



Punch®
Software for teaching
writing and reading.

Business Letter Punch®

Skill levels 6 - 10

Complete program: 4 units

PERSUASION (Unit 1),
REQUEST (Unit 2),
COMPLAINT/RESPONSE (Unit 3),
SOCIAL BUSINESS (Unit 4)

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: Letter of REQUEST (Unit 2)
Tracks work for two students.

Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/2003/XP
5 MB RAM, 40 MB hard disk space

This program requires a minimum screen resolution of 800 by 600 pixels.

The program helps students learn to write a letter that accompanies a résumé. In addition, they learn how to request information, to complain about a product or service, and to initiate informal socialization related to their career. The program contains 13 guided writing topics and 780 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 letters in business contexts. A step-by-step approach emphasizes content and organization.

The program teaches four different types of letters: persuasion (e.g., applying for a job or contacting potential customers); request (e.g., asking for information, permission, or a favor); complaint and response (e.g., dealing with poor service or damaged goods); social business (e.g., offering congratulations, appreciation, or praise at the office).

To use Business Letter Punch, students must be able to write basic sentences on a word processor. The program guides the student through each step in writing complete paragraphs. Help messages are provided throughout. Students are encouraged by the program's graphic rewards, as well as by seeing their work develop and progress. The program supplies the business letter format where appropriate: heading, inside address, date, salutation, and complimentary closing. These are seen when the student is ready to publish his/her letter. Students may transfer their finished letters 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 the student exits, the program saves the student's work and allows him / her to return to it at another time. The program will quickly scroll the student's work and stop at the place s/he 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

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: Each unit introduces a specific type of letter -- one that presents reasons (letter of persuasion), details (request letter), facts (letter of complaint or response to a complaint), feelings (social business letter).

TOPIC: Students are given several themes and are asked to choose one as the focus of their letter. The program then prompts them to enter the name of their own specific subject, which will become the topic of their letter. For several topics, additional information (for example, a classified ad) appears after the student chooses the topic. When needed later, this additional text may be accessed by pressing the Info button.

PRE-WRITING: A Pre-Writing Notepad appears on the screen. Using words or phrases, not sentences, students put their ideas about their chosen theme into the Pre-Writing Notepad. The program provides a series of prompts, to help stimulate the student's thoughts. Depending on the topic, the student is given three to six pre-writing prompts. The student responds by typing words or phrases in separate input boxes. Then the computer puts the student's ideas into a list. Tips are available if the student gets stuck.

WRITING - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: The program provides a sample statement of purpose, plus an incomplete statement for students to finish as an exercise. Students then write an original statement of purpose to begin their letter. Next, they look at their statement of purpose together with their pre-writing items and review the items for relevance to the topic sentence.

WRITING - BODY: The Pre-Writing Notepad reappears at the beginning of this section. Students choose a word or phrase from the Pre-Writing Notepad and use it in a sentence. They must continue to choose words or phrases to write at least as many sentences as there are pre-writing prompts. The sentences are entered into the Writing Notepad. 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 student's sentences appears on the left half of the screen. A Letter Notepad with the student's statement of purpose occupies the right half of the screen. Students transfer sentences from the Writing Notepad and arrange them in the Letter Notepad, deciding which sentences to use and in which order. All the sentences do not have to be used, but at least three must be chosen for the program to proceed.

In the second step of the Organizing section students see their work for the first time in paragraph form in the Letter Draft box. From this point on, students may print their work. The printout will show the section of the program from which the work was printed. After seeing their work, students are encouraged to add transitional words here to help the sentences flow smoothly from one thought to the next.

WRITING - CONCLUSION: The program provides a sample conclusion, plus an incomplete concluding sentence for students to finish as an exercise. Students then write an original conclusion to their letter.

REVISING - OVERVIEW: In Revising - Overview, the Letter Draft appears for review as a whole unit for the first time. The program asks students to check their work and provides prompts to guide them in the

use of Add, Edit, Remove, or Move buttons. Paragraph markers separate the opening from the body, and the body from the conclusion. A prompt will suggest when the student may consider dividing the body into paragraphs, using the final paragraph marker.

OPTIONS MENU: The Options Menu contains four subsections: STYLE, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, LANGUAGE 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 letter more interesting to read.

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

--**LANGUAGE:** Students are encouraged to make sure their sentences are free from overused expressions and repetitions.

--**PROOFREADING:** This is the students' 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' letters are saved, the student is presented with these options:

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

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

New Topic: This button 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.

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.

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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 BUSINESS LETTER PUNCH

Each unit concentrates on a specific type of letter. Here are the topics within each unit:

Unit 1: PERSUASION

Topic: Response to a classified ad - A classified advertisement offers a job that interests you. On the next screen you will see the ad. Read it carefully and write a letter to persuade the company to interview you. (This type of letter usually accompanies a resume but doesn't replace it or provide as much detail.)

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of application telling why you are the right person for the job.

Topic: A letter of application - You have heard positive things about a particular company. Although you do not know of a job opening there, you would like to be considered when a suitable position becomes available. Write a letter to the human resources director expressing your interest in working for the company. (This letter would accompany a resume, which provides greater detail.)

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write an unsolicited (unasked for) letter of application to a company telling why you would like to work there.

Topic: Inviting former customers to return - You are a customer relations representative for Smart Shoppers, a local department store. A recent review of the store's charge accounts shows that many of them have not been active for more than a year. Write a letter to the holders of these accounts reminding them of the advantages of being a Smart Shoppers charge customer.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter to inactive charge customers reminding them of the benefits of using their accounts.

Unit 2: REQUEST

Topic: Requesting information - Your company is planning to replace some of its office chairs. Write a letter to Corporate Seating, Inc., manufacturers of office furniture, explaining your needs and requesting any information that would help your company make a choice.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of request.

Topic: An invitation - As part of a business course or company seminar that you are taking, write a letter to a successful person in the business community asking him/her to visit your group.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of request. Here are some examples of people you could choose: top sales representative, CEO, retail store owner, company vice president, systems analyst, human resources manager.

Topic: Requesting permission - Your company, Chandler Corp., is planning a staff softball game and picnic. Write a letter to the Community Parks Department requesting permission to hold this event at a local park.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of request.

Unit 3: COMPLAINT AND RESPONSE

Topic: Complaint to a supplier - Your company has regularly purchased storage boxes for its computer software products from one supplier. Recently orders have not been filled promptly, and deliveries have arrived with an unusual number of broken boxes. Your company is very concerned about this situation. Write a letter to the supplier presenting your company's complaints.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of complaint.

Topic: Complaint from an advertiser - Your company recently placed an advertisement in a local paper. The ad included a color photograph of the company's best-selling and most colorful product. The photo was reproduced very poorly. A phone call to the paper has not brought any satisfaction. Write a letter to the advertising manager of the newspaper presenting your company's complaints.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of complaint.

Topic: Supplier's response to a complaint - Assume you are the delivery manager of the company that supplies storage boxes for computer software products. You have received a letter from a regular customer complaining that orders have been late and deliveries have arrived with broken storage boxes. Write a letter in response. The program will provide the explanation(s) you need for your letter.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to reply to a letter of complaint.

Topic: Response to an advertiser's letter of complaint - Supplier's response to a complaint - Assume you are the advertising manager of a local newspaper. You have received a letter from a new advertiser complaining about the poor quality of a photograph in her company's recent ad. The photo showed their best-selling and most colorful product. The customer further complained that a phone call she made to the paper had brought no satisfaction. Write a letter in response. The program will provide the explanation(s) you need for your letter.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to reply to a letter of complaint.

Unit 4: SOCIAL BUSINESS

Topic: Congratulations - A co-worker has been promoted to assistant credit manager. Although you were hoping to get this position, write a letter congratulating her/him on the promotion.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of congratulations.

Topic: Appreciation - Your manager, Mrs. Gray, has recommended you for a small, select training program. Write a letter to Mrs. Gray expressing your appreciation for this opportunity.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of appreciation.

Topic: Praise - You recently helped a co-worker who was assigned to organize your department's monthly report for the first time. You provided copies of previous reports, explained how to find the necessary data, and offered encouragement. Now write a letter complimenting your co-worker on an excellent job.

Tip: This topic will give you a chance to write a letter of praise.

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 Business Letter 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 letter writing that follows the process presented in Business Letter 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 *Essay Writing* or Business Letter Punch, remove paragraph breaks or scramble paragraph order from a short text based on material they are reading for social studies or language arts. Give them this text and prompt them to observe that this text is either missing paragraph breaks, or has paragraphs in the wrong order. Have them edit by inserting paragraph breaks or fixing paragraph order.

Remove punctuation from a short text based on material they are reading. Give them the text and prompt them 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.

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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 - Business Letter Punch

Circle One: **Persuasion** **Request** **Complaint** **Response** **Social Business**

Use this checklist to guide you through the letter writing process. As you begin each writing step, think about what you did in the Business Letter Punch program. You should do your pre-writing and letter 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:

HEADER

Refer to a printout of your letter from Business Letter Punch.

PRE-WRITING

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

WRITING--STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Write your statement of purpose that introduces your letter to the reader.

WRITING--BODY

Use your pre-writing ideas to write complete sentences.
Think about what you want to communicate to your reader.

ORGANIZING

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

WRITING--CONCLUDING SENTENCE

Write your concluding sentence to restate your statement of purpose.

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.

CLOSING

Refer to a printout of your letter from Business Letter Punch.

PUBLISHING