The Everyday Writer

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WITH 1998 MLA UPDATE

A Brief Reference

...write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, on the job or during meals....

—Gloria Anzaldúa

THE EVERYDAY WRITER

A Brief Reference

Andrea Lunsford
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Robert Connors
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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A note about the cover

What did you think when you first picked up *The Everyday Writer?* New technologies have made color, typography, and page design as important as syntax and diction and along the way have invited us all as writers to have some fun with words. We hope that the design of the cover demonstrates what *The Everyday Writer* aims to do—to help writers understand, use, and (at times) challenge the conventions of writing.

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THE EVERYDAY WRITER

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Our goal in *The Everyday Writer* is to provide a "short and sweet" writing reference you can use easily on your own—at work, in class, even on the run. Small enough to tuck into a backpack or briefcase, this text has been designed to help you find information quickly, efficiently, and with minimal effort.

Ways into the book

- The *quick access menu* inside the front cover gives a quick list of the book's contents. Once you find the general topic you are looking for on the Quick Access Menu, it will point you to the section of the book where you'll find your information. Turn then to that tabbed section, and check the menu on the tabbed divider for the exact page.
- The *index* lists everything covered in the book. You can find information here by looking up a topic ("articles," for example) or, if you're not sure what your topic is called, by looking up the word you need help with (*a* or *the*, for example).
- Two *tables of contents* list chapters and main headings in detail—the complete contents on pp. vii–xviii and the Brief Contents on the inside back cover.
- *Boxed editing tips* at the beginning of most chapters will help you check your drafts with a critical eye and edit as need be.
- *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)* about writing are covered in the first tabbed section, with brief explanations, hand-edited examples, and cross references to other places in the book where you'll find more detail.
- *Documentation models* are easy to find in two tabbed sections—one for MLA style and the other for APA and CBE styles.
- *Tips for multilingual writers* appear in a separate tabbed section and in boxes throughout the book. You can also find a list of the topics covered, including language-specific tips, on the tabbed divider for that section.

- *Revision symbols* are listed in the back of the book. If your instructor uses these symbols to mark your drafts, consult this list.
- A *glossary of usage* (Chapter 28) gives quick advice on commonly confused and misused words.

We hope that this book will prove to be an everyday reference—and that these reference features will lead you quickly and easily to whatever information you need.

PREFACE

The Everyday Writer rests on two simple insights. First, writing surrounds us: it's not something we do just in school or on the job but something that is as familiar and everyday as a pair of worn sneakers, or the air we breathe. We want to acknowledge this "everydayness" of writing and to encourage users of this book to act on Gloria Anzaldúa's advice—to "write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, on the job or during meals. . . ." Second, all learning, including learning to write, grows out of what we already know and understand, linking our "everyday" knowledge to something new—whether that something new is a form of punctuation, a sentence pattern, a stylistic choice, or a method of research. Thus *The Everyday Writer* speaks to students in everyday language about how to use what they already know to expand their writing repertoires.

Specifically, *The Everyday Writer* aims to enact the two principles described above by providing a quick and simple reference writers can easily use on their own, on the run even, as they work on writing tasks on the bus, in the computer lab, in the library, in between classes, on the job. Small enough to fit in a backpack, and with a binding that allows the book to open flat, *The Everyday Writer* can go anywhere, anytime.

Highlights

Attention to everyday language *in* everyday language. Each chapter opens with a brief example showing the everyday use of that chapter's subject. Everyday language pervades the book, giving students clear, straightforward answers they can understand, with examples from school, from the workplace, and from home.

Best online coverage. Chapter 39 offers unique coverage of the language of the digital world from *Wired Style: Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age,* the new style guide by the editors of *Wired.* Guidelines for using and evaluating electronic sources are in Chapter 42, Conducting Research, and Chapter 43, Evaluating and Using Sources. In addition, we provide guidelines for citing and documenting Internet sources in MLA, APA, and CBE styles. The guidelines for MLA and APA are from the most comprehensive and up-to-date system we could find, developed by Andrew Harnack and Eugene Kleppinger.

Quick guidelines on the most common errors. A "crisis-control center" provides practical answers to the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) about writing, with questions gleaned from nationwide research into student writing patterns and teacher responses to the writing of first-year college students. This study identified mistakes in the grammar, syntax, and use of standard written English writers are most likely to make as well as the larger rhetorical concerns readers are most likely to comment on. This tabbed section opens the book in brief, everyday language and provides hand-edited examples to help students recognize and edit for these problem areas.

Boxed editing tips. Detailed editing tips, usually at the beginning of each chapter, help students work with their own writing. All handbooks provide rules, but only *The Everyday Writer* gives tips to help students apply the rules to their own drafts.

Unique coverage of language variety. Chapter 26 helps students "shift language gears," as they often need to do, among ethnic, regional, occupational, and standard varieties of English.

Other significant features

A complete section for multilingual writers. Written by Franklin Horowitz of Teachers College, Columbia University, this section covers grammatical and rhetorical issues of concern to multilingual writers, including ESL writers. Boxed tips throughout the book offer advice on topics where ESL writers need extra help. Whenever possible we give language-specific advice, with special tips for 15 languages.

Special attention to matters of style. Brief style boxes help writers with the kinds of stylistic choices they must make as they move among various communities, fields, jobs, and disciplines.

A complete chapter on writing about literature. Chapter 53 presents a text-based approach to interpreting a literary work, with a sample student essay and a glossary of literary terms.

Help with many common everyday writing tasks. Today's writing tasks are many and varied, and *The Everyday Writer* offers help with some of the most important ones: email (Chapter 54), professional and business writing (Chapter 54), oral presentations (Chapter 52), collaboratively produced projects (Chapter 5).

And because writing situations and needs are changing constantly, we have *The Everyday Writer* Web site, which will feature FAQs about writing, links to other writer-friendly sites, even a chat space. Join us at *www.bedfordstmartins.com/everyday_writer*.

Acknowledgments

During the years we have worked on *The Everyday Writer*, we have had the benefit of much wisdom, advice, and help. Of special significance to us in this extensive collaboration have been Francine Weinberg, whose legendary abilities to condense and clarify enabled us to realize the goal of writing a brief handbook; Kristin Bowen, whose meticulous attention to even the smallest detail is reflected on every single page; Marilyn Moller, who is simply our *sine qua non* of editors (and friends); Diane Schadoff, who is calm patience personified; Griff Hansbury, whose quiet support has been deeply appreciated; George Scribner, whose imaginative marketing sense has helped us, we hope, reach a very wide audience; Steve Debow, whose creative and daring thinking has challenged and inspired us; and Lucy Krikorian and Anna George, to whom we owe the wonderful cover and interior designs.

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systems; and to *Wired* magazine for graciously allowing us to reprint part of *Wired Style.*

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Andrea Lunsford
Robert Connors

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