



# The Power of Writing

**David W. Chapman**  
**Preston Lynn Waller**



# *The Power of Writing*

**DAVID W. CHAPMAN**

*Samford University*

**PRESTON LYNN WALLER**

*McLennan Community College*

Mayfield Publishing Company  
Mountain View, California  
London • Toronto

Copyright © 1994 by Mayfield Publishing Company

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission of the publisher.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Chapman, David W.

The power of writing / by David W. Chapman and Preston Lynn Waller.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 1-55934-138-6

I. English language—Rhetoric. I. Waller, Preston Lynn.

II. Title.

PE1408.C48 1993

808'.042—dc20

93-21676

CIP

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Mayfield Publishing Company  
1280 Villa Street  
Mountain View, CA 94041

Sponsoring editor, Janet M. Beatty; production editor, April Wells-Hayes; copyeditor, Margaret Moore; text designer, Joan Greenfield; cover designer, Steve Naegele; cover image: © Ralph Wetmore/Tony Stone Images; art editor, Jean Mailander; art director, Jeanne M. Schreiber; manufacturing manager, Martha Branch. The text was set in 10/13 Galliard by Thompson Type and printed on 50# Finch Opaque by the Maple Vail Book Manufacturing Group.

Acknowledgments and copyrights continue at the back of the book on page 366, which constitutes an extension of the copyright page.



# Preface

Most people write for the same reason they balance their checkbooks, drive their cars, or read their newspapers. Writing allows them to control the circumstances of their lives. Unfortunately, many students enter a composition classroom believing that writing is a special talent possessed by a few gifted individuals. As long as they see writing as something that *other* people do, they cannot develop their own abilities to write. We wrote *The Power of Writing* to show students how *they* can use writing to get things done.

For this reason, *The Power of Writing* is written *to* students and *for* students. We address the student directly from the first page in order to communicate clearly that writing is something they can do. We want them to see the potential of writing for organizing experience, clarifying thinking, discovering new ideas, communicating information, arguing a debatable issue, investigating a problem—to explore the full range of uses for writing in their lives.

In writing this book, we have tried to concentrate on the essential elements of writing. These are not the old “basics”: lectures on the qualities of good writing, for instance. Telling students what they should do when they write has little effect on their actual performance. Nobody learns to swim sitting on a beach towel. *The Power of Writing* immediately immerses the student in the activity of writing. Part I: Writing Strategies helps students to explore their ideas, develop a focus, and revise in light of purpose and audience. Part II: The Aims of Writing leads students through specific assignments in writing to discover, inform, analyze, persuade, and investigate. Part III: Editing provides students with essential information on mechanics and style. Even in this section, we engage the students in the process of editing rather than getting bogged down in hair-splitting discussions of grammatical terms.

We are under no delusion that this textbook, or any textbook, should be the focus of a composition course. At one time, administrators and even some compo-

sition teachers might have pointed to the textbook as the best explanation of what the composition course entailed. Most of us now point to our classrooms, our conferences with our students, and our students' papers as the best representation of what we can accomplish in such a course.

Given a focus on student–teacher interaction as the foundation of the composition course, what part should a textbook play in the development of student writing? As a minimum, a textbook shouldn't get in the way. When students have invested large sums of money in an oversized text, their teacher feels almost compelled to spend time explaining the book, diverting attention from the students' own work. Because *The Power of Writing* was written to be read by students, we have avoided unnecessary jargon and theoretical justification for our approaches. Although our book is based on sound rhetorical theory—for instance, emphasizing a process approach to writing and encouraging collaborative activity—we do not feel that students in an introductory writing course should spend time figuring out the difference between topics and *topoi* or comparing Aristotle's views on argument to those of Stephen Toulmin. Many books aim to train new composition teachers. We don't believe a student textbook should serve that purpose.

We have strived, then, to make *The Power of Writing* a textbook that works for the teacher. Students get the necessary background information they need from the textbook so that class time focuses on working with the students' own writing. If students are struggling with a particular problem, the instructor can refer them to a section of the text that will provide helpful information in a clear, easy-to-understand format. The book's many activities will help the class as a whole explore new ideas and consider new approaches. The tone of the book is encouraging to students, especially those who often ignore independent reading assignments.

*The Power of Writing . . .*

- Empowers student writers

Students learn how to use writing to improve their personal, professional, and academic lives. Writing is not treated as an end in itself but as a means of achieving individual and social goals.

- Recognizes student diversity

American higher education has become increasingly open to students of different ages, cultures, educational backgrounds, and career goals. *The Power of Writing* emphasizes the importance of cultural background and heritage and the role that communication plays in developing mutual understanding and respect.

- Encourages collaborative activity

Composition scholars have become increasingly aware of the social nature of all writing. *The Power of Writing* encourages group brainstorming, peer

review, and other collaborative writing activities. Many of the activities take place in Discovery Groups set up to explore alternative approaches and to examine issues critically instead of merely to give pat answers.

- Acknowledges professional writing concerns

*The Power of Writing* will appeal to those students who have an interest in professional writing situations. For instance, students are often asked to write for situations they could encounter on the job. Sections on conducting field research and preparing graphics recognize the need for these skills in many practical writing situations.

- Appeals to reluctant writers

The friendly tone of the text and the use of illustrations and examples are appealing to the student who may be unprepared for college-level reading or who lacks motivation. High-interest reading selections are used throughout. The visually interesting format encourages independent reading of the textbook.

- Provides information on writing with a computer

Students are encouraged to see the computer as more than a fancy typewriter. As well as considering word processing applications, “Byte-Size Bulletins” provide information on modems, printers, electronic mail, databases, style programs, and many other subjects of interest. Instead of being relegated to an appendix, word processing information is placed in the context where it is most needed. We discuss databases in a chapter that considers library research and explain spell checkers in a chapter on editing. Since the emphasis is on the potential uses of computers, even students who do not use a word processor will find the information timely and relevant.

- Is informed by composition theory and research

Although *The Power of Writing* is not laden with rhetorical jargon, it does rely on the results of composition research for its approach to student writing. For instance, the emphasis on collaboration in writing is based on recent studies showing the importance of collaboration to students’ intellectual development. Writing assignments are also sequenced, beginning with short writing-to-discover activities and leading progressively to the more challenging tasks of writing to persuade and to investigate. Wherever possible, the editing activities are designed to represent writing in context rather than to focus on individual sentences. Rather than simply treating language as a static object, the “Language Notes,” which instructors may find useful as “mini-lessons,” engage the class in becoming conscious of their own language customs and habits. Critical thinking is encouraged throughout the text. The text itself becomes open to question in the “Critical Moments” section at the end of each chapter. In other words, the text is student centered, process oriented, and collaboratively based.

This book on writing — indeed, any current book on writing — would not have been possible without the work of that generation of writers and scholars who decided that freshman composition is something more than a momentary distraction on the way to more important things. Although they represent a variety of approaches and opinions, I have no doubt that this book was influenced by Janet Emig, James Britton, Gary Tate, Edward P. J. Corbett, Winifred Horner, Frank D'Angelo, Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, Janice Lauer, James Kinneavy, and many others who wrote the books and articles that were the inspiration of all the subsequent work that has gone on in rhetoric and composition.

More immediately, we wish to thank our students at Texas Tech University, McLennan Community College, and Samford University who contributed, directly and indirectly, to *The Power of Writing*. Our understanding of what works in a writing classroom was produced in the context of collaborating with hundreds of students on the writing assignments for our classes.




We also want to express our appreciation for those people who carried this work from concept to reality. Ruth Holt and Bonnie Siler worked tirelessly on manuscript preparation. Sharon Kenan and Alan Berecka often found our literary needles in the library haystack. Lissette Carpenter, Charles Workman, Janice Lasserter, David Roberts, David Dedo, and many other colleagues provided their support. Patricia E. Connors, Memphis State University; Deborah Core, Eastern Kentucky University; Robert Cosgrove, Saddleback College; Jeannie Simms Dobson, Greenville Technical College; Janice Neuleib, Illinois State University; W. S. Newman, DeKalb College; and Nell Ann Pickett, Hinds Community College offered many valuable comments and suggestions that have made this a better book than the one we started to write.

We have been fortunate to work with a publisher that believes in the integrity of authors rather than in books written by committee. To all our friends at Mayfield Publishing — Tom Broadbent and April Wells-Hayes and Julianne Rovesti, among others — many thanks! And most of all, to Jan Beatty, who believed in the project from the beginning and watched over it to the end, goes our inestimable sense of gratitude for a job well done.







Finally, we want to recognize the support of our families. Our wives, LuAnn and Bonnie, have borne with patience the litany that begins "I can't \_\_\_\_\_; I'll be working on the book." We also want to recognize our children — Luke, Jennifer, Michael, Bobby — who didn't contribute anything but will be thrilled to have their names in a book.




# Contents




## PART I: WRITING STRATEGIES 1





<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<i>Getting Started</i>	3
	Why Do We Write?	3
	Writing in a Community	3
	Writing in the Presence of Others	4
	Writing Influenced by Language and Culture	5
	 Byte-Size Bulletin: Writing on a Word Processor	6
	How Do I Get Started?	11
	Methods of Planning	12
	Listing	12
	Clustering	13
	Questioning	14
	Cubing	15
	Looping	18
	Specialized Forms of Planning	20
	Keeping a Journal	21
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> A Memorable Experience	23
	 Language Notes: The Writer's Tools	24
	 The Critical Moment	25





<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<i>Focusing</i>	26
	Writing for a Purpose	26
	Discovering Your Purpose	26
	Stating Your Purpose	29
	Writing for Results	33
	Your Personal Credibility	33
	 Language Note: Standard Written English	35
	Your Knowledge of the Subject	36
	Your Knowledge of the Readers	37
	Writing for an Audience	38
	Writing for a Specific Person	39
	Writing for a Defined Group	40
	Writing for a General Audience	42
	Responding to Writing	43
	 Byte-Size Bulletin: Computer Conferences	44
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> Current Issues	48
	 The Critical Moment	49
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<i>Revising</i>	50
	Making Time for Revision	50
	The Revision Guide	51
	 Byte-Size Bulletin: Revising on a Word Processor	55
	 Language Note: Titles	57
	Specialized Revision Guides	60
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> An Influential Person	60
	 The Critical Moment	62
	<b>PART II: THE AIMS OF WRITING</b>	63
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<i>Writing to Discover</i>	65
	The Knowledge Inventory	65



 Byte-Size Bulletin: Electronic Mail	67
Discovery Groups	68
Writing to Learn	69
Summarizing	72
Paraphrasing	73
Writing to Plan and Organize	76
Writing an Agenda	76
Writing a Discussion Outline	78
 Language Note: Outlining	80
 The Critical Moment	82







<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<i>Writing to Inform</i>	83
Knowing Your Reader		83
Level One: The Novice Reader		84
Level Two: The Generalist Reader		85
Level Three: The Specialist Reader		88
Academic Writing		91
Notetaking		91
Essay Questions		92
Book Reports		94
Using Quotations		96
<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> A Recent Innovation		99
Professional Writing		99
Résumés		99
<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> Résumé		102
Correspondence		103
 Byte-Size Bulletin: Form Letters and Mailing Lists		108
 Language Note: Tone		112
<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> Addressing a Customer's Complaint		113
 The Critical Moment		114

<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<i>Writing to Analyze</i>	115
	Reasoning	116
	Drawing Inferences	116
	Classifying	121
	Making Comparisons	124
	Determining Causes	126
	Writing Case Studies	128
	Organizing the Case Study	130
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> Preparing a Case Study	131
	 Byte-Size Bulletin: Computer Printers	134
	Writing Critical Essays	135
	Analyzing a Poem	135
	 Language Note: The Language of Poetry	140
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> Analyzing a Poem	144
	Poems for the Critical Essay	145
	Analyzing a Short Story	150
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> Analyzing a Short Story	160
	 The Critical Moment	164
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	<i>Writing to Persuade</i>	166
	A Model of Argument	167
	Types of Evidence	167
	Warrants	170
	Reservations	173
	 Language Note: Qualification	174
	Arguing for Specific Audiences	174
	Weaknesses in Arguments	175
	Problems with Evidence	176
	Problems with Warrants and Claims	177
	Arguments About Definitions	179
	Methods of Definition	180
	Extended Definitions	182
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> An Extended Definition	187

Arguments About Causes	187
<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> An Argument About Causes	189
Arguments About Values	189
<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> An Evaluation	192
 Byte-Size Bulletin: Collaborative Writing	194
 The Critical Moment	195

**CHAPTER 8***Writing to Investigate* 196


Discovering Your Topic	196
Collecting Information: Library Research	198
Locating Library Resources	199
 Byte-Size Bulletin: Using Computer Databases	203
How Much Information Is Enough?	206
Evaluating Your Sources	207
Reading for Background Information	208
Taking Bibliographic Notes	208
Making a Preliminary Outline	212
Taking Information Notes	213
 Language Note: Punctuating Quotations	216
Collecting Information: Field Research	220
Observations	220
Surveys	222
Interviews	225
<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> Observation Report	229
Organizing Your Information	229
Stating Your Claim	229
Arranging Your Information	231
Drafting Your Report	231
Supporting Your Position	232
Citing Your Sources	233
Avoiding Plagiarism	236
Preparing the Final Manuscript	237
A Sample Investigative Report	238
Discovering a Topic	238
Collecting Information	240

Organizing the Information	241
Supporting a Position	242
<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT:</b> Investigative Report	255
 The Critical Moment	256
 <b>PART III: EDITING</b>	 257
 <b>CHAPTER 9</b> <i>Editing for Readability</i>	 259
Writing To Be Read	260
Simplicity	260
 Language Note: “Dumbing Down” and the Literacy Issue	261
Brevity	262
Directness	264
Emphasis	265
Coherence	268
 Byte-Size Bulletin: Macros	269
Writing Effective Introductions	273
Writing Effective Conclusions	276
Organizing Longer Papers	278
Visual Displays of Information	281
Preparing a List	282
Preparing Graphics	283
 The Critical Moment	288
 <b>CHAPTER 10</b> <i>Editing for Correctness</i>	 289
Ten Trouble Spots	290
Spelling	290
 Byte-Size Bulletin: Using the Computer’s Spell Checker and Thesaurus	293
Word Choice	295
 Language Note: Why Aren’t Words Spelled the Way They Sound?	297

Use of the Comma	298
Sentence Fragments	302
Run-On Sentences	304
Verb Problems	305
Pronoun Problems	311
Modifier Problems	314
Capitalization	317
Plurals and Possessives	319


Self-Evaluation	322
-----------------	-----


A Final Word on Editing for Correctness	324
-----------------------------------------	-----

 The Critical Moment	325
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## **CHAPTER 11** *Editing for Style* 326

A Writer's Voice	326
Institutional Style	328


 Byte-Size Bulletin: Style Analysis Programs	329
Personal Style	330

 Language Note: Responsible Use of Language	331
Scholarly Style	332
Literary Style	333

Essential Elements	336
Specific Language	336
Vigorous Language	339
Imaginative Language	342

Sentence Workouts	347
Expand Dull Sentences	347
Reduce Wordy Sentences	348
Combine Related Sentences	349
Clear Up Confusing Sentences	352
Make Sentence Elements Parallel	354
Replace Nouns with Verbs	356

Levels of Formality	358
---------------------	-----

 The Critical Moment	361
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

<i>Index</i>	362
--------------	-----

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	366
------------------------	-----

# *Exercises*

<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	Exercise 1.1: Your Writing Environment	5
	Exercise 1.2: You and Your Language	7
	Exercise 1.3: Language and Culture	9
	Exercise 1.4: Listing	13
	Exercise 1.5: Clustering	14
	Exercise 1.6: Questioning	15
	Exercise 1.7: Cubing	17
	Exercise 1.8: Looping	20
	Exercise 1.9: Journal Assignment	23
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	Exercise 2.1: Finding the Purpose	29
	Exercise 2.2: Purpose Statements	30
	Exercise 2.3: Identifying Thesis Statements	32
	Exercise 2.4: Finding Sources of Information	36
	Exercise 2.5: Audience Awareness	39
	Exercise 2.6: Bob's Novelties	40
	Exercise 2.7: The Health Fair	40
	Exercise 2.8: The Campus Speaker	41

Exercise 2.9: Doublespeak	42
Exercise 2.10: Responding to “My Brother”	46
Exercise 2.11: Group Response to Writing	47

<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	Exercise 3.1: Responding to a Rough Draft	59
------------------	-------------------------------------------	----

<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	Exercise 4.1: Knowledge Inventory	66
	Exercise 4.2: The Northridge Mall Problem	68
	Exercise 4.3: Tired Tots on the Fast Track	71
	Exercise 4.4: Summary	73
	Exercise 4.5: Paraphrase	74
	Exercise 4.6: Writing-to-Learn Skills	74
	Exercise 4.7: Agenda for Student Committee	78
	Exercise 4.8: Discussion Outline	82

<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	Exercise 5.1: Describing a Task for a Novice Reader	85
	Exercise 5.2: Writing for a Generalist Audience	86
	Exercise 5.3: Writing Directions for a Novice and a Generalist	88
	Exercise 5.4: Novice, Generalist, or Specialist?	89
	Exercise 5.5: Writing for Different Audiences	90
	Exercise 5.6: Responding to an Essay Question	93
	Exercise 5.7: Evaluating a Book Report	95
	Exercise 5.8: When to Use Quotation and Paraphrase	98
	Exercise 5.9: Evaluating a Résumé	100
	Exercise 5.10: Letter Format	104
	Exercise 5.11: Elements of a Business Letter	106
	Exercise 5.12: Evaluating Good-News Letters	109
	Exercise 5.13: Evaluating Buffer Statements	112



<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	Exercise 6.1: Drawing Inferences	117
	Exercise 6.2: Inferences about People	117
	Exercise 6.3: Inferences about Situations	120
	Exercise 6.4: Classifying	121
	Exercise 6.5: Making a Comparison	124
	Exercise 6.6: Part-to-Part Comparison	125
	Exercise 6.7: Different Methods of Comparison	126
	Exercise 6.8: Determining Causes	127
	Exercise 6.9: Mistakes in Analyzing Causes	128
	Exercise 6.10: Planning a Case Study	129
	Exercise 6.11: Notes for a Case Study	130
	Exercise 6.12: Responding to a Critical Essay	143
	Exercise 6.13: Drawing Inferences from a Short Story	159
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	Exercise 7.1: Use of Evidence in a Movie Review	168
	Exercise 7.2: Warrants in a Movie Review	171
	Exercise 7.3: Models of Argument	172
	Exercise 7.4: Weaknesses in Argument	179
	Exercise 7.5: Definitions in Context	181
	Exercise 7.6: The Extended Definition	182
	Exercise 7.7: Analyzing Causes	188
	Exercise 7.8: Arguments about Values	190
	Exercise 7.9: Developing a Set of Criteria	192
<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	Exercise 8.1: Topics for Investigation	197
	Exercise 8.2: Questions for Research	197
	Exercise 8.3: Finding Information in Reference Sources	201
	Exercise 8.4: Library of Congress Subject Headings	202