

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What is MY Access!®?

MY Access!® (www.gomyaccess.com) is a prompt-driven, internet-based instructional writing program that scores student responses to prompts/writing tasks in a very short time (less than 10 seconds) through advanced artificial intelligence technologies. Through the consistent, time-sensitive scoring of student writing, teachers can conduct early diagnosis, deliver writing assignments more frequently, and monitor writing performance by student and class.

2. How will MY Access!® benefit my students?

Research supports that the one area where we can have the broadest, and most immediate, impact on student achievement, across the entire curriculum is unequivocal: Writing. Writing is the one focus that cuts across all subject areas. Writing enhances students' cognitive skills and, as a bonus, affords teachers a clear view of what their students are and are not gaining from their instruction.

With the MY Access!® Writing Program, your students can:

- Increase the frequency of their writing.
- Develop a repertoire of prewriting, drafting, organizing and revising strategies.
- Receive automatic feedback on scoring for 5 traits of effective writing (focus and meaning, content and development, organization, language use and style, and mechanics and conventions)
- Learn to use rubrics for self-guided instruction within the Student Writer's Guide
- Revise their scored essays and receive new scores for their revisions
- Be directed to explanations and developmental activities for any of the five traits based upon on the needs shown by their prior work.
- Have access to a Writer's Guide with over 70 developmental activities that help you and students work hard and work smart to improve their writing in all five traits or domains.
- Provide an electronic writing portfolio for students and teachers with holistic and analytic formative assessment information.

3. How will teachers and students interact with the MY Access!® Program?

Since this is an online resource, students and teachers will connect with MY Access!® (www.gomyaccess.com) over the Internet. Once they are enrolled, students may develop their responses to prompts, access their student portfolio to view teacher and IntelliMetric™ feedback and revise their essay on a 24/7 basis. Teachers control which prompts students write to and will determine the manner in which students will interact with MY Access!®.

4. Does MY Access!® have lesson plans and other instructional materials available? Upon logging into the system, please visit the Resource Center. It is filled with valuable information from instructional guides to printable student activities. The resource link is located at the upper right hand side of the main menu.

TECHNICAL

1. How do I know my computer meets the minimum technical requirements needed in order to use the MY Access!® (www.gomyaccess.com) program?

It's as simple as 1, 2, 3 to get started using MY Access!® It is however, necessary for your computer to meet the minimum requirements for use of the program.

1. The My Access!® website is located at <http://www.gomyaccess.com>. Located on the top right section of the log-in screen is a "System Requirements Check" link. Please check to see what has been updated and what has not been updated on your computer(s). This check must be done on each computer that will be accessing the My Access!® program. If any feature has a "fail" in its version check, please upgrade to the specified version. In addition, it would be helpful to complete the web-based technical form located below the diagnostic evaluation section of the systems requirement check. This information will be sent directly to the support team to further assist in trouble-shooting potential problems.
2. Review the Home User: MY Access!® Technical Requirements. This will provide additional information to assist in successfully using the program. The [Home User Technical Requirements](#) document is available once you login. Locate the Resources link in the upper right hand corner. This will open in a new window and display helpful resources including User's Guides and Technical Requirement Documentation.
3. If you have made the necessary changes and are still having trouble meeting the specified requirements, please contact technical support for help at 1-800-322-0848

2. Help! When I log into the system as a student and click on start assignment, all I get is a blue screen!

A blue screen is typically an indication that Flash is not loaded into your system.

1. Log off
2. Click on the system Requirement check located on the www.gomyaccess.com home page in the upper right-hand corner. Clicking on the [Check System Requirements](#) will run an analysis of your system with direct links to updates and downloads to insure the system runs smoothly before logging in!

3. When I click on links within the program such as the Word Bank, MY Editor, Rubrics, Writer's Guide etc nothing happens? What am I doing wrong?

You may have a pop-up blocker installed on your computer. MY Access uses popups to display content in a new window. However, Vantage is an educational site and is NOT supported by advertising. If you open www.gomyaccess.com in your browser and have no other Internet sites open, pop-ups should not be a problem.

4. Sometimes the program slows down. Why?

Vantage has "unlimited" bandwidth for MY Access!®. However, your home Internet speed can vary resulting in the program running more slowly on your machine. This could be caused by a number of variables.

1. Computer operating system - i.e. processing speed and age of the computer.
2. Internet service provider (dial-up, cable-modem etc)

In these circumstances, the best thing to do is to proceed with your current assignment. Although temporarily slow, the program should eventually speed up as you move on. If you are not in

danger of losing unsaved information, it may be beneficial to logout and return to the program after a few minutes.

5. What do I do when I get a 504 (or other) server error?

A 504 error can arise if your Internet bandwidth is slow to access your request. This is most likely a temporary error; please try your request again at a later time.

6. What do I do when the program freezes?

Actually, the program never “freezes”. It may be that the Internet connectivity to your desktop has slowed down. It is also important for home users to run the System Requirement Check before using the program. The [Check System Requirements](#) will run an analysis of your system with direct links to updates and downloads to insure the system runs smoothly before logging in! You may want to close the program, login in again, and continue with your assignment in progress.

7. Does MY Access!® have an auto-save feature like most Word Processing programs?

The auto-save feature checks the essay every 120 seconds (2 minutes) for any changes in the essay text. If there is a difference (Student made changes/entered text) the essay is sent to the server to save. An alert box will display “your session will time out... Do you want to continue?” Click here.

8. What port setting does your product/service use?

My Access!® employs standard Internet protocol Port 80.

9. At what number of users do you start to see a degradation of service?

There is typically no set number of end users that will cause degradation in the performance of the My Access!® online writing system. Any degradation of service that could possibly occur would be relative to the amount of available district/school connectivity.

10. In the set-up of your system, what data needs to be loaded into the system and in what format?

Student, teacher and Admin data needs to be loaded into the My Access!® system. Student data may be imported out of any student management system (i.e. SASI) into a Microsoft Excel™ or other spreadsheet template format (CSV) that is provided by Vantage Learning. Local data administrators in the schools can accomplish this with relative ease. Once we receive the data, the students are loaded into the system by Vantage Learning.

11. Is home/remote community-based access available to students and educators?

Yes, MY Access!® is delivered completely over the Internet and can be used anywhere a computer with a connection to the Internet running a modern web browser is present. The local hardware, OS, and bandwidth requirements are identical to the requirements stated previously in the section. Users in remote locations can employ dial-up connections to access the system. No special hardware or connectivity is required, however at home users should perform the systems requirement check located on the www.gomyaccess.com homepage to insure the system meets the minimum technical requirements, and has installed the most updated versions of required web-based applications. The link is located in the upper right-hand corner.

12. What is Citrix? Can I use MY Access!® with Citrix?

Citrix is a brand of terminal software that allows organizations to install thin client software onto

low-end computers. The thin client software allows users on the low-end computer to virtually log in and access a higher end machine/server. This provides organizations with a method to leverage computers that are not powerful enough to run software on the machines that they have. Citrix is one of many commercial and open source terminal programs. Other examples include Microsoft terminal services, VNC, and gotomypc.com.

If you are using Citrix to access MY Access!® you will need to make certain that "the server" or more powerful computer that you are logging into meets the MY Access!® system requirements. You can do this by logging into the desired application through Citrix, launching your web browser and taking the system requirements check.

13. What is a Proxy/Caching Server?

This term is used particularly for a type of networking software that sits on a server on the outskirts of a school or organizations network that acts as a "traffic cop" for incoming and outgoing Internet traffic. When the proxy receives a request for such a URL (www.gomyaccess.com), it strips off the prefix and looks for the resulting URL in its local [cache](#). If found, it returns the document immediately, otherwise it fetches it from the remote server, saves a copy in the cache and returns it to the requester. The cache will usually have an expiry [algorithm](#) which flushes documents according to their age, size, and access history. In addition, proxy servers can be "layered"—have one on top of another—school and district and/or the ISP used by the district.

14. What is the Purpose of a Proxy/Caching Server?

Its purpose is twofold:

1. **Security**-To block inappropriate sites through content filtering as well as block inappropriate network ports or software. i.e.-AOL chat or FTP
2. **Improved Network Performance Benefits**-To provide improved network performance benefits through "caching" Internet content locally rather than retrieving it across the internet and using bandwidth.

15. How can potential problems be eliminated?

The network specialist and/or the individual who manages the proxy/caching server should be made aware of this potential issue. Proxy setting should be optimized for dynamic content coming from this domain (www.gomyaccess.com). The IP Address is <http://63.89.64.208>.

16. How will you know if there is a proxy/caching problem?

Typically, if there is a proxy issue, the end user *may* be able to view another user's data. For example, users in a computer lab currently on the same network. Another issue that has been identified is a user frequently being "bounced" out of the program back to the login screen.

17. Is there a number and/or e-mail address if additional assistance is required?

Yes, the number for support is 1-800-322-0848 or e-mail support@gomyaccess.com. In addition, there is a [Need Help](#) text link located on the www.gomyaccess.com home screen (located on the bottom of the screen). This will display a web-based e-mail that will automatically be sent to our support team!

EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

1. How does IntelliMetric™ (artificial intelligence scoring engine) work?

IntelliMetric™ emulates the process carried out by human scorers. The system must be “trained” with a set of previously scored responses containing “known score” marker papers for each score point. These papers are used as a basis for the system to infer the rubric and the pooled judgments of the human scorers. IntelliMetric™ system “internalizes” the characteristics of the responses associated with each score point and applies this intelligence in subsequent scoring. The approach is consistent with the procedure underlying holistic scoring. IntelliMetric™ creates a unique solution for each stimulus or prompt. This is conceptually similar to prompt-specific training for human scorers. For this reason, IntelliMetric™ is able to achieve both high correlations with the scores of human readers and matching percentages with scores awarded by humans.

2. How Accurate is IntelliMetric™?

IntelliMetric™ is about as accurate as human expert scorers. How do we know this? One way educators evaluate the accuracy of scoring is to look at how often two experts who review a set of papers independently agree with each other on the scores that should be assigned. In most controlled situations using a 6 point scale, two experts will agree with each other within one point about 95% of the time. When we look at how often IntelliMetric scores agree with either of those experts we find that IntelliMetric™ typically agrees with either expert about 97% to 99% of the time. For the set of prompts included within My Access, IntelliMetric™ agreed with expert scorers 99% of the time.

3. Why are rubrics/scoring guides important?

For students to write well, they must know the qualities of good writing. We make students independent by giving them the tools (rubrics) and the experience (instruction) they need to become evaluators of their own work. They cannot become good planners or revisers until they are good evaluators. Students who know the qualities can address ANY writing task or prompt (MY Access, state writing task, etc) with the knowledge that they must write with focus, develop in detail, organize their work, write to an audience, and follow the rules or conventions of standard written English.

Learning to evaluate another’s work is a needed step to learning to evaluate one’s own work—and thus becoming a more proficient and independent writer.

4. What model is used to score the assignments?

IntelliMetric™ uses four and six point holistic and domain/trait rubrics that mirror the qualities that are standard for process writing across the country.

5. What is holistic scoring?

In holistic scoring, the response is considered as a total work, the whole of which is greater than the sum of its parts. In holistic scoring the score is NOT based on its separate traits, but rather on the overall effectiveness of the writing.

6. What is trait/domain/analytic scoring?

Trait/domain/analytic scoring breaks writing down into 5 traits (*focus and meaning, content and development, organization, language use and style, mechanics and conventions*) and scores each trait.

7. How much different are the MY Access! rubrics to the other state rubrics and scoring guides?

Not much, although there might be slight variations in the descriptors or wording. All scoring guides/rubrics help prepare students for success on virtually any writing assessment. Why??? The traits/domains (*organization, focus, content/development, language use/style, grammar and mechanics*) are the real foundation of quality writing. But more important--scoring guides or rubrics prepare students to be proficient and independent writers.

8. Is there any advantage of using a 6-point scale over a 4-point scale?

A 6-point scale provides more detailed criteria for students to assess their work. A 6 point analytical scale provides a stronger foundation for instruction because it both affords a complete picture of writing (6 points instead of 4) and allows students to focus their revision on particular problems, such as organizing information or providing more detail. This is also an advantage of analytic scoring guide over the holistic.

*Instructional strategy: Focus on one trait at a time. Turn off all, for example, except Content and Development. Use the feedback from content and development, along with the rubric to build/develop details. Then turn on the other domains.

9. What can I do if I don't agree with a score?

If for any reason you don't agree with the holistic or individual scores, you have the ability to manually change the score. To do so, click **View My Student Portfolios** from the Main Menu, choose select the group of the student, choose to View the Student's Portfolio, and click on one of the scores next to the student's name. From the new screen, select a human score for the component(s) you would like to change. If there are components that would like to remain the same, choose the same value under the human score option. When you are finished, click **Save** and the score(s) will be changed.

1. A 6-point analytical scale provides a stronger foundation for instruction because it both affords a complete picture of writing (6 points instead of 4) and allows students to focus their revision on particular problems, such as organizing information or providing more detail. This is also an advantage of analytic scoring guide over the holistic.
2. Instructional strategy: Focus on one trait at a time. Turn off all, for example, except Content and Development. Use the feedback from content and development, along with the rubric to build/develop details. Then turn on the other domains...

10. I don't want to submit my assignment for scoring? How do I save my work?

There is one way of saving your current work, and that is the Save and Finish Later button. If you find it necessary to save your current work, you can click the Save and Finish Later button and simply reopen the assignment from the Student Assignment Center screen.

11. Is the feedback always the same?

No, MY Access!® automatically delivers instructional feedback to the following:

- Score point – 4 or 6
- Prompt Genre – Literary, Narrative, Persuasive or Informative, and Informational/Text-based
- Level of Writer:
 - Developing
 - Proficient

12. Is the feedback grade specific?

The feedback is user specific. The teacher or administrator can customize the levels and type of feedback at the assignment level. In addition, MY Access!® can provide feedback returned in a student's native language (English or Spanish).

There are three types of instructional feedback:

1. MY Editor
 - Grammar and Style analysis – three levels of rules:
 - Developing writer
 - Proficient writer
 - Advanced proficient
2. MY Tutor-Currently two levels (Special Needs Level will be released in September)
3. Score Report.
 - 4 or 6 holistic
 - 4 or 6 domain/trait scores: Focus and meaning, content and development, organization, language use and style, mechanics and conventions.

13. How does a student view his or her score?

Once the student enters the final version of the response for review, the score is returned directly to the student within 10 seconds. Evaluation of the student's work will be reported with a score of from 1 - 4 or 1-6 points in each of the 5 domains. A student may receive a "non-scoreable" response from MY Access!®. This is because the computer did not recognize a response due to a variety of factors. If this happens, the teacher can review the student's response and input a score if they do not agree with the error message.

14. Why does the Grammar Checker (MY Editor) sometimes detect “false” errors?

No Grammar Engine is 100% accurate; however, we continuously strive to improve the MY Editor engine. Please do send us any incorrect or irrelevant errors, proper nouns NOT identified etc. (support@gomyaccess.com). We will forward this information on to our Linguistic team.

In addition, it is also important to understand that The MY Editor tool is independent of IntelliMetric™ scoring.

Note: Best Practices. Frequently, misspellings can trigger false grammar errors. It is good practice to have your students run the spellchecker first followed by the MY Editor.

15. What can I do if I don't agree with a score?

If for any reason you don't agree with the holistic or individual scores, you have the ability to manually change the score. To do so, click **View My Student Portfolios** from the Main Menu, choose select the group of the student, choose to View the Student's Portfolio, and click on one of the scores next to the student's name. From the new screen, select a human score for the component(s) you would like to change. If there are components that would like to remain the same, choose the same value under the human score option. When you are finished, click **Save** and the score(s) will be changed.

Note: Best Practices: If you are using the program at a 4-pt, change the score setting from the assignment preferences to a 6-pt scale. This will provide the students with more “granular feedback”.

16. How can I use portfolios to monitor work?

From your computer, you can monitor the performance of your student. You can track patterns of where he or she does well, where he or she does not so well, on what kind of prompts, what domains are the problems, what he or she has tried for solutions, and his or her development as a writer looks like, holistically and across five domains.

17. What other writing tools are available for the student?

MY Access!® provides a suite of writer's tools for the student that can be turned on or off by the teacher. Tools include Dictionary/Thesaurus, Checklists, Writing Guide (200 page E-textbook for writing), Graphic Organizers, Writer's Journal, Word Banks, Rubrics, Notepad, Spellchecker, MY Editor (grammar and style editor), Timer, On-line Portfolio, 2-way Communication Tool (read/write comments and respond to teacher comments), Charts/Graphs for monitoring student progress.

PROMPTS

1. In what genres are the prompts available? What academic levels are the prompts available in? Are the prompts grade specific?

GENRES

- Informative
- Narrative
- Literary
- Text-based/Informative
- Persuasive

LEVELS

- Higher Education Prompts (Level 4)
- High School Prompts (Level 3)
- Middle School Prompts (Level 2)
- Upper Elementary Prompts (Level 1)

The MY Access!® Library currently contains over 200 pilot and operational prompts/writing tasks! 10 or more new prompts are added to each grade level category each year.

2. Are the prompts already in MY Access!® the only ones that can be scored by the IntelliMetric™ system?

Before IntelliMetric™ (the essay scoring engine integrated into MY Access!®) can automatically score student essays, more than three hundred student responses to a prompt are scored by trained individuals. They score the student responses according to the domain-scoring rubric.

Once the scorers agree on the qualities that are inherent in certain levels within the rubric (i.e. they develop the anchor points), the information is entered into Vantage's computers. The Vantage programmers have algorithms that classify responses and compare student work to the various levels within the rubric. Once the scoring models are built, the comparisons are completed quickly and results are returned to the student when the writing session is completed.

Teachers and administrators have access to student essays and scores through the teacher level management system. Teachers can view essays, provide comments and feedback on student work, direct students to developmentally appropriate learning activities and continue to monitor a long-term electronic portfolio of writing performance by student and by class.

3. Can I add my own writing prompts?

Yes, you can add your own prompts. However, the response would not be scored by our scoring engine. All of the tools can be utilized, but the system would need to be programmed with about 300 responses in order to automatically score for that prompt.

4. How do pilot prompts become operational?

In order for a pilot prompt to become operational (able to be scored by IntelliMetric™), we require roughly 300 essays written by students in the corresponding grade that span the range of holistic scores from 1 to 6, with at least 25 papers at both the tail score points of 1 and 6. Once we accumulate enough essays, we develop and test the IntelliMetric scoring model. Prompts that pass our rigorous quality tests are made available to all MY Access! users.

5. My school would like to enter one of our custom writing assignments into My Access and have it automatically scored by IntelliMetric™. What is the process?

Step One: Submit Writing Prompt for Approval

Submit the prompt text to the Scoring Center for review and approval. The prompt may need to be modified to bring it into compliance with our standards of prompt design. Once finalized, we will enter the prompt into My Access! so that you may assign it to your students. Matt Daneker mdaneker@vantage.com T: 215.579.8390 x1182

Step Two: Arrange a Scoring Timeline

Inform the Scoring Center when the prompt will be assigned, how long the students will be writing, and how many responses will be generated. We will arrange a scoring schedule with you.

Step Three: Collect the Student Essays

We must generally collect 350 responses in order to train IntelliMetric™ to automatically score student essays. Moreover, the responses collected must be distributed across all of the score points on a six-point scale, with at least 20-25 essays scored at each holistic level from “1” through “6.” If there is an insufficient number of essays overall or at a particular score point, the school must provide additional essays to fill the gaps. Student essays should be submitted directly through My Access. The Scoring Center will only score the most recent revision and will return the students’ scores and feedback on a six-point scale to their portfolios. Finally, we will begin to create and test an automatic scoring model for the prompt. If the prompt is successfully modeled, it will be made available to all users of My Access.

6. What is the difference between using MY Access!® prompts and putting in my own?

The students can use all of the tools for writing their essay, but since IntelliMetric™ has not been trained on the prompt you have entered, they will not receive an instant score.

7. Does MY Access! support multiple languages?

MY Access! 5.0 is designed to equip non-native speakers of English (Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese) with the necessary tools to communicate effectively in English. When nonnative speakers use English, they make both errors that are specific to learning English as a second

language and those that relate to the differences between their own language and English. MY Access! ELL:

- Detects possible errors that native speakers of each language often make when they write in English. Errors include grammatical errors, typographical errors, and ELL-specific syntax errors that occur because the user is not familiar with the structure of English. For example, errors involving inappropriate prepositions, incorrect verb tenses, and incorrect forms of comparatives and superlatives.
- Displays error messages in the user's native language

The MY Editor checking and correction functionality is divided into three modes:

- **English Setting:** Contains word and rules specific to English. Returns MY Tutor and MY Editor Feedback in English.
- **Spanish Setting:** Contains words and rules specific to Spanish. MY Editor detects errors in grammar and style for responses written in Spanish. MY Tutor, Score summary and MY Editor feedback are in Spanish.
- **ELL Setting:** English Language Learner setting automatically detects the native language of the user based upon the student's profile (*English, Chinese, Japanese, or Spanish*) and launches MY Editor Grammar & Style check. When MY Editor detects a possible error, it presents the sentence containing the problem and highlights the possible error with a blue underline. Clicking on the word recommends changes that might improve the sentence. The MY Editor feedback (*English, Chinese, Japanese and Spanish*) and MY Tutor feedback (*English and Spanish only, Chinese coming soon*) are returned in the native language of the student.