



Mark Connelly

**THE  
MCGRAW-HILL  
WORKBOOK**



# *The* *McGraw-Hill* Workbook

Mark Connelly

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*The*  
*McGraw-Hill*  
Workbook

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## PREFACE

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***Writing is very much like bricklaying.  
You learn to put one brick on top of  
another and spread the mortar so  
thick.***

— Red Smith

We usually think of writers as people who write for a living—novelists, screenwriters, biographers, poets, reporters. But all professionals—in fact all educated people—use writing to achieve their personal and professional goals. In the information age most jobs involve exchanging data. Computers and FAX machines link individuals to the global economy. Eighty percent of computer work is word processing, and eighty percent of the world's computers use English. The ability to write effectively in English is the common denominator in becoming successful in any career you choose.

Attorneys write letters to persuade clients to accept an out of court settlement. A community organizer crafts a fund raising letter to finance a new daycare center. The commander of a Navy base develops a carefully worded policy on sexual harassment. College students prepare a complaint letter to urge their dean to respond to campus crime. Nurses and police officers document their daily activities in reports that are often presented in court as evidence. Executives are evaluated on their ability to communicate through sales brochures, client newsletters, press kits, annual reports, and memos. Public officials and heads of non-profit organizations write budget requests and grant proposals to secure funding for their operations. Entrepreneurs soon discover their success greatly depends on writing skills to attract investors, influence customers, and motivate employees.

Almost every challenge you face in life can require writing. When you enter the job market, you will have to write a resume and cover letter that command attention. If your insurance company refuses to pay a claim, you will have to state your case in writing. Persuasive, diplomatic writing may resolve a personal dispute and prevent a lawsuit. A well stated letter to the editor can focus attention on an environmental hazard endangering your community.

Like learning to play the guitar or use a computer, writing takes practice and hard work. It can be frustrating and often time consuming. Good ideas may be hard to develop and difficult to organize. Grammar and punctuation rules can be confusing. Choosing the right words may sometimes feel as complex as solving a crossword puzzle. But if you work at it, you will acquire the writing skills that will be key to achieving your goals.

## **This Book**

The *McGraw-Hill Workbook* is designed to help you develop writing skills through the activity of writing. The opening chapter explains writing as a process, providing a variety of starting points and strategies to organize ideas. Later chapters examine the building blocks of writing, moving from paragraphs and sentences to individual words. Much of the book focuses on overcoming common grammar problems. The more you write, the more you will appreciate the relationship of sentence structure, word choice, and punctuation to the ideas you are trying to express.

## **Special features of the *McGraw-Hill Workbook***

- *The McGraw-Hill Workbook* can be used separately or in conjunction with the *McGraw-Hill Handbook*. Both books use the same chapter headings and numbering system for easy cross reference.
- Each chapter ends with a checklist of main points for quick review.
- Writing and revision exercises provide opportunities to write and revise papers assigned in class.
- The appendix includes several practical guides:
  - ✓ a list of 200 topics for college essays
  - ✓ a planning sheet for organizing ideas.
  - ✓ a list of 300 commonly misspelled words
  - ✓ an alphabetical list of easily confused words such as “affect/effect” and “than/then”
  - ✓ a punctuation chart for fast reference.

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# 1 PLANNING A PAPER

---

*... the only way to write  
is simply ... to write.*

— Harlan Ellison

Your success as a college student greatly depends on writing. Essay exams, research papers, and lab reports require skills taught in composition courses. Writing is a communications tool you will use throughout your college career.

Good writing is original, fresh, and interesting. Good writing is not an emotional outburst, a list of facts, or a replay of ideas you have seen on TV. Good writing creates a bond between writer and reader. Readers are drawn to writers who care about their subjects, have something to say, and express their ideas clearly and creatively. Good writing is goal-oriented and does not occur in a vacuum. Writing — whether a cake recipe, an essay, or the Declaration of Independence — is a means to an end, a way of transferring ideas to a specific audience.

Movies often depict writers as tough reporters banging out copy on battered typewriters, inspired poets passionately writing to a soaring soundtrack, or investigative journalists with perfect manicures tapping high tech computers. All these stereotyped images create the illusion that writing is created in a single burst of inspiration.

Writing requires inspiration, but like designing an airplane or developing a vaccine, it takes effort. Writing is both a *product* and a *process*.

## The Writing Process

*... the thrill of writing is what  
emerges from the process.*

— Erica Jong

Writing is a creative enterprise. Even designing an owner's manual for a new car requires a measure of creativity to make sure the information is complete and easy to understand.

There are no "rules" on how to write, but experienced writers in a variety of fields follow similar steps:

1. **Plan** — define the topic  
develop main ideas  
consider the audience  
choose supporting material  
organize ideas
2. **Write** — write as much as you can without stopping
3. **Cool** — put your writing aside and move to other activities so you return to it with an objective eye.
4. **Revise** — review your writing, checking it against your plan to identify problems and needed improvements.
5. **Edit** — put the last draft into final form, making sure the paper follows the required format and is free of mechanical errors.

The first two chapters of this workbook explain step by step how to use this process. Although it may seem complex and involved at first, this process can help you save time and trouble. Perhaps you have started and stopped a paper half a dozen times or torn apart a legal pad trying to get the first paragraph right. Or maybe you have written three pages only to discover yourself writing in circles. If you have received poor grades because your papers lacked focus, were too general, didn't include enough support, or simply listed facts and statistics without building them into a clear argument, this chapter will help.

## Critical Thinking: Developing a Writer's Eye

**. . . it is part of the business of the writer . . . to examine attitudes, to go beneath the surface, to tap the source.**

— James Baldwin

Every step of the writing process requires skills that many educators and business leaders now call critical thinking — the ability to move beyond first impressions and emotional reactions to get at the heart of things.

Good writers are not passive — they don't simply record what they see around them or repeat what they hear — they *observe, ask questions, analyze, think*. Investigative journalists interview politicians, movie critics dissect films, sportswriters explain why teams win or lose, business reporters analyze stocks, columnists comment on social change.

Two critical thinking skills — observing and asking questions — can help you find topics to write about. Some of the best subjects come from looking carefully and stopping to analyze things other people have overlooked or misunderstood. Hemingway, for instance, believed people could train themselves to be better writers by sharpening their skills as observers:

When you walk into a room and you get a certain feeling or emotion, remember back until you see exactly what it was that gave you the emotion. Remember what noises and smells were and what was said. Then write it down, making it clear so the reader will see it too, and have the same feeling you had. And watch people, observe, try to put yourself in somebody else's head. If two men argue, don't just think who is right and who is wrong. Think about what both their sides are. . . . As a writer, you should not judge, you should understand.

Another writer, May Sarton, stressed the importance of getting into the habit of asking questions about the most ordinary experiences:

Say you've burned something in a pot, and you are standing at the sink scrubbing it. What comes to your mind as you are doing this? What does it mean to you in a funny way? Are you angry because you burn pots all too often? You can rage against the fact that it seems to be women who are mostly having to scrub pots, or you can ask yourself why are you bothering about this pot anyway. Why not throw it away if you can afford to get another? Is there something wrong with you that you are so compulsive you must try to clean something that is really beyond repair?

As you observe and ask questions, remain objective. It is natural to accept ideas you approve of and ignore or dismiss anything which upsets or angers you. In order to think critically, you have to move beyond what you *feel* and guard against making snap judgments.

---

## CRITICAL THINKING GUIDE

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Avoid making these common errors in thinking:

1. **Hasty generalizations** Don't jump to conclusions, making generalized statements based on limited evidence. Having spoken to three or four exchange students from Sweden, you cannot assume to have an insight into Swedish culture, politics, or society. Finding two or three discrepancies in a government report does not automatically indicate a conspiracy or coverup.
2. **False analogies** Comparisons are a weak form of argument. Because an educational policy works in Japan does not mean it would work in the United States. In explaining ideas with analogies, realize that no two situations are alike. You can't argue that drugs should be legalized based solely on the observation that Prohibition failed.
3. **Post-hoc fallacies** "Post hoc" refers to a Latin phrase warning against mistaking a time relationship for cause and effect. If you take an aspirin and your headache fades away ten minutes later, that alone is not proof that the aspirin worked. If a rash of crimes occurs following the showing of a violent TV movie, there might or might not be a casual relationship.
4. **Either-or fallacies** There are rarely only two options for any situation. It's not realistic to suggest that "either we pass the school bond issue or condemn our children to a life of illiteracy."
5. **Attacking personalities** Because an idea or position is advanced or supported by a controversial personality does not automatically discredit it. Judge ideas on their merits, not on personalities.
6. **Begging the question** Don't assume things that must be proved. If you state that the college's irrelevant English requirement should be banned, you have to first establish that the requirement is no longer valid.
7. **Ignoring potential change** Don't base your thinking on trends that may change. Because the price of oil or gold has risen steadily for ten years does not guarantee future increases.

In addition to improving your writing, critical thinking can help you succeed in other college courses and in your career. Almost every field, from air traffic control to law enforcement, demands the ability to observe, identify problems, and consider solutions.

***As you look at the world around you, try to see it with a "writer's eye." Look carefully, search for trends, analyze causes, ask questions.***



### Exercise 1-1

**Examine the following observations and assumptions. Are they valid? Do they exhibit logical fallacies? What additional information is needed to make a conclusion? Are there other possible conclusions?**

1. In a documentary film about drug addiction nearly all of the addicts interviewed were smoking cigarettes. There must be a link between tobacco and cocaine.
2. My ten year old brother's baseball card collection has doubled in value in just two years. If he holds onto it until he is eighteen, he'll have enough money to pay for college.
3. Because fraternities promote abusive drinking and sexist attitudes, they should be banned.
4. Don't bother to transfer to State University. I talked to three students who transferred last year, and all three said they regretted making the change.
5. Dean Lopez's budget should be rejected. He is being sued for sexual harassment and admits having a drinking problem.
6. The university shouldn't let its facilities be used for the gay arts fair. The last thing we need is more AIDS carriers on campus.



7. President Kennedy vowed to put a man on the moon before the decade of the 1960s ended. Just eight years after the first manned flight, the United States landed men on the moon. Over ten years has passed since the AIDS virus was identified, but no cure has been found. Clearly, our government has lost the ability to achieve its goals.
  
8. Reported cases of child abuse have risen 250% in this city since 1975. The family structure has totally collapsed.
  
9. Being a Navy pilot is extremely stressful. My uncle was a pilot, and he died of a heart attack at thirty-six.
  
10. Last week my roommate's purse was stolen in the Union. A student in my math class had his bike stolen from the parking structure. The campus police are not effective in battling the increase in crime.