



ConnSENSE Reviews

Connecticut's Special Education Network for Software Evaluation

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ConnSENSE Review: WriteOnline

Product Reviewed: WriteOnline
Manufacturer: Crick Software Inc.
191 Post Road West
Westport, CT 06880
Toll-free: 1-866-332-7425
Telephone: 203-221-2697
Fax: 203-221-2698
<http://www.cricksoft.com>
USinfo@cricksoft.com

Reviewed by: Margaret Kardos OTR/L, ATP muncie@connsensebulletin.com

Just when you think it can't be done, Crick Software comes out with yet *another* product sure to knock your socks off. I'm talking about WriteOnline, the newest addition to the Crick Software family that provides writing support for all students. WriteOnline delivers first rate word processing, word prediction, text-to-speech, and scaffolded writing support via the Internet. Hallelujah...no more waiting for the district geek to come over and install the program! No more trying to figure out how to provide students with the technology that they need across all settings. Just sit down at the computer, that would be *any* computer with Internet access, and login. Presto!! You are using WriteOnline, at school, at home, in the public library, anywhere that you have an active web browser you have this amazing and versatile program available to you. The program can even be accessed without a live Internet connection as long as the user has logged in through the net within the past 72 hours on that computer. So what could be better? Stick with me to find out...here are some of the fabulous features of WriteOnline.

Word processing: The word processing program in WriteOnline bears a striking resemblance to a commonly used word processing program. This enables users to be comfortable and familiar with it from the start. And because WriteOnline is available to all students in the same school, it eliminates the "special" factor that makes some kids avoid using needed supports.

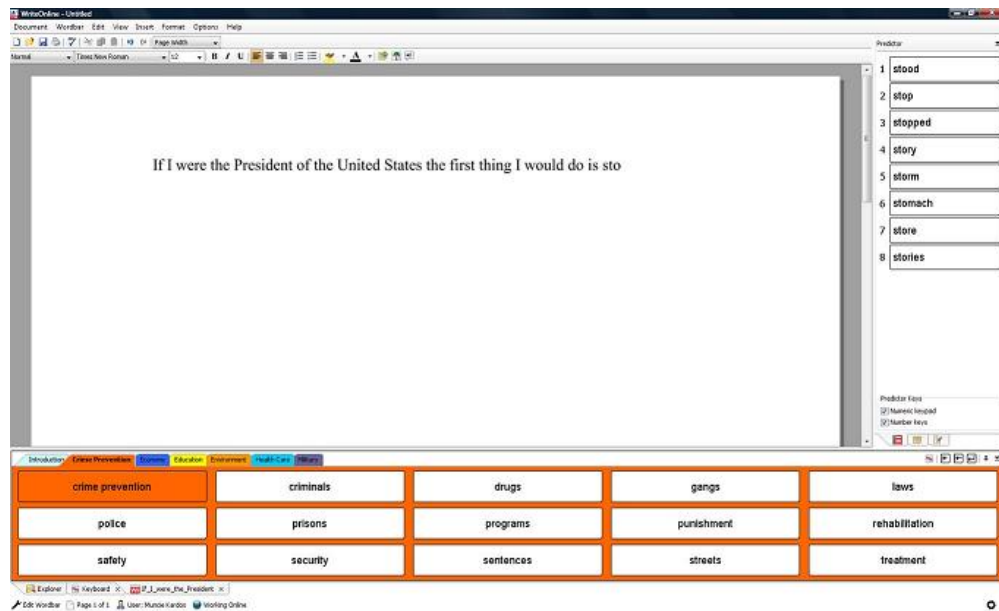
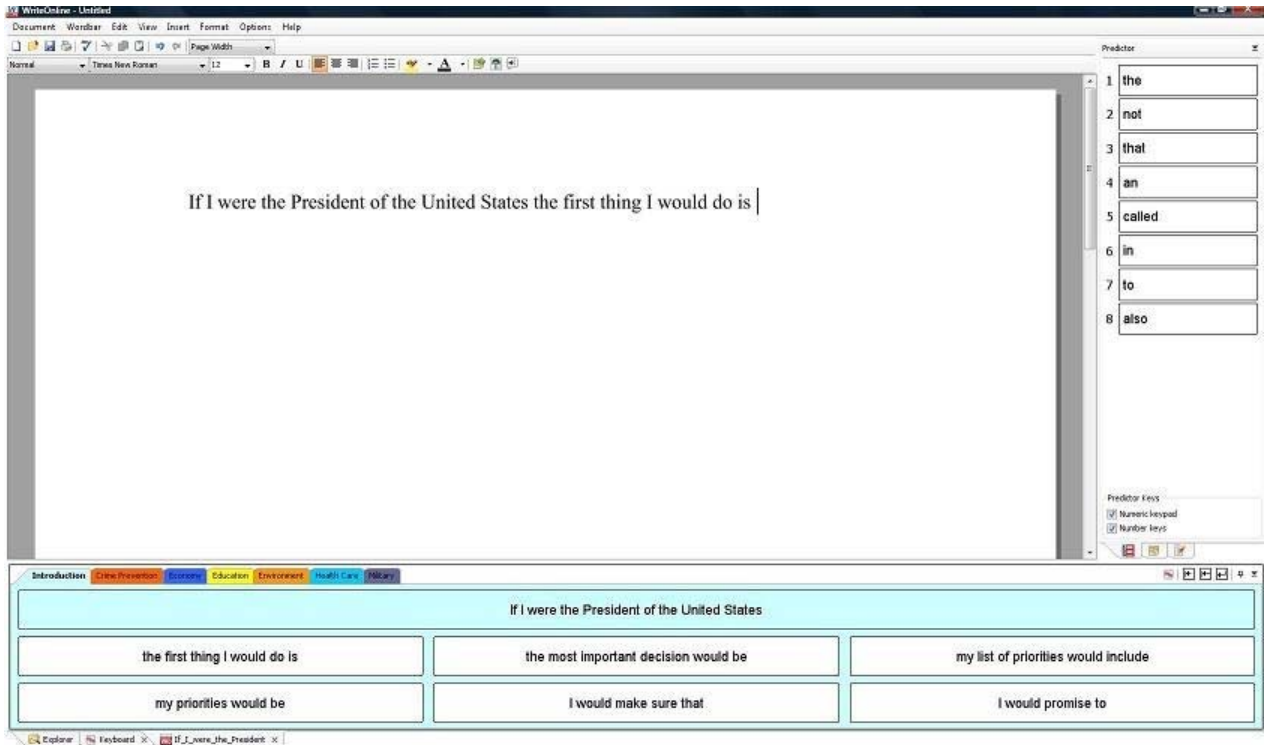
Text-to-speech: The program has a clear, crisp voice that is listener friendly. Settings can be adjusted to read words, sentences, paragraphs, etc. Text can be copied and pasted into the word processing program for students who might need to have text read to them prior to writing. Text contained in the word prediction feature and the Wordbar word banks can be read by right clicking on the text.

Sidebar: The sidebar appears on the side of the screen and contains three tabs, word prediction, comments and notes. Take a look:

- *Word prediction*: There is a fully integrated word prediction program that assists students with writing. Words can be entered by clicking on them with the mouse or choosing the corresponding number. The word prediction window can be hidden when it is not needed. Built in controls allow for a range of options within this program making it suitable for a range of abilities.
- *Comments*: Comments can be added to documents by both the user and the reader. Comments appear on the sidebar, much like writing in the margins. This is a useful tool for teachers and students alike throughout the editing and revising process.
- *Notes*: Similar to comments, notes also appear in the sidebar. There are two sets of notes, teacher and student. Teacher and student notes are mutually exclusive.

Wordbar: This is a unique and versatile program of word banks that appear on-screen below the text document. There are a number of pre-made word banks and templates available within the program. In addition, there are many more available for free download at LearningGrids.com, where people, who are much more clever than I, share the fabulous activities that they make. Just click on the link within the Wordbar toolbar to be taken to the site.

It's easy to adapt a pre-made Wordbar simply by shifting and clicking on a cell to enter your own text. The program makes it a snap to create topic-specific Wordbars by copying text from any resource (web page, document, etc.), pasting it to the clipboard and clicking on the command to make a new Wordbar. Words can be arranged alphabetically or in any categorical manner that you choose and accessed quickly and easily through tabs that can be labeled to suit the task. Wordbar can be useful to students who need a higher level of support by providing sentence starters, paragraph sequencing and phrases in addition to single words; the possibilities are unlimited. For a more extensive review of Wordbar visit our earlier review, done when this was a stand-alone program: <http://www.connsensebulletin.com/wordbar.html>



Analyses features: Available to teachers, these features enable tracking of document statistics such as sentence length, number of paragraphs and when the document was accessed. It also allows the teacher to track if text was cut and pasted from another source.

Accessibility: WriteOnline contains a range of accessibility features including an on-screen keyboard, switch accessible scanning and text to speech.

But wait, that's not all Folks, I have saved the best for last. Not only is this program remarkable, it is extremely affordable. An elementary school building license is \$1000.00 for the first year and \$500.00 for an additional year. The building license gives *every student and teacher* access to the program from any computer. That's comparable to the cost of a *single user* license of some other writing software programs currently available. Do the math, if you have 500 students in your school and 50 staff members, that breaks down to less than \$2.00 per user for an entire school year the first year, and less than \$1.00 per user the next. Check the website for the full range of pricing options available.

I have long been a fan of Clicker 5 and I have been hoping for a "next step" that supports students as they progress along the writing continuum. Through the overarching concept of universal design for learning, WriteOnline offers exactly that, an appropriate writing program for students of all abilities, from emerging through independent writers. WriteOnline is right on target for meeting the needs of students across the writing curriculum. Another grand slam for Crick Software!

<http://www.connsensebulletin.com/WOLrevmk.html>

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