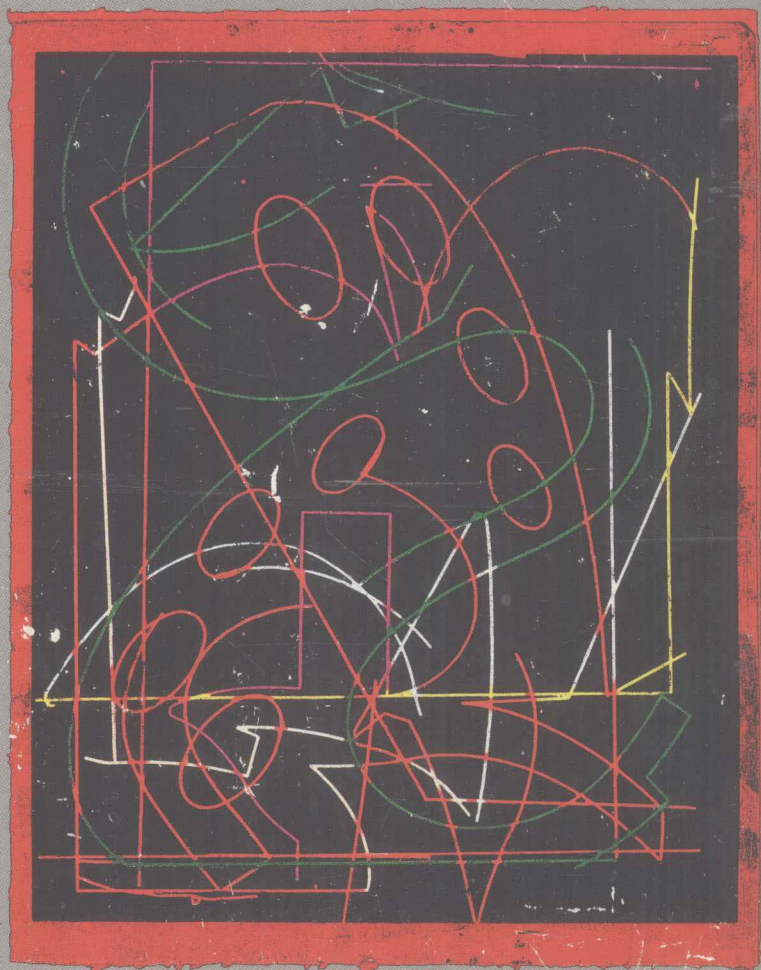


John M. Lannon

# THE WRITING PROCESS

A  
Concise  
Rhetoric



Third  
Edition

**THE  
WRITING PROCESS  
A CONCISE RHETORIC**

**THIRD EDITION**

**JOHN M. LANNON**

Southeastern Massachusetts University

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*Continued on page C-1.*

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# PREFACE

Freshman writers need both awareness and skills: They need to understand *why* writing occurs, as well as *how* it occurs. *The Writing Process* fosters rhetorical awareness and promotes rhetorical effectiveness by:

1. Emphasizing that writing is never done merely to demonstrate mechanical correctness; instead, the aim of any writing is to advance a writer's definite purpose and to serve a reader's definite needs.
2. Showing that writing is not a collection of random acts, but rather is a process of problem solving that requires a whole set of deliberate decisions.
3. Making clear the link between reading and writing, and promoting *active* reading.
4. Imparting the composing skills essential for control in planning, drafting, and revising each piece to meet the requirements of the particular writing situation.
5. Enabling students to evaluate their own writing for its rhetorical effectiveness: worthwhile content, sensible organization, and readable style.
6. Offering students practice in discovering, shaping, and expressing their meanings for a variety of goals.
7. Making a clear connection among the kinds of writing done for audiences in school, in the community, and in the workplace.

This text presents the writing process as it should be practiced — not as a simplistic series of linear steps, but rather as a set of deliberate and recursive decisions. Each rhetorical strategy is introduced in response to typical reader questions and explained in terms of the audience's needs and the writer's purpose. Well-chosen models, each accompanied by an explanation of the writer's decisions, illustrate the different strategies.

A practical guide, *The Writing Process* avoids the mechanical approach that brief rhetorics often use, as well as the needlessly theoretical aspects used by longer ones. The text is organized in four concentrated sections, each furthering the development of writing competency.

Section One, "The Process," covers in detail the stages of planning, drafting, and revising essays. Students develop rhetorical awareness by learning what any writer should know about writing as a decision-making process — how to invent, select, organize, and express material recursively and how decisions about purpose and audience naturally affect decisions about content. Here students confront all the decisions needed to produce effective writing — including writing about reading. They come to see "writing" as inseparable from "thinking."

Section Two, "The Product," expands on composition and evaluation skills, and promotes rhetorical effectiveness by focusing on the essential features of content, organization, and style. Students learn to support assertions with material that advances their exact meanings, study paragraph structure as a model for any discourse, and practice strategies for achieving prose maturity and efficiency, while sharpening their diction and adjusting their tone.

Section Three, "Essays for Various Goals," shows how the *strategies* (or modes) of discourse serve its *goals*; that is, how description, narration, exposition, and argument should express, refer, or persuade. Offering an array of variations on the standard "formula-essay" structure, this section functions as a concise reader; a balance of student and professional selections touch on a wide range of current and lasting issues. Beyond studying these samples as models, students are asked to respond to the issues presented — that is, to write in response to a specific rhetorical situation.

Section Four, "Research and Correspondence," expands rhetorical awareness beyond the classroom by applying the concepts and strategies learned earlier to a variety of practical writing tasks. The chapter on library research, fully revised and expanded, covers automated literature searches and MLA's in-text citations, and offers a new and fully annotated research report, along with a rich assortment of provocative topics. In addition, a new, thorough chapter on business letters and memoranda focuses on addressing the typical audiences, the persuasive challenges, and the composing decisions faced in business writing. Topics include inquiry and complaint letters, résumés and job applications, and informational and recommendation reports — all with abundant short-case exercises.

Finally, the appendix contains a concise handbook, complete with exercises, for easy reference.

The rationale for the sequence and substance of chapters is based on these assumptions:

- Although no single, predictable sequence characterizes the writing process, it is nonetheless a deliberate act of problem solving. As well as studying various essay models, students need guidance in active reading and in recursive decision making—guidance that is explicit without being prescriptive.
- Students do better with discourse that is writer-centered (description/narration) rather than reader-centered (exposition/argument) presumably because they have been conditioned to write for no apparent audience other than teachers, and for no apparent purpose other than the completion of assignments. As long as they view writing as an academic exercise in which neither writer nor reader has any real stake or interest, students cannot possibly understand that each writing situation poses its own rhetorical problem. Outside the classroom situation, we write about subjects only in context. We write to particular audiences who will use our writing as a basis for some specific human contact.
- Students who lack rhetorical awareness begin “writing” too early, and thus ignore the decisions essential to any kind of effective writing. Only by defining their writing situation and asking the right questions can they find the right answers. The mistake of a too-quick start is compounded by the failure to write deliberately and revise incisively. Students write deliberately only when they see writing as a form of problem solving.
- All students can learn to recognize and incorporate within their work the generic rhetorical features indispensable to good writing: content that is *worthwhile*—unified, credible, informative, and complete; organization that is *accessible*—a distinct introduction, body, and conclusion, each arranged for unity, coherence, and emphasis; and a style that is *readable*—clear, concise, fluent, exact, and engaging.
- Teachers should not waste class time in a writing course with lectures that reiterate information readily found in textbooks. Instead, workshops can apply textbook knowledge by focusing on the writing samples composed by students in the course. The workshop approach then calls for a student-centered, comprehensive, and concise text. Suggestions for workshop design are in the Instructor’s Manual.
- Finally, many writing classes are grouped heterogeneously, with students of widely varying abilities. Because books are ordered far in advance, instructors can only hope that their choices will match the general caliber of the classes they end up with. The diversity of student weaknesses and

strengths calls for accessible explanations, broadly engaging and intelligible examples, and challenging but achievable goals—in short, such diverse strengths call for a textbook flexible enough to allow individualized assignments.

This book offers a pattern of cumulative skills, moving from writer-centered to reader-centered discourse. Beginning with personal subjects and a basic essay structure, the focus shifts to increasingly complex tasks in rhetorical problem solving. Section Three culminates with argumentation, a task that draws upon the skills developed earlier. Within this structure, however, each chapter is self-contained for flexibility in course planning. Ample exercises throughout present applications at various levels of challenge and complexity.

Whether your approach is basic or accelerated, this text is easy to teach and learn from. The Instructor's Manual contains syllabi and detailed instructions for either approach. All material has been class-tested.

This new edition has been revised substantially. Specific improvements include:

- A sustained focus throughout on the link between reading and writing, including:

A new chapter, "Writing about Reading"

Readings and discussions in many chapters to help students become consciously aware of discourse forms and strategies. The readings provide a basis from which students can derive, inductively, an understanding of what makes writing work.

Directed assignments throughout in "Responding to Your Reading"

- A new section on organizing for readers.
- An expanded section on evaluating one's writing for its informative value.
- Greater emphasis on sentence combining as a way of achieving prose maturity.
- Individual chapters for each expository strategy, with more sample essays to serve as models and to provoke responses.
- A new section on four specific goals of argument: to influence reader opinion, to enlist reader support, to make a proposal, to change reader behavior.

Many changes in this edition were inspired by helpful reviews by Patsy MacDonald, Northeastern University; Jack W. Schneider, Midland College; Hol-lace J. Drake, Buena Vista College; Robert McCoy, Kent State University; Sara Brown, Tulsa Junior College; Robert Schwegler, University of Rhode Island;



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# CONTENTS

## SECTION ONE

### **THE PROCESS—PLANNING, DRAFTING, REVISING**

1

Writing as Decision Making 3

How Writing Occurs 3

How Writing Looks 4

#### **1 Decisions in the Writing Process 7**

How Writing Is Used 7

How Writing Is Shaped 8

How an Essay Is Composed 9

#### **2 Planning the Essay 21**

Deciding on Your Topic 22

Deciding on Your Purpose 23

Deciding on Your Thesis 25

*The Thesis as Framework 25 From Purpose Statement to Thesis 27*

*Evaluating Your Thesis 28 Variations in the Thesis Statement 29 When to Compose your Thesis 29*

Deciding on Your Audience 30

Discovering Useful Material 32

*Keeping a Journal 32 Freewriting 32 Using Journalists' Questions 33*

*Asking Yourself Questions 33 Brainstorming 34*

Selecting Your Best Material 36

Organizing for Readers 37

Deciding on Your Tone	40
The Writer's Planning Guide	42
<i>Planning Guide</i>	42

### **3 Drafting the Essay** 54

Drafting the Title and Introduction	55
<i>The Introductory Paragraph</i>	55
<i>Placing the Thesis</i>	56
<i>The Multiple-Paragraph Introduction</i>	57
<i>Selecting an Opening Strategy</i>	57
Drafting the Body Section	62
Drafting the Conclusion	64
<i>Selecting a Closing Strategy</i>	65

### **4 Revising the Essay** 69

The Meaning of Revision	70
Revision Checklist	71
Using the Checklist	72

### **5 Writing About Reading** 82

Different Levels of Reading	83
Different Readers, Different Meanings	83
Responding to Reading	84
Suggestions for Reading and Writing	89

## SECTION TWO

## **THE PRODUCT—SUBSTANCE, SHAPE STYLE** 95

### **6 Achieving Worthwhile Content** 97

Credibility	97
Informative Value	100
Completeness	105

### **7 Shaping the Paragraphs** 113

Support Paragraphs as Mini-Essays	113
Paragraph Function	114
Paragraph Length	115
The Topic Statement	115
<i>Topic Statement as Readers' Framework</i>	116
<i>Topic Statement as Writer's Framework</i>	117
Structural Variations in Support Paragraphs	118
When to Compose Your Topic Statement	119

Paragraph Unity 119

Paragraph Coherence 121

*Ordering Ideas for Coherence* 122    *Combined Types of Order* 129

*Parallelism* 130    *Repetition, Restatement, and Variation* 131    *Pronouns*

*for Coherence* 131    *Consistency for Coherence* 132    *Transitions* 132

*All Devices for Achieving Coherence Combined* 134

## 8 Writing Effective Sentences 145

Making Sentences Clear 146

*Avoid Faulty Modifiers* 146    *Keep Your Pronoun References Clear* 148

*Avoid Overstuffing* 150    *Keep Equal Items Parallel* 150    *Use That Wisely*

151    *Arrange Words for Coherence and Emphasis* 152    *Use Proper*

*Coordination* 153    *Use Proper Subordination* 154    *Use Active Voice*

*often, Passive Voice Selectively* 156

Making Sentences Concise 161

*Eliminate Redundancy* 161    *Avoid Needless Repetition* 162    *Avoid*

*There Sentence Openers* 162    *Avoid Some It Sentence Openers* 163

*Avoid Weak Verbs* 163    *Delete Needless To Be Constructions* 164

*Avoid Excessive Prepositions* 164    *Use That and Which Sparingly* 164

*Fight Noun Addiction* 165    *Make Negatives Positive* 166    *Clear Out the*

*Clutter Words* 167    *Delete Needless Prefaces* 167    *Delete Needless*

*Qualifiers* 167

Making Sentences Fluent 170

*Combine Related Ideas* 170    *Vary Sentence Construction and Length* 173

*Use Short Sentences for Special Emphasis* 173

## 9 Choosing the Right Words 178

Making Your Message Convincing 178

*Avoid Triteness* 178    *Avoid Slang* 179    *Avoid Overstatement* 179

*Avoid Unsupportable Generalizations* 180    *Avoid Misleading Euphemisms*  
181

Making Your Language Precise 182

Making Your Writing Concrete and Specific 185

Making the Tone Appropriate 189

*Establishing an Appropriate Distance* 190    *Address Readers Directly* 193

*Expressing a Clear and Appropriate Attitude* 194

Automated Aids for Revising 198

## SECTION THREE

### ESSAYS FOR VARIOUS GOALS

201

Three Major Goals of Writing 203

Major Development Strategies 204

A Word About Structural Variations 206

<b>10</b>	<b>Developing a Description</b>	<b>207</b>
	Description as a Support Strategy	208
	Description as a Primary Strategy	209
	<i>Objective Description</i>	210
	<i>Subjective Description</i>	211
	<i>Guidelines for Description</i>	214
<b>11</b>	<b>Developing a Narrative</b>	<b>219</b>
	Narration That Merely Reports	220
	Narration That Makes a Point	221
	Guidelines for Narrative	225
<b>12</b>	<b>Explaining Through Examples: Illustration</b>	<b>231</b>
	Uses and Types of Examples	231
	Guidelines for Using Examples	236
<b>13</b>	<b>Explaining Parts and Categories: Division and Classification</b>	<b>242</b>
	Combined Strategies	244
	Using Division	245
	Guidelines for Division	246
	Using Classification	246
	Guidelines for Classification	247
<b>14</b>	<b>Explaining Each Step or Stage: Process Analysis</b>	<b>252</b>
	Explaining How to Do Something	253
	Guidelines for Instructions	254
	Explaining How Something Happens	255
<b>15</b>	<b>Explaining Why It Happened or What Will Happen: Cause-and-Effect Analysis</b>	<b>263</b>
	Reasoning from Effect to Cause	266
	Guidelines for Effect-to-Cause Analysis	267
	Reasoning from Cause to Effect	267
	Guidelines for Cause-to-Effect Analysis	268
<b>16</b>	<b>Explaining Similarities or Differences: Comparison and Contrast</b>	<b>279</b>
	Developing a Comparison	281
	Developing a Contrast	282
	Developing a Combined Comparison and Contrast	283

- Guidelines for Comparison and Contrast    284
- A Special Kind of Comparison: Analogy    285
- Guidelines for Analogies    287

## **17 Explaining the Exact Meaning: Definition    294**

- Using Denotative Definitions    295
- Using Connotative Definitions    301

## **18 Developing a Persuasive Argument    307**

- Having a Debatable Point    309
- Supporting Your Claim    310

*Offering Convincing Reasons    310    Choosing Reliable Sources    312*  
*Distinguishing Hard from Soft Evidence    313    Avoiding Specious Conclusions    313*

- Appealing to Reason    314

*Using Induction    315    Using Deduction    318*

- Avoiding Illogical Reasoning    322

*Making Faulty Generalizations    322    Begging the Question    323    Avoiding the Question    323*  
*Using the Bandwagon Approach    324    Attacking Your Opponent    324*  
*Using Faulty Causal Argument    325    Imposing the Either-Or Fallacy    325*

- Appealing to Emotion    326

*Showing Empathy    326    Acknowledging Opposing Views    327*  
*Maintaining a Moderate Tone    328    Inserting Humor Where Appropriate    329*

- Shaping to Reveal Your Line of Thought    330

- General Guidelines for Developing a Persuasive Argument    332

- Specific Goals of Argument    332

*Arguing to Influence Readers' Opinion    333    Arguing to Enlist Readers' Support    333*  
*Making a Proposal    333    Arguing to Change Readers' Behavior    334    Sample Arguments    334*

## SECTION FOUR

## **RESEARCH AND CORRESPONDENCE    357**

## **19 Developing a Library Research Report    359**

- Discovering a Research Topic    360
- Using the Library    362

*Reference Works    362    The Card Catalog    363    Indexes to Periodicals    364*  
*The Reference Librarian    369    Indexes to Federal Government Publications    369    Computerized Retrieval Systems    371*

- Finding Adequate Sources of Information    374

- Developing a Working Thesis and Outline    375

- Taking Notes    376

Writing the First Draft	378
Documenting Your Sources	380
<i>Works-Cited Form for Books</i>	382
<i>Works-Cited Form for Articles</i>	383
<i>Works-Cited Form for Other Kinds of Materials</i>	384

Revising Your Research Report	385
A Sample Research Project	386

## 20 Composing Business Letters and Memos 424

Uses of Business Writing Skills	424
Specific Features of Business Writing	425
<i>A Focus on the Readers' Information Needs</i>	425
<i>Efficiency</i>	426
<i>Accuracy</i>	427
<i>A "You" Perspective</i>	428
<i>A Professional Format</i>	432
Business Letters	432
<i>Inquiry Letters</i>	433
<i>Complaint Letters</i>	436
<i>Résumés and Job Applications</i>	439
Business Memorandum Reports	446
<i>Informational Reports</i>	449
<i>Recommendation Reports</i>	449

## APPENDIX

### REVIEW OF GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION, AND MECHANICS

A-1

Sentence Parts	A-3
<i>Subject</i>	A-3
<i>Predicate</i>	A-3
<i>Object</i>	A-4
<i>Objective Complement</i>	A-4
<i>Subjective Complement</i>	A-5
<i>Phrase</i>	A-5
<i>Clause</i>	A-5
Sentence Types	A-6
<i>Simple Sentences</i>	A-6
<i>Compound Sentences</i>	A-6
<i>Complex Sentences</i>	A-6
<i>Compound-Complex Sentences</i>	A-7
Common Sentence Errors	A-7
<i>Sentence Fragment</i>	A-7
<i>Acceptable Fragments</i>	A-10
<i>Comma Splice</i>	A-11
<i>Run-On Sentence</i>	A-12
<i>Faulty Agreement—Subject and Verb</i>	A-13
<i>Faulty Agreement—Pronoun and Referent</i>	A-15
<i>Faulty Pronoun Case</i>	A-16
<i>Sentence Shifts</i>	A-17
Effective Punctuation	A-19
<i>End Punctuation</i>	A-20
<i>Semicolon</i>	A-21
<i>Colon</i>	A-22
<i>Comma</i>	A-23
<i>Apostrophe</i>	A-30
<i>Quotation Marks</i>	A-32
<i>Ellipses</i>	A-34
<i>Italics</i>	A-34
<i>Parentheses</i>	A-34
<i>Brackets</i>	A-35
<i>Dashes</i>	A-35
Effective Mechanics	A-36
<i>Abbreviations</i>	A-36
<i>Hyphen</i>	A-37
<i>Capitalization</i>	A-39
<i>Use of Numbers</i>	A-40
<i>Spelling</i>	A-41

## INDEX

I-1

SECTION ONE

**THE PROCESS—  
PLANNING,  
DRAFTING,  
REVISING**





## Writing as Decision Making

Success comes from good decision making. People who succeed usually are those who make the right decisions—about a career, an investment, a relationship, or anything else. Instead of letting things happen, these decision makers take control of their situation—and they stay in control. In one respect, writing is no different from life in general: successful writers stay in control by making the right decisions.

## How Writing Occurs

Like any decision making, good writing is hard work. If we had one recipe for all writing, one sure-fire way of doing it, our labors would be small. We could learn the recipe (“Do this, then do that”), then apply it to every writing task—from love letters to scholarship applications. (With a cookbook approach of that kind, I might have spent only an hour or two writing this introduction, instead of almost a week!) But no two writing tasks are identical; we write about different subjects for different audiences for different purposes—at home, at school, on the job. For every task, writers have to make their own decisions.

Even though we have no one recipe for writing well, most writers in most situations face common problems: they need to decide who their audience is and how to make real contact with it; they need to decide what goal they want their writing to achieve and how to make sure the writing achieves that goal; they need to decide what to say and how to say it. Each writer struggles alone, but there *are* decision-making strategies that can work for most writing tasks. This book will introduce you to these strategies.

Most writing is a conscious and deliberate process—not the result of divine intervention, magic, miracles, or last-minute inspiration. Nothing ever leaps from the mind to the page in one neat and painless motion—not even for creative geniuses. Instead, worthwhile writing progresses and improves in stages: we plan, draft, and revise—repeating this cycle of decisions until our thinking takes shape, until the writing does precisely what we want it to do. Sometimes we know exactly what we want to do and say as we begin to write, and sometimes we discover our purpose and meaning only as we write. But our finished product inevitably takes shape through the decisions we make at different stages in the writing process.

This book provides the ingredients for decision making, but you have to create your own recipes. So that you can make the right decisions, you will be shown how to plan, draft, and revise in a suggested sequence of activities. But just as no two people use an identical sequence of activities to drive, ski, or play tennis, no two people write in the same way. Good writing occurs in many ways, but *each* way requires careful decision making. How you decide to use the advice in this book will depend on your writing task.