

4th edition

a Troubleshooting Guide **STRATEGIES & PROCESS** for Writers

Barbara Fine Clouse

having trouble with my introductions.
"My writing seems boring."
word?
"Run-on or a Comma Splice
of the right word.
"Run-on or a C
"I don't know what to change."
"My ideas seem all mixed up."
"My draft is too short."
I have trouble with apostrophes.
"I can't spell."
How do I
How do I write a thesis?
I am having trouble with my introduction.
How do I get my ideas to fit together?
I don't know what to change.

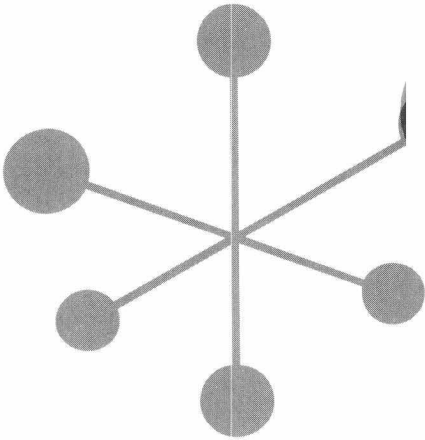
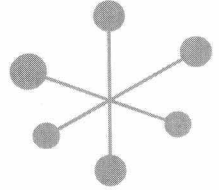
Fourth Edition

H15
W1

A Troubleshooting Guide for Writers

STRATEGIES AND PROCESS

Barbara Fine Clouse



**Mc
Graw
Hill**

Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York
San Francisco St. Louis Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Kuala Lumpur
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal New Delhi
Santiago Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

The **McGraw-Hill** Companies



Higher Education

A TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE FOR WRITERS: STRATEGIES AND PROCESS

Published by McGraw-Hill, a business unit of the McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10020. Copyright © 2005, 2001, 1997, 1993, by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written consent of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., including, but not limited to, in any network or other electronic storage or transmission, or broadcast for distance learning. Some ancillaries, including electronic and print components, may not be available to customers outside the United States.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

6 7 8 9 0 FGR/FGR 0 9 8 7

ISBN-13: 978-0-07-287689-5

ISBN-10: 0-07-287689-1

President of McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences: *Steve Debow*

Publisher: *Lisa Moore*

Sponsoring editor: *Christopher Bennem*

Developmental editor: *Anne Stameshkin*

Executive marketing manager: *David S. Patterson*

Senior media producer: *Todd Vaccaro*

Project manager: *Ruth Smith*

Production supervisor: *Janean A. Utley*

Associate designer: *Srdj Savanovic*

Lead supplement producer: *Marc Mattson*

Cover design: *Srdj Savanovic*

Interior design: *Ellen Pettengell*

Typeface: *10/12 Meridien Roman*

Compositor: *Shepherd, Inc.*

Printer: *Quebecor World Fairfield Inc.*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Clouse, Barbara Fine.

A troubleshooting guide for writers: strategies and process / Barbara Fine Clouse.—4th ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-07-287689-1 (acid-free paper)

1. English language—Rhetoric. 2. English language—Grammar. 3. Report writing. I.

Title.

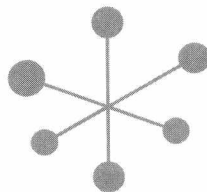
PE1408.C5378 2005

808'.042—dc22

2003068635

For Jeremy, Brady, and Julia
and
In loving memory of Bob Krantz

Preface



A Troubleshooting Guide for Writers: Strategies and Process is a compendium of strategies for handling all aspects of writing, from idea generation through editing. It is based on the belief that people write better when they discover procedures that work well for them.

GOALS

The many writing strategies in *A Troubleshooting Guide for Writers* serve two important purposes:

- To provide a range of strategies for writers to sample as they work to develop successful writing processes
- To help writers when they get stuck by providing specific strategies for solving writing problems

WHY A NEW TITLE?

In its first three editions, this book was titled *Working It Out: A Troubleshooting Guide for Writers*. The approach and scope of the book remain the same; the new title better reflects the book's goals: to help students solve writing problems and to help them improve their writing processes.

FEATURES

The features of *A Troubleshooting Guide for Writers* aim to make the book an efficient reference for those who want to improve their writing processes by discovering effective procedures and by developing successful problem-solving strategies.

New Over 284 Helpful Strategies

Over 40 strategies have been added! With so many helpful procedures described, all users should find ways to solve problems and improve their writing processes.

Clear, Jargon-Free Prose Written in a Conversational Style

So the book can be a ready reference both in and out of the classroom, explanations are concise and written in a supportive, nonintimidating style.

Organization across the Writing Process

Writers can use the text in the same sequence as their writing. Part I treats prewriting; Part II treats drafting; Part III treats revising; Part IV treats editing.

Chapters Structured as Responses to Questions and Comments Voiced by Student Writers

Students can find what they need faster because chapter titles echo their own language and concerns.

An Overview of the Writing Process and Essay Structure

The Introduction contains information on the stages of the writing process, audience, purpose, and essay structure.

New A Focus on Collaboration

Chapter 11 offers strategies to help students incorporate peer review into their revision processes.

New Illustrations of Revising

Each of the chapters in Part III (A Troubleshooting Guide to Revising) includes an “Examining a Draft” section that uses a student essay to illustrate the revising process.

New Strategies for Incorporating Research

Part V focuses on finding and using source material. An annotated student paper using research illustrates the points made in this section.

Revised A Greater Emphasis on Composing with a Computer

Frequently occurring “Troubleshooting with a Computer” sections offer strategies for those who compose at the computer. Each of these sections also includes helpful websites.

Useful Appendixes

Appendix A contains 15 ideas for writing, in rhetorical context. Appendix B describes strategies for writing essay examination answers.

New and Revised Additional Coverage

Chapter 3 has been expanded to include information on informal outlining, Chapter 18 includes more information on eliminating sentence fragments, and Chapter 21 includes strategies for using verb tenses correctly. A new chapter—Chapter 26—covers strategies for capitalizing.



A NOTE TO STUDENTS

Pretend for a moment that you play tennis and that you are having trouble with your baseline shots. A coach, noticing your problem, might suggest that you drop your hip a little. Now pretend that you are a runner and you are having trouble improving your time in the 1,600-meter race. In this case, your coach might suggest that you swing your arms more and pretend a giant hand is on your back pushing you along. That’s what coaches do: They make suggestions to help you solve problems that arise as a natural part of learning to do something better.

As you work to become a better writer, think of this book as one of your coaches. If you encounter a problem, look to this book for one or more suggestions for solving that problem.



HERE’S HOW TO USE THIS BOOK FOR BEST RESULTS.

- Read over the table of contents so you know what this book covers. Notice that most of the chapters are titled with a remark often spoken by a struggling writer.
- If you get stuck, return to the table of contents and find the remark that best expresses the problem you are having. Turn to the chapter titled with that remark.

- Quickly read the chapter (it will be short). Several strategies for solving your writing problem will be explained. Select one of the strategies and give it a try. If it works, great. If not, try another—and another until you solve your problem. (If none of the procedures works, speak to your instructor or writing center tutor.)
- If you are not having any problems but want to discover more effective or efficient procedures, read through the book and mark the procedures to try the next time you write.

Of course, this book is not your only coach. Your classroom teacher is the best coach of all, and your classmates and the tutors in the writing center are also good sources of information. So if you have a problem, you can also talk to one of these people to get suggestions for overcoming the obstacle. Ask them what specific procedures they follow, and try some of them to see if they work well for you too.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Lisa Moore, Anne Stameshkin, and Ruth Smith of McGraw-Hill for their support and expert guidance. In addition, I owe much to the sound counsel of the following reviewers, whose insights inform this book:

Steven E. Cohen, Norwalk Community College
Donald Erskine, Clark College
Lahcen Elyazghi Ezzaher, University Of Northern Colorado
Carol S. Manning, Mary Washington College
Sue McIntyre, Humboldt State University
Robbi Nester, Irvine Valley College
Deborah Coxwell Teague, Florida State University
Julie Whitlow, Salem State College

Finally, to my understanding husband, Denny, and to my children, Greg and Jeff, I offer thanks for the support and for the room of my own.

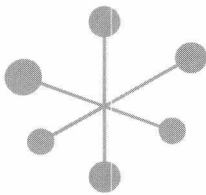


Table of contents

Myths about writing: an introduction	1
Don't Believe Everything You Hear	2
How to Become a Better Writer	3
A Sample Essay: "The Uniform Solution"	16

PART I

A Troubleshooting Guide to Prewriting 21

CHAPTER ONE

"I don't know what to write."	23
Freewrite	23
Use Looping	24
Try Clustering	24
Write a List	26
Brainstorm	27
Examine Your Topic from Different Angles	27
Use Questionnaires	28
Write an Exploratory Draft	28
Relate the Topic to Your Own Experience	28
Talk into a Tape Recorder	29
Talk to Other People	29
Write a Poem	29
Write about Your Block	29
Put Your Writing on the Back Burner	29
Identify Your Purpose and Audience	30

Keep a Journal	30
Combine Techniques	31
Develop Your Own Writing Topic	31
Troubleshooting with a Computer	33

CHAPTER TWO

"How do I write a thesis?"	35
Study Your Idea Generation Material	35
Write a Two-Part Thesis	35
Note the Main Points That Will Be Made in Your Essay	36
Limit Your Topic to Something Manageable	36
Express Your Assertion in Specific Words	36
Avoid Factual Statements	37
Avoid Announcing Your Intentions	37
Consider Your Thesis to Be Tentative	37
Troubleshooting with a Computer	37

CHAPTER THREE

"How do I get my ideas to fit together?"	38
Check Your Thesis	38
Write a Scratch Outline	39
Construct an Outline Tree	39
Complete an Outline Worksheet	40
Write an Informal Outline	40
Construct an Outline Map	42
Write an Abstract	42
Troubleshooting with a Computer	42

PART II

A Troubleshooting Guide to Drafting 45

CHAPTER FOUR

"I know what I want to say, but I can't say it."	47
Get Rid of Distractions	47
Set Intermediate Goals for Yourself	47
Allow Your Draft to Be Rough	48

Write in a New Place	48
Switch Your Writing Tools	48
Write on a Daily Schedule	48
Write a Letter to a Friend	48
Write for Yourself Instead of for a Reader	49
Use a Natural Style	49
Speak into a Tape Recorder	49
Reread Often	49
Walk Away	49
Write the Introduction Last	50
Begin in the Middle	50
Concentrate on What You <i>Can</i> Do and Skip What You Can't Do	50
Resist the Temptation to Rewrite as You Draft	50
Write Fast and Don't Look Back	50
Write an Outline	51
Return to Idea Generation	51
Troubleshooting with a Computer	51

CHAPTER FIVE

"I'm having trouble with my introduction."	52
Explain Why Your Topic Is Important	52
Provide Background Information	52
Tell a Story	53
Use an Interesting Quotation	53
Provide Relevant Statistics	54
Find Some Common Ground with Your Reader	54
Describe Something	54
Begin with the Thesis and the Points You Will Discuss	54
Keep It Short	55
Write It Last	55
Troubleshooting with a Computer	55

CHAPTER SIX

"How do I back up what I say?"	56
Use Your Own Experience	56
Use What You Observe	56
Tell a Story	57

x TABLE OF CONTENTS

Describe People and Places	57
Give Examples	58
Give Reasons	58
Show Similarities or Differences	59
Explain Causes or Effects	60
Explain How Something Is Made or Done	60
Explain What Would Happen if Your View Were Not Adopted	61
Consider Opposing Views	61
Use Material from Outside Sources	62
Troubleshooting with a Computer	62

CHAPTER SEVEN

"I don't know how to end."	63
Explain the Significance of Your Main Point	63
Provide a Helpful Summary	64
Explain the Consequences of Ignoring Your Thesis	64
Conclude with a Point You Want to Emphasize	64
Restate Your Thesis for Emphasis	64
Suggest a Course of Action	65
Ask a Question	65
Look to the Future	65
Combine Approaches	66
Keep It Short	66
Troubleshooting with a Computer	66

CHAPTER EIGHT

"I can't think of the right word."	67
Write in a Natural Style	67
Use ITTS	68
Substitute a Phrase or a Sentence for a Troublesome Word	68
Ask Around	68
Freewrite for Three Minutes	68
Skip the Problem and Return to It Later	68
Use Simple, Specific Words	69
Use the Thesaurus and Dictionary Wisely	69
Troubleshooting with a Computer	69

PART III**A Troubleshooting Guide to Revising 71****CHAPTER NINE**

"I thought my draft was better than this." 74

Be Realistic 74

Walk Away 74

Share Your Draft 74

Listen to Your Draft 75

Identify Two Changes That Will Improve Your Draft 75

Write a Second Draft without Looking at the First 75

Do Not Despair if You Must Start Over 75

Try to Salvage Something 75

Do the Best You Can with What You Have 76

Troubleshooting with a Computer 76

Examining a Draft 77

CHAPTER TEN

"I don't know what to change." 78

Walk Away 78

Construct a Reader Profile 78

Think Like Your Reader 79

Describe Your Draft Paragraph by Paragraph 79

Type Your Draft 80

Listen to Your Draft 80

Underline Main Points 80

Outline Your Draft after Writing It 80

Revise in Stages 80

Share Your Introduction and Conclusion 81

Share Your Draft 81

Pretend to Be Someone Else 82

Use a Revising Checklist 82

Trust Your Instincts 83

Do Not Edit Prematurely 83

Troubleshooting with a Computer 83

Examining a Draft 84

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"Is it cheating if someone helps me?" 85

Choose Your Readers Carefully 85

Give Your Readers a Legible Draft 85

Give Your Readers Guidance 85

Get More Than One Opinion 87

Ask for Specific Revision Strategies 87

Ask Readers to Point Out Strengths as Well as Weaknesses 87

Evaluate Responses Carefully 87

Troubleshooting with a Computer 87

Examining a Draft 88

CHAPTER TWELVE

"My ideas seem all mixed up." 89

Use Topic Sentences 89

Write a Postdraft Outline 89

Use Transitions 90

Repeat Key Words 90

Use Synonyms 90

Use Outline Cards 91

Troubleshooting with a Computer 91

Examining a Draft 92

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"My draft is too short." 93

Underline Major Points 93

Show after You Tell 94

Add Description 94

Add Examples 94

Add Dialogue 94

Evaluate the Significance of an Idea 95

Share Your Draft with a Reliable Reader 95

Return to Idea Generation 95

Check Your Thesis 96

Troubleshooting with a Computer 96

Examining a Draft 97

CHAPTER FOURTEEN**"My draft is too long." 98**

Check Your Thesis 98

Eliminate Unnecessary Points 98

Outline Your Draft 99

Eliminate Wordiness 99

Do Not Overwrite Your Introduction or Conclusion 100

Troubleshooting with a Computer 100

Examining a Draft 101

CHAPTER FIFTEEN**"My writing seems boring." 102**

Replace General Words with Specific Ones 102

Use Active Voice 103

Substitute Action Verbs for Forms of *To Be* 103

Rewrite Clichés 103

Eliminate Obvious Statements 103

Include Dialogue 104

Add Description 104

Add Examples 104

Tell a Story 104

Check Your Thesis 105

Troubleshooting with a Computer 105

Examining a Draft 106

CHAPTER SIXTEEN**"My writing sounds choppy." 107**

Use Different Sentence Openers 107

Vary the Placement of Transitions 108

Combine Short Sentences 108

Follow Long Sentences with Short Ones and Short Sentences
with Long Ones 109

Use Parallel Constructions 109

Use Your Ear 109

Troubleshooting with a Computer 110

Examining a Draft 110

PART IV

A Troubleshooting Guide to Editing 113

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"I don't find my mistakes." 116

Edit Last 116

Leave Your Work for a While 116

Point to Each Word and Punctuation Mark 116

Use a Ruler 117

Prepare a Fresh, Word-Processed Copy 117

Listen to Your Draft 117

Learn Your Pattern of Error 117

Use an Editing Checklist 118

Trust Your Instincts 118

Edit More than Once 118

When in Doubt, Check It Out 118

Learn the Rules 119

Get Help 119

Troubleshooting with a Computer 119

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

"I used a period and a capital letter, so why isn't this a sentence?" 121

Understand What a Sentence Fragment Is 121

Isolate Everything You Are Calling a Sentence 122

Read Your Draft Backward 122

Check *-ing* and *-ed* Verb Forms 122

Check for Fragment Warning Words 123

Watch Out for *Who*, *Whom*, *Whose*, *Which*, and *Where* 123

Eliminate the Fragments 124

Troubleshooting with a Computer 125

CHAPTER NINETEEN

"How can this be a run-on or a comma splice? It's not even long." 126

Understand What Run-On Sentences and Comma Splices Are 126

Understand How to Separate Independent Clauses 127

Study Sentences Individually 127

Underline Warning Words	127
Forget about Long and Short	127
Troubleshooting with a Computer	128

CHAPTER TWENTY

"It is I; it is me—what's the difference"	129
Cross Out Everything in the Phrase but the Pronoun	129
Cross Out Words That Rename	130
Add the Missing Words in Comparisons	130
Use <i>They</i> , <i>Their</i> , and <i>Them</i> with Plural Nouns	131
Remember That the — <i>Body</i> , — <i>One</i> , and — <i>Thing</i> Words Are Singular	131
Circle <i>Who</i> and <i>Whom</i> and Underline the Rest of the Clause	132
Determine Who <i>You</i> Refers To	132
Check <i>It</i> and <i>They</i>	132
Avoid Unclear Reference	133
Be Careful of <i>This</i> and <i>Which</i>	133
Troubleshooting with a Computer	133

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

"How do I know which verb form to use?"	135
Cross Out Phrases before the Verb	135
Rewrite Questions	136
Rewrite Sentences Beginning with <i>Here</i> and <i>There</i>	136
Watch Out for Subjects Joined by <i>Or</i> and <i>Either/Or</i>	136
Watch Out for Indefinite Pronouns	137
Understand Verb Tenses	137
Listen to Your Verb Tenses	138
Troubleshooting with a Computer	139

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

"I'm unsure about modifiers."	140
Know When to Use an Adjective and When to Use an Adverb	140
Remember that <i>Good</i> Is an Adjective and <i>Well</i> Is an Adverb—with One Caution and One Exception	141
Do Not Use <i>More</i> or <i>Most</i> with an - <i>er</i> or - <i>est</i> Form	142
Check Sentences That Open with - <i>ing</i> or - <i>ed</i> Verb Forms	142
Move Modifiers near the Words They Describe	143
Troubleshooting with a Computer	143