

# Software for Students



Windows

No Authoring

Title: **Easy Writer**

Publisher: **Software for Students**

Type: **Tutorial**

Author: **Jane Boris**

Machines: **IBM**

Level: **Intermediate**

Price

1-4 installations **£60.00**  
per installation

5-pack **£265**

10-pack **£495**

Lab licence **£885**

School/Building **£1300**

UK & EU customers add **17.5%**  
**VAT**

System Requirements: Windows  
95, 98, NT

## Easy Writer

Easy Writer is targeted at ESL students in US high school classes, Community College and Intensive English programs and is aimed at improving editing skills, correctness in grammar and writing. It uses more than 80 authentic student texts written over four years that exemplify the problems ESL students have. The CD-ROM is accompanied by a useful supply of tick-off sheets for students to keep track of what they have completed.

Easy Writer is based on the technique of looking at a text and identifying

The screenshot shows the 'Possessives' section of the Easy Writer software. The main window displays a text passage titled 'Friday Nights by the Black Sea' by Marina Salita. The text is: 'In Odessa, in my native country, Ukraine, Friday was the last working day of the week. When my parent's got off work, they came back home. Then my mother and father took me and we all went to my grandparents' house. My grandmother and grandfather had a big private house behind the Black Sea. It was a very beautiful place. My father three sister's and their family's also came to my grandparents' house. My grandmother was a good cook. She made dinner for her children and grandchildren. We, in turn, helped her to put all the food on the table. Then the whole family sat down and ate. We spoke about the week that just passed. After we ate, my cousin's and I went to play in the garden'. The word 'parent's' is highlighted in red, indicating a spelling error. The sidebar on the left contains buttons for 'Click Here!', 'Instructions', 'Grammar', 'My Score', 'Answers', 'Try Again', and 'Exit'.

anything that is wrong. These can be spelling errors, punctuation, grammar, use of possessives etc. At Level I clicking on the erroneous word results in the corrected version being substituted in colour. The expert menu (Level 4) is a melange of all the types of error covered previously, and after identifying an error, the learner has to manually correct it.

Grammar help is available at all stages.

The idea is to go through an essay following a guided process of editing - checking for grammar, etc, and seeing the final acceptable product. In the example above the spotlight is on possessives. When you enter the stage of writing yourself, using the inbuilt word-processor, you can apply the same acquired editing and checking processes to your own work.

The design is attractive but not distracting and students do not get over-involved in how the screen looks. One of the great advantages of a simple and clear interface like this one is that the student is less likely to be overwhelmed by the sheer drudgery of working through to the real business in hand. Moreover, the language of instruction is not pitched way above the language capabilities of the learners. Some good programming practice has been adhered to; in student typed input, for instance, an inadvertent leading or trailing space is correctly ignored.

The basic assumption is that by identifying and correcting common errors learners will improve their writing skills. We are not talking about creative writing or literary style here, but spotting and ironing out those perennial faults.

The author of the package - who is an experienced ESOL teacher - has a clear view of the real language standards of real students and the tasks are not pitched impossibly high. In addition it does not confront the (probably stressed-out) student with great woggles of text to wade through on-screen. The essays here are mercifully short.

This program stands out for its ease of use and also its originality. I am frequently asked for information about programs for writing and until recently there has been precious little on offer. Easy Writer is an unpretentious program that puts a useful and pleasant plug into this gap.