



# Paragraph Punch® Manual

Skill Levels 6-10

Complete program: 5 units

REASONS (Unit 1), DETAILS (Unit 2), EXAMPLE (Unit 3),  
CAUSE AND EFFECTS (Unit 4), SEQUENCE (Unit 5)

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.

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## Why Use Paragraph Punch?

### *Benefits of Using Paragraph 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 Paragraph Punch Do?

### *The Paragraph 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 a paragraph
  - 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 Paragraph 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 5 units
2. Provides writing prompts (topics) and writing questions
3. Guides students step by step through paragraph development
4. Focuses on a different kind of paragraph 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 sessions per week
  - b. 35-40 minutes per session
  - c. 2-3 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. read and follow directions
  - c. use a computer, type and use a mouse
2. Classroom instruction on writing a paragraph using the Punch process

- a. pre-writing – brainstorming (spelling not important in this step)
  - b. topic sentence
  - c. body
  - d. organizing
  - e. transition
  - f. concluding sentence
  - g. revising
  - h. proofreading (spellchecker will be available in this step)
  - i. 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 (15 topics in the series)
  - c. prompts (questions to guide student to enter appropriate information; 1548 prompts)
  - d. input boxes (places for the student to enter his or her 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, paragraph (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 paragraph via modeling
  - a. webbing, outlining
  - b. topic sentence
  - c. body
  - d. concluding sentence
2. While using the program: practice and solidification of skills via classroom review
  - a. topic and concluding sentences
  - 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) topic/supporting/concluding sentences
- 4. 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 until 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 paragraphs 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 on to [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.

### *Paragraph Punch Step by Step*

**INTRODUCTION:** Introduces a specific type of paragraph - one that presents reasons, details, example, cause and effects, or sequence to support the topic of the paragraph.

**TOPIC:** Students are given several writing prompts and are asked to choose one as the focus of their paragraph. The computer then prompts them to enter the name of their own specific subject, which will be the topic of their paragraph.

**PRE-WRITING:** A Pre-Writing Notepad appears on the screen. The computer provides a series of writing prompts that are customized to match the topic the student has chosen to write about. These prompts encourage the student to brainstorm. He/she responds by typing words or phrases into separate input boxes. Then the computer puts the student’s ideas into a list. Tips are available if the student gets stuck.

**WRITING - TOPIC SENTENCE:** The computer provides a sample topic sentence, plus an incomplete topic sentence for students to finish as an exercise. Students then write an original topic sentence to introduce their paragraph. Next, they look at their topic sentence together with their pre-writing items and review the items for relevance to the topic sentence.

**WRITING - BODY:** The Pre-Writing Notepad reappears. Students begin the body of the paragraph by choosing an item from the Pre-Writing Notepad and moving it to the Writing Notepad. They then use this item in a sentence that begins the body of the paragraph. They continue to choose several items and write several sentences to complete the body of the 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:** In the first step of this section, the Writing Notepad with the students’ sentences appears on the left half of the screen. A Paragraph Notepad with the students’ topic sentences are on the right half of the screen. Students transfer sentences from the Writing Notepad and arrange them in the Paragraph Notepad, deciding which sentences to use and in which order. All the sentences do not have to be used, but at least four must be chosen for the student to proceed.

In the second step of the Organizing section, students see their work for the first time in paragraph form in the Paragraph Draft box. Next, students are encouraged to add transitional words to help the sentences flow smoothly from one thought to the next.

From this point on, students may print their work. (The printout will show the section of the program from which the work was printed.)

**WRITING - CONCLUSION:** The computer provides a sample concluding sentence, plus an incomplete concluding sentence for students to finish as an exercise. Students then write an original concluding sentence to end their writing.

**REVISING - OVERVIEW:** Here, for the first time, the Paragraph Draft appears for review with the paragraph 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 and verbs and sentence variety. Examples show how changes can make the paragraph more interesting to read.

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

--**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 and their spelling. Spell checking is available here as a 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' paragraphs 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 Topic:* Allows students to start a new topic 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 Paragraph Punch

Each unit concentrates on a specific type of paragraph - based on reasons, details, example, cause and effects, or sequence. Here are the topics within each type:

### Unit 1: Reasons

**Topic:** A worthwhile charity - A relative has generously left you money in her will. You want to give some of it to charity. Which charity do you choose and why?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about a charity and its contribution to society.

**Topic:** A traveling companion - You have won a free trip to Hawaii. You may take one person with you. Whom do you choose and why?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about a close friend or relative, and why he or she would be fun to have with you in Hawaii.

**Topic:** A favorite local athlete - The editor of your local newspaper has asked you to write about the best athlete on a team in your school or community. Whom do you choose and why?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about your favorite local player.

### Unit 2: Details

**Topic:** A place to show a visitor - A friend from far away is coming to visit you for the first time. What place in particular do you want your friend to see during the visit?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about your favorite spot.

**Topic:** A memorable place - One place stands out in your memory. It may be indoors or outdoors, close to home or far away. Tell about it.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about a place you remember well.

**Topic:** Travel back in time - A special machine lets you travel back in time. Describe what you witness firsthand some time in the past.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell about a period of time or an event in the past that especially interests you.

### Unit 3: Example

**Topic:** A personal hero - Most of us have 'heroes,' people we greatly admire. Our heroes are usually people who help others. Describe one of your heroes.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about a person you admire.

**Topic:** A necessary machine - Machines and gadgets have made life easier and more fun. Some machines we could not imagine living without. Write about a machine that you cannot live without.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about the machine or gadget you enjoy or depend on most.

**Topic:** An unusual pet - We think of cats, dogs, and goldfish as commonplace pets. There are also other, more unusual pets available. Write about a pet that you think is unusual.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about an unusual pet.

### Unit 4: Cause and Effects

**Topic:** Moving on - You are moving on to another place or a new experience. How does this move affect you?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell how your life has changed.

**Topic:** Living without an important object - Something that you depend on breaks down. It takes a week to get it fixed. What does this do to your life?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe what it is like for you to live without an object that is important to you.

**Topic:** A community disaster - A natural disaster has struck your community. What are the results?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe how a force of nature affected your community.

### **Unit 5: Sequence**

**Topic:** How to play a game - You enjoy playing a particular game. Your friend wants to learn how to play it too. Describe how you teach your friend to play the game.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell how to play a certain game.

**Topic:** Organizing a party - There is a traditional holiday in three weeks. You want to have a party in your home. How do you organize it?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe how to plan a party.

**Topic:** Preparing a meal - You plan to surprise your mother by preparing a meal for her on Mother's Day. What do you do?

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe the steps involved in preparing a meal.

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## 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



**Independent Follow-up Worksheet**  
**Paragraph Punch**

**Circle One: Reasons      Details      Example      Cause and Effects      Sequence**

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

WRITING TOPIC \ QUESTION (fill in):

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Check the box when you have finished a step.

PRE-WRITING

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

WRITING—OPENING SENTENCE

Write your opening sentence to introduce the subject of your paragraph.

WRITING—BODY

Use your pre-writing ideas to write complete sentences.

ORGANIZING

Arrange your sentences into a paragraph. Use connecting words (first, also, finally) to help your sentences flow from one to the next.

WRITING—CLOSING SENTENCE

Write your closing sentence to summarize the main idea of your paragraph.

REVISING

STYLE

Check your word choice. Make sure you use specific nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Check that you use complete sentences. Make sure to avoid run-on sentences.

GRAMMAR

Check that you use commas correctly. Check your punctuation.

PROOFREADING

Listen to the flow of your paragraph as you read it out loud. Is there something that doesn't sound right?

Correct capitalization and spelling errors.

PUBLISHING