



The Harcourt Brace Guide to

WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

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The Harcourt Brace Guide to

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TO THE INSTRUCTOR

Although *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines* is not the first textbook to advertise itself as a guide to writing in the disciplines, we believe that its publication signals the beginning of a new generation of writing texts. Some textbooks offer essays from a variety of academic fields, while others provide readings arranged by theme (most often essays by academics or documents by professional writers) and then follow those professional essays with questions or writing assignments primarily confined to those essays. *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines* uses the writing, reading, and research of students and professionals to prepare students for writing in college and beyond. It is, we think, the first textbook to offer both students and instructors a comprehensive and accessible approach to writing in the disciplines.

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of the textbook is three-fold:

- To introduce students to the critical acts of writing, reading, and researching and to the connections among these three acts;
- To explore the forms, functions, and implications of writing in disciplinary cultures and to observe the shared characteristics and differences among writing in various disciplines; and
- To prepare students to write in various disciplines through writing in a variety of formats, to a variety of audiences, and for a variety of purposes.

Organization and Content

The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines is innovative in many important ways, providing a solid foundation for all composition students. The two major parts of the book are organized so that teachers, program directors, and departmental committees can adapt it to suit the specific needs of individual courses or sequences of courses. The first four chapters focus on writing, reading, and researching in the disciplines and on the relationship of computers to composing. The remaining seven chapters examine writing in academic areas that interest the majority of today's students.

Connecting Writing, Reading, and Researching

Chapters One through Three provide essential instruction in writing, reading, and researching and serve as a foundation for the more sophisticated tasks in later chapters where discipline-specific writing is introduced, explored, and

practiced. These chapters treat writing, reading, and researching as acts related to learning, communicating, and building a knowledge base in any subject area, thus extending the application of these critical acts beyond the composition classroom. Presenting them as crucial features of disciplinary cultures situates these acts within the students' majors, prepares for material presented in Chapters Five through Eleven, and, thus, motivates students to value the acts.

Chapter Four, "Written Communication and Computer Technology," provides a foundation for using computers in the writing process, for producing written documents, and for understanding key issues related to informational technologies. This chapter probes such critically related questions as privacy and surveillance, access, and reading and writing problems.

Chapters Five through Eleven introduce students to writing in seven disciplinary areas through readings and writings from undergraduate courses and from a range of professionals in those disciplines. These seven chapters dramatically distinguish this text from other writing in the disciplines texts by following up on the exploration of writing and disciplinary culture discussed in Chapters One through Three and presenting writing as a cultural act.

Chapters Five through Seven focus on the traditional areas of instruction in research writing classes—the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Chapters Eight through Eleven consider writing from mathematics and informational technology programs, business and management, health sciences, and engineering. These disciplines are rarely treated in first-year writing textbooks, yet they enroll almost 50 percent of all undergraduate students. These chapters do not present writing as merely a communication medium which transmits information, but rather they present writing as critical to learning in the disciplines thus enabling students to enter their chosen fields as thoroughly prepared professionals.

Distinguishing Features

The distinguishing features of this textbook are as follows:

- Writing is presented as both a process within the larger cognitive structure and as a medium of learning and communicating framed by disciplinary boundaries.
- Paired and small group assignments promote the benefits and values of collaborative writing.
- Writing assignments range from annotating reading and research, to exploratory notebook and journal entries, to formal research essays and report projects.
- Writing and reading are treated as symbiotic acts. Students are taught to analyze cues from various kinds of texts and then to take this knowledge into their own writing assignments as they learn how to anticipate readers' needs.
- Researching is established as an active process that engages students with various texts and sources. Building on a core of common research skills,

Chapter Three establishes that research skills differ from one discipline to another, thus preparing the student for materials presented in Chapters Five through Eleven.

- Writing-with-computers exercises are included in every chapter; and guides to electronic citation, sources for Universal Resource Locators (URLs), and home page examples provide students with up-to-date information on electronic sources.
- Discipline-specific chapters span from humanities to engineering, with extensive attention paid to all disciplines.
- Discipline-specific chapters include both brief and extended writing assignments, which promote the benefits and values of the writing process and prepare students for major assignments in their disciplines.
- Discipline-specific adaptations of advance-level assignments and examples of workplace writing inform students on such issues as purpose, audience, form, style, and interplay of written and visual language.
- Discipline-specific assignments encourage students from many majors to become contributors during the course.
- The Appendix provides guides to documenting in American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), Council of Biological Editors (CBE), and Modern Language Association (MLA) styles.

Acknowledgments

While the project which culminates in the publication of *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines* began less than three years ago, the origin of this book stems from the late 1970s when we began developing writing in the disciplines programs at our respective universities. The commitment each of us felt then to the initial principles of the writing across the curriculum movement and feel today as writing in the disciplines becomes a critical part of American education is unwavering. Our professional and personal lives have been enriched by hundreds of colleagues from our own institutions and from dozens of schools across the country and abroad. Together we have maintained a belief that writing is a crucial part of education in every discipline. Although working with so many colleagues has sustained us over the years, acknowledging all of them in this small space is impossible. We regret that the brief list that follows leaves out some whom we regard as contributing to this book.

First, we would like to thank the following reviewers for their careful, honest, and insightful criticism. During the several stages of the project, their voices have helped determine the final shape and scope of *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines*: Paige Byam, Northern Kentucky University; Allene Cooper, Boise State University; Bill Gholson, Southern Oregon State College; Doug Hesse, Illinois State University; Keith Hjortshoj, Cornell University; Adriane LaPointe, Troy State University; Jack Miller, Normandale Community College; Joan Mullin, University of Toledo; Richard Profozich, Prince George's Community College; and Sam Watson, University of North Carolina–Charlotte.

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Robert W. Jones
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TO THE STUDENT

The Importance of Writing in College and beyond

One question often asked by students in a composition class is, “How will a writing class prepare me for what I’ll do when I graduate?” Since less than 10 percent of current college graduates plan careers as writers or as English teachers, some think the answer is, “Not very well.” However, college graduates in all fields who face complex thinking assignments and critical communication tasks know that sound writing and reading skills form the basis of success in almost every profession. We believe that the approach to writing and learning offered in *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines* can contribute significantly to your success both in college and after graduation.

Guiding Principles of *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines*

Because we believe that your success as a writer will be affected by how well you understand the importance of writing in various disciplines, the types of writing valued in the disciplines, and the relationship among writing, learning, and communication in various disciplines, we have organized the book around several key principles:

- To understand the relationship between the cultural values held by disciplines and writing in those disciplines;
- To view writing and learning as processes that increase your potential to create, respond to, and manage critical thinking and writing assignments in all disciplines;
- To use writing as a means of learning subjects and of communicating what you have learned; and
- To connect the writing you will do as a college student to the writing you will do as a college graduate who will enter a profession.

Throughout the book we integrate writing assignments which benefit from these connections and which occur within specific disciplines. We believe you will write better after using this textbook because you will better understand the purposes and requirements of your writing assignments.

Organization of the Book

This textbook is divided into two fundamental sections. Chapters One through Four explore writing, reading, researching, written communication, and computer technology. In these chapters you will read about and practice the critical basics that prepare you for Chapters Five through Eleven—the discipline-

specific chapters in the second section. While the subject matter of the early chapters comprises an important part of many writing texts, we explore those subjects as they relate to a wide variety of disciplines, not from just the narrow range of disciplines often represented in writing texts. When you reach Chapters Five through Eleven, the discipline-specific chapters, you are prepared to examine and practice writing in seven specific areas: humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics and informational technologies, business and management, health sciences, and engineering and technology programs.

Discipline-specific Assignments

Many of the writing assignments in the discipline-specific chapters are unusual in first-year composition classes. Rather than using assignments from previous composition classes, we drew assignments from both lower division and advanced courses from many majors. In fact, most assignments are recommended by professors from the discipline discussed in that chapter. Some assignments are given here exactly as they were in the undergraduate classes from across the disciplines, while some have been modified to make them accessible for writers and who have not taken advanced courses. In either case, the assignments represent the breadth of assignments, both in form and in intellectual task, valued by diverse disciplines. Finally, to connect the writing and learning you do as a college student to the careers you may enter after graduation, we have included many examples of writing authored by college graduates from a variety of professions.

Writing as a Skill, Writing as Learning

We believe that writing courses are among the most important and valuable courses you take in college. Because writing is an activity that demands inquisitiveness, discipline, reflection, general understanding, and specific knowledge, it engages you in a rich variety of interesting and rigorous ways. We hope this book will prepare you to apply the skills and knowledge you gain as a writer to almost every area of your education and your chosen profession. Ultimately, we hope this book proves a valuable part of your educational experience and paves the way for the learning you will do throughout your lifetime.

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Writing in the Disciplines



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- Defining Disciplinary Culture: Relating Culture and Writing
 - Writing as a Process: An Overview
- Critical Thinking and Writing in the Disciplines
- Applying the Writing Process to Writing in the Disciplines
 - The Fundamentals of the Writing Process
- A Major Writing Assignment and the Process of Writing

The first three chapters of *The Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing in the Disciplines* will provide you with an overview of strategies and techniques you can use as you approach and fulfill writing assignments in disciplines throughout your college career. As you work with the material in these introductory chapters on writing, reading, and researching, you will learn that each of these activities is intricately connected to the others and that gaining skills in each will support the skills needed to become skillful in the others. You should also keep in mind that these introductory chapters form a continuum, so that information you gain and exercises you do will help you build a broad platform from which to write, read, and conduct research in various disciplines. The assignments and material in the chapters are designed to guide you through this progression.

In this first chapter, we will introduce four major ideas which will be elaborated on in succeeding chapters.

1. understanding the relationship between the **cultural values held by disciplines** and the **writing** in those disciplines
2. viewing writing and learning as **processes** which increase your potential to create, respond to, and manage critical thinking and writing assignments throughout the disciplines
3. using writing as a means of both **learning** subjects and **communicating** what you have learned.
4. connecting the writing you do as **college students** to the writing you will do as **college graduates** who enter professions from various academic majors.

The first two ideas form the basic structure of the chapter, while the third and fourth are integrated throughout the chapter.

So that you have a sound idea of our approach to writing in the disciplines, we offer the following set of assumptions.

Guiding Assumptions for Writing in the Disciplines

- Writing is inseparable from learning.
- Writing is both a skill which can be acquired and practiced and an important means of communicating information, understanding, and knowledge.
- Writers and communities of writers create meaning.
- College-educated people write for a variety of purposes and to a variety of audiences.

We ask not that you accept these assumptions without question, rather we ask that you keep them in mind as you work through this book. We shall try to demonstrate that writing is a manageable process, as well as a critical part of college work and of the professional lives of college graduates. Further, we hope to show that writing is affected significantly by various social, political, and professional forces and that competent writers understand and respond to those forces. In other words, we hope to demonstrate that developing sound

writing skills occurs best within a specific context and that acquiring these skills will be a valuable asset for you both during and after college. At all times, however, we encourage you to be critical of these assumptions and to engage your teacher and peers in constructive debate about these assumptions.

Having established a foundation for the subject matter and the assumptions employed in the book, let us now consider our first purpose, the cultural values of disciplines and their relationship to writing in the disciplines.

The Cultural Values of Disciplines and Writing in the Disciplines: An Overview

One key to understanding groups of people, business and government organizations, and, yes, colleges, is to understand the cultural traits of the people who constitute those groups. For example, while Americans of Italian, French, African, English, and Chinese descent share certain values, each group may be characterized by unique cultural traits. Thus, understanding those specific traits helps us understand the people within the group. Additionally, such understanding helps us see that a culture reflects the values of the group. For example, if we know that a specific group highly values close contact between grandparents and grandchildren, we better understand why members of that group might tend to live in the same community rather than dispersing over a wide area.

We believe very strongly that academic institutions are “cultures” and that understanding the types of thinking and writing practiced in various disciplines enables us to better understand the “culture” of those disciplines and, thus, what those disciplines value. For example, most mathematics departments in American colleges offer a course in the history of mathematics. While those of us who will never take advanced mathematics courses might not understand why anyone would take such a course, mathematicians understand clearly that knowing the history of mathematics provides valuable context and background for the work they do. We will contend that increasing your understanding of how disciplines function and what they value will better enable you to succeed in any discipline, for you will understand much more than the surface-level requirements of a class. You will, in fact, understand the class in a different way, a deeper way, for you will understand why the discipline values certain approaches to learning, strategies for learning, and formats for presenting information and knowledge.

As we work through the next few pages, think about your definition of the term *culture*. Begin by responding to the following exercises.

Exercises

1. Write out your definition of the term *culture*. You might define by listing characteristics or providing brief examples. As you think about the definition, note how your definition is informed by personal experience and