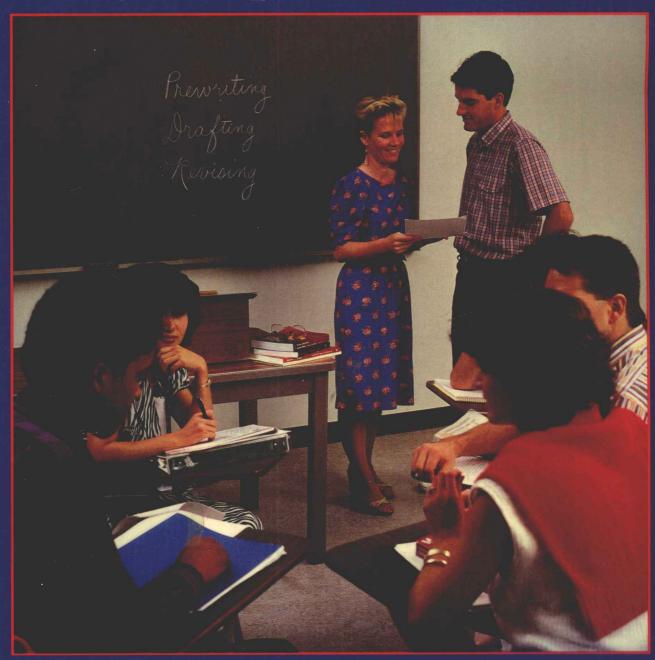
The Independent Writer



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The Independent Writer

For David, Douglas, and Donald

Notes to the Instructor

In order to have a successful and efficient writing workshop in your classroom, two things must happen: you must be free to conduct one-to-one tutorials during class time, and your students must have an abundance of self-directed material to help them improve all aspects of their writing. Such material not only allows you to conduct meaningful conferences with all your students, but it also frees you from having to reteach fundamentals.

The Independent Writer provides such material in the "Assignment" section to help students in all stages of their writing process, and in the "Workshop" sections to help students choose their content and organization, improve their style, vary their sentence constructions, and eliminate their mechanical errors.

A detailed explanation of converting your classroom into a writing workshop is included in the Instructor's Manual available from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. You will soon become aware of the following five significant results of implementing a workshop program:

- 1. Students' writing will improve to such a degree that they will often be able to tell you how much they have improved.
- 2. You will be able to spend most of the class time in one-to-one or small-group tutorials, becoming part of your students' writing process instead of their judge. When the need arises, however, you will be able to pull the whole class together to give an occasional lecture on a finer point of composition.
- 3. You will no longer have to take home class-size sets of papers.
- **4.** Your students will learn self- and peer-dependence—writing up to five times more than had you used a traditional, product-oriented method of teaching composition.
- 5. By the time your students finish your course, they will have become independent rather than teacher-dependent writers.

Writing Programs

You may choose your own method of implementing *The Independent Writer*: from having the entire class work together on similar assignments to placing all students in their own individual programs. For a variety of alternative methods of organizing your class, see the Special Interest Program chart in Appendix A.

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Notes to the Student

The Independent Writer will help you to communicate, entertain, inform, and persuade effectively. Like other skills you acquire in life, skill in writing comes from concentrating on the process, rather than on the end product. By developing and practicing a logical, yet simple, process of writing, you will soon be able to produce a desirable product. Think, for a moment, of the process that has gone into perfecting the product of someone other than a writer. For example, an actor rehearses for weeks under the guidance of a director to produce an opening night sensation. A basketball player practices hour after hour under the watchful eye of his coach to perfect a devastating slam dunk. The masterful summation of a young lawyer results from dozens of mock trials before more experienced lawyers and judges. By the same token, you—with the aid of your editors—can produce an exciting and exacting piece of writing that successfully conveys your message and stimulates your intended reader.

It may be useful for you to reflect on how you have, to this point, produced a piece of writing. Have you concentrated on the finished product instead of thinking about the process by which you produced it? In the real world you must take responsibility for your writing as a product. *The Independent Writer*, however, focuses on helping you develop and improve your own writing process to achieve a polished product.

Throughout this book you will learn how to develop your own effective process of writing to deal with a variety of "real-life" writing demands. Although you do not have to follow the steps of the writing process rigidly, you should be aware of what happens in each step:

- During your *prewriting process* you invent or generate an idea that you consider worthwhile.
- During your *drafting process* you begin to compose your piece of writing by selecting appropriate supporting evidence, organizing it in a logical fashion, and developing a tone so that your audience will discover exactly what you want it to know.
- During your revising process you ask your peers and writing instructor for their editorial comments so that you can revise, rewrite, and reform anything that does not work. You can accept or reject your editors' comments, but your ultimate aim is to publish your paper—that is, present it to your intended reader or readers.

Although you will be able to experiment with these three steps of the writing process in every assignment in *The Independent Writer*, you should take time to work through the introductory section. It lays the foundation for your becoming an independent writer. Afterward, you will be able to use the entire book with more confidence.

Normally you begin to read a book from the first page and continue through to the end. With *The Independent Writer*, however, you are encouraged to use it as you would an encyclopedia, dipping into it here and there to serve *your* needs. Sometimes you will use it on your own at home, to find out how to write in a particular format or to practice a sentence-building technique; sometimes you will use it with others in a workshop atmosphere at school, to edit each other's papers, or to play a game to eliminate a writing problem. As you become familiar with the book, you will see the usefulness of employing various parts of it to help you get a piece of writing ready for your intended audience.

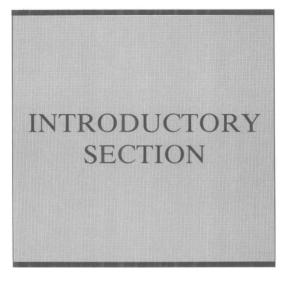
As you become more involved in improving your writing, you will become aware of the strong and weak aspects of your writing process. Your aim will be not only to build on what is strong, but to correct, modify, or change what is weak. *The Independent Writer* provides ample assignments and workshops with exercises, activities, and games for you to strengthen your writing process.

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Process Writing in a Workshop Atmosphere

WORKSHOP WRITING

You might think, as most students do, that an introduction to a book is unnecessary and that you should go right to Chapter One. This introduction, however, is different. In essence, it provides a step-by-step approach to process writing in a workshop atmosphere. Once you are familiar with this approach, you will be able to enjoy the finer points of *The Independent Writer*. Therefore, take plenty of time and carefully go through the rest of this introduction in order to improve and enrich your writing process.

THE WRITING PROCESS

The writing process involves three general steps: prewriting, drafting, and revising. Writers do not necessarily move from Step One to Step Two to Step Three, ending up very comfortably with a perfect product. During their writing process writers often backtrack, leap forward, and backtrack again. But familiarity with these steps will help you develop *your* personal writing process.

Step One: Prewriting

The writing process begins with the generation of ideas. *The Independent Writer* provides you with specific prewriting suggestions for every assignment. Additionally, you will have opportunities to enrich your prewriting process in four chapters: "Journal Writing," "Brainstorming," "Notetaking," and "Thesis and Topic Statements" (Chapters 24–27). But to begin with, here are some general prewriting methods to think about. You might

- 1. develop an idea that you have been thinking about (the think/write method);
- 2. brainstorm a topic by talking with other people (the talk/write method);
- 3. read until an idea of your own comes (the read/write method);
- **4.** watch a movie, sports event, or other performance; then write about it (the see/write method);
- 5. write about something in which you have participated (the experience/write method);
- 6. simply write until an idea comes (the write/write method); or
- 7. be told what to write about (the assign/write method).

At some point during the prewriting stage, you should begin to control and limit your piece of writing according to six main writing variables: topic, audience, purpose, format, voice, and situation. You will have an opportunity to experience these writing variables later in this introductory section by composing a short piece of writing.

Step Two: Drafting

The drafting stage of the writing process involves the composing of your assignment and the shaping and organizing of it so that it communicates exactly what you want. At this stage of the process, you will be considering the selection and organization of your information, your sentence structure, and your word choice.

The Independent Writer provides specific suggestions for drafting each assignment, as well as finished products of student and professional writing at the end of each assignment. In addition, you will find special drafting help in three chapters: "Beginnings, Middles, and Endings," "Unity," and "Coherence" (Chapters 28–30). Finally, you can refer to other workshop chapters when you require help with a specific writing technique or sentence structure. As you compose, you will probably make many changes, perhaps even write several drafts, before you proceed to Step Three.

Step Three: Revising

Revision is an ongoing process for every writer. In fact, most writers revise their work many times both before and after they show it to others for editorial comments and suggestions. Although you can and should revise your work by yourself, modern research has shown that receiving comments and suggestions from your peers is more helpful. Although at first you may be reluctant to show your fellow students your writing, you will soon discover that this kind of sharing can create a happy working situation; not only do you learn a great deal from your fellow students, but you will also be able to share with them what you know. The learner becomes a teacher and the teacher becomes a learner.

Every assignment in *The Independent Writer* provides a checklist of revising questions for you and your peers to consider; thus, you will always have guidance when you edit a paper. In addition, the First Workshop Section offers two chapters of specific information to make your revising process as smooth as possible: "Self-Editing, Peer-Editing, and Instructor-Editing" and "Unwriting" (Chapters 31–32).

Ideally, the writing process will help you produce a publishable paper. *Publishable* simply means that, in your opinion, your product is ready to present to a final reader. If this reader finds any difficulty in understanding what you have written, the writing process on that particular product is not over, and you may have to take more time to bring it to the publishable stage.

USING THE INDEPENDENT WRITER

Besides this introductory section, *The Independent Writer* has one Assignment and four Workshop sections. You are *not* expected to complete everything in this textbook in a single term, so you should become familiar with its contents as soon as possible to see what portions of it can best fulfill your immediate needs. As you go through the textbook, you may find parts that—for you—are too easy, too difficult, or inappropriate. In consultation with your instructor, you both can decide on the parts that are appropriate and challenging and which both of you believe can help you become a better writer.

The Assignment Section: Formats for Writing Nonfiction

The Assignment Section is designed for you to use with the assistance of your instructor-editor and your peers. In this section you can become involved in many real-life projects, all with strategies to shape your writing at each stage of the writing process. Since writing just for the sake of writing often produces bad results, you should always consider a real audience and a real purpose when you write.

You can follow the assignments according to one of the groupings found in the Special-Interest Programs section of the Appendix. Your first task, however, is to begin with the Introductory Assignment on the following page. It will serve to guide you through the steps of the writing process as you do an actual assignment.

The First Workshop Section: Content and Organization

This section presents all the details of the writing process. If you are having any difficulty with any stage of your writing process (prewriting, drafting, or revising), you can read the relevant chapter and do the exercises with a partner (a fellow student at school or a friend or relative at home). If you own, or have access to, a computer, you will also find in this section a chapter on how to implement this textbook and the writing process with word processing.

Once you have developed your own writing process and are able to produce desirable products each time you write, you will no longer need to refer to the chapters in this section.

The Second Workshop Section: Style

This section is also designed for you to work with a partner. It deals primarily with specific techniques that will improve your writing style. Furthermore, each chapter in this section will culminate with a special writing assignment that you can do *for* your partner. You can work on the chapters in any order, as well as complete only those portions of a chapter that you require to help you refine a particular stylistic technique.

The Third Workshop Section: Sentence Combining and Variety

This section is designed for individualized learning; you can work on this section by yourself, at home, or at school. Basically, the exercises in these chapters will help you improve your sentence structure through the use of sentence combining. Suggested answers are provided for all sentence work so that you can check your answers yourself. You should begin with the first two chapters because they will help you develop a common language that is useful when you talk about sentence combining. These chapters also illustrate all the sentence patterns found in the rest of the Third Workshop Section.

The Fourth Workshop Section: Mechanical Conventions

The previous sections of *The Independent Writer* approach writing from a positive viewpoint. Error is seldom mentioned. The Fourth Workshop Section, however, is designed as a handbook so that you can zero in on bothersome writing errors in order to eliminate them from your composing process.

There are two ways to approach this section: (1) During an editing session, your editors may point out spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors that you have made. If they continually bring the same kinds of errors to your attention, do the chapter dealing with those problems. By working through the chapter with a partner, you can eliminate the errors from your writing. (2) Each chapter in this section begins with a short quiz. Take the quiz and then evaluate your results by locating the correct responses in the Suggested Answers section. Obviously, if you answer the entire quiz correctly, you should not waste your time on the chapter. If you do poorly, you should work on the exercises and games with a partner. Try to find a partner who is more confident about the chapter than you. Your partner, by following the suggestions in each chapter, will become your personal tutor. When you learn writing mechanics and conventions in this way, you take control of mastering what you have not yet learned or have forgotten.

INTRODUCTORY ASSIGNMENT

Introduction

Because the best way to learn how to do something is to actually do it, you can learn about the writing process by working through this assignment. Remember these points as you work:

1. Concentrate on each part of the process rather than on the finished product. The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize yourself with the format of this book and with the writing process.