

Tips For Using I Can Write Online In Your Classroom

Using the Computer to Write

1. Be sure to model using the keys on the computer when working in I Can Write Online. Students need to understand how to:
 - a. Use the tab key to go from one box to another in graphic organizers.
 - b. Use the mouse to go back to a previous box that they wish to revise.
 - c. Delete by backspacing
 - d. Place the cursor to add new information.
 - e. Use the return key to start a new paragraph
 - f. Use the space bar to indent a paragraph
2. Some of the above skills are used in pre-writing while others are best used in drafting, revising or editing.
3. Demonstrate how to turn Freddy the Frog off and on. Be sure to show students how to click on the Help Lily Pad to read as well as hear the directions.

Helping Students Get Started in I Can Write Online

1. The first time you demonstrate the software, use the descriptive genre, because it seems to be the easiest for new users to understand.
2. Use an LCD projector to show the software on a large screen to the whole class.
3. As you move through the steps elicit information from the students for a shared writing experience.
4. Since students use their five senses to describe an object, using a food such as fruit or a snack will generate more responses than something that has no taste or smell (e.g. a rock). You might serve the snack prior to the lesson to elicit more response during the lesson.
5. Students do not have to use all their five senses to describe something. They can say, "I don't know" if they truly don't know.
6. All work is saved when students click the "Next" arrow on each screen. A safety feature, though, is the Options Button. Have students click on it to see the "Save " feature. This feature is particularly important in the Pre-Write stage. If students have not completed the Pre-Write at the end of the class period, and if they do not click "Next", their Pre-Write entries will disappear. It is important to introduce this the first time you show them the software and to review it on subsequent days to get the students in the habit.
7. You might want to break the lesson into more than one day. It is important for students to understand that every time they use I Can Write Online, they are not to write a complete piece. Pre-writing might take a whole writing period. Students can print out and share their pre-writes just as they share pieces they write by hand.
8. Show students how to use the mouse to scroll through their pre-writing ideas when they read the Draft screen.
9. Show students how to scroll within the writing area on each screen.

10. Assure the students that their writing is saved on each screen when they go to the next screen. They can, however, click on the Options button and save while they are writing and before they go to the next screen.
11. The Traits of Good Writing have more tips than you want students to work on in one day. You might choose the most important items in a Trait for your grade level and teach a mini-lesson on each.
12. Students will not master these traits in just one or two mini-lessons, however. Once you have taught one item in Organization, for example, you will want them to practice that trait in the days that follow. You could spend a week on just one item.
13. The Traits alone could be the core of your entire writing program. To know which traits are the most important for your grade level, check your district or state writing standards.
14. To demonstrate how the students are to use the Teacher Comments, have the students write for a couple of days and then read and send Comments to a few students.

Examples of comments:

- a. Your writing makes sense to me. (ideas)
 - b. You sound as though you are talking to me. (voice)
 - c. Your introduction to your piece wants me want to read more. (organization)
 - d. I can see you've used your thesaurus to find interesting words to use in your writing. (word choice)
 - e. I see that you have used questions as well as statements in your writing. See if you can also use exclaiming sentences (sentence fluency)
15. The traits will not teach grammar, capitalization and punctuation. Those come under Editing. But they address key writing standards and promote excellent writing.
 16. You must teach each Editing tool just as you teach each Trait. From the list of 16 in the Teacher Administrative section, choose the ones that are appropriate for your grade level. One of the best ways to know when to teach one to the whole class is when a number of students are not using those editing tools. You can address editing in small groups if only some of the students need help with that.
 17. By the time students reach the Edit Screen, their writing should be in a stage that most revisions have been made. Students may always revise, however, even when they have inserted their writing into the portfolio. See the document, "Tips for Editing" to give students some really good ideas on how to find and mark editing errors.
 18. When students reach the Publish stage, there are a number of things to teach. Each of the following should be demonstrated for your class.
 - a. Choosing borders
 - b. Formatting pages
 - c. Previewing their writing
 - d. Opening their portfolio and writing a reflection (They have to select the writing first on the right side of the screen).
 - e. Revising from the portfolio screen
 - f. Beginning a new piece of writing.

