

SMARTHINKING

Review by Justin Shewell

English Language Center, Provo, Utah

SMARTHINKING. Houghton Mifflin.

With economic slow-down spreading across the globe, more and more teachers are finding the number of students per class increasing, and the amount of time they can spend with each student decreasing. This creates a problem and often causes students to have a negative image of their program and its instructors because they don't receive the personal instruction they deserve. A new service provided by Houghton Mifflin offers an excellent solution to this problem.

The service is called *SMARTHINKING*TM. Working in partnership with *SMARTHINKING.com*, the service provides live tutors, called "e-structors," who are available to answer students' questions and tutor students in nine disciplines, including English as a Second Language. The service is available for the following ESL books, all published by Houghton Mifflin: *Grammar Links Basic*, *Blueprints 1: Composition Skills for Academic Writing*, *Blueprints 2: Composition Skills for Academic Writing*, *Great Essays*, *Great Paragraphs*, *Great Sentences for Great Paragraphs*, *Grammar Links*, and *Top 20: Great Grammar for Great Writing*. Access to the service is included with the purchase of these books by students or institutions. Passkeys, or passwords, are printed at the back of each book and can be used to access the service at [http:// www. smarthinking.com/partners/houghton/buyindex.cfm](http://www.smarthinking.com/partners/houghton/buyindex.cfm).

The service is available for live tutoring on Sunday—Thursday, from 2 PM to 5 PM and 9 PM to 1 AM Eastern Standard Time. Students can logon to the website and get live, one-on-one help with homework assignments, writing questions, or other related questions. Students can also submit questions via email 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and receive answers from e-structors within 24 hours. The service includes a "whiteboard" which both the e-structor and the student can see, allowing for real-time instruction using both visual and textual input.

At a glance, the service appears very useful. Not only is it accessible from any internet-ready computer, but it allows students to interact with real teachers, giving the individual classroom teacher more time to deal with other demands. Also, the service is available for books in accounting, chemistry, college survival, developmental writing, economics, English, mathematics, and Spanish. This might be extremely useful for ESP

programs. The only major drawback to the service is that it is text-based chat, which might pose some problems for lower-level students or those with poor English typing skills.

More information is available at the following website: http://www.college.hmco.com/instructors/ins_smarthinking.html. Instructors interested in evaluating the service should contact Houghton Mifflin at 1-800-733-1717. Those outside the United States should contact the Houghton Mifflin representative in their area for information on evaluating the service. Demonstration sessions are available in Accounting, Chemistry, Economics, Math, Online Writing Lab, and Spanish.

About the Reviewer

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