

MY Access! Frequently Asked Questions

General

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 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.

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.

- a. Log off
- b. 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.

- a. Computer operating system - i.e. processing speed and age of the computer.
- b. 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.

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

Yes, the student’s work is saved every 60 seconds while he or she is writing.

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

My Access!® employs standard Internet protocol Port 80.

c. 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.

d. 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.

e. 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.

f. 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.

g. 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:

- a. **Security**-To block inappropriate sites through content filtering as well as block inappropriate network ports or software. i.e.-AOL chat or FTP
- b. **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!

18. Computer Protection Software/Firewall: Help! I downloaded the latest version of Flash™ and when I rebooted my computer, the computer was restored to its original system configuration. What happened?

Most likely your computer has a Firewall such as (DriveShield™ and MacShield™. DriveShield and MacShield protect the hard drive of the computer against mistaken or unwanted changes. Upon reboot, the computer is restored to its original configuration. In order to update or install new or updated versions of required plugins (Flash™ 7.0+), you will need to contact your system administrator to deactivate the Firewall, install the required program and reactivate the protection software solution (DriveShield™ and MacShield™).

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. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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

7. 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:

- a. MY Editor
 - Grammar and Style analysis – three levels of rules:
 - Developing writer
 - Proficient writer
 - Advanced proficient
- b. MY Tutor-Currently two levels (Special Needs Level will be released in September)
- c. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 Belgium.

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.

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

If for any reason you do not 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”.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. Who can score a student's essay?

Teacher-level assignments can only be scored by that teacher. School-level assignments can only be scored by the School Administrator, and district-level assignments can only be scored by District Administrators.

14. What is the Approximator™?

The Approximator is a scoring system that has been developed to provide estimated scores for essays submitted to pilot prompts and “My Prompts.” This allows students to receive immediate feedback for *every* prompt in MY Access!™, not just the ones with IntelliMetric™ scoring models.

How was the Approximator™ developed?

The Approximator is grounded in a similar background and concept to prompt-specific IntelliMetric scoring models. Rather than being prompt-specific, the Approximator was trained with a pooled approach covering a variety of essays at each grade range (Elementary, Middle, and High School). The Approximator uses hundreds of features of writing to evaluate each essay.

How can I use the Approximator™?

With each assignment of a pilot or personal prompt, you will be able to turn on the Approximator. The Approximator provides a holistic score for each essay submitted.

Why would I use the Approximator™?

The Approximator opens up the availability of immediate score feedback on every prompt in the system including personal prompts. This allows you to use more prompts and provide immediate feedback to your students. This is particularly helpful to provide students with more practice across a wider range of prompts, including those that are aligned to popular reading series. While it is not recommended for the Approximator to be used for assessments, the scores can provide valuable feedback for various instructional and practice activities.

How reliable are the scores given by the Approximator™?

The Approximator scores provide a fairly reliable *estimate* of the student's writing sample. It is not able to provide specific scores on domains of writing nor is it able to infer any nuances of the particular prompt. Similarly, it is not developed to match expert scores for the particular prompt being used in the assignment. For these reasons, it is strongly urged that the Approximator only be used in classroom settings where a general evaluation of writing would be acceptable. For more reliable and valid scores for assessment and evaluation purposes, it is recommended that IntelliMetric prompts or prompts scored by the Scoring Center be used.

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. 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.

ACCOUNT EXPIRATION

1. How will I know when my accounts expire?

All accounts (student, teacher, admin) will automatically expire (close) on the date of expiration (12 midnight EST). This date is presented every time you login on the Welcome Screen which asks you to confirm that you are in fact the user that has been logged in.

District Administrators are notified 30 days prior to expiration on the Welcome Screen. This information includes total number of subscriptions, number of licenses that will expire in 30 days, and contact information for renewing your subscriptions for your district.

School Administrators are notified 30 days prior to expiration on the Welcome Screen. This information includes total number of subscriptions, number of licenses that will expire in 30 days, and contact information for renewing your subscriptions for your school.

Teachers are notified that their individual subscription will expire 30 days in advance. Teachers are informed to contact their district to make sure the license is properly renewed.

Vantage Customer Support is also notified 30 days prior to expiration with the name of the district or school, total number of subscriptions, and the number of licenses that will expire.

2. How will inactivating or deleting a group affect student portfolios of student and teacher and level above, also reports?

Students can access their essays and scores for inactive groups through their portfolio. Only the current years' groups (created in 2005-2006-represents a school year) will be displayed. Reporting data is archived for 3 years.

Inactive groups are not displayed in the teacher's portfolio unless *archived groups* is selected. An *Archived Group* will be accessible from the teacher's MY Group Center. Selecting the Archived Groups will allow the teacher to access the group data through the View MY Student Portfolios feature. Previous year's groups and data will in fact be available through Archived Groups.

For **Reports**, archived groups will be included in the group listing. archived groups will be the last group listed. Selecting the archived groups will display the previous year's groups sorted by name of group, teacher, and date created.

All open sessions are closed when a group becomes inactive. *Note:* If a group is activated, closed sessions will reopen. Remember, it is important to note that teachers do not need to activate groups to view archived student performance data.

3. How will inactivating or deleting a profile assignment affect the portfolios and reports of students and teachers?

Any open sessions are closed when you inactivate or delete a profile assignment. If the assignment is inactive, student data does not appear in the portfolio. However, student data is available in the teacher's portfolio. This enables a teacher to close the assignment (if desired) following the completion of a writing assignment, and provide feedback or comments to the student without the student viewing the information,

MOVING STUDENTS

1. How will moving (deleting) a student affect the student portfolios and reports for both the student and teacher?

School

- a. If a student is removed or deleted from a school, the student is flagged as deleted and any open sessions are automatically closed. If a student is re-enrolled within one year, the data for that student will magically appear in the student's portfolio. This data is historical and will still be available through reports (data of assessment option must be selected). If a student is deleted will that student still be able to access their account? No, account is "closed."
- b. If a student is moved from one school within a district to another school, the data follows the student and is available in the student's portfolio and all open sessions are automatically closed. The current teacher no longer views the data in the teacher portfolio. However, since all data is historical, the student's data remains in reports as historical data (*current class enrollment should be default*). Users in the new school, which the student has recently become enrolled, can access the student's data and text from the Student History Report. District level assignments written by that student would also be available in reports.

Group to Group Within a School

- a. If a student is moved from one teacher's group to another teacher's group within a school, the data follows the student to the new school and all open sessions are automatically closed. The original teacher will no longer view the student's data in the teacher portfolio. However, the student's data remains in reports if *View by Date of Assessment* is selected by the original teacher when creating a report. The new teacher or administrator can view the student's response and scores through the **Student History Report**.

2. What are the Rules with respect to a Student History Report when a student is moved?

Teachers can view student performance for the assignment of another teacher, school, or district assignment for any student through the Student History Report. Selecting a group will display all prompts written by one or more students within that group. Ideally, and for ease of use, by the teacher, only prompts written too are listed.