



Punch™
Software for teaching
writing and reading.

Paragraph Punch™

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)

For details about each unit, see the Content section on page 4.
For Teaching Suggestions, see page 6.
Writing Assessment and Independent Writing Worksheet, attached.

Evaluation version: REASONS (Unit 1)
Tracks work for two students.

Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/2003/XP
5 MB RAM, 65 MB hard disk space
This program requires a minimum screen resolution of 800 by 600 pixels.

The program helps students learn different ways to write a paragraph: through reasons, details, sequence, example, and cause and effects. The program contains 15 writing topics and 1,548 help prompts to guide students through each step in the writing process.

This writing program helps students with reading levels of six and up to write effective paragraphs. It teaches five different ways to develop a paragraph: through reasons, details, example, cause and effects, and sequence. A step-by-step approach emphasizes content and organization.

To use Paragraph Punch, students need to be able to write basic sentences on a word processor. The program guides students through each step in writing a complete paragraph. Help messages are provided throughout. Students are encouraged by the program's graphic rewards, as well as by seeing their work develop and progress. Students may transfer their finished paragraphs to a commercial word processing program. Teachers may write a comment to the student which will be saved until the student sees it.

Saving, Printing, and Exiting Before Completing Paragraph

When students exit, the program saves their work and allows them to return to it at another time. The program will quickly scroll students' work and stop at the place they left off. After the students have completed Pre-Writing they will be able to print out their work in progress at frequent intervals. Students who return to Publishing can go back to the Editing sections.

Versions are available for stand-alone, network, or home use. The evaluation version of the program permits entry of only two student names. When a third name is entered, the first one will be deleted. The stand-alone version for one station contains record keeping for 42 students. Other School versions permit entry of as many names as disk space allows. When disk space is filled, the name that was entered first will be deleted.

Operating Overview

Students progress through the program by typing in input boxes and by clicking on buttons or typing keyboard shortcuts to select actions. Next, their entries are placed and edited in notepads.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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 themes 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 a minimum number, determined by the topic, must be chosen for the computer 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: In Revising - Overview, the Paragraph Draft appears for review with the paragraph as a whole unit for the first time. 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 notifies the teacher which subsections the student has looked at.)

--**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.

--**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 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 section again.

Spell checking: This is an opportunity to review spelling.

Save: This creates a document with the name of the student, program unit, and a unique code so the file will not overwrite existing documents.

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

Print: Name and date appear at the beginning of the printout.

Word Processor: Moves the paragraph to the word processor that was selected in the Teacher Program Manager (TPM).

New Topic: Allows students to start a new topic without exiting the program.

TEACHER PROGRAM MANAGER

All Merit Software applications utilize a centralized student record keeping/management system utility program called Teacher Program Manager (TPM). To learn about these advanced functions, see the Teacher Program Manager manual. It can be printed out from the Software Documentation section of the Merit Software Installation CD or from this link on the Internet:
http://meritsoftware.com/Teacher_Program_Manager.pdf.

LOGGING ON AND CLASS MANAGEMENT

There are two options for adding student names to the record database.

- Teacher controlled – appropriate for most schools. Names added with the TPM Set Up Student Names functions.
- Student controlled – for home users and for mature students. Names added at the Logon Screen.

For more information about class management and adding student names to the database, see the Teacher Program Manager manual. It can be printed out from a Merit Software CD or from this link on the Internet: http://meritsoftware.com/Teacher_Program_Manager.pdf

The program opens to a Log on screen with all previously entered class codes and student names. Students must select their class code in order to see the list of students in their class. They then click on their name to begin the program. If the program is in student controlled mode and students are logging on for the first time, they select their class code, click the New Student icon, and fill in their name on the form that appears on the screen.

The evaluation version of the program permits entry of only two student names. When a third name is entered, the first one will be deleted. The stand-alone version for one station contains record keeping for

42 students. Other School versions permit entry of as many names as disk space allows. When disk space is filled, the name that was entered first will be deleted.

TRACKING STUDENTS' WORK

In addition to student printouts of their work in progress, teachers may view students' work in the Teacher Program Manager (TPM).

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.

CLASSROOM PRINTOUTS FOR USE WITH THIS PROGRAM (Attached)

1. Writing Assessment

Merit Software supplies a possible rubric for assessing students' writing. The rubric resembles the scoring guidelines found on many tests and formal writing assessments. In general, a rubric is valuable for teachers in determining each students' overall writing quality and also the specific strengths and weaknesses of a student's writing. A rubric can be equally important for students. They need to know what components differentiate excellent writing from poor writing. This rubric will help students understand what they need to do to produce good writing. The teacher should actively review the rubric with students, or the teacher will need to adapt it to the students' language level.

2. Independent Writing Worksheet

One goal of Paragraph Punch is to develop students' ability to write independently. The Independent Writing worksheet assists students in making this transition. The Independent Writing worksheet is a guide for paragraph writing that follows the process presented in Paragraph Punch. It helps students recall the writing steps followed in the program. Using the Independent Writing worksheet, students can work as active learners.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS PROGRAM

Ask students what kinds of writing they do for social studies, science, and language arts classes. Do they feel like writing? Why or why not? When is writing easy? When is it difficult? What kinds of writing do they most like to read? Least like to read?

Ask students what kinds of writing they do outside of school. Do they keep a journal? Write letters or email? Create stories or comic strips?

Have students use the program, going through *Pre-Writing* and inputting sentences for *Writing-Body*. Ask them to break into pairs in order to share sentences with each other.

Have students continue with their Merit writing program till they reach *Revising*. Ask them to work in pairs, helping each other as they edit.

Help students transfer their completed writing to their own disks, or to a word-processing, email, or HTML program. Have them “publish” their work by printing it.

Follow up by asking students to break into small groups and share their printed writing. What do they like about each other’s writing? Do group members have any suggestions for each other?

Follow up each session by asking students what they found easiest when using their Merit writing program. What was already familiar to them? What new things did they learn about writing?

Review any problem areas for writing in the classroom. Ask students what they found most difficult about starting, writing, or editing their writing.

If students are using *Starter Paragraph Punch* or *Paragraph Punch*, give them a short text based on material they are reading. Take a short passage from material related to something they are reading and remove punctuation. Prompt students to observe that this text is missing punctuation, such as sentence breaks, capitals and commas. Have them edit by inserting punctuation.

Ask students to try doing pre-writing for their language arts or social studies classes.

Have students work in pairs to come up with a list of adjectives to describe people, places, and things. Ask the pairs to come up with a list of verbs to describe action, then a list of adverbs for describing actions.

Request that students try editing their writing for language arts, social studies, and science classes.

Put together a class publication of work done with this program.

Merit Writing Assessment

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
- very clearly explains a key idea
- displays syntactic variety, including use of sentence structure
- displays facility in the use of language, including use of 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
- clearly explains a key idea
- displays some syntactic variety, including use of sentence structure
- displays some 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
- does not display much syntactic variety
- 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 limited proficiency in response to the assignment. It clearly needs improvement. It contains both major and minor errors. A writing assignment with a score of 2:

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

SCORE OF 1

A 1 writing assignment is **PROBLEMATIC**. It demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in response to the assignment. It demonstrates 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
- displays little or no relevant detail
- displays little understanding of sentence structure
- displays inappropriate use of language
- displays many major and minor errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure

Independent Writing 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):

Check the box after you have finished each 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