

THE WRITER'S EXPRESS

A PARAGRAPH AND ESSAY TEXT WITH READINGS



SECOND EDITION

KATHLEEN T. MCWHORTER

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Essay Text
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Niagara County Community College

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PREFACE

To succeed in college and beyond, today's students must be able to express their ideas clearly and correctly in written form and to read, think critically, interpret, and react to what they have read. Twenty-nine years of experience with developmental students have convinced me that these essential skills—writing, reading, and critical thinking—are most effectively taught when integrated. Many students flourish when given the opportunity to learn and practice these skills within a stimulating, non-threatening framework. My goals in writing *The Writer's Express* and in preparing the second edition have been to help students build a solid repertoire of strategies for writing, reading, and critical thinking—a repertoire that will stand them in good stead in freshman composition and in the rest of their college and work careers.

The Writer's Express, Second Edition, has retained its integrated writing-reading approach, step-by-step instruction, and supportive tone. It teaches developmental students the fundamentals of paragraph and essay writing through structured, sequential instruction; varied exercises that build upon each other; numerous pieces of student writing and examples; and high-interest, issue-oriented readings. In the second edition, I have given increased attention to essay-writing skills in a way that affords greater flexibility of use. Instructors can move earlier from a focus on the paragraph to a focus on the essay as the main unit of composition, with essay-writing instruction now in Chapter 11, Chapters 13–15, and in Chapters 6–10 (on the rhetorical modes) in the form of two new features, “Applying Your Skills to Essay Writing” and “Essay Option” assignments. I have also included a new chapter (Chapter 12) that helps students develop the important skills of annotating, paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing. It contains a brief introductory look at finding and using appropriate sources, a skill students increasingly need. Complementing the enhanced essay coverage and new chapter are five pairs of readings that allow more comparative discussions and assignments and some beginning source-based writing. As in the first edition, sentence-level concerns are presented as integral to the clear expression of ideas; a handbook with exercises appears at the end of the text; and near the end of each chapter in Parts II–IV, a “Skill Refresher” box ties in with the handbook.

Organization of the Text

The text is organized into six parts. Part I, “Getting Started,” opens with a chapter that establishes the importance of effective writing, places writing within the context of the college experience, and offers five tips for writing success. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the writing process, with an emphasis on prewriting techniques. This chapter demonstrates many of its points by showing how a sample student paper (an ad analysis) develops through several stages and drafts.

Part II, “Paragraph Writing Strategies,” covers paragraph structure and topic sentences (Chapter 3), developing a paragraph with details (Chapter 4), and the revision process (Chapter 5). Chapter 5 introduces a “Revision Checklist” feature that is further developed in each of the remaining chapters of the book. From Chapter 3 on, a reading or pair of readings appears at the end of each chapter, with accompanying opportunities for discussion, journal writing, critical thinking skills-building, and writing. Writing assignments are in two categories: “Writing About the Reading” and “Writing About Your Ideas.”

In Part III, “Methods of Development,” each chapter describes one of the rhetorical modes, gives examples, and provides practical advice for organizing, developing, and writing paragraphs and/or essays using that mode. The chapters in this part cover narration and process; description; example, classification, and definition; comparison and contrast; and cause and effect. As in other sections, writing assignments build sequentially. Students generate ideas about a topic, prepare a first draft, and revise using the “Revision Checklist” and “Proofreading Checklist.”

Part IV, “Strategies for Writing Essays,” concentrates on the short essay. Chapter 11, “Sharpening Your Essay-Writing Skills,” emphasizes writing effective thesis statements, supporting them with evidence, and crafting strong introductions and conclusions. The new Chapter 12, “Summarizing and Synthesizing Sources,” presents these basic academic skills, as well as annotating and paraphrasing, in an introductory way; it also provides simple guidelines for finding and using appropriate sources. Pairs of carefully selected readings appear at the end of this chapter and the next two to facilitate the teaching of these essay-related skills. Chapters 13–15 cover expository essays, persuasive essays, and essay exams. Topics include analyzing audience, selecting and organizing convincing evidence, and choosing a tone.

Part V, “Additional Readings,” contains twelve selections on a range of stimulating topics. These readings offer instructors flexibility in choosing and assigning readings and further represent the rhetorical modes. Selections are accompanied by questions for discussion and by journal writing and writing assignments. Included in this part are two more pairs

of readings; each pair explores a timely issue—encounters with strangers, and predators in the wild and in captivity. Part VI, “Reviewing the Basics,” is a brief handbook with exercises. It reviews the principles of grammar, sentence structure, mechanics, and spelling and concludes with a set of error correction exercises.

Features

The following features distinguish *The Writer’s Express*, Second Edition, from other developmental writing texts and make its approach unique:

- **Readings** Beginning with Chapter 3, each chapter includes an engaging reading around which prewriting, critical thinking, and writing assignments are structured. Readings touch on topics within the students’ realm of experience, such as family relationships, the widening gap between rich and poor, gender differences, and the use of politically correct language. Each reading offers students a model for the writing skills taught in the particular chapter, as well as a source of ideas and a base for discussion and collaborative learning activities.
- **“Getting Ready to Write” Strategies** After the first two introductory chapters, each chapter contains three activities that prepare students to write about the reading. In the first, “Examining the Reading,” students are taught reading strategies including review techniques, underlining, and drawing idea maps to review and organize ideas. In the second, “Thinking Critically,” students learn critical thinking strategies that enable them to analyze and evaluate the reading. Critical thinking skills include making inferences, understanding connotative language, and analyzing tone. In the third, “Reacting to Ideas: Discussion and Journal Writing,” students are given a range of thought-provoking questions on which class discussions or collaborative learning activities may be built.
- **Writing Assignments** Two types of writing assignments follow each chapter reading. “Writing About the Reading” involves students with ideas expressed in the reading. “Writing About Your Ideas” allows students to write about personal experiences related to the topic of the reading. In Chapters 6–10, Essay Options are included for instructors who choose to have their students write an essay rather than a paragraph.
- **Idea and Revision Maps** Throughout the book, students are taught to use idea and revision maps and given opportunities to practice these techniques. Many developmental students are visual learners;

that is, they process information visually rather than verbally or through auditory means. Students learn to draw idea maps—visual representations of a paragraph’s or essay’s content and organization—in order to examine ideas. Students learn to draw revision maps of their own writing as a means of evaluating both content and organization.

- *Revision Checklists* A “Revision Checklist” appears at the end of each chapter, starting with Chapter 5. This feature provides a review of writing strategies learned in the chapter as well as a cumulative review of strategies learned in previous chapters.
- *Skill Refreshers* Each chapter after Chapter 2 offers a review of a topic related to sentence structure, grammar, or punctuation. The “Skill Refresher” begins with a brief section of instruction, followed by a ten-item self-assessment quiz. Students are directed to record their score on the “Skill Refresher Score Chart” at the back of the book. Students who miss more than two questions on the self-assessment quiz are directed to pages in Part VI, “Reviewing the Basics,” that present a more detailed explanation of the topic.
- *Assessment Exercises* Chapter 1 contains five assignments that will enable the student and instructor to assess the student’s experience, attitude, and approach to writing. These assignments encourage writing early in the course and emphasize its importance as a vehicle of communication between instructor and student.
- *Student Writing Samples* Each chapter features one or more pieces of student writing used as an example or a model of a particular writing strategy. The samples are motivational and enable students to establish realistic expectations for their own writing.

Changes to the Second Edition

- *New Chapter* A new chapter, “Summarizing and Synthesizing Sources” (Chapter 12), teaches the skills needed to use sources effectively: annotating, paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing. The chapter also provides a brief and manageable introduction to finding and using appropriate sources.
- *Earlier Introduction of Essay-Writing Skills* The revised text presents essay-writing skills earlier and allows instructors greater flexibility in terms of when they wish to focus on the essay. The skills covered in Part I, “Getting Started,” may be applied to either paragraph or essay writing. Each chapter in Part III, “Methods of Development,” introduces a rhetorical mode using paragraph

examples and concludes with a section titled “Applying Your Skills to Essay Writing.” The writing assignments at the end of each chapter in Part III now include an “Essay Option.”

- *Paired Readings* Chapters 12, 13, and 14 each have two end-of-chapter readings. Two additional pairs are included in Part V, “Additional Readings.” These paired readings offer students an opportunity to make comparisons, synthesize ideas, and begin to use other writers’ ideas to support their own.
- *New Readings* More than 50 percent of the readings (16 out of 28) are new to the second edition, while the most effective selections from the first edition have been retained. Readings are brief, high-interest, and issue-oriented.
- *New Design* The updated design features a clear, easy-to-follow chapter format and organization.
- *Writing in Context Assignments* Assignments that place writing tasks within an academic context have been added, beginning with Chapter 3. These options enable students to define concretely their audience and purpose and connect the writing skills they are learning in college with writing tasks they will encounter in other courses.
- *Increased Number of Journal Writing Opportunities* Journal questions are placed earlier and have been expanded.
- *Improved Grammar Handbook* Part VI has been extensively revised and now includes a brief section on documentation.
- *New Material on Writing and Supporting Thesis Statements* Chapter 11 has been revised to focus on one of the most common essay-writing problems: developing and supporting thesis statements.
- *Student Essay Contest* The “Call for Papers” invites students to send their work to the author to be considered for inclusion in an upcoming new ancillary, *The Student’s Express: A Collection of Paragraphs and Essays*. This contest offers students the chance for their work to reach a wider audience and helps them see that writing really is about the communication of ideas.

Ancillary Materials

- *Instructor’s Resource Manual* This manual provides a time-saving overview of the text, explains its pedagogical features, discusses the role of critical thinking in the writing class, describes the software ancillary *Expressways*, and offers practical suggestions for teaching writing. It also gives suggestions for using the readings and has notes on each chapter, including additional class activities, Overhead

Transparency Masters, a complete answer key to the text, and correlations to statewide writing competency tests (TASP and CLAST).

- *Expressways*, Second Edition Available in DOS, Windows, and Macintosh versions, *Expressways*, Second Edition, software is an interactive program that provides a tutorial review of the key writing strategies presented in the text. Moving at their own pace, students complete a range of writing activities and exercises. Each unit models the pedagogical structure of the text, providing skill instruction, demonstration, practice, and a brief on-screen reading. The modules guide the student through the writing process and culminate in a writing assignment that may be printed and evaluated by the instructor or by peer reviewers.
- *The Student's Express: A Collection of Paragraphs and Essays* This ancillary, to be published in 1997–98, will be created from student entries; see the “Call for Papers” contest announced in the front of *The Writer's Express*, Second Edition.
- *MicroLab*, Second Edition Available in both IBM and Mac versions, this versatile software program teaches and reinforces the basics of grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.
- *Newsweek* Subscription A 10-week subscription card may be shrink-wrapped with the text for a nominal fee.
- The Dictionary Deal *The American Heritage College Dictionary* may be shrink-wrapped with the text at a substantial savings.

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CONTENTS IN BRIEF

Part I Getting Started 1

- CHAPTER 1 An Introduction to Writing 2
CHAPTER 2 The Writing Process: An Overview 17

Part II Paragraph Writing Strategies 35

- CHAPTER 3 Writing Topic Sentences 36
CHAPTER 4 Developing and Arranging Details 56
CHAPTER 5 Strategies for Revising 73

Part III Methods of Development 93

- CHAPTER 6 Narration and Process 94
CHAPTER 7 Description 113
CHAPTER 8 Example, Classification, and Definition 130
CHAPTER 9 Comparison and Contrast 155
CHAPTER 10 Cause and Effect 175

Part IV Strategies for Writing Essays 193

- CHAPTER 11 Sharpening Your Essay-Writing Skills 194
CHAPTER 12 Summarizing and Synthesizing Sources 218
CHAPTER 13 Writing Expository Essays 247
CHAPTER 14 Writing Persuasive Essays 266
CHAPTER 15 Writing Essay Exams and Competency Tests 289

Part V Additional Readings 311

Part VI Reviewing the Basics 359

- A Understanding the Parts of Speech 362
B Understanding the Parts of Sentences 382
C Avoiding Sentence Errors 400
D Writing Effective Sentences 432
E Using Punctuation Correctly 451
F Managing Mechanics and Spelling 462
G Documenting Sources 470
H Error Correction Exercises 477

CONTENTS

RHETORICAL CONTENTS	<i>xiv</i>
THEMATIC CONTENTS	<i>xvi</i>
PREFACE	<i>xviii</i>

Part I *Getting Started* 1

CHAPTER 1 **An Introduction to Writing** 2

Why Is Writing Important?	2
Improving Your Writing Skills	3
What Is Good Writing?	5
Ways to Think About Writing: Key Concepts	8
Tips for Writing Success	8
Tip #1: Organize a Place and Time to Write	9
Tip #2: Build Your Concentration	10
Tip #3: Consider Using a Word Processor	11
Tip #4: Keep a Writing Journal	12
Tip #5: Use Peer Review	14
Chapter Summary	15

CHAPTER 2 **The Writing Process: An Overview** 17

The Five Steps	17
Generating Ideas	18
Chapter Summary	33

Part II *Paragraph Writing Strategies* 35

CHAPTER 3 **Writing Topic Sentences** 36

What Is a Paragraph?	36
Writing Effective Topic Sentences	39
Thinking Before Reading	45
READING “Divorce: Sometimes a Bad Notion” FRED MOODY	46

Getting Ready to Write	49
<i>Examining the Reading</i> : Immediate Review and Underlining	
Topic Sentence	49
<i>Thinking Critically</i> : Discovering the Author's Purpose	50
<i>Reacting to Ideas</i> : Discussion and Journal Writing	50
Writing Assignments	51
Skill Refresher: Sentence Fragments	52
Chapter Summary	54

CHAPTER 4 Developing and Arranging Details 56

Using Relevant and Sufficient Details	56
Methods of Arranging Details	60
Using Specific Words	63
Using Transitional Words	64
Thinking Before Reading	65
READING "Politically Correct Language" STUART W. HYDE	65
Getting Ready to Write	68
<i>Examining the Reading</i> : Recognizing Types of Supporting Details	68
<i>Thinking Critically</i> : Analyzing Tone	68
<i>Reacting to Ideas</i> : Discussion and Journal Writing	69
Writing Assignments	69
Skill Refresher: Run-on Sentences	70
Chapter Summary	72

CHAPTER 5 Strategies for Revising 73

Using Revision Maps to Examine Your Ideas	73
Examining Your Language	79
Revision Checklist	80
Editing for Errors	81
Thinking Before Reading	83
READING "Moon-Walk" E. B. WHITE	85
Getting Ready to Write	88
<i>Examining the Reading</i> : Drawing Idea Maps	88
<i>Thinking Critically</i> : Understanding Symbols	88
<i>Reacting to Ideas</i> : Discussion and Journal Writing	89
Writing Assignments	89
Skill Refresher: Subject-Verb Agreement	90
Chapter Summary	91

Part III *Methods of Development* 93

CHAPTER 6 **Narration and Process** 94

Writing Narratives	95
Writing Process Descriptions	98
Applying Your Skills to Essay Writing: Narration and Process	101
Thinking Before Reading	102
READING “The Charwoman” GORDON PARKS	103
Getting Ready to Write	106
<i>Examining the Reading:</i> Using Sequence Maps	106
<i>Thinking Critically:</i> Point of View	107
<i>Reacting to Ideas:</i> Discussion and Journal Writing	108
Writing Assignments	108
Revision Checklist	109
Skill Refresher: Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement	110
Chapter Summary	111

CHAPTER 7 **Description** 113

Establishing a Dominant Impression	114
Developing and Selecting Descriptive Details	116
Using Descriptive Language	117
Organizing Details and Using Transitions	120
Applying Your Skills to Essay Writing: Description	120
Thinking Before Reading	121
READING “Obachan” GAIL Y. MIYASAKI	122
Getting Ready to Write	125
<i>Examining the Reading:</i> Marking Revealing Actions, Descriptions, and Statements	125
<i>Thinking Critically:</i> Understanding Connotative Language	125
<i>Reacting to Ideas:</i> Discussion and Journal Writing	126
Writing Assignments	126
Revision Checklist	127
Skill Refresher: Pronoun Reference	128
Chapter Summary	129

CHAPTER 8 Example, Classification, and Definition 130

Using Examples to Explain	131
Using Classification to Explain	133
Using Definition to Explain	138
Helpful Transitional Words and Phrases	141
Applying Your Skills to Essay Writing: Example, Classification, and Definition	142
Thinking Before Reading	144
READING “The Ways We Lie” STEPHANIE ERICSSON	144
Getting Ready to Write	147
<i>Examining the Reading:</i> Using Idea Mapping to Review and Organize Ideas	147
<i>Thinking Critically:</i> Applying and Transferring Information	149
<i>Reacting to Ideas:</i> Discussion and Journal Writing	149
Writing Assignments	149
Revision Checklist	150
Skill Refresher: Dangling Modifiers	152
Chapter Summary	153

CHAPTER 9 Comparison and Contrast 155

Identifying Similarities and Differences	155
Developing Your Topic Sentence	159
Organizing Your Paragraph	160
Useful Transitional Words and Phrases	162
Applying Your Skills to Essay Writing: Comparison and Contrast	164
Thinking Before Reading	165
READING “Are There Sex Differences in Emotion?” SAUL KASSIN	165
Getting Ready to Write	167
<i>Examining the Reading:</i> Using the Three-Column List for Review	167
<i>Thinking Critically:</i> Identifying and Examining Supporting Evidence	169
<i>Reacting to Ideas:</i> Discussion and Journal Writing	170
Writing Assignments	171
Revision Checklist	171
Skill Refresher: Misplaced Modifiers	173
Chapter Summary	174

CHAPTER 10 Cause and Effect 175

Distinguishing Between Cause and Effect	176
Developing Your Topic Sentence	178
Organizing Supporting Details	179
Helpful Transitional Words and Phrases	181
Applying Your Skills to Essay Writing: Cause and Effect	182
Thinking Before Reading	183
READING “Light in Montana” JO CLARE HARTSIG AND WALTER WINK	184
Getting Ready to Write	186
<i>Examining the Reading:</i> Reviewing and Organizing Ideas	186
<i>Thinking Critically:</i> Evaluating Cause-and-Effect Relationships	187
<i>Reacting to Ideas:</i> Discussion and Journal Writing	188
Writing Assignments	188
Revision Checklist	189
Skill Refresher: Coordinate Sentences	190
Chapter Summary	192

Part IV Strategies for Writing Essays 193**CHAPTER 11 Sharpening Your Essay-Writing Skills 194**

Write Strong Thesis Statements	194
Support Your Thesis with Substantial Evidence	200
Make Connections Among Your Ideas Clear	203
Writing the Introduction, Conclusion, and Title	204
Using Revision Maps to Revise	207
Thinking Before Reading	209
READING “The End of the Golden Era” JOHN CASSIDY	209
Getting Ready to Write	211
<i>Examining the Reading:</i> Using Idea Maps to Understand a Reading	211
<i>Thinking Critically:</i> Making Inferences	212
<i>Reacting to Ideas:</i> Discussion and Journal Writing	213
Writing Assignments	213
Revision Checklist	214
Skill Refresher: Subordinate Clauses	215
Chapter Summary	216

CHAPTER	12	Summarizing and Synthesizing Sources	218
		Working with Reference Sources	218
		Annotating a Source	221
		Writing a Paraphrase	223
		Writing Summaries	225
		Using Sources to Support Your Ideas	228
		Adding Information from Sources	230
		Synthesizing Sources	232
		Thinking Before Reading	236
		READING “What’s in a Label: ‘Black’ or ‘African-American’?”	
		ZICK RUBIN, ET AL.	237
		READING “Who Has the Right to Name?” RICHARD APPELBAUM	238
		Getting Ready to Write	239
		<i>Examining the Readings: Using Idea Maps to Compare Sources</i>	239
		<i>Thinking Critically: Examining Your Sources</i>	241
		<i>Reacting to Ideas: Discussion and Journal Writing</i>	242
		Writing Assignments	242
		Revision Checklist	243
		Skill Refresher: Parallelism	244
		Chapter Summary	245
CHAPTER	13	Writing Expository Essays	247
		What Is an Expository Essay?	247
		Planning Your Essay	248
		Drafting Your Essay	254
		Thinking Before Reading	256
		READING “A High Cost for a Small Hope” ELLEN GOODMAN	257
		READING “Living Longer with HIV” GEOFFREY COWLEY	259
		Getting Ready to Write	261
		<i>Examining the Readings: Using Idea Maps to Examine Expository Essays</i>	261
		<i>Thinking Critically: Evaluating Alternative Viewpoints</i>	261
		<i>Reacting to Ideas: Discussion and Journal Writing</i>	262
		Writing Assignments	262
		Revision Checklist	262
		Skill Refresher: When to Use Commas	264
		Chapter Summary	265