



# Starter Paragraph Punch<sup>®</sup> Manual

Skill levels 3 - 5

Complete program: 4 units  
DETAILS (Unit 1), REASONS (Unit 2),  
SEQUENCE (Unit 3), EXAMPLE (Unit 4)

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 Starter Paragraph Punch?

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

### *The Starter 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 Starter 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 4 units
2. Provides writing prompts (topics) and writing questions
3. Guides students step by step through sentence and 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. put ideas together in words and phrases
  - 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. modeling opening sentence
  - c. body – writing complete sentences
  - 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 (16 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. opening sentence
  - c. body – writing complete sentences
  - 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.

### *Starter 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 - OPENING SENTENCE:** The computer provides sample opening sentences. Students then write an original opening sentence to introduce their paragraph. Next, they look at their opening sentence together with their pre-writing items and review the items for relevance to the opening 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 in 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, adjectives and verbs. Examples show how changes can make paragraphs more interesting to read.

--**SENTENCE STRUCTURE:** The program reminds students about the common sentence structure problem of incomplete sentences. Examples show how to correct run-on sentences.

--**GRAMMAR:** Students are encouraged to improve their use of commas. Examples show some of the many ways to use commas in a paragraph.

--**PROOFREADING:** The program reminds students about the proper use of capital letters. Examples show students how to use capital letters correctly. Students then revisit their paragraph for spelling errors. 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' 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 Starter Paragraph Punch

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

### Unit 1: Details

**Topic:** An imaginary creature - Our imagination can take us to far away places. Humans often wonder about life in outer space. Imagine that you have discovered a new planet. Write about the creatures that live on this planet.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe the beings who live on the new planet.

**Topic:** The weather - Everybody has an opinion about the kind of weather they prefer. Write a paragraph about the weather you enjoy most.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about weather that you enjoy.

**Topic:** A favorite food - You and your family have just entered a fantastic restaurant. There is no menu there because they can make anything you want, and everything they cook is delicious. Describe what you would order.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to imagine a tasty food made just for you.

**Topic:** A new superhero - You have seen superheroes on television, in movies and in comic books. They have powers and abilities that are amazing. Think about your idea of a superhero and create your own.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell about a new superhero that you would create.

### Unit 2: Reasons

**Topic:** A memorable character - Write about a character you remember well from a book you have read. The character could be from a biography (the life of a real person) or from fiction (a made-up story).

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe someone, either real or imaginary from a book.

**Topic:** A favorite place - There are many places where you spend your time. Think about a favorite place where you feel comfortable. Write about why you enjoy being there so much.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe your favorite place.

**Topic:** Someone you like - In your life you have many people whom you know well and with whom you enjoy spending time. Think about someone who is important to you and write about that person.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe someone you like.

**Topic:** A favorite animal - Which animal do you like to visit most at the zoo? Tell why you chose it.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to write about your favorite animal at the zoo.

### Unit 3: Sequence

**Topic:** Planning a party - Planning a party can be fun, but it requires a lot of hard work. You have been asked to plan a party for your class at your school. You have six weeks to prepare for it. Tell how you would organize it.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe how you would organize a party at school.

**Topic:** A birthday present - You want to buy a birthday present for a friend. Describe how you will choose the present.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell about buying a birthday gift for a friend.

**Topic:** Making a dessert - Bake sales raise money for good causes. Your school is having a bake sale and you are going to make a special dessert. Describe the steps you will take to prepare this treat.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell how you will bake a dessert.

**Topic:** Losing and founding something - Everyone has lost something and then found it. Write about something you lost and then found.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe something you lost and how you found it.

**Unit 4:**  
**Example**

**Topic:** An enjoyable story - In a book there are many different parts to the story. When you read, you meet people, see different places, and perhaps travel to a different time period. Choose a book that you enjoyed reading and write about it.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell about a story that you enjoyed.

**Topic:** A memorable trip - When you travel you can learn many things. Write about a trip that you took to a nearby or far away place. Tell what you learned on this trip.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell about a trip you remember well.

**Topic:** An imaginary invention - Many of us have ideas for inventions that could make our lives easier. Maybe you have thought about such an invention. Use your imagination to describe something that you would like to invent.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to describe something unusual that you want to create.

**Topic:** A great day - There are great days that we remember. It is fun to look back on these days and think about what made them so wonderful. Write about a great day that you experienced.

**Tip:** This topic will give you a chance to tell what you did on a day that you thought was wonderful.

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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**  
***Starter Paragraph Punch***

**Circle One:**            **Details**            **Reasons**            **Sequence**            **Example**

Use this checklist to guide you through the paragraph writing process. As you begin each writing step, think about what you did in the Starter 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**