

SUCCESSFUL WRITING AT WORK

FIFTH EDITION

KOLIN



Successful Writing at Work

Fifth Edition

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To Kristin, Eric, and Theresa
Julie and Loretta
Tammie
and
MARY

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Successful Writing at Work



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Preface

Successful Writing at Work is a comprehensive introductory text for use in technical, business, professional, and occupational writing courses. As in the first four editions, the approach in this fifth edition remains practical, emphasizing that communication skills are essential for career advancement and that writing (often as part of a team) is a vital part of almost every job. The fifth edition, however, even more strongly emphasizes the importance and application of the most recent communication technology—such as the Internet, computer graphics, e-mail, and teleconferencing—to writing successfully for and in the world of work. Even the appearance of this redesigned fifth edition underscores the significance of these technologies. TECH NOTES, boxed inserts in each chapter, give students additional information about computer applications in on-the-job writing.

The fifth edition also continues to stress that writing is a problem-solving activity that helps workers meet the needs of their employers, co-workers, customers, and clients. But with this edition's special emphasis on technology, students are shown how to become better problem solvers, and hence better writers, by understanding and using the Internet. In light of these expanding communication resources, *Successful Writing at Work* presents multiple situations and problems that students as business and technical writers will have to address and asks them to consider the rhetorical and technical options available for solving these problems. As earlier editions did, the fifth edition provides students with detailed guidelines for writing and designing clear, well-organized, and readable documents. This edition contains a wide range of examples (many of them annotated and visually varied) drawn from such diverse sources as Internet home pages, e-mail, student papers and reports, letters and memos, proposals, graphics packages, instructions, brochures, news releases, newsletters, and magazine and journal articles. These examples—all dealing with real issues in the world of work—reveal writers as effective, successful problem solvers.

Consistent with this overall view of workplace writing as workplace problem solving, the fifth edition steadfastly continues to emphasize writing as a process. Students will find helpful and concise explanations of the *hows* as well as the *whys* of writing for the world of work. *Successful Writing at Work* helps students develop the crucial skills of brainstorming, researching (through print and on-line sources), drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, and formatting various business and technical documents—correspondence, instructions, summaries, reports, brochures. It also helps them understand why the mastery of such skills is essential to career advancement.

The fifth edition continues to emphasize audience analysis, but this edition stresses even more than its predecessors that writers must often make ethical decisions to meet their readers' needs and fulfill commitments to them. Moreover, given the revolution in information technology, the concept of audience now extends to readers worldwide, whether as co-workers, employers, clients, or representatives

of various agencies and organizations. E-mail, letters, brochures and newsletters, instructions, proposals, short and long reports—all are considered from the points of view of the intended audience(s)—that is, from the vantage point of employers, personnel directors, co-workers, and customers, with renewed emphasis on the needs of ESL readers, both in this country and abroad. To engage students fully in job-related writing, the text treats them as professionals seeking advancement at different phases of a business career. For example, they are addressed as employees who must learn to collaborate as part of a writing team of co-workers in Chapter 3; as customer relations representatives addressing the needs of employers and customers with specific requests, problems, and complaints in Chapter 6; as job candidates preparing a variety of documents related to their job search in Chapter 7; as assistants who are asked to summarize a document or a report for a superior in Chapter 11; as competitive businesspeople writing a persuasive proposal to win a contract in Chapter 15; and as presenters at a meeting or conference in Chapter 18.

The organization of the fifth edition reflects the student's own progress in researching and writing for the world of work. The text moves logically and smoothly from consideration of basic concepts in writing (audience, tone, message, purpose, ethical considerations) in Chapter 1 to the overall process of writing (brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, formatting) in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 is devoted to the dynamics of collaborative writing and the procedures groups must go through in order to resolve conflicts and produce successful documents. These three chapters form the foundation on which students can further develop and apply their writing skills. From these introductory chapters, the fifth edition moves sequentially from relatively short and simple assignments (e-mail correspondence, faxes, memos, letters) in Chapters 4 through 7 to longer and more complex business writing (brochures, newsletters, instructions, proposals, reports) in Chapters 8 through 18.

Like the four previous editions, this edition is rich in practical applications, equally useful to readers who have no job experience and to those with years of experience in one or several fields. Another strong feature of the fifth edition is a series of case studies showing how writers use varied resources and rhetorical strategies to solve problems in the business world. An abundance of exercises at the end of each chapter gives students opportunities to practice a variety of writing skills: analyzing the weaknesses and strengths of diverse documents, generating ideas, researching topics, organizing information, drafting, revising and editing, incorporating visuals, designing documents, and working as part of a collaborative writing team.

New Material in the Fifth Edition

The fifth edition has been improved and greatly expanded to make it a more effective tool for the instructor and a more comprehensive and contemporary resource for the student. Throughout the text, new guidelines, examples, figures, case studies, and exercises make the discussion of occupational writing more useful and current. A great deal of information has been added about Internet and other on-

line resources in business and technical writing. The following features are new to the fifth edition:

- **TECH NOTES** help students better understand the ways in which computers, the Internet, and other communication technologies can help them with their work; some **TECH NOTES** offer advice on applying recent technology (for example, how to send an attachment with e-mail or how to use graphics software to position a table in text) while others elaborate on a topic mentioned in the chapter.
- New material in Chapter 1 on ethical issues in business and technical writing emphasizes the importance of ethics in the writing process, explains how to revise unethical (misleading, exaggerated) writing, and offers possible solutions for ethical dilemmas. The discussion of ethics is not limited to Chapter 1 but continues in other chapters—on e-mail (netiquette), letters, visuals, summaries, reports—with specific guidelines about ethical communication as it pertains to each type of document.
- Chapter 3, on collaborative writing, is entirely new, offering practical advice on the dynamics of team writing. Several collaboration models and a case study on collaborative writing prepare students to be better team members and, therefore, better readers/editors/writers.
- Chapter 4 is also new to the fifth edition. Covering memos, faxes, and e-mail, the chapter introduces students to some of the most frequently written correspondence in the world of work; explains and illustrates both the technology and the protocols students need to understand to produce these documents professionally and concisely; and presents a case study that helps students learn about the format, style, ethics, and rhetorical strategies of this communication medium.
- Chapters 5 and 6 include greatly expanded and updated sections on writing for ESL (English as a Second Language) readers. Examples, guidelines, and a case study on researching, observing, and incorporating a reader's point of view encourage students to respect the cultural traditions and communication needs of diverse audiences.
- This edition supplies expanded coverage of sexist language and ways to avoid it in correspondence and reports.
- New examples throughout Chapter 6 introduce students to the types of problems they are likely to face as writers in the workplace and guide them toward the most effective rhetorical strategies to employ; a new sales letter on promoting ergonomic software, for example, demonstrates the degree of audience analysis required for a mass market promotion.
- A thoroughly revised and updated Chapter 7 on job application letters and résumés contains advice about the variety of resources available to job seekers. Sensitive to the needs of individuals reentering the workplace or changing careers, this chapter devotes additional, valuable space to their situation. The new formats and rhetorical strategies for on-line résumés and electronic job searches are valuable additions to this much-used chapter.
- Responding to the needs of students who are frequently called upon to write or assist in the production of promotional materials for their company or

organization, a new Chapter 8 on news releases, newsletters, brochures, and home pages offers advice, examples, and practical guidelines on preparing these documents. Numerous types of releases, including some from the World Wide Web, are included, along with carefully designed and written examples of a brochure, a newsletter, and a Web home page. This chapter reinforces a prominent theme of the fifth edition—that document design is crucial to the writer's success. No other occupational writing textbook gives students so much detailed and practical information about the construction and rhetoric of home pages.

- A completely revised and substantially updated Chapter 9, on finding and using information resources, including the Internet, introduces students to the most important research tools of the Information Age. A new section on step-by-step research strategies opens the chapter, followed by extended coverage of on-line catalogs, databases, and reference works; the second half of the chapter is devoted exclusively to the Internet, with detailed attention to (and illustrations of) the types of Internet searches, search engines, and Web browsers. The chapter contains a variety of illustrations of home pages, menus, and hyperlinked texts, giving students a thorough but not overwhelming technical introduction to the Internet.
- New material in Chapter 10 on how to document electronic and on-line sources in researched reports offers students clear citation guidelines and plentiful examples. A new section on precautions researchers must follow to verify constantly changing Web sites is also especially useful. A student-written research paper on telecommuting illustrates how to incorporate information from electronic sources and Internet sites and then how to document them.
- A new model article—"Virtual Reality and Law Enforcement"—in Chapter 11, on writing summaries, is used to illustrate, through detailed annotations and extended running commentary, the process of summarizing documents clearly and concisely. New examples of abstracts and summaries also draw upon and highlight new communication technologies to teach careful writing and to introduce interesting and current information into this edition.
- A new Chapter 12, on document design, logically precedes Chapter 13 on visuals and stresses the note that the visual appearance of a document plays in how (and how easily) an audience understands and responds to a piece of writing. Students are introduced to the ABCs of document design, including page layout, levels of headings, type and font size, and design, and are given specific guidelines on mistakes to avoid as they plan and print their work. A before-and-after example of a document illustrates graphically the importance of design in the communication process. This chapter rests upon such central pedagogical bases as the psychology of space and the ways in which design affects readability and retention.
- A thoroughly revised Chapter 13, on designing visuals, pays particular attention to computer-generated visuals and includes additional, updated examples of graphs, tables, and clip art; the emphasis throughout is on the software options available to students configuring appropriate visuals for their written work.

- A new model proposal on notebooks (laptop computers) in Chapter 15 further illustrates a new technology and ways to market it, in writing, to a potential customer.
- Chapter 17, on long reports, contains a new model report on e-cash, or electronic money, using Internet and other contemporary sources.
- New material in Chapter 18 focuses on conferencing and oral reports; a new speech outline on teleconferencing stresses collaboration in the workplace.
- A new appendix—“A Writer’s Brief Guide to Paragraphs, Sentences, and Words”—concisely explains and illustrates the most significant and recurrent problems of punctuation, usage, mechanics, and style relevant to writing for the world of work. This appendix is a condensed but not watered-down handbook, useful to the instructor who wants a standard but not intrusive guide for students and for students who need a quick but effective review.

A brief overview of the fifth edition will show how these new materials have been integrated.

An Overview of Part I

Part I deals with the overall writing process. Chapter 1, setting the stage for all occupational writing, identifies the basic concepts of audience analysis, purpose, message, style, tone, and ethics, and relates these concepts to on-the-job writing.

Chapters 2 and 3 continue this important unit on the basic elements of effective writing. Chapter 2, on the writing process at work, introduces students to prewriting strategies, drafting, revising, and editing their written work. Chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of collaborative writing in the world of work and gives students valuable guidelines for being productive, cooperative members of a writing team. This chapter also explores some of the major problems writers face when working together and suggests positive, effective strategies for dealing with problems and resolving them.

An Overview of Part II

Part II deals with business correspondence. Chapter 4 concentrates on memos, faxes, and e-mail, perhaps the most frequent types of writing that students will face in the world of work. Chapter 5 introduces the nuts and bolts of letter writing and focuses on selecting the appropriate format, language, and tone. Chapter 6 examines the rhetorical strategies for producing a variety of business correspondence—complaint, adjustment, order, and sales letters—with additional material on organizational strategies for good-news or bad-news letters, and an expanded discussion of writing for ESL readers. Chapter 7, covering the job search, takes students through the process of preparing a placement file, writing a résumé and organizing it by skill area and/or chronology, and sending it via the Internet as well as through more conventional means, writing a letter of application, anticipating interviewers’ questions, and accepting or declining a job offer. For greater

teaching flexibility, instructors will find six application letters and six résumés from applicants with varying degrees of experience—helpful models for new and veteran job seekers alike. A new Chapter 8 on writing and designing promotional literature—news releases, brochures, newsletters, and home pages—closes this section and stresses the application of various rhetorical strategies and technical designs to these important customer-centered documents.

An Overview of Part III

Part III, on gathering and summarizing information, occupies a key position in the fifth edition. It helps students acquire the techniques they need to be skilled researchers and accurate summarizers. Chapter 9 takes students on a guided tour of a computerized library, shows them how to locate printed and audiovisual materials, and explains how to profit from searching various computer databases and electronic reference works; the chapter also provides a full introduction to the Internet—its usefulness, organization, search engines, and prominent Web sites in various disciplines. Chapter 10 is devoted to documentation, in particular, the MLA and APA parenthetical methods. Detailed guidelines show students how to document a variety of print and electronic sources, including Web sites, e-mail, listservs, and discussion groups. A reprinted student research paper, “The Advantages of Telecommuting in the Information Age,” illustrates several print, electronic, and Internet citations. In Chapter 11 students learn how to write clear and concise summaries and abstracts by seeing how a police officer summarizes an article on virtual reality and law enforcement for a superior.

An Overview of Part IV

In Part IV students get a chance to apply the skills they learned in Part III to more complex writing assignments. The section focuses on key business and technical writing documents—instructions, proposals, and reports. Chapters 12 and 13 form a unit on the related topics of document design and visuals. A new Chapter 12 stresses the significance of document design and gives students practical advice and pertinent examples for making their work more reader-friendly and visually appealing. Chapter 13 supplies practical advice on designing visuals with written commentary; describes how to use visuals in instructions and reports; discusses and illustrates a variety of visuals students can use in their work; and concludes with a greatly expanded and updated section on computer graphics.

Chapter 14 covers writing accurate instructions and selecting the most appropriate language and visuals. Chapter 15 explores three common types of proposals: an internal proposal for an employer, a sales proposal (solicited and unsolicited) for customers, and a research proposal for a teacher. A sample proposal on supplying notebook computers to a small firm is new to the fifth edition. Chapter 16 outlines the principles common to all short reports and then discusses specific types, with detailed coverage of test and laboratory reports and a thorough discussion of

reports. Finally, students are cautioned about the legal implications of what they write and are shown how to avoid some legal pitfalls.

To make it easily accessible to students, Chapter 17, on long reports, has been revised for this edition to emphasize the *process* of writing such a report. Students are encouraged to see a long report as the culmination of all their work in the course or on a major project at work. The individual parts of such a report are discussed and illustrated in detail, with a fully annotated student-written model report, “E-cash.” This paper, together with the Chapter 10 report on telecommuting and the long report on AIDS and health care workers in the Instructor’s Guide, gives instructors three complete, documented student research papers from which to teach the long report.

Chapter 18, which stresses the importance of audience analysis in oral communication, offers commonsense advice on preparing briefings and conferences and on generating, organizing, and delivering formal speeches; this chapter includes a new speech outline on the benefits of teleconferencing.

A Writer’s Brief Guide

New to the fifth edition is an appendix, “A Writer’s Brief Guide,” which students can use as a handy, concise reference manual on matters of usage, mechanics, punctuation, style, word choice, sentence structure, and paragraph development.

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To the Student

This book is based on the belief that writing substantially influences your career. Effective writing can help you obtain a job, perform your duties more successfully, and earn promotions for your efforts. Guidelines and examples found in this book emphasize the progress you can make in your career as you acquire effective writing skills. Specifically, *Successful Writing at Work*

- explains the writing process and shows you how planning, drafting, revising, and editing can help you to produce a variety of essential job-related communications
- describes the function and format of these job-related communications
- teaches you how to supply an audience with the information it needs to make decisions and solve problems
- introduces you to various research tools, including the Internet
- prepares you to write a variety of business documents, from simple e-mail messages to longer, more complex proposals and reports

The fifth edition is organized to coincide with your own progress in writing. Part I gives you solid, useful background information to be a successful writer in the world of work. Chapter 1 introduces you to key ideas, strategies, and requirements for writing on the job. Chapter 2 explains and illustrates the process of writing. Chapter 3 explains the advantages and techniques of collaborative writing and the pitfalls to avoid.

Part II, Correspondence, discusses the basics you should know in order to write these major on-the-job documents and so advance in your career. Chapter 4 focuses exclusively on memos and electronic correspondence—faxes and e-mail. Chapter 5 surveys some essential information on style, format, and organization of business letters. Chapter 6 turns to the strategies to be used with specific types of correspondence you will write for your employer and customers. Chapter 7 focuses on how to write a letter of application and to prepare several kinds of résumés, including bullet and electronic (or Internet) résumés. Part II concludes with a chapter that shows you how to write promotional material—news releases, newsletters, brochures, and home pages.

Part III is devoted to helping you gather and summarize information. On your job you will be expected to know how to use a variety of research tools (including the Internet) and strategies. Chapter 9 describes how to find, retrieve, and use research materials, with an emphasis on the Internet and database resources. Chapter 10 is devoted to documenting the information you gather, particularly from on-line sources, and Chapter 11 covers summarizing what you find and know.

Part IV concentrates on effective ways to record your findings in instructions, proposals, and reports. This part helpfully begins with two chapters on designing

documents and using visuals. Visuals and graphics are components in all the types of documents discussed in the other Part IV chapters—instructions (Chapter 14), proposals (Chapter 15), short reports (Chapter 16), long reports (Chapter 17), and oral reports, or business presentations (Chapter 18).

A Brief Writer's Guide will assist you in the mechanics of writing paragraphs, composing sentences, and improving your word choice and spelling.

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