

# **THE COMPLETE STYLIST AND HANDBOOK**

**SECOND EDITION**



**SHERIDAN BAKER**

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The University of Michigan



**HARPER & ROW, PUBLISHERS, New York**

Cambridge, Philadelphia, San Francisco,  
London, Mexico City, São Paulo, Sydney

Sponsoring Editor: Phillip Leininger  
Developmental Editor: Walter Brownfield  
Project Editor: Robert Ginsberg  
Designer: T.R. Funderburk  
Production Manager: Marion Palen  
Compositor: P & M Typesetters  
Printer and Binder: Book Press

THE COMPLETE STYLIST AND HANDBOOK, Second Edition  
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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Baker, Sheridan Warner.  
The complete stylist and handbook.

Includes index.

1. English language—Rhetoric. I. Title.

PE1408.B283 1980 808'.042 79-17621  
ISBN 0-06-040452-3

# PREFACE

Since 1976, teachers and students in thousands of classrooms have tested *The Complete Stylist and Handbook*. Their suggestions, reinforcing my own experience, have prompted this second edition. My first edition was, of all things, too wordy! At least, it lingered too long on certain tangents, trying too hard to be complete. Now, the basic *Rhetoric* reduces 14 chapters to 12; the *Handbook*, 6 sections to 5, reorganizing for clarity and economy. I have refreshed everything. Though I have also added a number of examples and exercises—some poems in the “Literature” chapter, how to answer an essay question, how to describe a process, an analysis of a short story—you now have in sum a leaner and cleaner book, especially strengthened in the all-important early chapters on the practical problems that confront the beginning writer.

In the *Rhetoric*, I now move more rapidly, and, I think, more efficiently, from the search for a thesis into the essay’s basic structure and on to the main rhetorical unit, the paragraph, in its three general manifestations—beginning, middle, and end. In Chapter 2, “Basic Structure,” I have condensed the former full chapter on outlines—jotted, topic, and sentence—into an extension of the basic pro-con tactics I advocate for young writers. I had previously treated the varieties of middle paragraphs

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as both “orders” and “modes.” Eliminating this overlap, reducing two chapters to one, now simplifies the presentation with no loss of substance (Chapter 4). Then I have moved up “Straight and Crooked Thinking: Handling the Evidence” as Chapter 5 to cap this speedier progression through the essay as a whole. I have also rewritten and reorganized the chapters on the research paper, unearthing from the back of the *Handbook* my former guide to the library and making it new, and setting up a new sample term paper as an improved working model. The whole section on research is as up to date as I can make it, with fuller examples of basic research, note-taking, and formal documentation.

But the basic approach, as in my short rhetoric, *The Practical Stylist*, remains the same, since, in almost two decades, it has proven itself fundamental. It stresses rhetoric as the art of communication and persuasion. It emphasizes argument as the quickest and clearest teacher of rhetorical principles. It begins with the two primal elements, inner idea and outer form, thesis and structure. It proceeds step by step with the progressively smaller and more powerful units—paragraphs, sentences, words. Then the rhetorical process culminates in “Writing About Literature,” now thoroughly overhauled, and the research paper.

The *Handbook*, as before, begins with a short chapter on “The English Language,” and covers grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage, all newly considered. The *Handbook* reinforces chapters in the *Rhetoric*, offering material the teacher may integrate with assignments or assign separately and the student may use for constant and ready reference. In particular, I have reconsidered the comma, that key to meaning, now describing it in terms students have found clearer: the Introducer, the Coordinator, the Inserter, and the Linker. And I have amplified the treatment of those perpetual headaches, the run-on, the comma splice, and the fragment.

I have revised the *Instructor's Manual* to match, again adding possibilities for other angles and alternate uses and solutions for exercises, with new diagnostic tests to help set priorities for assignments.

*The Complete Stylist and Handbook* again strives to show the student how important writing is in coming to grips with our ideas and ourselves, to demonstrate that writing is really our only steady means of getting our thinking straight and clear. Throughout, I urge students to see that style is both personal and public, a matter of finding one's self in language—one's own personality written into reason and looking its best.

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