



# Essay Punch® Manual

Skill Levels 6-10

Complete program: 3 units

DESCRIPTION (Unit 1), INFORMATION (Unit 2), PERSUASION (Unit 3)

Internet Explorer 6.0+ (Windows)  
Safari 3.0+ (Windows and Mac)  
Firefox 2.0+ (Windows, Linux and Mac)

Best viewed at 1024 x 768 screen resolution.

Table of Contents	
Why Use Essay Punch? .....	2
<i>Benefits of Using Essay Punch</i> .....	2
What Does Essay Punch Do? .....	2
<i>The Essay Punch Method – Research Basis</i> .....	2
<i>References Cited in The Essay Punch Method (in Alphabetical Order)</i> .....	3
Scope of the Program: Skills .....	3
Implementation .....	3
<i>Plan of Action for Using the Program Integrated with the Curriculum</i> .....	3
Class Time – Preparing your students to use the Punch Program .....	3
Classroom Curriculum Integration .....	4
Beyond The Program .....	5
Teacher Orientation to Program Structure or “Anatomy of the Program” .....	7
<i>Logging on, Class Management and Course Administration</i> .....	7
<i>Essay Punch Step by Step</i> .....	7
<i>Tracking Students’ Work</i> .....	8
Content of Essay Punch .....	8
Merit Writing Assessment Rubric .....	10
Brainstorming .....	11
Essay Outline - Body .....	12
Independent Follow-up Worksheet .....	13
<i>Essay Punch: Description / Information</i> .....	13
Independent Follow-up Worksheet .....	15
<i>Essay Punch: Persuasion</i> .....	15

## **Why Use Essay Punch?**

### *Benefits of Using Essay Punch*

1. Effective research-based computer-assisted instruction: embedded cognitive strategies, e.g., repetition; rehearsal of content; paraphrasing; drawing inferences; use of illustrative examples
2. Student control over amount and sequence of work performed and extent of review needed, leading to increased mastery and improved attitude towards learning
3. Improvement of writing skills
  - a. Recognition of points of difficulty and confusion
  - b. Advancement at student's own pace
  - c. Scaffolding and enhancing comprehension
4. Generalization of skills to other contexts and situations, i.e., transferring these skills to other academic areas
5. Appropriate for students of all skill levels
  - a. Effectiveness seen notably in low-achieving students
  - b. Improvement in proficiency among students in middle quartiles
  - c. Enrichment for students in upper quartile
6. Detailed class management via Merit Software record keeper
  - a. Teacher can track and check students' progress
  - b. Teacher can track and intervene at points of difficulty
  - c. Student records may be exported into spread-sheets

## **What Does Essay Punch Do?**

### *The Essay Punch Method – Research Basis*

1. Engages cognitive thinking and metacognitive strategies step by step step (Bloom and Krathwohl, 1956)
2. Supports constructivist learning by providing students with choices; decisions; multiple-completion paths for writing tasks (Shepard, 2000)
3. Explicitly teaches steps necessary for planning, revising, and/or editing text; increases students' independent writing skills. (Graham, 2006).
  - a. Teaches different ways to write an essay
  - b. Shapes further learning responses through interactive feedback
4. Provides a way for a wide range of students to get personal feedback when learning the writing process (Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdes, and Garnier, 2004).
5. Improves comprehension of students struggling with language arts skills and produces gains across the curriculum in social studies, science and mathematics (O'Byrne, Securro, Jones, and Cadle, 2006).

### *References Cited in The Essay Punch Method (in Alphabetical Order)*

Bloom, B.S., and Krathwohl, D.R., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*, by a committee of college and university examiners, Longmans, Green, 1956.

Graham, S., *Strategy Instruction and the Teaching of Writing: A Meta-Analysis*, *Handbook of Writing Research*, 2006.

Matsumura, L.C., Patthey-Chavez, C.G., Valdes, R., and Garnier, H., *Teacher Feedback, Writing Assignment Quality, and Third-Grade Students' Revision in Lower- and Higher-Achieving Urban Schools*, *The Elementary School Journal*, 2002.

O'Byrne, B., Securro, S., Jones, J., Cadle, B., *Making the cut: the impact of an integrated learning system on low-achieving middle school students*, *Journal of Computer-Assisted Learning*, 2006.

Shepard, L.A., *The Role of Assessment in a Learning Culture*, *Educational Researcher*, 2000.

### **Scope of the Program: Skills**

1. Contains 3 units
2. Provides writing prompts (topics) and writing questions
3. Guides students step by step through essay development
4. Focuses on a different kind of essay for each unit
5. Provides a computer-assisted approach to teaching writing through specific skills as well as brainstorming, organizing, expanding ideas and revising

### **Implementation**

#### *Plan of Action for Using the Program Integrated with the Curriculum*

1. Suggested allocation of time for using the program
  - a. 2-3 sessions per week
  - b. 35-40 minutes per session
  - c. 3-5 sessions to complete each writing topic
2. Suggested overview of student sessions
  - a. **First session:** Choosing a topic, brainstorming, pre-writing, writing and organizing
  - b. **Second and third sessions:** Revising, editing, proofreading and publishing
3. Tracking students' work
  - a. checking progress – using reports and the online portfolio
  - b. intervening with individual students or the whole class as dictated by work in progress
  - c. using completed work to assess both individual and overall class progress

### **Class Time – Preparing your students to use the Punch Program**

1. Skills students need to be able to use the program
  - a. write basic sentences
  - b. write basic paragraph
  - c. read and follow directions
  - d. use a computer, type and use a mouse

2. Classroom instruction on writing an essay using the Punch process
  - a. pre-writing – brainstorming (spelling not important in this step)
  - b. thesis
  - c. outlining
  - d. introductory paragraph
  - e. body
  - f. organizing
  - g. coherence
  - h. conclusion
  - i. revising
  - j. proofreading (spellchecker will be available in this step)
  - k. publishing
  
3. Classroom instruction on the use of the software program – how the program works
  - a. “My Progress” (shows how far along the student is in the program)
  - b. choosing a topic (9 topics in the series)
  - c. prompts (questions to guide student to enter appropriate information; 1080 prompts)
  - d. input boxes (places for the student to enter his own words, phrases or sentences)
  - e. tips
    - i) for the student who is not sure of the directions
    - ii) for the student who wants suggestions about what to enter in input boxes
  - f. notepads – pre-writing, writing, paragraphs (places where student inputs are recorded)
  - g. topic sentence and concluding sentences (examples are provided)
  - h. revising tools (how to change text, add, remove, move text)

### **Classroom Curriculum Integration**

1. Preparation: Classroom instruction on writing a good essay via modeling
  - a. webbing, outlining
  - b. introduction
  - c. body
  - d. conclusion
  
2. While using the program: practice and solidification of skills via classroom review
  - a. introduction and conclusion
  - b. body
  - c. revision
  - d. vocabulary
  - e. connectives (transitional words)
  - f. editing - proper punctuation/usage/capitalization
  
3. While using the program: classroom follow-up
  - a. Sharing in small groups or with whole class
    - i) editing

- ii) revision—small group or class suggestions may encourage students to go back to program to use revising tools
- iii) modeling
  - (1) small group
  - (2) whole class
- b. Mini-lessons for small groups or whole class
  - i) grammar/usage
  - ii) sentence structure
  - iii) spelling
  - iv) vocabulary/language
  - v) revision
  - vi) introductory/supporting/concluding paragraphs
- c. Publishing
  - i) Use completed writing topics to create individual writing portfolios
  - ii) Share portfolios with other students

## **Beyond The Program**

1. Have students continue with their Merit writing program till they reach *Revising*. Ask them to work in pairs, helping each other as they edit.
2. Have students break into small groups and share their printed writing, telling what they like about each other's writing, and giving any suggestions.
3. Put together a class publication of work done with this program.
4. Trade essays with a partner and edit each other's work.
5. Use the Merit Software Punch process to practice independent writing.
  - a. Have students use the Independent Follow-up Worksheet to work step by step.
  - b. Have students check off steps on the Independent Follow-up Worksheet as they complete them.
6. Use the Merit Writing Assessment to evaluate student skills.
  - a. Meet with students for independent writing conferences whenever possible.
  - b. Point out strengths in their writing.
  - c. Point out how they have improved over time.
  - d. Explain which ideas continue to need improvement.
  - e. Intervene with individual students or with the whole class as needed.
7. Create a bridge from language arts to other academic subjects.
  - a. Have students use the Merit Software Punch process to comprehend other kinds of subject-area content, and to improve their writing across the curriculum.
  - b. Explain how students may use the Merit Software Punch steps they have learned while doing social studies or science writing assignments.

- i) Have students work together in small groups after reading a social studies or science text.
- ii) Give group members a writing topic.
- iii) Have group members work together filling out the Brainstorming Worksheet.
- iv) Have students return to the Independent Follow-up Worksheet while completing their writing assignment.

## **Teacher Orientation to Program Structure or “Anatomy of the Program”** *Logging on, Class Management and Course Administration*

All users log into [www.meritonlinelearning.com](http://www.meritonlinelearning.com) with their user name and password. The system displays each user's personalized Homepage. Students see their individualized coursework and click on a program unit to start the lesson.

The parent/tutors Homepages include tools for adding students. School administrators' homepages include tools for creating courses and adding both teachers and students.

### *Essay Punch Step by Step*

**INTRODUCTION:** Introduces a specific type of essay - one that presents reasons, explanations or details to support the subject.

**SUBJECT:** Students are given several subjects and are asked to choose one as the focus of their essay.

**PRE-WRITING:** Students brainstorm their ideas in the Pre-Writing section. Using words or phrases, students write their ideas about the topic they have chosen. The program provides a series of prompt questions and help messages to help stimulate students' thoughts. Students write about many aspects of the topic, using words or phrases. Students do not have to use all their ideas in their essay.

**THESIS:** Students formulate a thesis, or main idea, statement that tells what the essay will be about. The program provides a sample thesis statement, plus an incomplete statement for students to finish as an exercise. Students then write a thesis statement of their own.

**BUILDING an OUTLINE:** Students look at their pre-writing list for related ideas and group them as subtopics under a heading. The program helps students to write possible headings. Students must write at least two headings, with at least two subtopics under each, in order to advance. Various options allow students to make corrections. The program supplies Roman numerals - I, II, etc. - for the headings. It uses capital letters - A, B, etc. - for the subtopics.

**WRITING - INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH:** Students are prompted to use their thesis statement as written or rephrase it to introduce their essay. The program then provides a sample sentence that could follow the opening sentence. Students must write at least one follow-up sentence of their own for their introductory paragraph. From this point on, students may print their work. The printout will show the section of the program from which the work was printed. After seeing their work, students are encouraged to add transitional words here to help the sentences flow smoothly from one thought to the next.

**WRITING - BODY:** Here, students use the outline as their plan for writing the body paragraphs of their essay. The program guides students step by step to expand each heading and its subtopics into sentences that form paragraphs. Students are prompted to write at least three sentences for each paragraph. Students are encouraged to write complete sentences. The sentence must begin with a capital letter, have appropriate end punctuation, and include at least two words.

**ORGANIZING:** Students see all the paragraphs they have written for the body of the essay. They have a chance here to review and make any changes in the order of the paragraphs so that the essay is organized in the most logical and effective way. Student may also add or delete entire paragraphs in this section.

**COHERENCE:** The program provides examples of connecting words or phrases that improve the transition between thoughts. Students are encouraged to add transitional words for a smooth flow from one paragraph to the next.

**WRITING - CONCLUSION:** The program guides the student to write a concluding paragraph that restates their introductory paragraph and sums up what their essay is about.

**REVIEWING - THE FIRST DRAFT:** In this section, the Essay Notepad presents the essay as a whole unit for the first time. The program asks students to check their work, paragraph by paragraph, using the Essay Notepad buttons: Add, Remove, Move, or Edit.

**REVISING - CONTENT:** Here, the Essay Draft appears for review of the essay as a whole unit. The computer asks the students to check their work and guides them in the use of the Add, Change text, Remove, or Move buttons.

**OPTIONS MENU:** The Options Menu contains four subsections: STYLE, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, GRAMMAR AND PROOFREADING. Each subsection contains lessons designed to help students improve their writing. (The record-keeping program lets the teacher know which subsections the student has completed.)

--**STYLE:** Students are encouraged to review their choice of nouns, verbs and sentence variety. Examples show how changes can make the essay more interesting to read.

--**SENTENCE STRUCTURE:** The program reminds students about common sentence structure problems, such as incomplete sentences, comma faults and parallel structure errors.

--**GRAMMAR:** Common grammatical errors, such as lack of agreement between subject and verb and misplaced modifiers, are called to the students' attention.

--**PROOFREADING:** This is the students' last chance to revisit what they have written and check their spelling. Spell checking is available here as review tool. Students are reminded to reread their work after doing a spell check to make sure it makes sense.

**PUBLISHING:** When students arrive at the Publishing section they are given three choices:

Review: Review the revising sections again.

Spell checking: This is an opportunity to review spelling.

Save: This saves the student's work to the student's online portfolio.

After the students' essays are saved, students are presented with these options:

Print: The student's work appears in a browser window for printing. Name and date appear at the beginning of the printout.

Word Processor: Copies the student's work to the Clipboard so that it can be pasted into a word processor document.

New Subject: Allows students to start a new subject without going back to the Learning Center.

### *Tracking Students' Work*

Administrators and teachers may view students' online portfolios. They can also view and print a variety of reports.

## **Content of Essay Punch**

Each unit concentrates on a specific type of essay - based on persuasion, information, or description. Here are the subjects within each type:

### **Unit 1: Description**

**Subject:** A memorable experience - One of your friends always seems to have an interesting experience to relate. Sometimes it is a quiet experience, drawn from everyday life. Sometimes it is a vivid memory of a past event. Now it is your turn to describe an experience or event in your own life that you remember well because of how it made you feel or what you learned from it.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about something that happened to you and how it influenced or affected you.

**Subject:** A significant place - Particular places often have a special meaning, interest, or importance. For example, a child you know loves to describe the exciting sights and sounds of a local amusement park. An elderly neighbor remembers in detail her overcrowded home in a far-distant town nearly seventy years ago. Now it is your turn to tell about a place, past or present, that is significant to you.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe a particular place and tell what it means to you.

**Subject:** Someone who has affected your life positively - You have learned about people whose lives were touched in some significant way by another person. Now you have a chance to write about someone who has affected your own life positively in some way.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about a particular person and how he or she touched your life.

## Unit 2: Information

**Subject:** An area of interest - One of your friends knows all about dolphins. Another can sing all the songs the Beatles ever wrote. Almost everyone has an interest, talent, or hobby that makes him or her an 'expert' in some area. Describe an activity or area about which you are especially knowledgeable.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe or explain something you know well.

**Subject:** A modern discovery or invention - Have you ever wondered what a visitor from an earlier time would make of our world today? Imagine that you have such a visitor. Describe a discovery or invention made in the last one hundred years or so, and show how modern society depends on it.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell about something discovered in nature or created entirely new within the past hundred years.

**Subject:** A character from a different background - You have a new neighbor, a recent arrival in your community. Some of your friends already know something about his culture from a movie they saw. Movies and books allow us to meet people whose lives are different from our own. Here is your chance to tell about a movie or book that increased your knowledge of people from another land, or from another part of America, or from a different background.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe a movie or book about people from a different place or culture.

## Unit 3: Persuasion

**Subject:** Community service - Some members of the school board in your community have recommended that all students be required to do community service each semester. Students are invited to express their opinions, in writing, for or against required community service.

**Tip:** This subject will give you a chance to write about why required community service for all students is a good idea or a poor idea.

**Subject:** A standard dress code - The principal of a local school wants to ban jewelry, hats, and leather jackets in school and set up a standard dress code for all students. Write an essay that argues for -- or against -- the idea of a school's having a standard dress code.

**Tip:** This subject will give you a chance to write about why a standard dress code for all students is a good idea or a poor idea.

**Subject:** The effects of TV - A teacher, a student, and a member of the town council appear on a local TV talk show and debate whether television does more good than harm, or the reverse. The program's host invites his home audience to write in their views.

**Tip:** This subject will give you a chance to write about the negative -- or positive -- effects of television.

## Merit Writing Assessment Rubric

Scores from 5 to 1 reflect the range of skills demonstrated in response to each writing assignment.

### SCORE OF 5

A 5 writing assignment is **EXCELLENT**. It demonstrates proficiency in response to the assignment. It contains only a few minor errors. A writing assignment with a score of 5:

- is very well organized and developed
- explains a key idea very clearly
- displays variation in types of sentences used
- displays outstanding facility in the use of language, including vocabulary
- is nearly free of errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure

### SCORE OF 4

A 4 writing assignment is **GOOD**. It demonstrates proficiency in response to the assignment. It may contain a number of minor errors. A writing assignment with a score of 4:

- is well organized and developed
- explains a key idea clearly
- provides some variation in types of sentences used
- displays good facility in the use of language and vocabulary
- is generally free of errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure

### SCORE OF 3

A 3 writing assignment is **COMPETENT**. While it demonstrates some proficiency in response to the assignment, it also needs some improvement. It contains a number of minor errors. A writing assignment with a score of 3:

- is adequately organized and developed
- explains a key idea
- displays little variation and some errors in sentences
- displays adequate facility in the use of language
- displays a number of minor errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure

### SCORE OF 2

A 2 writing assignment is **LIMITED**. It demonstrates minimal proficiency in response to the assignment. It needs much improvement. It contains both major and minor errors. A writing assignment with a score of 2:

- is weakly organized and poorly developed
- does not adequately explain a key idea
- shows limited understanding of sentence variety and structure
- displays limited or inappropriate use of language, including limited vocabulary
- displays major and minor errors in mechanics and usage

### SCORE OF 1

A 1 writing assignment is **UNSATISFACTORY**. It demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in response to the assignment. It indicates that the student is struggling to write. It contains major errors that need to be dealt with before the minor errors. A writing assignment with a score of 1:

- is not organized and developed
- does not explain a key idea, or goes off-topic
- provides little or no relevant detail
- shows little understanding of sentence structure
- displays inappropriate use of language
- displays many major and minor errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Group members \_\_\_\_\_

Topic \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Brainstorming**

Use words or phrases.

Ideas

Supporting Details



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Essay Outline - Body

You should always outline the body of your essay before you begin writing. Use only words or phrases. This sample outline can help you organize your thoughts for your essay.

I. Heading 1: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Subtopic 1: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Subtopic 2: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

II. Heading 2: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Subtopic 1: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Subtopic 2: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

III. Heading 3: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Subtopic 1: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Subtopic 2: \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Independent Follow-up Worksheet**  
*Essay Punch: Description / Information*

Circle One:                      Information                      Description

Use this checklist to guide you through the essay writing process. As you begin each writing step, think about what you did in the Essay Punch program. You should do your pre-writing and essay writing on a word processor or in your writer's notebook.

WRITING SUBJECT \ QUESTION (fill in):

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Check the box after you have finished each step.

**Pre-Writing**

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorm by writing ideas related to your topic. Write only words or phrases.

WRITING--THESIS

Your thesis should explain what the reader will learn or what you will describe.

OUTLINE

Use your pre-writing ideas to build an outline for your essay.

Use only words or phrases.

Create headings for the bigger ideas and subtopics for the supporting arguments.

**Essay Writing**

WRITING--INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

Introduce your subject and thesis with an introductory paragraph.

WRITING--BODY

Use your outline to write at least three body paragraphs.

ORGANIZING

Arrange the paragraphs of your essay in a logical and effective way.

Use transition words and phrases to help your paragraphs flow smoothly

WRITING--CLOSING PARAGRAPH

Write your closing paragraph to summarize your essay.

## Editing

### □ REVISING

#### □ CONTENT

Check that your writing sticks to the chosen subject stated in your introduction.  
Check that your information or descriptions are easily understood.

#### □ STYLE

Check that you use descriptive and informative words appropriate for an essay.  
Check that you use varied sentence types and lengths.

#### □ SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Check that you use complete sentences.  
Check that you avoid run-on sentences.  
Check that you use parallel structure.

#### □ GRAMMAR

Check that you use commas correctly.  
Check your punctuation.

### □ PROOFREADING

Read your essay aloud for fluency.  
Correct capitalization and spelling.  
Re-read your essay for any final changes.

### □ PUBLISHING

## Independent Follow-up Worksheet

### *Essay Punch: Persuasion*

Use this checklist to guide you through the persuasive essay writing process. As you begin each writing step, think about what you did in the Essay Punch program. You should do your pre-writing and essay writing on a word processor or in your writer's notebook.

WRITING SUBJECT \ QUESTION (fill in):

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Check the box after you have finished each step.

#### **Pre-Writing**

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorm by writing ideas related to your topic. Write only words or phrases.  
Brainstorm ideas both for (pro) and against (con) the argument.

WRITING--THESIS

Choose the point of view from which you would like to write.  
Develop a single, arguable statement that expresses your opinion.

OUTLINE

Use your pre-writing ideas to build an outline for your essay.  
Use only words and phrases.  
Create headings for the bigger ideas and subtopics for the supporting arguments.

#### **Essay Writing**

WRITING--INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

Introduce your subject and thesis with an introductory paragraph.

WRITING--BODY

Use your outline to write at least two body paragraphs.

Organizing

Arrange the paragraphs of your essay. Place the strongest arguments last.  
Use transition words and phrases to help your paragraphs flow smoothly

WRITING--CLOSING PARAGRAPH

Write your closing paragraph to summarize your essay and your argument.

## Editing

### □ REVISING

#### □ CONTENT

Check that you stick to the subject and point of view stated in your introduction.  
Check that your argument is logical and convincing.

#### □ STYLE

Check that your word choice is appropriate for a persuasive essay.  
Check that you use varied sentence types and lengths.

#### □ SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Check that you use complete sentences.  
Check that you avoid run-on sentences.  
Check that you use parallel structure.

#### □ GRAMMAR

Check that you use commas correctly.  
Check your punctuation.

### □ PROOFREADING

Read your essay aloud for fluency.  
Correct capitalization and spelling.  
Re-read your essay for any final changes.

### □ PUBLISHING