

W R I T E R S

100

A Student Handbook
for WRITING and LEARNING



W R I T E R S

INC

A Student Handbook
for WRITING and LEARNING



Written and Compiled by

Patrick Sebranek, Dave Kemper, and Verne Meyer

Illustrated by Chris Krenzke

WRITE SOURCE®

GREAT SOURCE EDUCATION GROUP

a Houghton Mifflin Company
Wilmington, Massachusetts

405/56

Reviewers

Britta Carns

Renton School District
Renton, Washington

Edmund Desmond

Hofstra University
Hempstead, New York

Susan Dinges

Mt. Olive Township Public Schools
Budd Lake, New Jersey

Paula Denise Findley

White Hall, Arkansas

Timothy R. Hart, Ed. D.

Cincinnati Public Schools
Cincinnati, Ohio

Stephanie Anne Izabal

Huntington Beach Unified High
School District

Huntington Beach, California

Harriet Maher

Lafayette Parish School System
Lafayette, Louisiana

Jenny R. May

Mason City Schools
Mason, Ohio

Constance McGee

Pembroke Pines, Florida

Marie T. Raduazzo

Arlington Public Schools
Arlington, Massachusetts

Acknowledgements

Writers INC is a reality because of the help and advice of our team of students, educators, writers, editors, and designers: Laura Bachman, Ron Bachman, William Baughn, Amy Bauman, Heather Bazata, Colleen Belmont, Chris Erickson, Hillary Gammons, Mariellen Hanrahan, Tammy Hintz, Mary Anne Hoff, Lois Krenzke, Joseph Lee, Joyce Becker Lee, Ellen Leitheusser, Douglas Niles, Kelly King, Rob King, Pamela Reigel, Christine Rieker, Steven Schend, Janae Sebranek, Lester Smith, Vicki Spandel, Julie Spicuzza, Stephen D. Sullivan, Randy VanderMey, John Van Rys, Jean Varley, and Claire Ziffer.

Trademarks and trade names are shown in this book strictly for illustrative purposes and are the property of their respective owners. The author's references herein should not be regarded as affecting their validity.

Copyright © 2006 by Great Source Education Group, a division of Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of Great Source Education Group unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law. Address inquiries to Permissions, Great Source Education Group, 181 Ballardvale Street, Wilmington, MA 01887.

Great Source and **Write Source** are registered trademarks of Houghton Mifflin Company.

Printed in the United States of America

International Standard Book Number: 0-669-52994-X (hardcover)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -RRDC- 11 10 09 08 07 06 05

International Standard Book Number: 0-669-52995-8 (softcover)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 -RRDC- 11 10 09 08 07 06 05

The Forms of Writing

PERSONAL WRITING

- Journal Writing 131
- Descriptive Writing 135
- Narrative Writing 139

CREATIVE WRITING

- Writing Stories and Plays 151
- Writing Poetry 163
 - Poetry Terms 170

ACADEMIC WRITING

- Writing Expository Essays 173
- Other Forms of Expository Writing 183
 - Process Essay 184
 - Essay of Definition 186
 - Cause-Effect Essay 188
 - Comparison-Contrast Essay 191
 - Essay of Opposing Ideas 194
- Writing Persuasive Essays 197
- Other Forms of Persuasive Writing 207
 - Pet Peeve Essay 208
 - Editorial 210
 - Personal Commentary 212
 - Problem-Solution Essay 214
 - Essay of Argumentation 217
 - Writing a Position Paper 221



The Forms of Writing

RESPONDING TO LITERATURE

Personal Responses to Literature 233

Writing a Book Review 239

Writing a Literary Analysis 245

Literary Terms 253

RESEARCH WRITING

Writing the Research Paper 263

Writing Responsibly 273

MLA Documentation Style 281

Sample MLA Research Paper 299

APA Documentation Style 309

WORKPLACE WRITING

Writing Business Letters 321

Special Forms of Workplace Writing 329

Memos 330

E-Mail Messages 332

Brochures 334

Résumés 336



The Tools of Writing

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

- Types of Information 339
- Using the Internet 347
- Using the Library 353

READING SKILLS

- Reading Graphics 367
- Critical Reading Skills 373
- Improving Vocabulary Skills 385

STUDY SKILLS

- Improving Classroom Skills 401
- Listening and Note-Taking Skills 407
- Writing to Learn 415
- Test-Taking Skills 423
- Taking Exit and Entrance Exams 437

SPEAKING, THINKING, AND VIEWING SKILLS

- Speech Skills 453
- Multimedia Reports 465
- Thinking Skills 469
- Viewing Skills 479



Proofreader's Guide

MARKING PUNCTUATION

Period 487

Question Mark 488

Exclamation Point 488

Comma 489

Semicolon 493

Colon 494

Hyphen 495

Apostrophe 498

Quotation Marks 500

Italics (Underlining) 502

Parentheses 503

Dash 504

Ellipsis 505

Brackets 506

CHECKING MECHANICS

Capitalization 507

Plurals 510

Numbers 512

Abbreviations 513

Acronyms and Initialisms 515

Commonly Misspelled Words 517

USING THE RIGHT WORD 523

PARTS OF SPEECH

Noun 533

Pronoun 535

Verb 539

Adjective 545

Adverb 546

Preposition 547

Conjunction 548

Interjection 548

USING THE LANGUAGE

Constructing Sentences 550

Using Phrases 552

Using Clauses 553

Using Sentence Variety 554

Diagramming Sentences 556

Getting Sentence Parts to Agree 558

Using Fair Language 561



Student Almanac

LANGUAGE

- Manual Alphabet 565
- The History of the English Language 566
- Traffic Signs 568
- Common Parliamentary Procedures 569
- Six-Year Calendar 570

SCIENCE

- Weights and Measures 571
- The Metric System 573
- Handy Conversion Factors 574
- Periodic Table of the Elements 575
- Our Solar System 576
- Computer and Internet Terms 577

MATHEMATICS

- Math Symbols 581
- Math Tables 582
- Math Terms 583

GEOGRAPHY

- Using the Maps 589
- World Maps 591
- Index to World Maps 601

GOVERNMENT

- Branches of the U.S. Federal Government 603
- The U.S. Constitution 604
- U.S. Presidents and Vice Presidents 607
- Order of Presidential Succession 608

HISTORY

- Historical Time Line 609

INDEX 620



Writers Understanding the Writing PROCESS

- Why Write? 1
- Writing as a Process 3
- One Writer's Process 9
- Traits of Effective Writing 21
- Writing with a Computer 27
- Publishing Your Writing 33

“Writing allows you to penetrate your life and learn to trust your own mind.”

—Natalie Goldberg

WHY Write?

Writing requires practice—a lot of it. You wouldn’t expect to pick up a guitar and play it with ease and skill, unless you practiced a lot. Well, the same is true of writing. You shouldn’t expect to write well, unless you practice. We may be stating the obvious here—but this point is so important that it can’t be emphasized enough. You will never appreciate the best that writing has to offer unless you regularly put pen to paper (or fingers to the keyboard).

Writing regularly—as in every day—will help you develop writing fluency, which essentially means feeling comfortable with the act of writing. Writer Dan Kirby and his coauthors make this statement in their book, *Inside Out*: “Fluency is the first consideration. It is the basis for all that follows.” Once you feel at ease with writing, many good things will begin to happen. (See the next page.)

Tip If you aren’t already writing in a journal or notebook, start as soon as possible. No other activity can help you as much as journaling can to become fluent as a writer.

Preview

- Reasons to Write
- **Writers INC** and You



Reasons to Write

To Develop a Personal Voice

You may have heard your teachers talk about the importance of voice in writing. Writer Donald Graves explains voice in this way: “Voice is the imprint of ourselves in our writing. Take the voice away . . . and there’s no writing, just words following words.” Voice is the writer’s unique personality that comes through in his or her writing.

If you are an infrequent writer, there’s little chance that your writing voice will develop. On the other hand, if you are a frequent and fluent writer, your writing should speak with a great deal of personality and appeal.

Remember: Write to discover your personal voice.

To Become More Reflective

You probably lead a busy life. As a result, you may have little time to relax and reflect on things. This is where writing can help. By its very nature, writing is perfectly suited to examining daily happenings.

Writer Ray Bradbury once said, “Writing lets the world burn through you.” If you write regularly in a journal, you know exactly what he means. In a typical entry, you will consider the events in your life, and in the process, ask questions, make decisions, and set goals. In short, you can reflect—or “let the world burn through you.”

Remember: Write to reflect on your life.

To Become More Analytical

Writing is often called thinking on paper because it forces you to concentrate all of your attention on the words in front of you. As writer Paul J. Meyer states, “Writing crystallizes thought,” helping you see things more clearly and logically.

With practice, you will become more analytical in your writing, intent on finding the patterns and relationships between ideas. Before you know it, you’ll be making many interesting connections and comparisons. Reaching this level of maturity should be one of your primary goals as a writer.

Remember: Write to think more analytically.

Writers INC and You

Writers INC is a portable resource of valuable information. What you won’t find are exercises or assignments—not one. Note the subtitle on the cover: *A Student Handbook for Writing and Learning*. *Writers INC* is a guide for your own writing and learning. Now and for years to come, it will help you make writing an important part of your life.

“When I write, I am always struck at how magical and unexpected the process turns out to be.”

—Ralph Fletcher

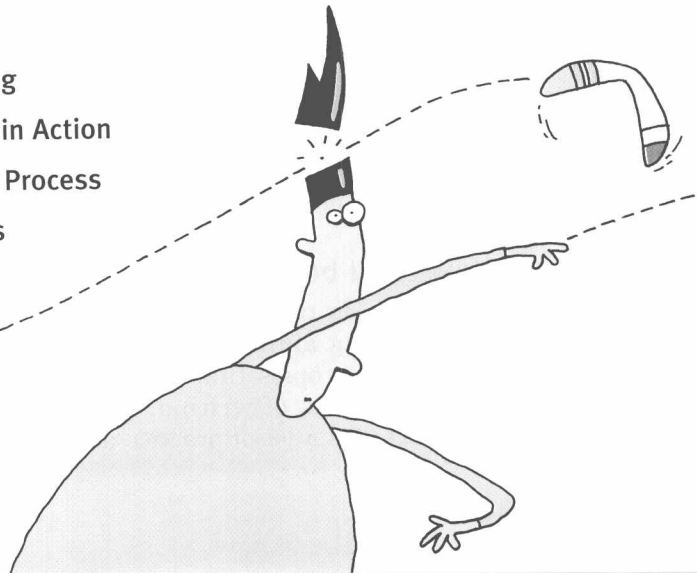
Writing as a PROCESS

At the start of her career, author Annie Dillard thought that all you really needed was “paper, pen, and a lap” to write something. But before too long, she discovered that “in order to write so much as a sonnet [a 14-line poem], I needed a warehouse.” Of course, the author is exaggerating, but only to make a point. Dillard soon learned that she had to spend a lot of time—and write numerous drafts—to produce effective finished products.

You may know from experience what Dillard is talking about. Think of your best essays, reports, and stories. You probably put forth a great deal of effort (enough to fill a warehouse?) to produce each one, changing some parts many times from draft to draft. You may also know that writing really becomes satisfying when it reflects your best efforts. If you work hard at your writing, you—and your readers—will almost always be pleased with the results.

Preview

- Writing Is Discovering
- The Writing Process in Action
- A Closer Look at the Process
- Advice from the Pros



Writing Is Discovering

Writing is not trying to figure out everything you want to say *before* you put pen to paper or fingers to the keyboard. Working in this way will result in having very little to say, or worse yet, having nothing to say at all. (Ever hear of writer's block?) Writing almost always works best when it springs from the discoveries you make *during* the writing process.

Take NOTE



The five steps in the writing process discussed in this handbook are **prewriting, writing the first draft, revising, editing and proofreading, and publishing.**

Setting the Stage

Before you use the writing process, it's important that you understand the following points about writing:

- **Experience shapes writing.** Each of your experiences becomes part of what you know, what you think, and what you have to say in your writing. Writing is the process of capturing those thoughts and experiences in words.
- **Writing never follows a straight path.** Writing is a backward as well as a forward activity, so don't expect to move neatly through the steps in the writing process. Writing by its very nature includes detours, wrong turns, and repeat visits.
- **Each assignment presents special challenges.** For one assignment, you might search high and low for a topic. For another one, you might do a lot of prewriting and planning. For still another, you might be ready to write your first draft almost immediately.
- **Each writer works differently.** Some writers work more in their heads, while others work more on paper. Some writers need to talk about their writing early on, while others would rather keep their ideas to themselves. As you continue to work with the writing process, your own writing personality will develop.

FAQ

How can I become a better writer?

If you do the following four things, you are sure to improve your writing ability: become a regular reader, write every day, write about topics that truly interest you, and experiment with different forms of writing. *Remember:* Writing is like any other skill. It takes a lot of practice and patience to become good at it.

The Writing Process in Action

The next two pages provide a basic look at the writing process in action. Use this information as a general guide whenever you write.

■ PREWRITING

Choosing a Topic and Gathering Details

1. Search for a meaningful writing idea—one that truly interests you and meets the requirements of the assignment.
2. Use a selecting strategy (listing, clustering, freewriting, and so on) to identify possible topics. (See pages 43–45.)
3. Learn as much as you can about your topic. (See pages 46–49.)
4. Decide on an interesting or important part of the topic—your focus—to develop. Express your focus in a sentence to help map out your writing.
5. Think about an overall plan or design for organizing your writing. This plan can be anything from a brief list to a detailed outline. (See page 52.)

■ WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

Connecting Your Ideas

1. Write the first draft while your prewriting is still fresh in your mind.
2. Set the right tone by giving your opening paragraph special attention. (See page 55.)
3. Refer to your plan for the main part of your writing but be flexible. A more interesting route may unfold as you write.
4. Don't worry about getting everything right at this point; just concentrate on developing your ideas.

HELP FILE

Experienced writers often view the drafting process as a stimulating release, especially if they have spent a lot of time researching a topic and have a lot of ideas percolating in their minds. Approach your own drafting with the same kind of energy and enthusiasm, and you'll do your best work.

■ REVISING

Improving Your Writing

1. Review your first draft, checking the ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency of your writing. (See pages 65–72.)
2. Ask at least one classmate to react to your work.
3. Add, cut, reword, or rearrange ideas as necessary. (You may have to change some parts several times before they say what you want them to say.)
4. Carefully assess the effectiveness of your opening and closing paragraphs.
5. Look for special opportunities to make your writing as meaningful and interesting as possible. (See page 64.)

■ EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Checking for Accuracy

1. Edit your revised writing for conventions.
2. Have a dictionary, thesaurus, and your *Writers INC* handbook close at hand as you work.
3. Ask a reliable editor—a friend, a classmate, a parent, or a teacher—to check your writing for errors you may have missed.
4. Prepare a neat final copy of your writing.
5. Proofread the final draft for errors before submitting it.

■ PUBLISHING

Sharing Your Work

1. Share the finished product with your teacher, writing peers, friends, and family members.
2. Decide if you will include the writing in your portfolio. (See page 35.)
3. Post your writing on your personal or class Web site or elsewhere online. (See pages 38–39.)
4. Consider submitting your work to a school, a local, or a national publication. (Ask your teacher for recommendations for places to publish.) Make sure to follow the requirements for submitting manuscripts. (See pages 36–37.)

A Closer Look at the Process

Keep the following tips in mind whenever you write. They will help make each of your writing projects satisfying and meaningful.

Keep time on your side. Effective writing requires a lot of searching, planning, writing, reflecting, and revising. In order to do all of these things, you must give yourself plenty of time. If your teacher provides you with a timetable for your writing, make sure to follow it. Otherwise, create your own. (Always reserve plenty of time for revising.) As you probably know, waiting until the last minute takes all of the fun out of writing.

Remember: Good writing takes time.

Limit your topic. It would be almost impossible to write an effective essay or report about a general subject such as photography. You wouldn't know where to begin or end. But if you limited this subject to a specific topic—let's say, the use of photography by investigative reporters—then you would find it much easier to manage your writing.

Remember: Good writing has a focus, meaning that it stems from and is built around a limited topic.

Work from a position of authority. The more you know about your topic, the easier it is to write about it. So collect as much information as you can during prewriting—tapping into your own thoughts, asking other people for their ideas, consulting print material, surfing the Net, and so on.

Remember: Good writing requires good information.

Pace yourself when you revise. Many of the pros believe that the real writing takes place when they add, cut, rearrange, and rewrite different parts of their first drafts. They do not rush these changes or make them all at once. Instead, they pace themselves, working very patiently and methodically at times, making revisions until all of the parts seem clear and complete.

Remember: Good writing usually requires a series of changes before it says exactly what you want it to say.

Take some risks. Don't be afraid to experiment in your writing. For example, you might share a personal story in an essay or develop an interview report in a question-and-answer format, much like you would find in many magazine articles. Then again, you might change the sequence of events in a narrative to add suspense. If one experiment doesn't work out, you can always try something else.

Remember: Good writing is a process of discovery.

Advice from the Pros

Keep the following thoughts in mind as you develop your writing. They come from experienced authors who appreciate writing as a process of discovery.

“I don’t pick subjects so much as they pick me.”

—Andy Rooney

**“When I speak to students about writing,
I hold myself up as an example of that ancient
axiom—write about what you know.”**

—Robert Cormier

“The inspiration comes while you write.”

—Madeleine L’Engle

“Writing comes more easily if you have something to say.”

—Sholem Asch

**“I think one is constantly startled by the
things that appear before you on the page while
you write.”**

—Shirley Hazzard

**“By the time I reach a fifth version, my writing begins to have
its own voice.”**

—Ashley Bryan

“Half of my life is an act of revision.”

—John Irving

**“I am an obsessive rewriter, doing one draft and then another
and another, usually five. In a way, I have nothing to say but
a great deal to add.”**

—Gore Vidal

**“I believe in impulse and naturalness, but followed
by discipline in the cutting.”**

—Anaïs Nin

**“Write visually, write clearly, and
make every word count.”**

—Gloria D. Miklowitz