

Diana Hacker

RULES FOR WRITERS

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THIRD EDITION

Diana Hacker

RULES FOR WRITERS

A Brief Handbook

Third Edition



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Preface for Instructors

A decade ago, Bedford Books published the first edition of *Rules for Writers*, a brief handbook that later evolved into the longer *Bedford Handbook for Writers*. When Bedford recently proposed that we revive *Rules for Writers*, I was delighted, for the book is an old favorite of mine. It grew directly out of my classroom experience at Prince George's Community College, and I look forward to using it again in my classes at Prince George's. The brevity of *Rules for Writers* appeals to my students; so does its price.

When revising the book, I hoped to do more than bring back an old favorite. Today's computer-oriented students expect to get quick answers to their questions, so I have designed a system of graphic access through icons. I predict that the simplicity and familiarity of these icons will draw even unmotivated students into the book. And because there are only nine icons, each accompanied by a short title, *Rules for Writers* looks manageable—not too daunting.

Here are the book's principal features, beginning with the icons.

Graphic access through icons. To help today's visually oriented students find the information they need, icons, like those on the toolbars of computer programs, are keyed to each part of *Rules for Writers*. The icons appear in six places: on the cover, in the brief menu inside the front cover, in the detailed menu inside the back cover, in the table of contents, on the part openers, and on the tabs on each left-hand page.

In most circumstances, the brief menu inside the front cover is the fastest way into the book. Designed for student use, it is as simple as possible, containing just the nine icons and sixty sections, with no subsections listed. By consulting this menu, students can usually locate the icon and the section number for the information they need. Then they can simply flip pages in search of the appropriate tabs. The tabs on the left-hand pages display the icons, and those on the right-hand pages give the section numbers.

At times students may want to use other reference features of *Rules for Writers*: the detailed menu inside the back cover, the index, the Glossary of Usage, or one of the book's directories to documentation models. "How to Use This Book" (pages xii–xix) describes these reference features and includes several tutorials that give students "hands on" experience using the book.

Comprehensive coverage and compact format. To make *Rules for Writers* brief, I have limited myself within each section to the essentials: straightforward rules backed up by concise explanations, realistic examples, and brief comments on examples. In its coverage, however, the book is complete. It is a guide to the full range of conventions of grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and usage as well as to the writing process, paragraphs, style, argument, research papers, business letters, résumés, and memos. The "Research Guide" includes the most recent versions of both the MLA and APA systems of parenthetical citations.

An emphasis on rules. As its title suggests, *Rules for Writers* focuses on rules rather than on grammatical abstractions. Though abstract section headings such as "parallelism" and "agreement" are understandable to instructors, they are not always clear to students. Rules such as "Balance parallel ideas" and "Make subjects and verbs agree" are clearer because they both identify the problem and tell students what to do about it.

Handbooks are by their very nature prescriptive, but that does not mean they must be unbending. Like other modern handbooks, *Rules for Writers* alerts students to levels of formality, rhetorical options, and current standards of usage. It distinguishes between rules intended as rhetorical advice and those that are more strictly matters of right and wrong.

A problem-solving approach to errors. Where relevant, *Rules for Writers* attends to the linguistic and social causes of errors and to the effects of errors on readers. The examples of errors in the text are realistic, most having been drawn from student papers and local newspapers. The text treats these errors as problems to be solved, often in light of rhetorical con-

siderations, not as violations of a moral code. Instead of preaching at students, it shows them why problems occur, how to recognize them, and how to solve them.

Hand-edited sentences. Most examples appear as they would in a rough draft, with handwritten revisions made in color over typeset faulty sentences. Unlike the usual technique of printing separate incorrect and corrected versions of a sentence, hand-edited sentences highlight the difference between the two versions and suggest how extensive a change is required. Further, hand-edited sentences mimic the process of revision as it should appear in the students' own drafts.

Clear, uncluttered page design. Because the two-color page design highlights rules and hand-edited examples, *Rules for Writers* is easy to skim for quick answers to questions. Readers who want more help will find it in concise explanations following rules and in brief comments pegged to examples.

Extensive coverage of ESL problems. Three sections focus exclusively on common problems facing speakers of English as a second language. Section 29 discusses ESL problems with verbs; section 30 explains when to use the articles *a*, *an*, and *the*; and section 31 alerts ESL students to a variety of other potential trouble spots. ESL boxes throughout the book alert students to possible ESL problems; a quick-reference chart of these boxes appears at the back of the book.

Special attention to dialect differences. Section 27, "Choose standard English verb forms," helps students with such matters as omitted *-s* and *-ed* endings and omitted verbs, problems often caused by dialect differences. Section 17d, on nonstandard English, contains cross-references to practical advice that appears elsewhere in the book.

Straightforward advice on composing and revising. Instead of philosophizing about the writing process, *Rules for Writers* shows students, through a multiplicity of examples on a variety of topics, how to find a process that will work for them. The emphasis, throughout, is on flexibility.

"The Writing Process" includes three student essays, each accompanied by a draft or an outtake from a stage of the writing process.

Nine short sections on the research paper. For easy reference, the "Research Guide" is broken up into nine short sections. The section on using the library emphasizes computerized library resources, including the Internet. The MLA and APA sections are up to date, and each documentation style is illustrated with a model research paper.

Other sections focus on matters most troublesome to students: choosing and narrowing a topic, crafting a thesis, citing sources, integrating quotations, and avoiding plagiarism at both the note-taking and the drafting stages.

Two sections on argument. Using a process approach, section 46 shows students how to construct an argument that will have some hope of persuading readers who do not already agree with their views. The logical fallacies and common mistakes in inductive and deductive reasoning are in section 47.

A section on document design. In both the business and the academic worlds, writers are becoming increasingly interested in document design—the use of visual cues to help readers. Section 4a, "Principles of document design," provides guidelines on selecting format options and using headings, displayed lists, and other visuals to make documents more effective. Section 4b includes both MLA and APA guidelines for preparing academic manuscripts. Section 4c gives advice on business letters, résumés, and memos.

Extensive exercises, some with answers. At least one exercise set accompanies nearly every section of the book. Most sets begin with five lettered sentences that have answers in the back of the book so students can test their understanding independently. The sets continue with five or ten numbered sentences, the answers for which appear only in the instructor's edition so instructors may use the exercises in class or assign them as homework.

A user-friendly index. The index of *Rules for Writers* helps students find what they are looking for even if they don't know grammatical terminology. When facing a choice between *was* and *were*, for example, some students may not know to look up "Subject-verb agreement." To help such students, *Rules for Writers* includes index entries for "*was* versus *were*" and "*were* versus *was*." Similar user-friendly entries appear throughout the index.

A wide array of ancillaries. In addition to the instructor's edition, *Rules for Writers* is available with the following ancillary:

Developmental Exercises to Accompany Rules for Writers,
by Wanda Van Goor and Diana Hacker

The publisher is also making available most of the resources accompanying *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*. These supplements can easily be used with *Rules for Writers* because its central section numbers (8-45) correspond with those in *The Bedford Handbook*. All of the ancillaries are free of charge to instructors, and some are available for student purchase as well.

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTORS

Diagnostic Resources to Accompany The Bedford Handbook for Writers (with ESL versions)

Transparencies to Accompany The Bedford Handbook for Writers

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTORS

Background Readings for Instructors Using The Bedford Handbook for Writers

The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Supplemental Exercises for The Bedford Handbook for Writers (with Answer Key)

Resources for Research and Documentation across the Curriculum to Accompany The Bedford Handbook for Writers

Research Workbook for The Bedford Handbook for Writers
Preparing for the CLAST with The Bedford Handbook for Writers

Preparing for the TASP with The Bedford Handbook for Writers

SOFTWARE

Grammar Hotline for The Bedford Handbook for Writers
(IBM and Mac versions)

Exercise Tutor for The Bedford Handbook for Writers (IBM and Mac versions)

MicroGrade: A Teacher's Gradebook (IBM and Mac versions)

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Book editor Michelle McSweeney has taken an active interest in all aspects of the book — from its design to its grammar — while guiding it expertly through production. Managing editor Elizabeth Schaaf orchestrated production of the book with unflappable calm. DeNee Reiton Skipper has handled the page make-up with expertise, and award-winning designer Claire Seng-Niemoeller once again deserves credit for designing the clean, uncluttered pages that highlight the book's hand-edited sentences.

Special thanks are due to publishers Chuck Christensen and Joan Feinberg. Ten years ago Chuck took a chance on an unknown community college professor with an inexplicable urge to write a handbook. I am deeply grateful to him for giving me this opportunity. In retrospect, I suppose Chuck knew that almost anyone could learn to write a handbook under the guidance of Joan Feinberg. Certainly a better teacher-editor could not have been found. Joan has consistently set a standard of excellence, and over the years she has nudged me toward it, always with intelligence, grace, and good humor. It would be impossible to overstate my gratitude.

Finally, a note of thanks goes to my mother, Georgiana Tarvin, and to Joseph and Marian Hacker, Robert Hacker, Greg Tarvin, Betty Renshaw, Bill Fry, Bill Mullinix, Joyce Magnotto, Christine McMahon, Anne King, Wanda Van Goor, Melinda Kramer, Joyce McDonald, Tom Henderson, the Dougherty family, and Robbie and Austin Nichols for their support and encouragement; and to the many students over the years who have taught me that errors, a natural by-product of the writing process, are simply problems waiting to be solved.

Diana Hacker

Prince George's Community College

How to Use This Book

Though it is small enough to hold in your hand, *Rules for Writers* will answer most of the questions you are likely to ask as you plan, draft, and revise a piece of writing: How do I choose and narrow a topic? What can I do if I get stuck? How do I know when to begin a new paragraph? Should I write *none was* or *none were*? When does a comma belong before *and*? What is the difference between *accept* and *except*? How do I cite a source with two authors?

How to find information with an instructor's help

When you are revising an essay that has been marked by your instructor, tracking down information is simple. If your instructor marks problems with a number such as 16 or a number and letter such as 12e, you can turn directly to the appropriate section of the handbook. Just flip through the colored tabs on the upper corners of the pages until you find the number in question. The number 16, for example, leads you to the rule "Tighten wordy sentences," and 12e takes you to the subrule "Repair dangling modifiers." If your instructor uses an abbreviation such as *w* or *dm* instead of a number, consult the list of abbreviations and symbols on the page right before the back endpapers. There you will find the name of the problems (*wordy*; *dangling modifier*) and the number of the section to consult.

How to find information on your own

With a little practice, you will be able to find information in this book without an instructor's help — usually by tracking the icons that appear on the cover and inside the front cover. At times, you may want to consult the detailed menu inside the back cover, the index, the Glossary of Usage, or one of the directories to the documentation models.

The icons. Because the icons are right on the cover, it won't take you long to become familiar with the organization of *Rules for Writers*. These icons also appear on a brief menu inside the front cover. Usually this menu is the fastest way into the book.

Let's say that you are having problems with run-on sentences. Your first step is to find the appropriate icon on the menu inside the front cover—in this case the checkmark for "Grammar." Next, find the appropriate numbered rule: "20 Revise run-on sentences." Finally, use the tabs on the upper right-hand corners of the pages to find section 20. The running head next to the tab ("Run-on sentences") will tell you that you are just where you want to be.

At times you can work straight from the icons on the cover. These icons appear on every left-hand page of the book and on the solid-color part openers. To look up correct uses of the semicolon, for example, you can find the traffic light icon (for "Punctuation") on the left-hand pages, and then, just by flipping, you can locate the appropriate running head ("The semicolon") on the right-hand pages.

The back endpapers. The detailed menu appears inside the back cover. When the numbered section you're looking for is broken up into quite a few lettered subsections, try consulting this menu. For instance, if you have a question about the proper use of commas for items in a series, this menu will lead you quickly to section 32c.

The index. If you aren't sure which topic to choose from one of the menus, consult the index at the back of the book. For example, you may not realize that the issue of *is* versus *are* is a matter of subject-verb agreement (section 21). In that case, simply look up "is versus are" in the index and you will be directed to the exact pages you need.

The Glossary of Usage. When in doubt about the correct use of a particular word (such as *affect* and *effect*, *among* and *between*, or *hopefully*), consult the Glossary of Usage at the back of the book. This glossary explains the difference between commonly confused words; it also lists colloquialisms and jargon that are inappropriate in formal written English.

Directories to documentation models. When you are documenting a research paper with either the MLA or the APA style, you can find appropriate documentation models by consulting the MLA or APA directory. The MLA directory is easy to find: just look for the first of the pages marked with a vertical band of red. The APA directory appears on the first of the pages marked with a vertical band of gray.

How to use this book for self-study

In a composition class, most of your time should be spent writing. Therefore it is unlikely that you will want to study all of the chapters in this book in detail. Instead you should focus on the problems that tend to crop up in your own writing. Your instructor (or your college's writing center) will be glad to help you design an individualized program of self-study.

Rules for Writers has been designed so that you can learn from it on your own. By providing answers to some exercise sentences, it allows you to test your understanding of the material. Most exercise sets begin with five sentences lettered a–e and conclude with five or ten numbered sentences. Answers to the lettered sentences appear in an appendix at the end of the book.

Diana Hacker

Tutorials

The following tutorials will give you practice using the book's menus, index, Glossary of Usage, and MLA directory. Answers to all tutorials appear on pages xvii–xix.

TUTORIAL 1 Using the menus

Each of the following "rules" violates the principle it expresses. Using the brief menu inside the front cover or the more detailed menu inside the back cover, find the section in *Rules for Writers* that explains the principle. Then fix the problem. Examples:

Tutors in

In the writing center, they say that vague pronoun reference is unacceptable. 23

Be alert for irregular verbs that have ^{come}came to you in the wrong form. 27a

1. A verb have to agree with its subject.
2. Each pronoun should agree with their antecedent.
3. About sentence fragments. You should avoid them.
4. Its important to use apostrophe's correctly.

5. In my opinion, I think a writer should not get in the habit of making use of too many unnecessary words that are not needed to put the message across.
6. Discriminate careful between adjectives and adverbs.
7. If your sentence begins with a long introductory word group use a comma to separate the word group from the rest of the sentence.
8. Don't write a run-on sentence, you must connect independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon.
9. For clarity, a writer must be careful not to shift your point of view.
10. Do not capitalize a word just to make it look important.

TUTORIAL 2 Using the index

Assume that you have written the following sentences and want to know the answers to the questions in brackets. Use the index at the back of the book to locate the information you need, and edit the sentences if necessary.

1. Anyone taking the school bus to the volleyball game must bring in a permission slip signed by their parents. [Does the pronoun *Anyone* agree with *their*? If not, what is the best way to fix the problem?]
2. We had intended to go surfing but spent most of our vacation lying on the beach. [Should I use *lying* or *laying*?]
3. We only looked at two houses before buying the house of our dreams. [Is *only* in the right place?]
4. In Saudi Arabia it is considered ill mannered for you to accept a gift. [Is it okay to use *you* to mean "anyone in general"?]
5. In Canada, Joanne picked up several bottles of maple syrup for her sister and me. [Should I write *for her sister and I*?]

TUTORIAL 3 Using the menus or the index

Imagine that you are in the following situations. Using either the menus or the index, find the information you need.

1. You are Ray Farley, a community college student who has been out of high school for ten years. You recall learning to punctuate items in a series by putting a comma between all items except the last two. In your college readings, however, you have noticed that most writers use a comma between all items. You're curious about the current rule. Which section of *Rules for Writers* will you consult?
2. You are Maria Sanchez, an honors student working in your university's writing center. Mike Lee, who speaks English as a second

language, has come to you for help. He is working on a rough draft that contains a number of problems involving the use of articles (*a*, *an*, and *the*). You know how to use articles, but you aren't able to explain the rather complicated rules on their correct use. Which section of *Rules for Writers* will you and Mike Lee consult?

3. You are John Pell, engaged to marry Jane Dalton. In a note to Jane's parents, you have written "Thank you for giving Jane and myself such a generous contribution toward our honeymoon trip to Hawaii." You wonder if you should write "Jane and I" or "Jane and me" instead. Upon consulting *Rules for Writers*, what do you learn?
4. You are Selena Young, an intern supervisor at a housing agency. Two of your interns, Jake Gilliam and Susan Green, have writing problems involving -s endings on verbs. Gilliam tends to drop -s endings; Green tends to add them where they don't belong. You suspect that both problems stem from nonstandard dialects spoken at home.

Susan and Jake are in danger of losing their jobs because your boss thinks that anyone who writes "the tenant refuse" or "the landlords agrees" is beyond hope. You disagree. Susan and Jake are more intelligent than your boss supposes, and they have asked for your help. Where in *Rules for Writers* can they find the rules they need?

5. You are Joe Thompson, a first-year college student. Your girlfriend, Samantha, who has completed two years of college, seems to enjoy correcting your English. Just yesterday she corrected your sentence "I felt badly about her death" to "I felt bad about her death." You're sure you've heard many educated persons, including professors, say "I felt badly." Upon consulting *Rules for Writers*, what do you discover?

TUTORIAL 4 Using the Glossary of Usage

Consult the Glossary of Usage to see if the italicized words are used correctly. Then edit any sentences containing incorrect usage. Example:

an

The pediatrician gave my daughter *a* injection for her allergy.

1. Changing attitudes *toward* alcohol have *effected* the beer industry.
2. It is *mankind's* nature to think wisely and act foolishly.
3. This afternoon I plan to *lie* out in the sun and work on my tan.
4. Everyone in our office is *enthused* about this project.
5. Most sleds are pulled by no *less* than two dogs and no more than ten.

TUTORIAL 5 Using the directory to MLA documentation models

Assume that you have written a short research paper on the debate over the use of marijuana for medical purposes. You have cited the following sources in your paper, using MLA documentation, and you are ready to type your list of works cited. Turn to the first page marked with a vertical band of red and use the MLA directory to locate the appropriate models. Then write a correct entry for each source and arrange the entries in a properly formatted list of works cited. *Note:* Do not number the entries in a list of works cited.

A journal article by Gregg A. Bilz entitled "The Medical Use of Marijuana: The Politics of Medicine." The article appears on pages 117 to 135 of the *Hamline Journal of Public Law and Policy*, which is paginated by issue. The volume number is 13, the issue number is 1, and the year is 1992.

An unsigned magazine article entitled "Cross-Eyed and Painless." The article appears on page 89 of the July 6, 1991, issue of *The Economist*.

A book by Jack E. Henningfield and Nancy Almand Ator entitled *Barbiturates: Sleeping Potion or Intoxicant?* The book was published in Philadelphia in 1986 by Chelsea House Publishers.

A newspaper article by Michael Isikoff entitled "U.S. Provided Marijuana for Some AIDS Patients." The article appears on page A3 of the March 24, 1991, issue of the *Washington Post*.

A journal article by Gabriel Nahas and Colette Latour entitled "The Human Toxicity of Marijuana." The article appears on pages 495 to 497 of the *Medical Journal of Australia*, which is paginated by volume. The volume number is 156, and the year is 1992.

Answers to Tutorial 1

1. A verb has to agree with its subject. (21)
2. Each pronoun should agree with its antecedent. (22)
3. Avoid sentence fragments. (19)
4. It's important to use apostrophes correctly. (36)
5. Get rid of unnecessary words. (16)
6. Discriminate carefully between adjectives and adverbs. (26)
7. If your sentence begins with a long introductory word group, use a comma to separate the word group from the rest of the sentence. (32b)

8. Don't write a run-on sentence; you must connect independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon. (20, also 32a and 34a)
9. For clarity, a writer must be careful to shift his or her [not their] point of view. Or For clarity, writers should be careful not to shift their point of view. (13a)
10. Do not capitalize a word just to make it look important. (45)

Answers to Tutorial 2

1. The index entry "*anyone*" mentions that the word is singular, so you might not need to look further to realize that the plural *their* is incorrect. The second page reference leads you to section 22, which suggests nonsexist strategies for revision, such as *Students taking the school bus to the volleyball game must bring in a permission slip signed by their parents* or *Anyone taking the school bus to the volleyball game must bring in a permission slip signed by his or her parents*.
2. The index entry "*lay, lie*" takes you to section 27b and to the Glossary of Usage, where you will learn that *lying* (meaning "reclining or resting on a surface") is correct.
3. Look up "*only*" and you will be directed to section 12a, which explains that limiting modifiers such as *only* should be placed before the words they modify. The sentence should read *We looked at only two houses before buying the house of our dreams*.
4. Looking up "*you, inappropriate use of*" leads you to section 23d and the Glossary of Usage, which explain that *you* should not be used to mean "anyone in general." You can revise the sentence by using *a person* or *one* instead of *you*, or you can restructure the sentence completely: *In Saudi Arabia, accepting a gift is considered ill mannered*.
5. The index entries "*I versus me*" and "*me versus I*" take you to section 24, which explains why *me* is correct.

Answers to Tutorial 3

1. Section 32c tells you that although usage varies, most experts advise using a comma between all items in a series—to prevent possible misreadings or ambiguities. To find this section, Ray Farley would probably use the menu system.
2. Maria Sanchez and Mike Lee would consult section 30, on articles. This section is easy to locate on the main menu.
3. Section 24 explains why "*Jane and me*" is correct. To find section 24, John Pell could use the menu system if he knew to look under "Problems with pronouns." Otherwise, he could look up "*I versus*