MERIT®
software

Merit® Online Learning
Essay Punch®

Skill Levels 7 and above
Middle School through College Prep
Intermediate English Language Learners through Advanced
Suitable for Adult Literacy and Special Needs Students

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)

What Does Essay Punch® Do?

Essay Punch helps students develop their essay writing skills. It teaches three different ways to develop an essay: through description, information, and persuasion.

Through pre-set writing prompts the program guides students step by step to develop an idea and write their own short essay. Steps to finished essays include pre-writing, outlining, organizing, revising, rewriting, and publishing.

Scope of the Program

The program contains 9 writing topics and 1,080 help prompts to guide students through each step in the writing process.

Implementation

Suggested allocation of time for using the program
For best results we recommend that students use the program 35 to 40 minutes a session for two to three sessions a week. Students would complete a writing assignment in three to five sessions. The program should be used throughout the school year to build and reinforce skills.

Suggested overview of student sessions
       First session: Choosing a topic, brainstorming, pre-writing, writing and organizing
       Second and third sessions: Revising, editing, proofreading, and publishing

Students advance through the program at their own pace. The program accommodates students with a wide range of skills and abilities. The program provides structure and support for students who need the help and engages advanced students by encouraging them to stretch themselves to improve their writing.

Tracking students' work
Students and teachers are able to view progress and time-on-task through students' Online Portfolios and Reports. The Online Portfolio stores all completed or published work. Students and teachers can review student writing to see development and progress over an entire year.

Program Structure or "Anatomy of the Program"

The following pages are a teacher orientation to the Essay Punch program structure, using sample screens from the program.

Student's Learning Center

The student clicks the + next to the Essay Punch program to see the units of the program. The student clicks the unit to start a lesson.

To see all saved writing the student clicks Online Portfolio in the menu bar.

Display Options: Text Size, Rewards, Background Color
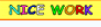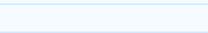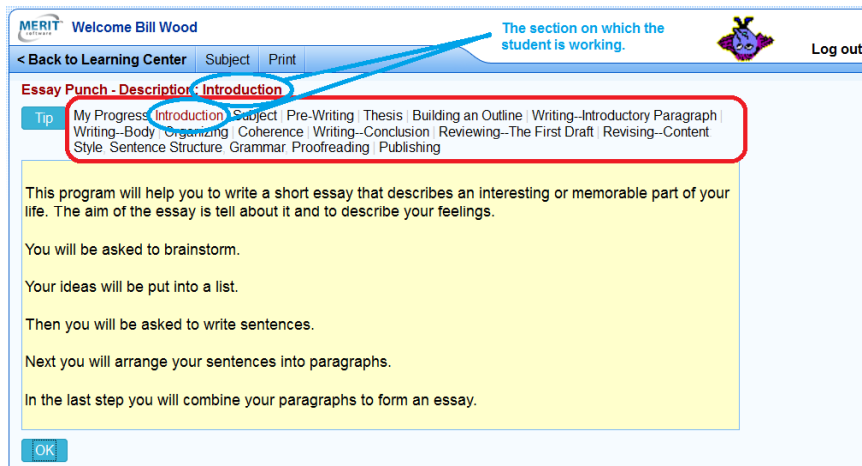
Students can choose a graphic reward theme, and choose a different background color when they start a Essay Punch unit.
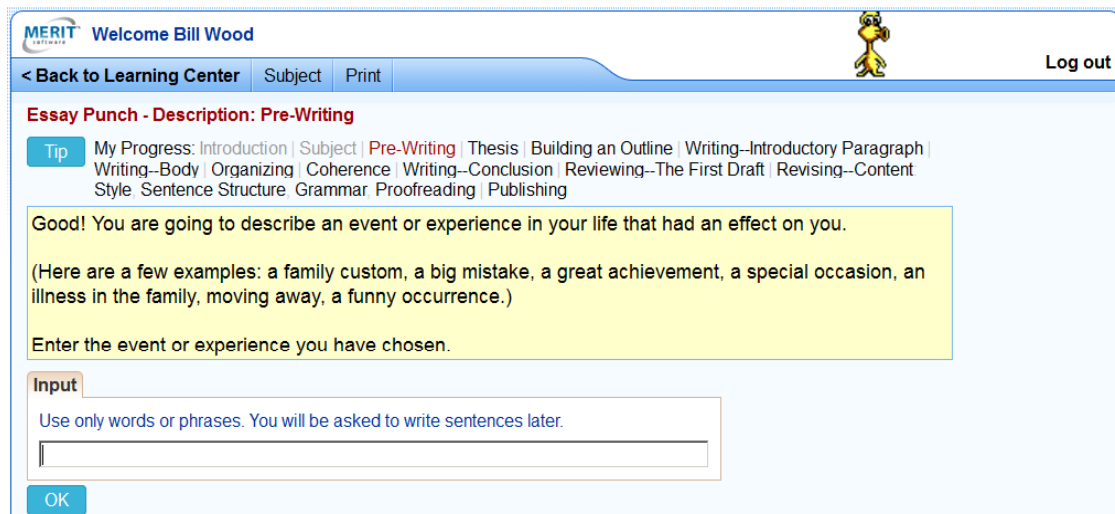
My Progress

The section or "step" on which the student is working is shown following the program name and unit name, as well as in "My Progress."

Introduction

The program introduces a specific type of essay - one that presents details, explanations or reasons to support the subject of the essay.

Subject

Students are given several writing prompts and are asked to choose one as the focus of their essay. Students personalize the subject they have chosen.

Pre-Writing

A series of questions encourage students to brainstorm their ideas. Students enter words or phrases, not sentences. The program places students' answers in the Pre-Writing Notepad.

Thesis

Students formulate a thesis statement that tells what the essay will be about.

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. The program supplies Roman numerals - I, II, etc. - for the headings. It uses capital letters - A, B, etc. - for the subtopics.

Building an Outline

Writing--Introductory Paragraph

Students are prompted to use their thesis statement as written or rephrase it to introduce their essay. Students must write at least one follow-up sentence for their introductory paragraph.

Writing--Body

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.

Writing--Body

> **MERIT** *software*   **Welcome Bill Wood**   **Log out**
>
> **< Back to Learning Center** | Subject | Print | Outline
>
> **Essay Punch - Description: Writing--Body**
>
> Tip   My Progress: Introduction | Subject | Pre-Writing | Thesis | Building an Outline | Writing--Introductory Paragraph | Writing--Body | Organizing | Coherence | Writing--Conclusion | Reviewing--The First Draft | Revising--Content Style Sentence Structure Grammar Proofreading | Publishing
>
> Write another supporting sentence on another subtopic.
>
> This could complete your paragraph.
>
> **Input**
>
> [   ]
>
> **OK**
>
> **Outline**
> ```
> II.  Why it Was Important
>      A.  Big step
>      B.  Scary/exciting
> ```
>
> **Essay Notepad**
>
> city. I spent weeks before the move deciding what to bring with me, what to leave, and what to get later, once I was settled. When the big day finally came, my family flew to Manhattan with me to help me move in to my new dorm.
>
> The move was important for several reasons. I had lived in Chicago for nearly 19 years, so going to a new city was a big deal. Also, it would be my first time living on my own.

Students write sentences for the body of the essay. The student's opening sentence appears in the Writing Notepad. Students begin the body of the essay by choosing an item from the Pre-Writing Notepad. They use this item in a sentence, which is saved in the Writing Notepad.

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.

Organizing

> **MERIT** *software*   **Welcome Bill Wood**   **Log out**
>
> **< Back to Learning Center** | Subject | Print | Outline
>
> **Essay Punch - Description: Organizing**
>
> Tip   My Progress: Introduction | Subject | Pre-Writing | Thesis | Building an Outline | Writing--Introductory Paragraph | Writing--Body | Organizing | Coherence | Writing--Conclusion | Reviewing--The First Draft | Revising--Content Style Sentence Structure Grammar Proofreading | Publishing
>
> Look at the ORDER of the paragraphs IN THE BODY of your essay.
>
> Could you organize your paragraphs in a more interesting or more effective way?
>
> First, decide which paragraph should follow your introduction.
>
> If necessary, change the order by selecting the paragraph and using Up move/Down move.
>
> **Essay Notepad**   Up move | Down move
>
> ▷ One of the most important moments of my life was moving to New York for college. I packed up my belongings and moved from a house in Chicago with my family to a tiny dorm room in New York City. It was a very scary experience, but I rose to the challenge and learned a lot along the way.
> ▷ The move from Chicago to New York was quite an experience. I had moved before, but never to a different city. I spent weeks before the move deciding what to bring with me, what to leave, and what to get later, once I was settled. When the big day finally came, my family flew to Manhattan with me to help me move in to my new dorm.
> ▷ The move was important for several reasons. I had lived in Chicago for nearly 19 years, so going to a new city was a big deal. Also, it would be my first time living on my own. It was a scary experience, but also exciting.
> ▷ I learned a lot from the move to New York. Living on my own made me much more independent. I learned to handle my own problems without having to rely on others. It also made me appreciate home more
>
> **OK**

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.

Reviewing – The First Draft

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.

Revising--Overview

The computer asks the students to check their work and guides them in the use of the Add, Change Text, Remove, and Move buttons.

Revising Options

Students are presented with optional lessons to help them improve their writing.

The Revising Options menu contains four subsections: STYLE, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, GRAMMAR, AND PROOFREADING. Each subsection contains lessons designed to help students improve their language arts skills. The record-keeping program lets the teacher know which subsections the students have completed.

Publishing

Students are given the opportunity to continue revising their work before publishing. Students have a final opportunity to review their work before saving it – "publishing" it – to their online portfolio. All published writing is stored in the Online Portfolio.

Post Published Edits

Once students have finished the program, they can view their published work in the Online Portfolio. In addition to viewing completed work, students can make edits to published essays.

Accessing Student's Most Recent Work

In addition to making edits, students can see the current state of their work, review past versions, and print their newly updated essays. The essay as it was initially published will be preserved

both on the Published Essay screen, and on the Post Published Edits screen under the title "Original."

Monitoring Student Work in the Online Portfolio

The Online Portfolio shows the student's most recent work in each unit. In addition, the Online Portfolio stores all published work.

Accessing Student's Most Recent Work

Teachers go directly to a student's most recent work by clicking the unit name in the course Snapshot View on their home page. Although the Parent / Tutor interface looks different, users click the unit name on their home page as well.

Online Portfolio Performance Detail

The Performance detail opens with the Notepad displaying the student's most recent work.

Online Portfolio Performance Detail – Reviewing Earlier Stages

To see how the student's writing developed you may view earlier stages of the work, such as the student's Pre-Writing Notepad.

Online Portfolio Performance Detail – Post Published Edits

To see changes that students have made to their writing after publishing, you can access the Post Paragraph Edits tab.

Online Portfolio – All Work for a Student

Online Portfolio Table of Contents

To view the student's previous work select the Performance Detail you wish to view from the online portfolio table of contents.

Navigating the Performance Detail Interface

The Student Performance Detail also displays overview and progress statistics that the program tracks.

Monitoring Student Work With Reports

The Reports are useful for monitoring student summary information and statistics for the Essay Punch units. You can view and export information about a whole class.

Performance Summary Report

The Performance Summary report tracks the number of published works, works in progress, and completed revising sections. It includes Date Last Played, Date Started, and Time on Task.

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

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