



Punch™
Software for teaching
writing and reading.

Writing For Business™

Skill levels 9 - 11

Complete program: 5 units
PERSUADE (Unit 1), DESCRIBE (Unit 2), EXPLAIN (Unit 3),
SUGGEST (Unit 4), ORGANIZE (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: PERSUADE (Unit 1)
Tracks work for two students.

Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/2003/XP
5 MB RAM, 55 MB hard disk space
This program requires a minimum screen resolution of 800 by 600 pixels.

The Writing For Business program helps students write effective paragraphs useful for their careers. The program contains 15 work-related writing topics and 1,598 help prompts to guide students through each step in the writing process.

The program is recommended for students at reading levels of grade nine and up. It teaches five different ways to write effectively for business: persuading, describing, explaining, suggesting, and organizing. A step-by-step approach emphasizes content and organization.

To use Writing For Business, students must be able to write basic sentences on a word processor. The program guides the student 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 comments to individual students, which the program will save until the student sees them.

Saving, Printing, and Exiting Before Completing Paragraph

When students exit the program, all work is saved and remains accessible for future use. Open returning, students can choose to continue from the place s/he left off. After 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

The student progresses 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 business-related paragraph - one that persuades, describes, explains, suggests, or organizes.

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 student's chosen topic. These prompts encourage the student to brainstorm. He/she responds by typing words or phrases into separate input boxes. The computer then puts the student's ideas into a list. Tips are available to help the student if needed.

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 view 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. This item becomes the topic of the paragraph body's first sentence. 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 students cannot proceed until they have written a minimum number of sentences. The minimum number is determined by the topic.

In the second step of the Organizing section, the Paragraph Draft box allows students to see their work for the first time in paragraph form. 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 students to check their work using the Add, Change Text, Remove, and 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.

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 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 enter 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 WRITING FOR BUSINESS

Each unit concentrates on a specific type of paragraph; themes include persuasion, description, explanation, suggestion, and organization. Here are the topics within each type:

Unit 1: Persuade

Topic: Attending a meeting - You need your manager's approval to attend a program, or seminar, during company time. She has asked you to write a short memo explaining why you should go.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to choose a program and tell why it would be a good thing for you to attend.

Topic: Recommendation for promotion - You want to recommend that for a person who works for you receives a promotion. The senior manager who will make the decision has asked for a written recommendation. Tell why the person you have chosen should get a promotion.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write about the positive qualities of someone you work with.

Topic: Request for extra time off - You need to take some time off from work, but you don't have any vacation or personal days left. In a paragraph, state how much time you need and explain why the company should grant your request.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write about your need to take extra time off.

Unit 2: Describe

Topic: Progress report on a project - You have been working on a project for several weeks. Your manager has asked for a written progress reports. Describe what you have accomplished.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write about a project you have been working on.

Topic: Your job description - Your employer has asked you to write a job description to have on file. Describe your primary tasks.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to tell about your job.

Topic: A morale booster - Your company likes to sponsor events and activities to boost morale and encourage teamwork. Your supervisor has asked you to describe something that will increase morale among employees.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to describe something that will make people at work feel good.

Unit 3: Explain

Topic: Seeking a place in a training program - Your company is sponsoring an important training program. Since the number of participants is limited, the Training Department has asked everyone interested in attending to describe how this course would benefit him/her. Your memo could earn you a place in the program.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to describe a training program that could influence your work.

Topic: A maintenance problem in your office - A problem in your office is causing you physical discomfort and/or inconvenience. You have called Maintenance several times, but no one has responded. To emphasize the urgency, you have decided to write a memo. Explain how this problem is affecting you and your work.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to describe how a maintenance problem in your office is affecting you and your work.

Topic: Effect of broken office equipment - An important piece of equipment in your office is not functioning and will not be repaired for several days. In a written request for a temporary replacement or faster service, explain the impact of not having the use of this equipment.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to describe what happens when an important piece of equipment in your office breaks down.

Unit 4: Suggest

Topic: A redesign of the office - Your company is redesigning the office. The Design Committee has asked employees for written suggestions. Describe one thing that you would like to see included.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write about something that you would like to have in the office when it is redone.

Topic: Suggestions to improve safety at work - Your company's safety team has asked employees to suggest ways to improve safety in their work environment. A prize will be given for any suggestion that is used. Write a memo to the safety team describing your suggestion.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write about how to make your workplace safer.

Topic: Suggestions to organize work time - Your company has hired a consulting firm to see if staff time could be used more productively. In a questionnaire distributed by the consultants, you are asked to suggest something that you find useful in organizing your work time.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to describe what you use to organize your time at work.

Unit 5: Organize

Topic: Planning a conference - Your company is planning to host a conference. Your manager has asked for your ideas on how to organize it.

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

Topic: Describing an important procedure at work - Congratulations! You have been promoted! Your manager wants you to write a memo for your replacement describing one procedure that is a frequent and important part of your job.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to describe a procedure that is very important in your job.

Topic: Evaluating a situation - Sales of one of your company's best products are down. Your boss would like to know, in writing, how you will go about analyzing the situation.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to develop an evaluation in a logical order.

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 Writing for Business 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 business writing that follows the process presented in Writing for 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

Discuss the kinds of writing students like to do. Do they write letters or email? Text messages or web logs? Do they keep a journal? Create poetry or songs? Do they enjoy writing? When is writing easy? When is it frustrating?

Find out what questions students have about work-related writing. Do they know how to complete a resume? Respond to a job ad with a cover letter? Discuss what writing skills will help students get a job, retain a job, or find better work.

Have students work in pairs to come up with a list of adjectives to describe work-related nouns. Ask each pair to create a list of work-related verbs to describe action, then a list of adverbs for describing these verbs.

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 until 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.

Take a short text on a work-related subject 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.

Give students a choice of work-related writing prompts. Offer paragraph topics that relate to their own experiences, such as "my dream," "what I want to do for my family," "my best job," "my worst day at work," "how to be a good boss," "how to succeed in business," "what I would teach someone about life and work."

Give students time to practice business-related writing. Do they know how to complete a resume? Respond to a job ad with a cover letter? Create a memo? Write a report? Help students put together their own business-writing portfolios. Include writing produced using Merit software programs.

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

Writing For Business

Circle One: Persuade Describe Explain Suggest Organize

Use this checklist to guide you through the business writing process. As you begin each writing step, think about what you did in the Writing for Business program. You should do your pre-writing and business 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--TOPIC SENTENCE
Write your topic sentence that introduces 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--CONCLUDING SENTENCE
Write your concluding sentence to summarize what you have said in your paragraph.
- REVISING
 - STYLE
Check your word choice. Check that you use specific nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Check that you avoid the passive voice wherever possible.
 - SENTENCE STRUCTURE
Check that you use complete sentences. Check that you 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