

STUDENT CASE STUDY

THE CHALLENGE: Facing and Acing the Dreaded Timed-essay Requirement

Does the thought of writing a timed, five-paragraph academic essay make you anxious? You are not alone. Every year, hundreds of thousands of students must prove their academic writing ability in class or on assessments like the *HiSET*® Language Arts-Writing test.

If you want a high school diploma, you must demonstrate your ability to write well. However, good writing skills can help you excel beyond the classroom. Your future employers¹ also want employees who can write clearly and concisely. This is why many of the tests you take include an essay requirement.

The HiSET exam is for students looking to obtain a high school equivalency certificate or diploma. It evaluates the test taker's abilities to develop positions or claims supported by evidence from the materials provided, as well as their own experiences.

A well-written essay:

- responds to a prompt
- is clear and concise
- has ideas supported by evidence, reason or examples

Additionally, since academic writing is formal, you will have to write using standard American English — slang or shortcuts definitely aren't recommended if you want a good score.

Thinking about all of the elements that are required to compose a good essay can be overwhelming and stressful, *but there is something that can help you* improve your abilities and ace your essay.

A DIGITAL LEG-UP: An Innovative App Helps Improve Essay Writing Ability and Confidence

That something is ETS's *Writing Mentor*® app, a Google Docs™ add-on that can help you improve your academic essay writing ability one step at a time.

Created by a tutor for a student who struggled with writing, the *Writing Mentor* app aims to improve students' writing skills through additional practice, particularly when face-to-face meetings with an instructor are not possible.

¹ *Skills and Earnings in the Full-Time Labor Market (2018)*. ETS Center for Research on Human Capital and Education.
www.ets.org/research/report/earnings-full-time-labor-market/

So, how can the *Writing Mentor* app help you?

- **It sharpens academic skills.**

The *Writing Mentor* app starts with paragraph practice, an important building block of writing good essays. The app will give you the opportunity to sharpen important academic skills, such as expressing complex ideas coherently and concisely.

- **It encourages daily writing.**

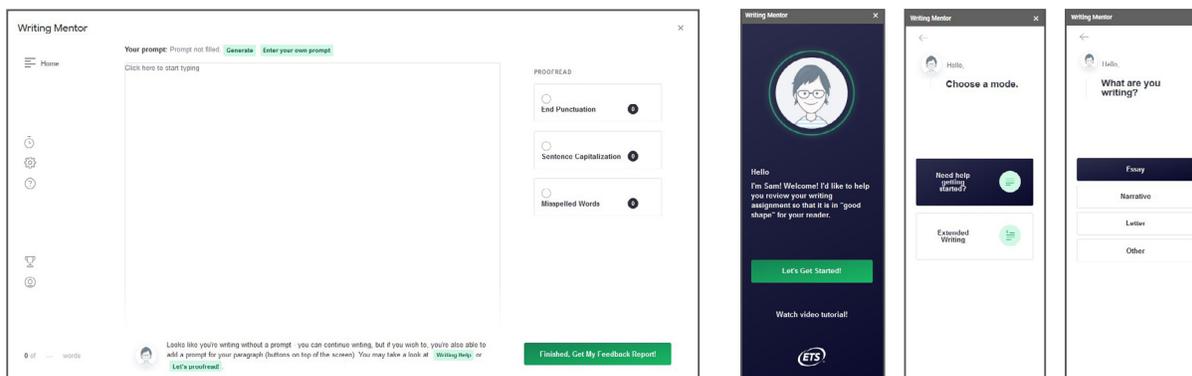
The app offers many opportunities for academic writing using high-quality prompts from *The New York Times* Education program to help you make writing a daily habit.

- **It builds writing confidence.**

Writing competence — and confidence — comes from practice and receiving extensive feedback. Designed as a revision tool for academic writing, the *Writing Mentor* app provides automatic feedback about your writing quality — no matter your skill level.

- **It develops extended writing skills.**

As you continue to use the *Writing Mentor* app, you will progress from paragraph writing to more advanced skills, which includes extended writing (i.e., essays).



Once you are feeling more confident, feedback from the app can also help you determine when it's time to tackle a HiSET practice essay and even the HiSET Writing test.

To learn more, visit
mentormywriting.org or hiset.ets.org