



# *Effective Writing*

*Choices and Conventions*

Second  
Edition



*Karen Greenberg*

# **EFFECTIVE WRITING**

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**CHOICES AND  
CONVENTIONS**

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# PREFACE

As I noted in the Preface to the first edition, the title of this text, *Effective Writing: Choices and Conventions*, echoes Mina Shaughnessy's belief that effective writing grows out of the choices and decisions writers make in their selection of words, sentence structures, and rhetorical strategies. In addition to making choices that are consistent with their purposes and with the expectations of their readers, writers must also edit their writing so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard Written English. The second edition, like the first, encourages writers to try out a variety of forms and strategies, to examine the relationships between their choices and their intentions, and to cast their choices in the conventions of academic English.

This second edition of *Effective Writing* presents a variety of strategies and activities that are designed to meet the diverse linguistic and intellectual needs of today's students. Throughout the book, instruction and assignments represent current theory and practice in composition. The writing tasks enable students to examine their writing processes and to expand and improve these processes in specific writing contexts. In addition, the content of every writing assignment and exercise comes from the "real" world—from the workplace and from the academic areas of the physical and social sciences and the humanities. Thus, the text provides intellectual challenges while encouraging students to learn about writing from their own efforts to compose and revise.

One unique feature of this text is its format: every exercise is composed of a paragraph or an essay, allowing students to practice skills within the connected discourse of paragraphs rather than in the isolated, rhetorical sentences found in most other composition texts. Writing teachers know how common it is for their students to complete textbook exercises correctly, only to produce paragraphs full of the very errors that they had just seemingly mastered. Part of the reason for this failure to "transfer" knowledge is that the learning context of rhetorical, disconnected sentences eliminates the relationship between content and form. In the exercises in this text, the practice of

skills is merged with genuine rhetorical goals. Finally, all of the writing assignments in this book are student-centered—even the research assignments ask students to draw upon personal experiences as they plan and compose—and the many models of student writing provide realistic examples of the skills that student writers can attain.

### Overview of the Text

The organization of this text reflects the findings of recent composition researchers that developing writers need to begin from the “top down” with “large” elements (elaboration of ideas, details, and rhetorical objectives) and move to “smaller” elements (features of syntax, grammar, and mechanics). This progression also represents the most logical pedagogical approach. It is pointless to ask writers to begin the semester examining subjects and verbs, especially if they have not yet done much writing that requires them to use subjects and verbs. If the purpose of writing is to communicate one’s ideas and feelings effectively to specific readers, then writing instruction and texts should begin by acknowledging this purpose and by presenting students with purposeful, meaningful writing activities. Working on grammar or syntax has little purpose or meaning if it is divorced from writers’ efforts to make their writing more appropriate for their readers.

This text is organized into four parts: “Drafting,” “Revising,” “Editing,” and “Applying Your Writing Skills.” Each part presents writing as a recursive process of thinking, writing, rethinking, revising, editing, and rewriting. Each chapter within these parts begins with a shared writing task for groups of students to work on collaboratively (or for a whole class to try together), and each chapter includes a variety of different tasks to assign to individuals. In addition, every chapter ends with a stimulus relating to the topic of the chapter—a picture, a cartoon, a piece of writing—for students to think and write about; each also includes guidelines to help students develop and organize a response to the stimulus.

Every chapter also presents students with a revising checklist to help them examine and improve their writing, and every chapter (except the first) ends with suggested issues for students to explore in their journals. These issues come from two sources: some of them are based on ideas that have been presented in the preceding chapter, and some of them present issues that will be discussed in the chapters that follow. This variety in suggested journal topics encourages students to think and write about the material that they have recently finished reading in the text. It also enables them to record and explore their

immediate responses to controversial issues that will be presented in writing tasks throughout the book.

The second edition of *Effective Writing* incorporates many new features and changes that reflect the responses and suggestions of teachers and students who used the first edition.

- More than a third of the reading selections in this edition are new, including longer professional and student drafts and revisions.
- Each chapter ends with a new reading and a new writing assignment relevant to the chapter's theme. These essays illustrate the various stages of the writing process and serve as models for paragraph and essay development.
- The organization and structure of the chapters on paragraph and essay development have been expanded and reorganized. The new, detailed treatment of paragraph development, accompanied by new examples and exercises, will help students master a variety of patterns of exposition and argumentation.
- The concept of revision is discussed more comprehensively than in the earlier edition. Both paragraph-level and sentence-level revision are described in greater detail.
- The treatment of research writing has been expanded and integrated with instruction on writing across the curriculum.
- A new chapter on writing essay tests and writing competency tests presents illustrations from various local and statewide tests and describes the process of writing a timed test.
- Specific instruction on writing with a word processor at the end of every chapter will guide students in composing, revising, and editing on a computer screen.

As in the first edition, every chapter in this book stresses the recursive processes involved in writing and helps students see the relationships between improvements in their processes and improvements in their products. To help reinforce these goals, the book ends with a series of individualized progress logs that students can use to keep track of their writing problems and progress; separate logs are provided for considering the composition of paragraphs and essays, for noting particular spelling problems, and for thinking about conference discussions.

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K. L. G.

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PART ONE



**DRAFTING**