



Frequently Asked Questions

OVERVIEW	1
Technical Information	2
STUDENT PROGRAM	2
Avatars	2
Assessments	3
Instruction	4
Rewards	6
TEACHER DASHBOARD.....	7
Class Setup	7
Instruction	8
Reports	9

OVERVIEW

What is Smarty Ants?

Smarty Ants is an effective, research-driven solution that differentiates instruction in foundational reading skills and accelerates student achievement – all in an engaging, interactive, online learning environment. The program continuously evaluates each student’s exact skill level, learning temperament, and learning pace. Based on this information, the adaptive content system automatically delivers the right level of skill instruction and practice to keep learners in the zone of proximal development.

An additional add-on option, called **Smarty Ants Español** is available as well. Using similar elements from the research-driven English solution, this add-on focuses on developing Spanish literacy skills in early literacy programs and dual language Spanish-English programs. The FAQ for that program can be found [here](#).

How long should students work in the program each week?

Each student has a personal recommendation for how long they need to be in the program to reach their goal based on results from their Initial Placement and progress in the program. Teachers can view this information on the *Overview* tab in the *Time Last Week as Recommended* progress bar, as well as review the specific number of minutes/hours each week in the *Individual Student Recommendation and Progress Report*. Recommendation information will populate once a student has completed the initial or Beginning of Year Placement and completes 1 full lesson.

What size class or group of students do I need to effectively use the Smarty Ants program?

Smarty Ants is designed to be easily and effectively implemented with your entire district, school, or classroom but can be used with any size group of students that best fits your needs.

Do I need a computer lab to effectively incorporate the Smarty Ants program into my schedule? As

long as your students have access to computers or tablets, whether in a lab, classroom or virtual setting, you can effectively implement the Smarty Ants program. Students can also use Smarty Ants in an offline mode with our Mobile Apps but will be required to connect to the internet periodically to upload progress for reports.



Technical Information

What platforms are available?

Smarty Ants can be accessed from any computer with internet access that meets the minimum system requirements. Apps for iOS and Android tablet devices are also available. Click [here](#) to see the full system requirements.

How do the features of the app compare to the browser version?

There are some differences between the mobile app and browser version of Smarty Ants. For a detailed comparison, please refer to [this chart](#).

Where can I find the apps?

There are two Smarty Ants apps available for each platform: one for PreK through Grade 1 (lessons 1ABC - 69) and another for Second grade (lessons 70-97).

For iOS devices, you can download the apps from the iTunes app store by clicking the links below:

- [Smarty Ants PreK – 1st for iPad](#)
- [Smarty Ants 2nd Grade for iPad](#)

For Android tablets, you can download the apps from either the Google Play store or the Amazon app store. The links to download the Android versions are below.

Android from Google Play:

- [Smarty Ants PreK – 1st for Android tablets](#)
- [Smarty Ants 2nd Grade for Android tablets](#)

Android tablet and Kindle from Amazon:

- [Smarty Ants PreK – 1st for Android tablets](#)
- [Smarty Ants 2nd Grade for Android tablets](#)

STUDENT PROGRAM

Avatars

What is the Smarty Ant avatar?

All students will be represented in Smarty Ants with an ant avatar. The first time they log in, they will have the opportunity to select the gender of their avatar (girl, boy or gender neutral) and then they get to customize a number of appearance options. These include both the color and style of the avatar's skin, hair, eye shape and antennae. The students play through the program as their ant and will have additional opportunities to personalize their avatar's look with a variety of fun clothes, hats and decorations from the Shop as they go along.

Who are Coach and Flea?

Coach is the students' online tutor and is always available to students. Flea is the "comic relief" character- much like a sidekick! He demonstrates how to play the various game modules and is integrated throughout areas of the program. While Coach cannot be turned off, students can opt to skip Flea's instruction (e.g. demonstrating games). He can easily be reinstated by clicking the "Flea button" in the lower right-hand corner of the screen when in a game module.

Assessments

How does Smarty Ants place students at their appropriate level?

Upon entering Smarty Ants for the first time, new students are taken to an initial placement activity in the form of a swimming pool. (Returning students take the Beginning of Year Placement test). Here, they are assessed on their knowledge of letters, letter sounds, and words. Based on the results of this initial activity, students are placed at their appropriate level.

Students are given a similar assessment again in January, when we activate the Mid-Year Back to School Placement test for all students that had initially assessed before Dec. 1 of the current school year. This is a chance to verify the student's placement in the program mid-way through the academic year and inform remediation or acceleration by moving students to the instruction they need. Students will also complete a similar End of Year Placement test as well, in the same format at the previous two assessments.

How are returning students assessed and placed?

Returning students will complete a Beginning of Year Placement test, which begins testing on the last level completed. For example, if a student completed level 4 last school year and left off in the middle of level 5, their assessment would begin on level 4.

At what level do students start the Initial assessment?

PK and K students start at their grade level. 1st grade students start with CVC words and 2nd grade students and higher start at the beginning of the 1st grade levels.

How long does it take students to complete the assessment?

On average, it takes students about 5-10 minutes to complete the assessment. The time will vary for each student based on where they start and their current level of literacy, and for returning students, if remediation lessons are needed.

What if students can't complete the assessment in one sitting?

If students need to complete their assessment at a different time, they can simply log out of their session by clicking the red "X" in the upper right-hand corner (preferred), or close their browser window or app. The next time they log in, they will resume their assessment from the same level where they left off.

How do I see results from the initial assessment?

- **For new students only:** As soon as your students complete the Initial Placement test, basic placement information is available on the Overview tab in the Teacher Dashboard on the Overall Lesson Progress bar. Sunday evening following the completion of the assessment, more detailed information can be found in the Teacher Dashboard by selecting the *Class Reports* tab and choosing the *Class Initial Assessment and Progress Report*. Teachers also receive an email with a link to the results.
- **For returning students:** Before the student has logged into the program for the current school year, the Overall Lesson Progress bar will show the last level they completed in the previous school year, not their Beginning of Year Placement results. Once the Beginning of Year Placement test is complete, the new lesson progress will populate on the Overall Lesson Progress bar. Teachers can also review the "How did my students perform on the Smarty Ants Placement tests?" report to see detailed results for each student.
- **For ALL Students:** Recommendations cannot be made for a student until they have completed a full lesson in the current school year. The Sunday after that happens, the learning pace is calculated for the student and we are able to give time recommendations for each week.

Can teachers adjust the lesson placement of their students?

While teachers can adjust student placement in the system, it is not recommended. The Initial Placement and Beginning of Year Placements tests will automatically place and adjust students following each testing administration, based on their performance on each assessment. If a teacher does manually change the assigned level, some previously collected data can be lost/reset.

If students are using a tablet (iPad or Android device) how do they complete the Initial Placement and Beginning of Year tests?

There are two versions of the Smarty Ants app: PreK-1 and Second Grade. Each version contains the Initial and Beginning of Year Assessments. However, students may need to switch to the other version of the app depending on their placement in the program.

Are students assessed in any way after the Initial or Beginning of Year Placement Tests?

Students are continually assessed as they move through the program with the embedded assessments, as students complete activities. Each lesson contains a Lesson Check and at the end of each level, students complete a Level Check. These are all important check points to make sure that students are retaining what they have learned as they move through the program.

Will the students be tested at the end of the school year?

Each student will receive an End of Year Assessment in both the Smarty Ants and Smarty Ants Español programs. It will test students on all skill levels they have played in throughout the current school year.

Instruction

What is the difference between a Level, Lesson, Mode and Module?

The program level encompasses the “big idea” of what is being learned, such as “CVC words”. The lesson focuses on a specific skill within that big idea, such as words with a short ‘a’ and new consonants ‘b’ and ‘d’. The mode is the part of the lesson that they’re working in, such as word building or word matching. The module is the actual game that they choose to play, such as the Treadmill or the Pool.

What is the routine for students as they work through the program?

After the initial assessment has been completed, students log into Smarty Ants and start by reading or listening to the Daily Woof, which is a summary of their last session. Next, students go to the Activity Board and select the activity module they want to complete. During the activities, students collect letters and words that will be used to build a book. The goal at each grade level is to complete a final product. PreK- 1st levels are working towards building a story book in each lesson, such as an alphabet book or a phonics-based story. Second grade levels work towards putting on a performance in the Greek Theatre.

Are other literacy skills incorporated or does the program just teach reading?

Although the primary focus of the program is to teach reading, students are also taught how to correctly form each letter, there are 67 different vocabulary activities, and additional writing opportunities are available in the Interactive Student Guided Practice books. There are also several hands-on [Multisensory activities](#) available to teachers for use in the classroom that will support the students’ progress within the program.

Are all of these various activities triggered automatically or does the student need to know where to go next?

All content that students see is automatically provided based on the students’ individual profile. Each of the various modes, lessons and levels will automatically be presented to the students at the appropriate time. Students do get to choose which modules they’d like to play in for each mode but will be taken through each mode of each lesson as their performance warrants.

Are students assessed during their play?

Students receive lesson and level checks as they move through the content. This ongoing, embedded assessment ensures that students are retaining what they have learned and will provide remediation if students have not mastered the concept.

Do the students have any choices in the program?

Yes! Students can choose whichever game (module) they would like to play from the Activity Board. They can also choose the level of challenge of that game. Students can also choose whether or not to receive instruction, they can ask for help, or complete a practice round within modules.

Students can also customize their Avatar, selecting the colors, hair style, and even the antennae for their ant avatar! As they earn Smarty Coins, they will be able to return to the store to purchase additional items.

Do students receive prompts or instruction automatically or on an ‘as needed’ basis? How do they receive this instruction/scaffolding?

There are many audio prompts and transition videos that explain what is going on throughout the program. At the beginning of every lesson, the teaching video plays automatically and students can view this again at any time by clicking the Coach cloud in the bottom left corner. Game instructions also come up automatically and can be replayed in the same manner. To help students stay on task, audio prompts will come up automatically on the Activity Board if the student is idle, reminding them to select an option. Scaffolding is triggered automatically for students on an as-needed basis. Students can also manually trigger scaffolds on demand by clicking on the learning clouds in the lower left corner of the game module screen. There is no limit to the number of times scaffolds can be activated.

Can the background music in the student program be turned off?

Yes. Simply select the Options button on the Activity Board (orange button with a “speaker”). Students can then choose various levels of the background music (Max, Medium, Minimum, Off) by dragging the slider. Select the red ‘X’ in the upper left of the Options window to close.

How does student choice and learning temperament impact the instruction they receive? Although student choice and learning temperament are key components of the Smarty Ants program, they do not impact the level of instruction your students receive. The instruction level is determined by their initial assessment and successful progression through the scope and sequence of reading skills, so students are always receiving explicit, systematic instruction in foundational literacy skills.

How does Smarty Ants support native Spanish speakers who are learning English?

Vocabulary development is important for all early readers, especially those learning a new language! For native Spanish speakers learning English, Smarty Ants provides a few specific scaffolds, including instructions in Spanish as well as two additional activities:

- Vocabulary modes – The meaning of the English vocabulary is taught by using the Spanish equivalent to demonstrate meaning. Vocabulary mode also has a unique module (Word Pop) which is not available for others.
- Vocabulary exam modes – This is where their understanding of the English words is tested. The instruction as well as the targets are called out in Spanish, but they need to select the appropriate word in English.

How does Smarty Ants meet the needs of Special Education students?

Smarty Ants is adaptive to each student's level, pace, and learning temperament. The program creates a truly personalized learning path for each student. The data reporting tools allow teachers to monitor and report progress in real time while providing the information needed to target instruction based on a student's individualized needs.

Rewards

What rewards can students earn?

Smarty Ants keeps students motivated! The system automatically calculates and rewards various levels of student performance including,

- Ant of the Week
- Class of the Week
- Reward Time
- Smarty Coins
- Necklaces
- Graduation Ceremony (at the end of each level)

How are the Ant of the Week awards determined?

Ant of the Week awards are automatically generated by the system based on the criteria. Teachers do not need to track and monitor progress towards these awards and are automatically notified via email each week. Teachers can easily print certificates for the students from the Teacher Dashboard in the *Class Reports* section. Criteria include:

- Most time played
- Most words built
- Most stories built
- Most recordings made
- Most uppercase letters earned (pre-K lessons only)
- Most lowercase letters earned (pre-K lessons only)
- Most chapters completed (Second grade lessons only)
- Most Science books completed (Second grade lessons only)

How is Class of the Week determined?

Class of the Week uses the same criteria as Ant of the Week, but at the class level. Please note that there must be multiple classes of the same grade level enrolled in Smarty Ants in the school to trigger Class of the Week awards.

What is Reward Time and how can it be used?

Reward Time is an opportunity for students to take a break from the lessons and visit the Reward Board. From the Reward Board students may choose Reward Activities such as visiting the dance studio where they will listen to learning songs, visiting the reward room where they can read the books they've built, playing a word wall game, reading their Daily Woof Newspaper which is where they can read about their previous activities and accomplishments, or go Home where they can change their outfit or visit the Smarty Store to buy a new outfit. Students in the PreK and 2nd grade lessons can also go to the Story Game Show.

How is Reward Time awarded? Will my student spend too much time in the reward activities?

In order to maximize time in the interactive learning modules, student access to reward, or non-instructional activities, is limited. These special reward activities are only accessible after reaching certain benchmarks and are only available for a limited amount of time. Reward time is automatically rewarded to students by the system.

- Pre-K and Grade 2 content lessons award 4 minutes of reward time at the end of each lesson
- Kindergarten and Grade 1 content lessons award 2 ½ minutes of reward time periodically throughout the lesson, typically after word and story building modes

How are Smarty Coins earned and how can they be used?

Every time a student earns a target (e.g. letter sound, words, etc.) they earn a coin. Coin totals are shown on the top left of the screen for students and can be used in the Smarty Store to purchase clothing and accessories for their ants, dog and virtual friends, further increasing the personalization of their avatars.

What are necklaces?

Necklaces are awarded for mastery of each skill. Students can collect necklaces as they go – they may even have so many they are hanging off of their antennae! An award ceremony is held at the end of every module play in which a student earns a target.

TEACHER DASHBOARD**Class Setup****How can teachers find the password for their students?**

If students are logging in using the teacher username and **unique student passwords**, teachers can go to the *Manage Students* tab and click *Edit Profile* next to each students' name to see the password for each student. Teachers can change this password, if desired, so it is easier for students to remember. These passwords must be unique to the school.

Can one student be assigned to two classes/teachers?

Students can only be in one class at a time. Each class can have multiple teachers, however, so co-teachers and reading specialists can be added to a class if they need visibility into the students' progress in that class.

Can teachers move students to another teacher's class?

A teacher can move a student to another class that they teach, but not to another teacher's class. Site Coordinators can move students between teachers' classes within their school and District Administrators can move students between schools. These controls can be limited, depending on the method used for rostering students within a district, however.

When my students move from one grade level to the next, can they continue to use the Smarty Ants program?

Yes, as your students continue from one grade level to the next, their Smarty Ants account and all data associated with it can move with them.

Can teachers manually add or remove students from their class(es)?

If enabled, yes. Removing (deactivating) students only removes them from the class. Their data still exists in the database. Some schools/districts who manage their rosters through Clever or other automatic syncing processes may disable this functionality.

How are multiple teachers assigned to a class, or multiple classes assigned to a teacher?

There are a few different ways to assign multiple teachers to a class.

From the Site Coordinator & District Administrator Dashboards

1. On the *Manage All Students (SC)* or *Manage Students (DA)* tab, click the 'Assign Teachers' button and select from the list of available teachers to assign to a class (choose the class in the classes dropdown first).
2. On the *Manage Teachers* tab, click the 'Add Teacher' button and choose from the Classes dropdown which classes they should be assigned to.
3. On the *Edit Teacher Account* page, the classes that teacher is assigned to can be changed from the Classes dropdown.

How do I know which or how many teachers are assigned to a class?

As a Site Coordinator on the *Manage School* tab, all teachers assigned to a class are displayed in the Teacher(s) column, and all classes assigned to a teacher are displayed in the Class column. Also, on the *Manage All Students* page, there is header information that displays “Students of” and then lists all teachers associated with those students. Finally, in all roles, the first initial, last name of all associated teachers are displayed in all class dropdowns throughout the program.

Can teachers print the class roster?

Teachers can print the class list from the ‘Manage Student’ page. Select the class from the drop down and click the Print button on the right-hand side of the screen.

Instruction

What are the academic goals that teachers can set for students?

There are two kinds of Academic Goals that can be set within Smarty Ants; End of Grade Level or 1 Academic Year. The default for all students is 1 Academic Year. Teachers choose a specific goal for each individual student. Based on this selection and the current placement from the initial assessment, the program calculates the amount time that each student needs to spend in the program to reach the selected goal.

For example, a 1st grade student started the year placing at an early Kindergarten level. His teacher wants him to aim for the End of Grade Level Progress. This would mean that the student would be expected to place at the end of the 1st grade level by the end of the school year. Based on this, the system calculates the amount of time this particular student needs to spend in the program to achieve those results.

In another example, a 1st grade student started the year placing at an early Kindergarten level. His teacher opted for him to work towards One Academic Year of Progress. This would mean that the student would be expected to finish the year in an early 1st grade level. Based on this, the system calculates the amount of time this particular student needs to spend in the program to achieve those results.

How do I set academic goals for each of my students?

On the *Manage Students* tab of the Teacher Dashboard, simply click on the goal in the Academic Goal column next to each student’s name. A dropdown will appear and you can make your selection which is automatically saved. You can also set the goal on the *Edit Student Profile* page using the Academic Goal dropdown.

How can I easily see which academic goals are currently set for my students?

On both the Overview tab and the Manage Students tab of the Teacher Dashboard, there is an Academic Goals column which displays the current goal for each student.

How often can I change the academic goals?

There is no limit to how frequently you can change the goals. Recommendations for both goals are always provided on the *Individual Student Recommendation and Progress Report* and in the Data Center, however only the currently selected goal will be displayed on the Overview and Manage Students tabs.

Are these goals reflected in reports?

Yes. While the *Individual Student Recommendation and Progress Report* provides recommendations and progress towards both goals, the specific goal assigned to each student is displayed as a reminder.

Can the teacher align Smarty Ants content to what is being taught in class?

In Smarty Ants, the content is automatically delivered to each student based on their specific needs and academic profile. However, if you wish to conduct small group or whole class instruction, you can use the activities for Whole Group and Small Group Instruction in the Teacher’s Guide including guided practice sheets, resource cards, interactive lessons, multisensory activities or read aloud activities to meet this goal. These can be found in the *Overview* tab for each student or the *Teachers’ Guide* tab in the Teacher Dashboard.



What resources are available for teachers?

Teachers can access Smarty Ants materials in multiple places within the Teacher Dashboard. From the Teacher's Guide tab, teachers can review the Level Overviews and Program Skills overviews. They can also select a specific Interactive Lesson or Read Aloud Activity to find additional activity ideas, guided practice and interactive resources as well as the state standards being addressed. The Training Tab also contains a number of useful materials to help you get started, manage your Smarty Ants classroom, review key reports, and engage families.

How/where can teachers access the Read Aloud books?

McGraw Hill does not have these materials available for purchase at this time. However, many of the resources are trade books or generic activities that can easily be found elsewhere or used with different books.

Can teachers delete student recordings?

Student recordings cannot be deleted by teachers at this time. They are stored with the student's information and available for reference or sharing with students or parents during conferences. Recordings are also available through the Parent Dashboard if activated.

Reports

How do I track student progress?

Smarty Ants automatically gathers progress data for all students, helping teachers to quickly and easily monitor student performance. Most student reports can be found in the *Class Reports* tab in the Teacher Dashboard. Review this [Summary of Reports for Teachers](#) for more information on the reports available and the suggested frequency for the review of each report.

Do I have to log in each week to see reports?

Many reports, including a weekly progress report and a weekly student successes report, are emailed directly to teachers each week. Each have links embedded to provide quick access to more detailed information.

What is considered "In School" time?

"In School Time" is designated from 8am-3pm local time. Access at any time outside of these hours is considered "Out of School Time". Usage during both periods is tracked in the *Time in Smarty Ants Report*.

What key metrics qualify as quality usage?

Since each student progresses along a personalized learning path, each will move through the program differently. Teachers should check the Overview tab and make sure that students are spending the recommended amount of time in the system, looking for the yellow or green color coding. The Data Center also provides information about time spent this week and progress toward goal. Teachers can also monitor the Personal Progress Pace shown on the Individual Student Recommendation and Progress report. This provides on-track information for the selected student. Click the blue question mark icon for details on interpreting that information.