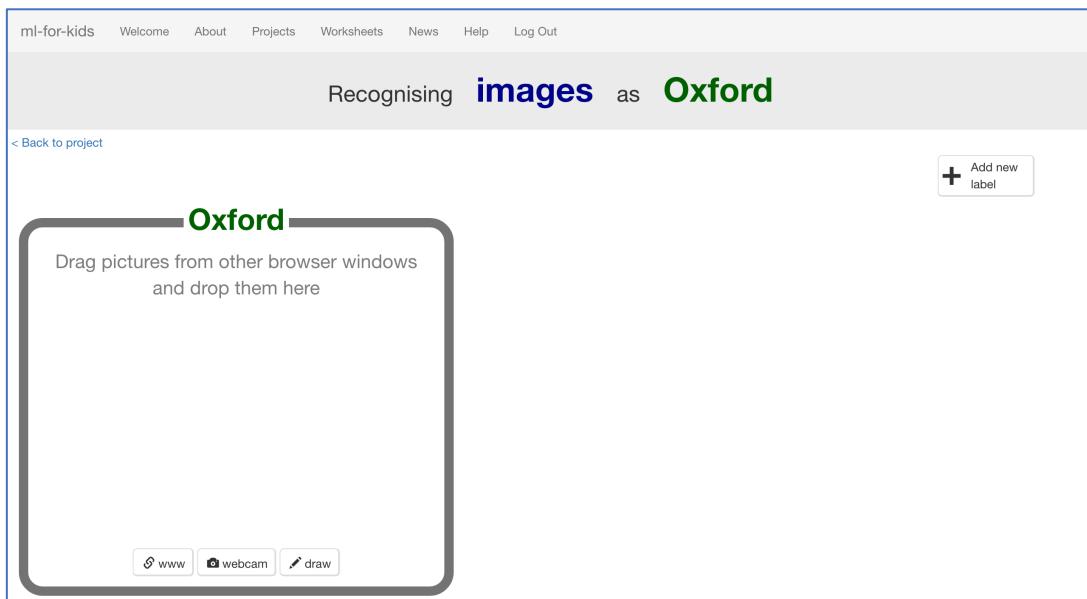
What type of thing do you want to teach the computer to recognise?  
For words, sentences or paragraphs, choose "text"  
For photos, diagrams and pictures, choose "images"  
For sets of numbers or multiple choices, choose "numbers"

CREATE CANCEL
- 7.** Click the “**Create**” button
- 8.** You should see “**Mailman Max**” in the list of your projects. Click it.

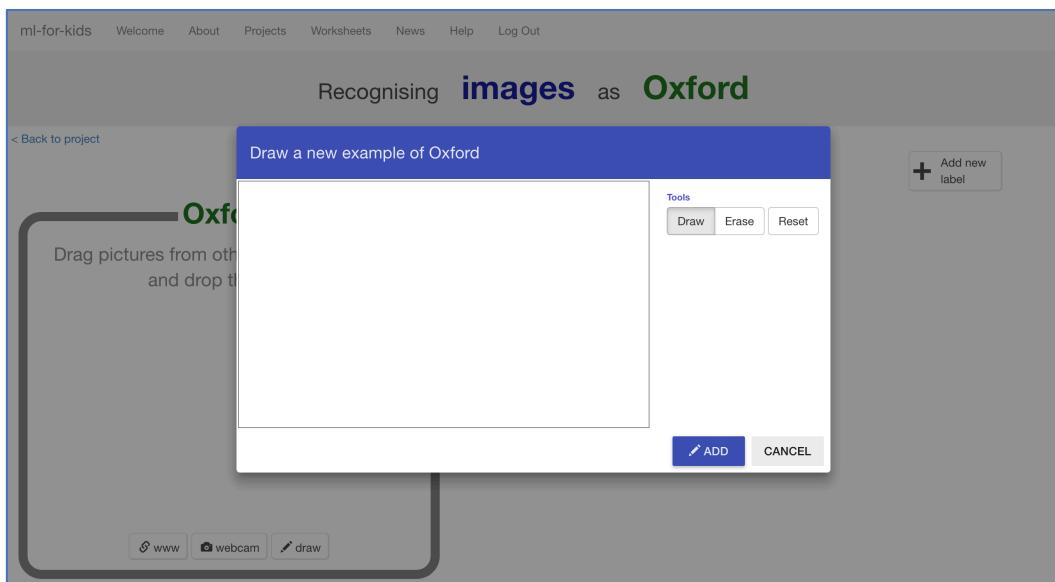
## 9. Click the “Train” button



## 10. Click the “Add new label” button, and create a label called “Oxford”



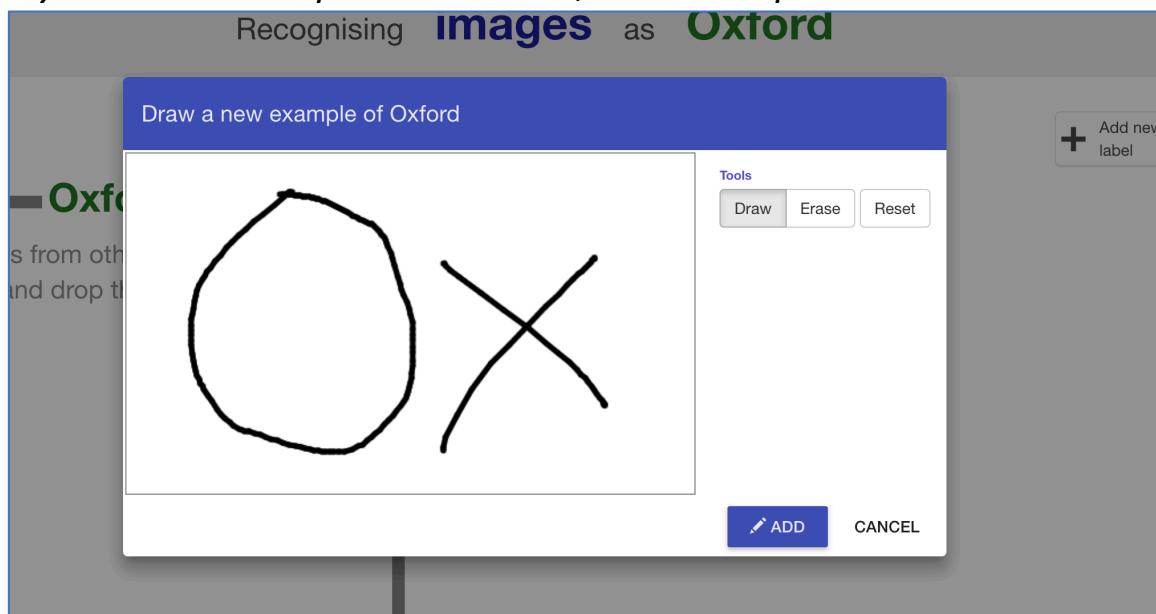
## 11. Click the “draw” button in the “Oxford” bucket



**12.** Use your mouse to write “OX” in the empty box.

*OX is the start for postcodes in the Oxford area.*

*Try to use all the space in the box, like in the picture below.*



**13.** Click “ADD”

**14.** Click “Draw” again, and draw another “OX”

The screenshot shows a web-based application for training a machine learning model to recognize the letters "OX". The main title is "Recognising images as Oxford". Below it, there's a section titled "Oxford" containing two examples of the letter "OX" drawn by a user. At the bottom of this list, a green circled number "(2)" indicates the count of examples. At the very bottom of the page, there are three buttons: "www", "webcam", and "draw".

**15.** Repeat until you've got **10** examples of “OX”

**16.** Click “Add new label” again, and create one called “Guildford”

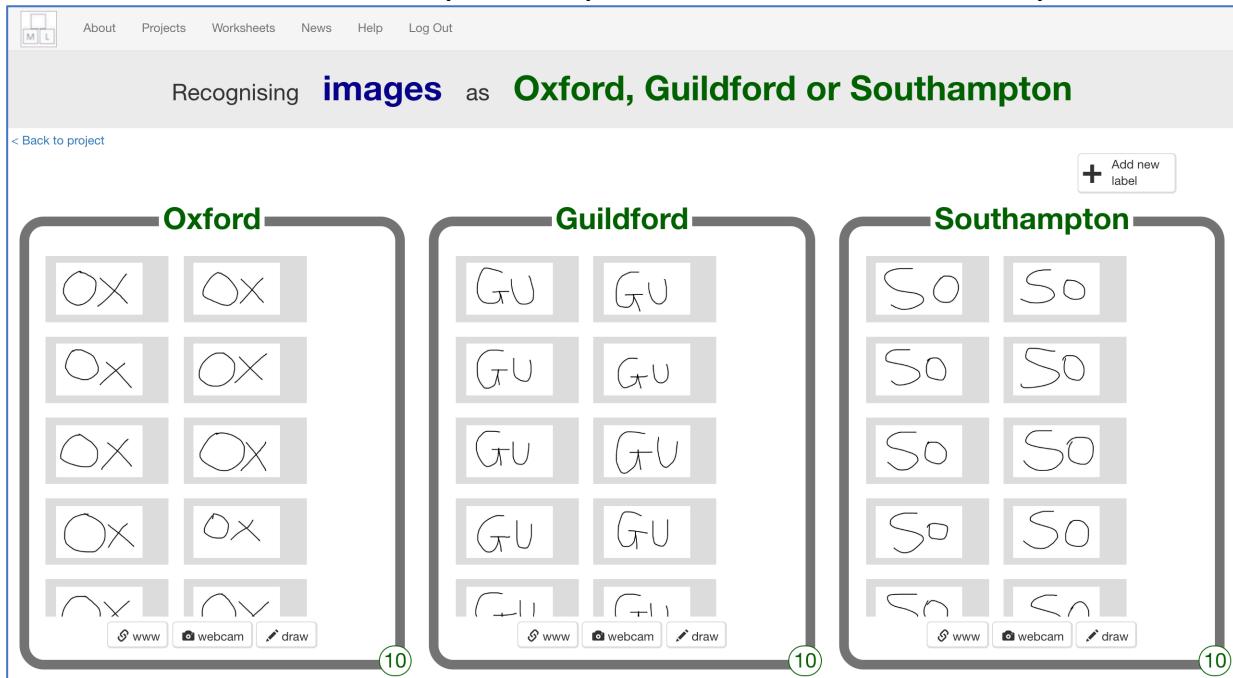
The screenshot shows a web-based application for image recognition. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for About, Projects, Worksheets, News, Help, and Log Out. Below the navigation, the title "Recognising images as Oxford or Guildford" is displayed. On the left, under the "Oxford" label, there are 10 boxes containing the letters "OX". On the right, under the "Guildford" label, there is a large text input field with the placeholder "Drag pictures from other browser windows and drop them here". In the top right corner of the "Guildford" section, there is a button labeled "Add new label" with a plus sign icon. At the bottom of each section, there are three buttons: "www", "webcam", and "draw". A green circle with the number "10" is located at the bottom center of the Oxford section.

**17.** Use the “Draw” button in the “Guildford” bucket to draw 10 “GU” for postcodes in the Guildford area

This screenshot shows the same project interface after drawing 10 "GU" labels. The "Oxford" section remains the same with 10 "OX" labels. The "Guildford" section now contains 10 hand-drawn "GU" labels. The "Add new label" button is still present in the top right of the "Guildford" section. The bottom buttons and the green "10" circle are also visible.

**18.** Click “Add new label” again, and create one called “Southampton”

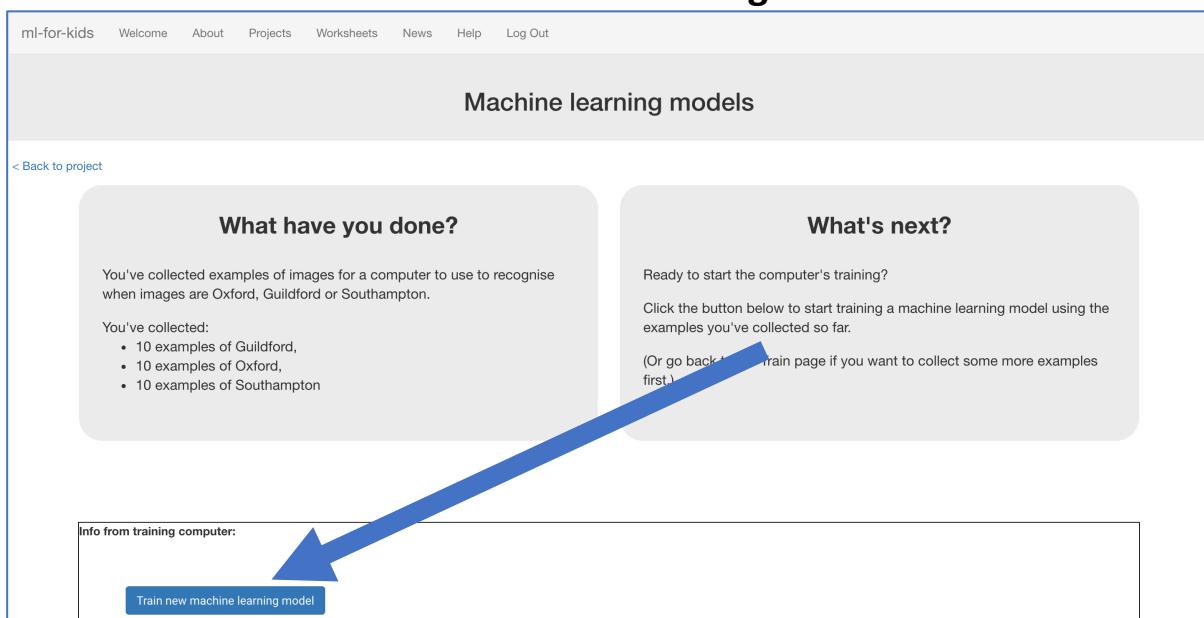
**19.** Draw 10 “SO” examples for postcodes in the Southampton area



**20.** Click on the “< Back to project” link

**21.** Click the “Learn & Test” button

**22.** Click the “Train new machine learning model” button



## 23. Wait for the training to complete. This might take a few minutes.

ml-for-kids Welcome About Projects Worksheets News Help Log Out

### Machine learning models

< Back to project

**What have you done?**

You've started training a machine learning model using the examples of images that you collected.

It's been training since Monday, November 6, 2017 4:13 PM.

This normally takes a few minutes, but can take a little longer if the training computer is very busy.

**What's next?**

You could wait for the machine learning model to finish being trained. Or, you could try the machine learning quiz below, to check what you've learned.

Info from training computer:

Model started training at: Monday, November 6, 2017 4:13 PM  
Current model status: Training  
Model will automatically be deleted after: Monday, November 6, 2017 5:13 PM

[Cancel training](#)

## 24. Click the “< Back to project” link

## 25. Click the “Make” button

## 26. Click the “Scratch” button

*This page has instructions on how to use the new blocks in Scratch*

### Using machine learning in Scratch

< Back to project

Your project will add these blocks to the **More Blocks** tab in Scripts.

**recognise images [costume image] (label)**  
Put images in the input for this, and it will return the label that your machine learning model recognises it as.

**recognise images [costume image] (confidence)**  
This will return how confident your machine learning model is that it recognises the type of images. (As a number from 0 - 100).

**Oxford Guildford Southampton**  
These blocks represent the labels you've created in your project, so you can use their names in your scripts.

**costume image**  
This block is in the Looks palette for Sprites and will return the image of the currently selected costume.

**This means you can do something like this:**

It will look something like this - except with the name of your project.

The coloured circle next to your project name tells you if your machine learning model is okay.

- green means your model is trained and ready to go
- yellow means your model hasn't finished training yet
- red means something went wrong. Go back to the [Learn & Test](#) page to see what went wrong with training.

[Open in Scratch](#)

## What have you done so far?

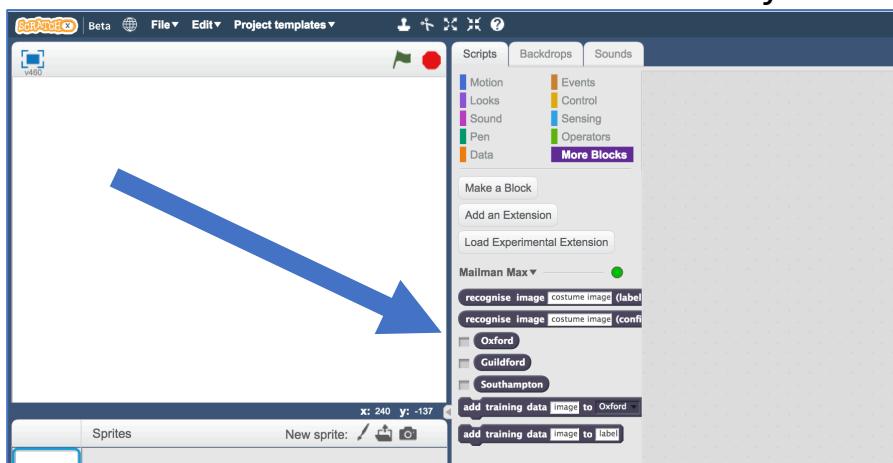
You've started to train a computer to recognise pictures of handwriting as being the start of postcodes for the Oxford, Guildford, or Southampton area. You are doing it by collecting examples of your handwriting. These examples are being used to train a machine learning “model”.

This is called “supervised learning” because of the way that you are supervising the computer’s training.

The computer will learn from patterns in the shapes of each of the examples you’ve drawn. This will be used to be able to recognise the postcodes we’ll write on the envelopes to be sorted.

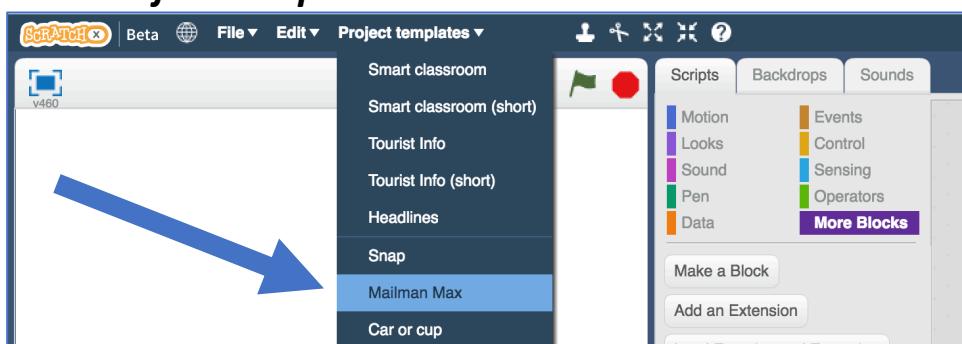
### 27. Click “Open in Scratch” to launch Scratch.

*You should see new blocks in “More blocks” from “Mailman Max”.*

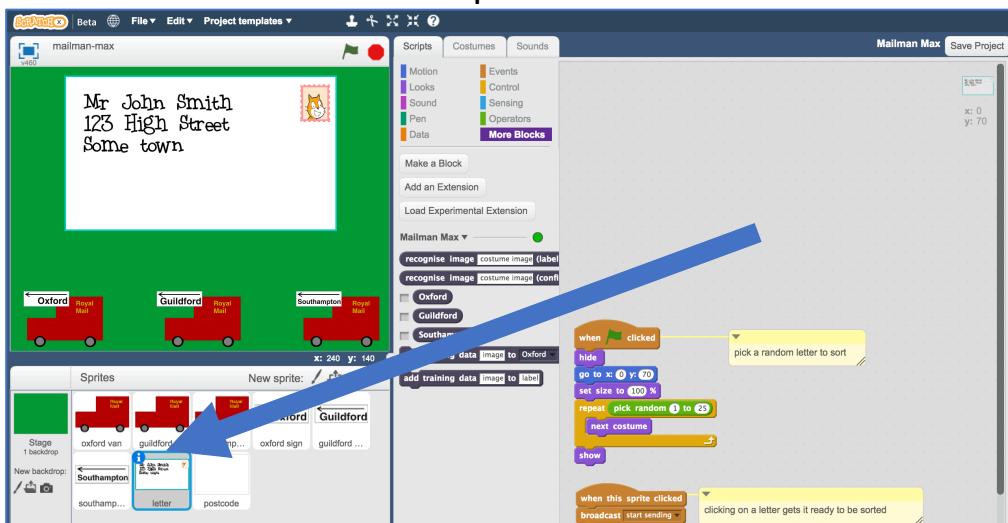


### 28. Open the Mailman Max project template

*Click Project templates -> Mailman Max*



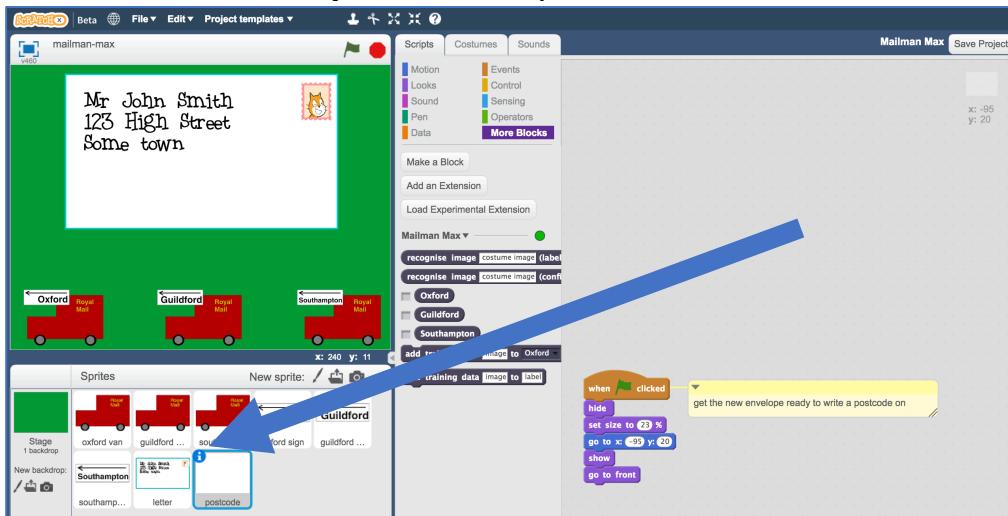
## 29. Click on the “letter” sprite



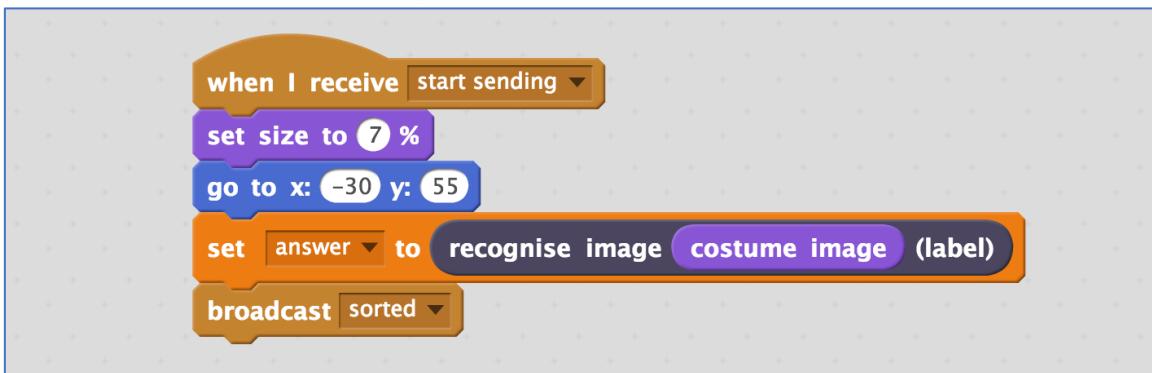
## 30. Add this so when the letter is sorted, it goes to the correct post van.



## 31. Click on the “postcode” sprite



**32.** Add this script to get the computer to try to recognise the postcode you write on the envelope.

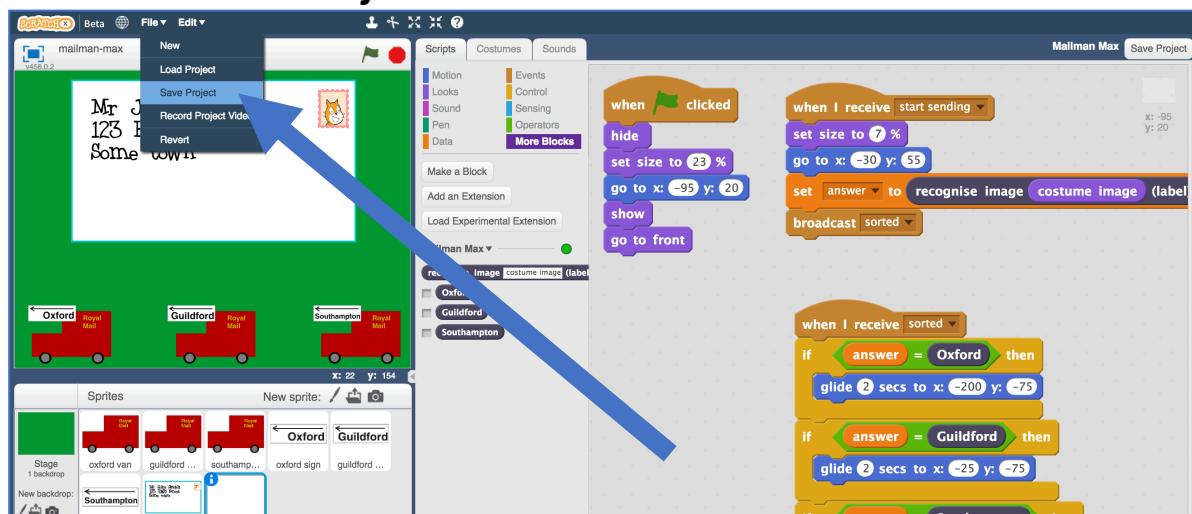


**33.** Add the following script to get the handwritten postcode to go to the post van to be taken to the correct regional sorting office.



**34.** Save your project

*Click File -> Save Project*

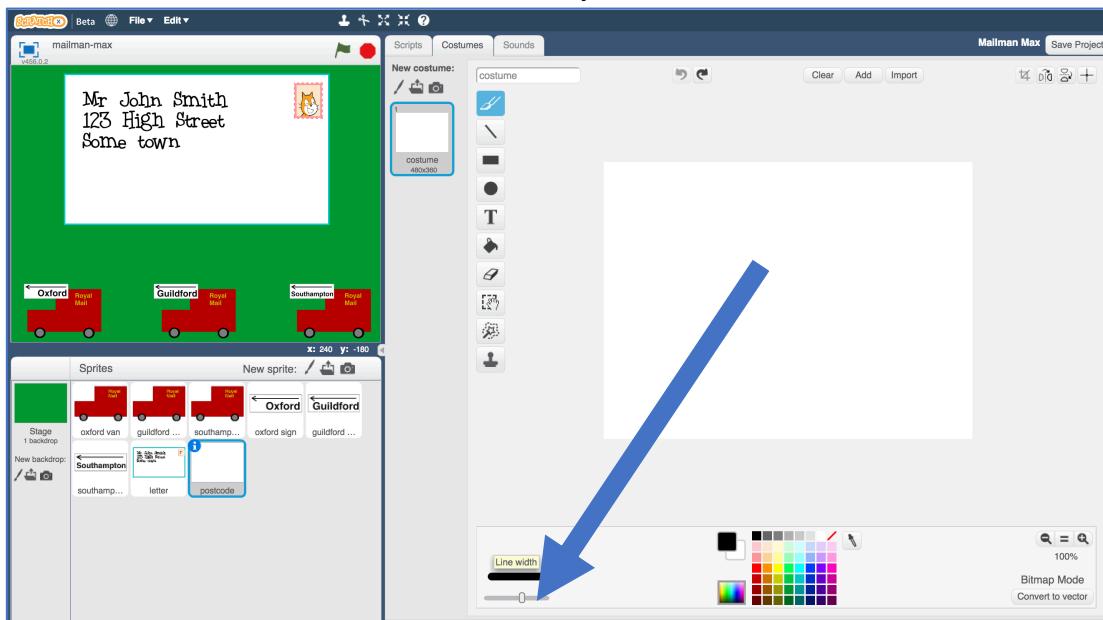


It's time to test!

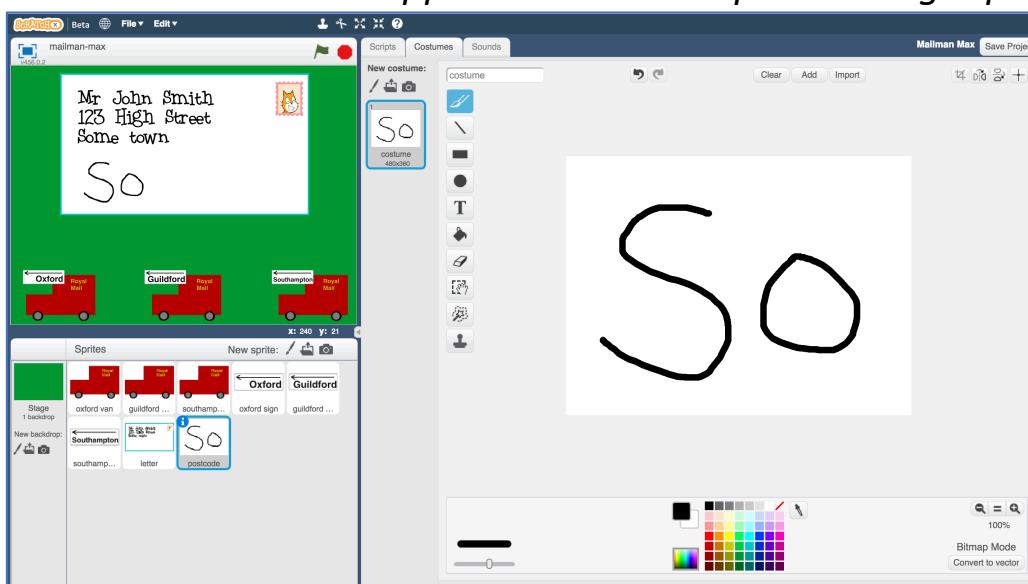
**35.** Click the Green Flag

**36.** Still on the “postcode” sprite, click on “Costumes”

**37.** Use the line width slider so you can write a thick black line

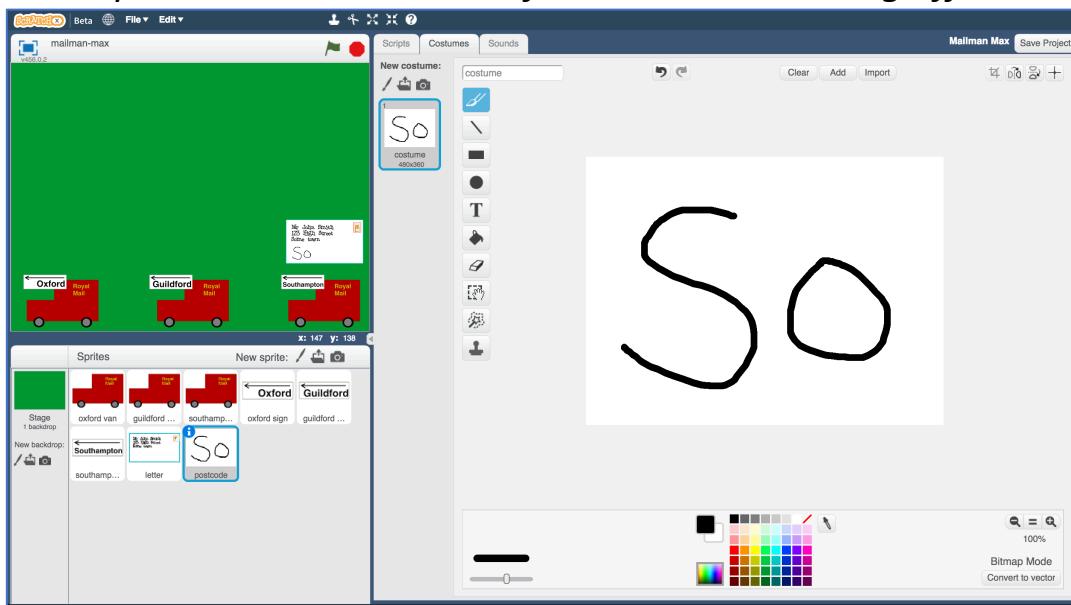


**38.** Write the first two letters of a postcode using the paintbrush tool.  
*Fill the space, like you did with the training examples.*  
*You should also see it appear in the envelope in the right place.*



## 39. Click on the stamp in the envelope in the stage.

You should see the letter shrink. Then the computer will try to recognise the postcode letters you've written. Once it thinks it has the answer, the envelope will move to the van for the correct sorting office.

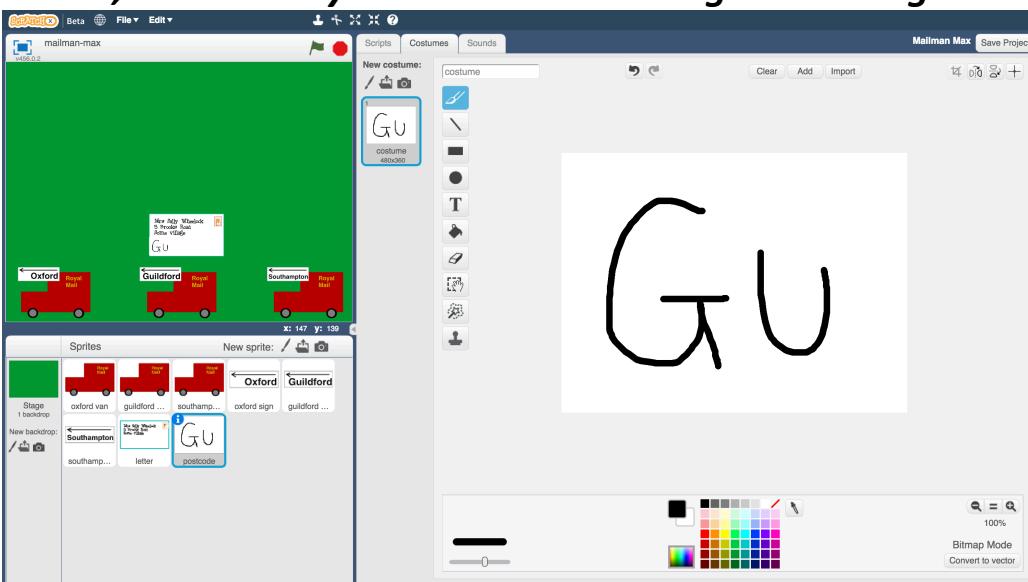


## 40. Did it get it right?

If it's not very good, you might need to add some more examples, and train a new machine learning model with them.

## 41. Repeat steps 34-38 to try it again with a different postcode

You'll need to paint over your first postcode in white first. If you use the eraser, make sure you add a white background in again.



## What have you done?

You've trained a machine learning model to be able to do handwriting recognition. This is called "optical character recognition" or "OCR" for short.

You did that by collecting examples of handwriting, to train the computer to be able to recognise it.

You built a small and simple example, using just the first two letters for just three postcode areas.

Imagine doing the same thing for every postcode area in the country. You'd have to create a lot more training buckets to cover the 120 postcode areas in the UK. And you'd need to collect thousands of training examples, with lots of different people's handwriting, so that the computer could get really good at recognising them.

That is how large postal sorting offices sort our letters in real life.

## Ideas and Extensions

Now that you've finished, why not give one of these ideas a try?

Or come up with one of your own?

### **Try someone else's handwriting**

You've trained the computer to recognise how you write the postcode letters, but would it be able to recognise someone else's?

Ask a friend to test it and see if it works.

If it doesn't, you'll need to get some examples of their writing to add to your training data. The more people you can get training examples from, the better the computer will be at recognising a variety of handwriting styles.

### **Try more of the postcode**

We made it easier for the computer by only giving it the first two letters.

But how can we get it to recognise something like "OX1 2JD" as being a postcode in the Oxford area?

If you collect a variety of different training examples of actual full postcodes (not just the first two letters) you should be able to train it to recognise them. That will probably need more than 10 examples!