

Writing

A College Handbook

SECOND EDITION



James A.W. Heffernan
John E. Lincoln

WRITING

A COLLEGE
HANDBOOK

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of this book set out to demonstrate that good writing is not simply the absence of grammatical error but the presence of rhetorical power. Though this second edition differs in a number of ways from the first, the leading aim of the book remains unchanged. While identifying the mistakes commonly made in student writing and showing how to correct them, it focuses on what student writers can do rather than on what they cannot or should not do. Above all, it seeks to explain and illustrate the various ways in which students can generate rhetorically effective prose.

Since many teachers like to start by introducing students to the writing process as a whole, Part I, "Writing Essays," begins with a five-chapter overview of that process. Users of the first edition will find that this new overview is at once more systematic and more thorough than the original one. While the original three-chapter overview gave short shrift to the important task of formulating a thesis and did not treat revising at all, the new overview gives special attention to both tasks, and it integrates them within a fully coherent guide to the writing process in five basic steps: pre-writing, discovering a thesis, organizing the first draft, revising (making large-scale changes), and editing (making small adjustments and corrections).

After five chapters on the writing process as a whole, chapters 6–10 of Part I treat special aspects of the process. Description, narration, methods of exposition, strategies of argumentation, and techniques of persuasion are all explained in more detail and with more examples than the first edition provided. Part I also devotes

one chapter each to the writing of paragraphs and the choosing of words, and it ends with a chapter on how to turn reading into writing: how to use reading matter as a source of stimulation, as an object of analysis or interpretation, or as a model to be imitated.

Part II, "Writing Sentences," takes a fundamentally positive approach to sentence construction. This second edition treats sentence errors more thoroughly and precisely than the first one did, and our reference system—which has also been revised and improved—makes it easy to find specific advice on error correction. But since this book was written to be read as well as consulted, most of the chapters in Part II begin by explaining and illustrating the rhetorical impact of a particular construction when it is correctly and effectively used. Before we attack the misplaced modifier, for instance, we show what a well-placed modifier can do; and before we identify the wrong ways of joining independent clauses (the run-on sentence and the comma splice), we show what coordination can do. Using lively examples from student essays as well as from the work of leading writers, we consistently aim to show students how they can exploit the rich, vital, and inexhaustible resources of the English language. Our chief aim in the whole of Part II, in fact, is summed up by the title of the new chapter that ends Part II: "Invigorating Your Style."

The emphasis on rhetorical effect in Part II is reinforced by the exercises. Instead of merely calling for the correction of errors, many of them ask students to expand or combine short sentences, to finish sentences that we start for them, or to imitate complete sentences. The exercises will therefore help students to increase the variety of constructions they actually use and the variety of rhetorical effects they can achieve.

Part III, "Punctuation and Mechanics," is meant for reference. Teachers familiar with the first edition will find that what was once a single chapter has now been broken up into seven chapters (chapters 26–32), and that many points which were previously grouped together in long sections are now treated separately in short, readily accessible sections with their own headings. As a result, teachers and students alike will find specific advice on problems in punctuation—especially on problems with the comma—much easier to find.

Part IV, "The Research Paper," provides a detailed guide to the preparation and writing of a research paper. Users of the first edition will find that material originally presented in just two large chapters (one on preparing the paper, the other on writing it) has now been divided into five smaller ones. These new chapters define more sharply the steps involved in a research paper: preparing it, writing it, documenting it, and preparing the final copy. After one chapter on each of these steps, a final chapter is given to the sample research paper.

We begin Part IV by noting that a research paper may furnish an analytical argument about its topic or an explanatory survey of it; then we trace the developments of a particular argumentative paper from beginning to end. We explain not only how to use a library, take notes, cite sources, and avoid plagiarism, but also how to plan and organize the paper, how to keep quotations under control, how to make them serve an argument or an explanatory survey rather than take it over completely. We also thoroughly explain the new MLA style of parenthetical citation, and we show how it is used in a wholly new sample research paper: an argumentative paper on the vexing problem of how to make college possible for truly needy students. (A sample survey-type research paper appears in Appendix 1.)

Two Glossaries—one on usage and the other on grammatical terms—are followed in this new edition by four appendices. For teachers who prefer that students cite sources with notes rather than parentheses, the first appendix explains the MLA note style and shows how it is used in a sample paper, “Options for Working Mothers.” Appendix 2 explains and illustrates with a few examples the APA method of parenthetical citation. Appendix 3 is a brief introduction to writing with a word processor as well as to computer programs that help students find errors and weaknesses in their writing. Finally, appendix 4 moves “Beyond Freshman English” into the various kinds of writing that students have to do for other courses and other purposes. With apt illustrations, the chapter shows how to write an examination essay, a résumé and covering letter for a job application, a business letter, a letter of protest, and a personal statement for an application to a school of law, medicine, business, or graduate studies. Appendix 4 tries to demonstrate, in fact, that the ability to write well can have a real and lasting effect upon a student’s life.

Many teachers may find that this book by itself serves all the needs of a beginning composition course. To help you in various ways, however, we have prepared a number of supplements. For students who need intensive work on the sentence, we have revised *Writing—A College Workbook*, which offers brief instruction and extensive exercises on every aspect of sentence structure treated in parts II and III of the *Handbook*. To assist you in identifying the problems of individual students, we have provided a revised set of diagnostic tests. Finally, for your own use, we have revised our instructor’s manual. This provides not only the answers to the exercises in the *Handbook* and the *Workbook* but also a number of suggestions on how to use the *Handbook* in a composition course.

JAMES A. W. HEFFERNAN
JOHN E. LINCOLN

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