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CONTEXTS and

OPTIONS for the

REAL WORLD

Donald Pharr | Santi V. Buscemi

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writing today

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CONTEXTS and

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REAL WORLD



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Higher Education

Writing Today
Contexts and Options for the Real World

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Donald Pharr received his bachelor's degree from Indiana State University and his master's and doctorate from the University of Georgia. He is the co-author (with Gerald J. Schiffhorst) of *The Short Handbook for Writers*, second edition. He taught for many years in the Florida community college system, where he specialized in applied composition: business, technical, and science writing. As well, he has spent almost two decades consulting as a technical writer and editor. Dr. Pharr currently teaches at Saint Leo University. He lives in Lakeland, Florida, with his wife, Mary.

SANTI V. BUSCEMI

Santi V. Buscemi teaches reading, composition, and literature at Middlesex County College in Edison, New Jersey, where he was chair of the Department of English for twenty-eight years. He is the author of *A Reader for College Writers*, sixth edition, *75 Readings*, ninth edition, *75 Readings Plus*, seventh edition, *The Basics*, fourth edition, and the writing software *AllWrite!* He has lectured on freshman composition and developmental education at regional and national conferences in the United States and South Africa. He also served as a business and technical writing consultant/trainer for the Altria Group, Horizon Blue Cross/Blue Shield, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and Bristol-Myers Squibb. He has also translated *C'era Una Volta*, the fairy tales of Luigi Capuana, from the Italian. Professor Buscemi is past president of the New Jersey College English Association and the New Jersey Association for Developmental Education, and he served on the NADE Adjunct Task Force.

PREFACE

The careers that today's students aspire to, and the preparation that they need for those careers, are different from what they were only ten years ago. Much of this change, of course, can be attributed to the electronic revolution in communications, which presents students with increasingly sophisticated tools for researching, writing, revising, and communicating with others. Consequently, in recent years, the English composition course, already essential in a complete and well-planned college curriculum, has also been changing in new and challenging ways.

As composition instructors with sixty years of experience between us, we have learned that today's college students need and want a curriculum that challenges them in the classroom, provides them with skills they can use in other college courses, and, most important, prepares them to communicate effectively in the professional and business worlds. Our goal in *Writing Today* is to give students realistic, practical reasons to master college reading and writing because success in writing is a prerequisite to achieving continued success in college and in their careers. Therefore, we decided to write a text that would focus on both academic and professional contexts for writing. Throughout *Writing Today*, we deliberately address the skepticism of students who see English composition classes as just another hurdle on their way to a degree. *Writing Today* helps them use reading and writing as tools for continued intellectual growth that they can employ in any writing context they confront, long after having completed even their most advanced degrees.

OPTIONS WITHIN DIFFERENT WRITING CONTEXTS

In today's high-tech-dominated world, students are confronted with an exciting, and often bewildering, array of choices in how to write, when to write, and what to write about. A writer's decisions don't happen in a vacuum, of course. As much as possible, we offer scenarios related to the world of writing both inside and outside college. In fact, the chapters in Part 2, "Structures," begin with brief vignettes in which writing and challenges associated with writing play a part in solving problems found in typical business and professional environments. These scenarios help students connect their own daily concerns and their academic and future goals with what the text offers.

In addition, each chapter in Part 2 offers a job-related writing prompt at the end of the chapter along with two prompts that ask students to respond to, analyze, or otherwise discuss a photograph that carries an intriguing message about our history and culture. Other prompts ask them to address questions about popular and/or classic films and encourage them to explore questions by researching Internet sources. In all cases, the text encourages students to focus on specific questions that allow them to apply the techniques and strategies discussed and illustrated in the chapter. Several chapters in Part 3 also emphasize the notion that effective writing makes use of well-defined contexts. For example, the chapter on business formats suggests a variety of scenarios to which students can respond by writing e-mails, letters, and memoranda, including the all-important context of a job search.

PRACTICAL OPTIONS THAT MAKE STUDENTS EFFECTIVE WRITERS

In addition to the many years we have spent teaching English composition, we have both worked closely with corporate executives and government officials who need to communicate better with employees, customers, and the public; we have both designed and delivered corporate training programs; we have written and edited reports, letters, and even speeches for major corporations; and we have taught both business and technical communication in college. Our experience as professional writers in both academia and in the business world has taught us that learning rules and principles, while important, will supply only about a third of what it takes to become an effective writer. The rest depends on the writer's own good judgment and hard work. In any context, writers must constantly make choices among the variety of options that are available to them, from which technique to use to explore their ideas, through which pattern or patterns to use to support their main point, to which suggestions from fellow students or co-workers to follow in revising a draft. That is why we decided to focus on the importance of the writer's responsibility for choosing and to provide as much guidance as possible regarding the process by which writers exercise judgment.

Indeed, the theme of identifying, choosing among, and exercising options runs throughout the text, with "Consider Your Options" notes in the margin that stress the need to make choices. In addition, student writing through much of the first three parts of the text demonstrates how students can employ a spectrum of rhetorical techniques and choices, and annotated first drafts of student essays at the end of each chapter in Part 2 show students in the process of exercising specific rhetorical and linguistic options as they revise their writing. Our experience in field testing the ideas in this text clearly points to the benefits of allowing students to make informed choices as they work their way through the writing process. Doing so simply makes them more responsible and, therefore, more effective writers.

OPTIONS FOR USING TECHNOLOGY

Today, a writer's contexts almost always include some form of technology. In keeping with this reality, we have thoroughly integrated *Writing Today* with *Catalyst*, the most complete electronic resource for research and writing available. "More Options Online" notes in the margin tell students when they can go online to find additional advice, online writing tutors, help with research, diagnostic tests, over 3,000 practice exercises, and more. In addition, the text includes explanations of the use of word processors, the Internet, databases, and other tools generated by the electronic revolution, along with helpful hints for using electronic resources for researching, drafting, and editing.

A FOUR-IN-ONE TEXT OPTION

As a guide to the writing process—with a reader and visual texts integrated into this guide—a guide to research, and a handbook for editing student work, *Writing Today* offers a complete text for the first-year writing course. *Writing Today* is also available in a brief version that omits the handbook.

A Guide to the Writing Process

A Practical Introduction to the Process. The five chapters in Part 1, “Approaches,” are a thorough and well-illustrated discussion of the writing process. Chapter 1 provides a definition of the essay and explains its importance as an academic tool and as a way to learn skills that can be applied in the types of writing more often seen in business and professional settings. Through the numerous student and professional examples in the next four chapters, readers easily trace various steps and strategies from which to choose when writing an essay. Again, we emphasize the notion of options for writers and the importance of exercising one’s judgment in a particular context.

Patterns Presented as Options. Part 2, “Structures,” includes nine chapters that are devoted to discussions of the rhetorical options, or patterns, from description to argument. The tenth chapter, Chapter 15, covers essays that use more than one pattern and explains how to draw on a variety of strategies to address complex questions. Each chapter in Part 2 contains four professional essays, complete with introductory materials and questions for writing and discussion. At the end of each chapter, the final and first drafts of a student essay written using the option covered in that chapter show the process of revision in action.

An Emphasis on Making Choices in Revision. The guidelines for writing an essay in each chapter end by suggesting the kinds of questions a writer must ask and answer as he or she reviews an essay during the revision stage.

Plenty of Options for Writing Topics. Each chapter in Part 2 concludes with a series of suggested assignments, including assignments based on recent and classic films, assignments based on compelling photographs, and one workplace-based assignment.

Readings, Cartoons, and Photographs. The reading selections in *Writing Today* offer students examples of writers facing different contexts and choosing among options, and the visuals help introduce the rhetorical options and give students ideas for their own writing.

Selections from a Variety of Fine Authors. Integrated into each chapter in Part 2, the diverse selection of professional readings includes essays by Bharati Mukherjee, Barbara Ehrenreich, Sandra Cisneros, Thomas McGuane, Maxine Hong Kingston, Fran Lebowitz, Deborah Tannen, Brent Staples, David Sedaris, Lynda Barry, and Sherman Alexie, as well as time-tested classics such as “A Hanging” by George Orwell and “Why I Want a Wife” by Judy Brady. The essays, on engaging topics such as shopping, student employment, and rock lyrics as well as such provocative issues as whether humans are programmed to fight wars and whether torture is ever justified, are enjoyable to read, provide plenty of opportunity for discussion, and serve as strong models.

A Strong Connection Between Reading and Writing. Two complementary sections in each of the chapters in Part 2 are designed to help students make the most of the connection between reading and writing: “Reading with a Writer’s Eye” and “Writing with a Reader’s Eye.” The first section encourages students to engage the text so that they understand the choices professional writers make, the techniques and strategies they employ, and the purposes and contexts they

address. Again, our purpose here is to stress the importance of using one's judgment and exercising appropriate options when creating any piece of writing.

The next part of each chapter offers suggestions for every step in the writing process and a part-by-part analysis of a student's essay in the drafting stage. Called "Writing with a Reader's Eye," this section stresses that students need to see themselves as their intended readers and to consider how such an audience might envision, interpret, and react to what they have written.

Visuals That Help Make the Rhetorical Options Real for Students.

Engaging cartoons, many of them work-related, open the chapters on rhetorical options in Part 2. At the end of each chapter, a classic photograph and a writing prompt encourage students to use the option presented in that chapter to explore a historical topic that has relevance in today's world.

A Guide to Research and More

Writing in College and Professional Contexts. Part 3, "Applications," covers a number of specialized projects and skills common to college and professional writing. Chapter 16 provides excellent advice on taking various types of examinations, especially the essay exam. Chapter 17 discusses business formats, including appropriate practices for e-mailing in business contexts as well as writing more traditional correspondence. The coverage of writing résumés and letters of application will be especially useful to students seeking employment. Chapter 19, on writing about literature, contains two student essays that analyze works of fiction and poetry included in the text.

Unique Coverage of Using Quotations. Chapter 18, unique to this text, explains how to use quoted material in a paper according to the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) formats. As such, this chapter prepares students for the types of writing covered in Chapter 19 ("Writing About Literature"), Chapter 20 ("The Research Process"), and Chapter 21 ("The Research Paper").

Thorough Coverage of Writing and Documenting Research Papers.

Chapter 20 provides suggestions on finding and using library and electronic resources. Chapter 21 introduces both the MLA and the APA styles of documentation and contains a complete student research paper in MLA format. Throughout these two chapters, we stress the fact that exercising choice and applying one's judgment are as important when writing a research paper as they are in any other kind of writing. In this regard, we discuss the notion that students are responsible for choosing viable, relevant, and up-to-date sources and that they need to be aware of the many ways in which to incorporate researched material into their work. We discuss the uses of direct quotations, and we explain how and when to paraphrase and to summarize. A complete subsection is devoted to the dangers, as well as the benefits, involved in using the Internet—an unregulated collection of information—as a tool for academic research. Finally, we explain how and why to avoid plagiarism, both intentional and unintentional.

A Handbook

Part 4, "Grammar and Mechanics," is a comprehensive and thorough college handbook that is easy to read and can be used both in class and as an out-of-class reference. We emphasize practical solutions to the most common problems that students face, provide explanations in familiar, easily understood language, and

illustrate principles with numerous appropriate examples. Editing exercises throughout and at the end of each chapter give students plenty of opportunities for practice.

KEY FEATURES OF WRITING TODAY

We designed this text to help students see reading and writing as practical tools both in college and in the world of work. To meet this goal, *Writing Today* includes the following features:

- **A realistic yet humorous approach to writing.** We understand students' concerns and questions about studying English, so we write directly to our readers, helping them understand how and why writing is valuable to them not only in their composition courses but in all of their other classes and throughout their working lives. To help make a subject many of them find forbidding far more inviting, we offer cartoons at the beginning of chapters in Part Two and practical, often humorous, examples of writing situations and writing pitfalls.
- **Online resources that support writing instruction.** To prepare students for the many electronic options now available in academic life and the work world, *Writing Today* is accompanied by *Catalyst*, the most complete electronic resource for research and writing available. Accessible either on CD or as part of the text's Web site, this electronic resource gives students and instructors a wealth of additional options, including a bank of more than 3,000 grammar exercises, a diagnostic test, writing tutorials, a tutorial on avoiding plagiarism, Bibliomaker software that automatically formats source information in different documentation styles, and an online handbook. Marginal references to the Web site, entitled "More Options Online," appear throughout the text to let students know when additional help is available on *Catalyst*.
- **Plenty of advice on using computers and the Internet.** In keeping with the emphasis on the uses of technology in *Writing Today*, the text offers advice throughout on using the various electronic tools and resources that are available in today's digital writing environment. To make this important advice easy for students to spot, it is identified with an icon.
- **Chapter-opening vignettes from the world of work.** Every chapter in Part 2, "Structures," begins with an often humorous account of an employee using writing to interact with the dreaded Bob, a demanding and sometimes inscrutable supervisor. These scenarios help to make writing real for students by demonstrating how the type of writing they will learn in that chapter has practical applications in the working world. Even more important, they help emphasize the importance of a writer's assessing his or her purpose and audience and of choosing an appropriate strategy for a given writing context.
- **Student writers making choices.** Because student models are so useful to student writers, we offer more than twenty sample student essays. In Part 1, the text follows a student through the process of developing an essay from preliminary activities to final draft. Each chapter in Part 2 includes at least two sample student essays, one in both draft and final form, with comments from the student writer that show how that writer made decisions in moving from the first to the final draft.



- **An extended explanation of and a repeated emphasis on the natural connection between reading and writing.** Through repeated illustration and explanation, we stress that reading and writing are opposite sides of the same coin. As we have noted, each of the ten chapters in Part 2, “Structures,” includes two complementary sections to help students make the most of this connection: “Reading with a Writer’s Eye” and “Writing with a Reader’s Eye.” At the same time, these sections impress students with the importance of evaluating and considering the needs of their audiences and contexts. Finally, the text offers a full range of accessible writing prompts that enable students to draw inspiration from the professional and student essays they have read.
- **Consider Your Options notes.** Throughout the text, these marginal notes prompt students to think about what they already do when they write and what their choices are in a given writing situation. As such, they get students to consider numerous and varied questions about intended audiences, purposes, selection of detail, rhetorical approaches, patterns of organization, word choice, and even sentence structure.
- **An emphasis on choices made in revision.** The process of revising an essay for global concerns as well as for errors in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics is covered in Part 1. The need for revision is then reinforced throughout Part 2. Each chapter includes a list of revision questions that students can use to analyze their own and other students’ drafts, along with a revision exercise that provides faulty student essays for students to comment on and revise, giving them meaningful practice in critically reviewing and revising essays.
- **Support for students whose first language is not English.** An icon identifies sections throughout the text that are especially relevant to and useful for students whose first language is not English. The notion of options comes into play here as well. Second-language students often agonize over choosing the correct idiom or finding a word with the appropriate connotation. We keep this in mind whenever we discuss ESL-related concerns, and we provide information that makes the process of choosing easier.
- **A variety of collaborative activities.** Today’s student will be called on to collaborate not only with other students throughout college but also with colleagues at work. *Writing Today* offers numerous collaborative activities throughout. These activities are identified with an icon that stresses the importance of each individual’s contribution to the whole.
- **A complete introduction to the research process.** Chapters 20 and 21 provide commonsense advice for every stage of the research process, along with guidelines for finding print and online sources, models for documenting print and online sources using both the MLA and APA styles, and a sample student research paper.
- **A complete grammar handbook.** In our sixty years in the classroom, we have had plenty of opportunities to observe and analyze the kinds of errors students make; each of us is also the author of a grammar handbook. We apply our combined experience in Part 4, “Grammar and Mechanics,” a complete, easily referenced guide to sentence errors, punctuation, and mechanics. It also includes grammar exercises as well as a glossary of usage.



- **A chapter on writing for business.** In keeping with the book's emphasis on writing for the world of work, Chapter 17 offers advice for writing the most common types of business documents students will encounter, including memos, e-mail, letters of application, résumés, and business letters.
- **Chapters on essay examinations and writing about literature.** Chapter 16 offers down-to-earth, practical advice on how students can successfully approach one of the most stressful events in higher education: the essay examination. Chapter 19 offers advice for writing about fiction and poetry, along with two sample student essays and definitions of literary terms.

HELPFUL SUPPLEMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS

For Students

As noted above, *Writing Today* offers students access to the many resources available on *Catalyst*, including diagnostic tests, over 3,000 grammar exercises, an online handbook, writing tutors for each of the rhetorical options covered in Part 2 of the text, a tutorial on avoiding plagiarism, Bibliomaker software, which automatically formats source information in five different documentation styles, and plenty of support for research. McGraw-Hill also offers the following dictionary and vocabulary resources:

- **Random House Webster's College Dictionary (ISBN 0-07-240011-0).** This authoritative dictionary includes over 160,000 entries and 175,000 definitions. The most commonly used definitions are always listed first, so students can find what they need quickly.
- **The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (ISBN 0-07-310057-9).** Based on the best-selling *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, this paperback dictionary contains over 70,000 definitions.
- **The Merriam-Webster Thesaurus (ISBN 0-07-310067-6).** This handy paperback thesaurus contains over 157,000 synonyms, antonyms, related and contrasted words, and idioms.
- **Merriam-Webster's Vocabulary Builder (ISBN 0-07-310069-2).** This handy paperback introduces 3,000 words and includes quizzes to test progress.
- **Merriam-Webster's Notebook Dictionary (ISBN 0-07-299091-0).** An extremely concise reference to the words that form the core of English vocabulary, this popular dictionary, conveniently designed for 3-ring binders, provides words and information at students' fingertips.
- **Merriam-Webster's Notebook Thesaurus (ISBN 0-07-310068-4).** Conveniently designed for 3-ring binders, this thesaurus helps students search for words they might need in a given context. It provides concise, clear guidance for over 157,000 word choices.
- **Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus, Electronic Edition (ISBN 0-07-310070-6).** Available on CD-ROM, this online dictionary contains thousands of new words and meanings from all areas of human endeavor, including electronic technology, the sciences, and popular culture.

For Instructors

- **Annotated Instructor's Edition.** The *Annotated Instructor's Edition* provides abundant support for instructors teaching with *Writing Today*, including classroom hints, suggested activities, and answers to exercises. The AIE is especially helpful for new teachers of writing as well as instructors who are assigned classes with little advance notice.
- **Advice on the Web site (www.mhhe.com/writingtoday).** The Instructor's portion of the Web site includes advice for new instructors on a variety of subjects, such as teaching the writing process, assigning and teaching the research paper, responding to student writing, and assigning in-class writing, along with sample syllabi.
- **Teaching Composition Faculty Listserv at (www.mhhe.com/tcomp).** Moderated by Chris Anson at North Carolina State University and offered by McGraw-Hill as a service to the composition community, this listserv brings together senior members of the college composition community with newer members—junior faculty, adjuncts, and teaching assistants—through an online newsletter and accompanying discussion group to address issues of pedagogy, both in theory and in practice.
- **PageOut.** McGraw-Hill's own PageOut service is available to help you get your course up and running online in a matter of hours—at no cost. Additional information about the service is available online at <http://www.pageout.net>.

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Guided Tour

The following pages illustrate how **Writing Today** will help you succeed as a writer, whether in your coursework, at your job, or in another writing context. To get the most out of this text, spend a few minutes getting to know the organization and features of **Writing Today**.

BRIEF CONTENTS	APPROACHES	1 The Essay: Determining Purpose, Audience, and Approach 2 Shaping Your Essay: Prewriting, Organizing, and Drafting 3 Developing Strong Paragraphs: Exploring Your Options 4 Reshaping Your Essay: Global Revision 5 Refining Your Essay: Editing and Proofreading
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Part I of **Writing Today** shows you how learning to write college essays will help you succeed not only in your college work but also in your career. It also introduces you to the stages of the writing process. Part 2 includes chapters on the options you have for developing your writing, and Part 3 explains how to apply those options in different writing contexts, including essay exams, business writing, research papers, and literary analyses. Part 4 will help you edit and proofread your writing.

Writing Today means writing with technology.

Because today's technology gives you more options than ever before as you write, **Writing Today** also offers access to *Catalyst*, the most complete electronic resource for research and writing available. Notes in the text margins tell you when you can go online to find additional advice, writing tutors, help with research, diagnostic tests, over 3,000 practice exercises, and more.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Are there any advantages to having a "private self" that is very different from the "public self"? Write a 500- to 750-word essay contrasting the private you and the public you.
2. Write a 500- to 750-word essay that recounts a situation in which your cultural upbringing left you uncertain of how to handle the demands of a different culture or context. Possible areas include city versus country, native country versus foreign country, pool hall versus country club.

MORE OPTIONS ONLINE
If you would like to read additional comparison/contrast essays, go to www.mhhe.com/writingtoday.

WRITING THE COMPARISON/CONTRAST ESSAY WITH A READER'S EYE

Students sometimes approach the comparison/contrast assignment as if it were merely an exercise instead of a great opportunity to communicate. All too often, this approach yields mechanical, boring essays that fulfill the assignment's requirements but do little else. Some of these essays seem to have been

human beings serving more.

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Online Resources
Student Edition
Link Time Users

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Writing today is more than college papers and office memos. It is made to customers, lecture notes on a PalmPilot, and instant Messaging a friend. In every writing context - from college to the office to your kitchen at home - today's writing tools and technologies give you more options than ever before. Writing Today will help you choose among these options and succeed as a writer. The following features of Writing Today will show you how:

- **Online Options** (www.mhhe.com/writingtoday). Throughout Writing Today, you will find **More Options Online** in the margin that tell you when you can go online to find the most complete electronic resource for research and writing available. Powered by CATALYST: A Tool for Writing and Research, Writing Today provides you with diagnostic tests, over 3,000 editing exercises, writing tutors that walk you through the entire process of composing and revising an essay, help with research and with documentation, and more.
- **Real world vignettes**. Writing Today opens each assignment chapter with a real-life, practical writing situation that shows you how to write. These vignettes show you how the writing you do as a student is valuable not only in your composition course but in all of your classes and throughout your working life.
- **Everyday Images**. Writing Today offers visuals - cartoons, photographs - as introductions to patterns of development and as prompts for your writing. The images also provide more ways to think about how writing helps you understand and interpret the world and your experiences.
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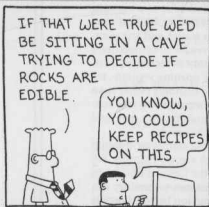
(see also Chapter 3, page 71, for a chart that lists various transitions):

Writing Today . . . and tomorrow.

Each assignment chapter opens with a real-life, practical writing situation. These work-related scenarios show you how the writing you do as a student is valuable not only in your composition course but throughout your working life.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

Writing in Context:



Bob appears at your cubicle yet again. "What do you know about optical scanners?" he asks.

"I know what they do. And I know that some of them are geared more toward text processing and some of them are graphics oriented."

"Good," Bob replied. "Here, take this." He hands you two folders. "We need to decide which one of these to buy. Talk to Stephanie if you want the background. I'll need an analysis by Friday."

You start looking through the folders Bob has left with you. They contain

mainly sales brochures and listings of technical specifications. You know you'll need to grill Stephanie, and probably other people, before you feel confident about starting the report.

Then it will be a matter of writing an evaluation, a side-by-side examination of the distinctions between the two scanners. Even at this point you can see the "shape" of your report.

You can see its shape because this task so clearly calls for an option known as comparison and contrast, in which two things are compared, often with the aim of producing an evaluation, perhaps an evaluation that will enable readers to arrive at some decision.

Writing in Context



Cartoon courtesy of John McKinley. Reprinted with permission of United Media Services. All rights reserved.

You have been "called back" for a second interview at Ogden. On Wednesday afternoon you show up on time to do and show the job.

First, you have another interview with Bob, the man who would be your boss. Bob is all death, smiles, and so, but you notice that he is smart enough to protect himself by carefully avoiding a commitment at this point.

Next, you are sent back to Human Resources. There is yet another psychological profile test for you to complete, administered by one of the quiet, predictably pleasant people who hover around the area. (At this point you wouldn't be surprised if one of them produced a quiet smile and asked to check your reflexes.) After the profile, one of the HR people sits down with you, hands over a clipboard and some writing paper, and asks this question: "Can you tell us about the single most important event in your college years, the one that led you here today?"

And how did you begin?

Indeed, we all know how to tell stories, but finding the most effective one and telling it in maximum benefit is a complex process.

Writing Today involves images as well as words.

Images—cartoons, photographs—serve as introductions to patterns of development and as prompts for your writing. The images also provide more ways to think about how writing helps you understand and interpret the world and your experiences.

the next, you give your readers clear accounts of both events. On the other hand, if you were to use a point-by-point approach here, you'd wind up fragmenting those accounts, in a sense reducing the dynamics of the experiences to mere categories of information (hotels stayed at, meals eaten, places seen, and so on). Your reader deserves better treatment. After all, you are trying to fulfill your purpose of providing a clear picture of the two subjects.

In most comparison/contrast essays, the emphasis will be on contrast. Obviously, if your purpose is evaluative, you want to find and focus on differences. Even if your purpose isn't evaluative, it is usually more instructive and interesting to readers to show how two entities are different than to show how they are similar (however, see page 408 for examples of situations in which comparison is the best option). For example, consider this idea: for decades, American automakers tended to produce a car model and then package it under different "nameplates." A midsize Chevy was virtually identical to a midsize Pontiac, and the same was true of Ford and Mercury and Plymouth and Dodge. Presumably, a buyer might buy a Mercury that was virtually the same as the (normally) lower-priced Ford because the Mercury line had more prestige. Would you want to write an essay comparing these two very similar cars? It's hard to see how you could write a fully developed, interesting paper when trying to compare two items that are so similar. However, keep in mind that comparison/contrast essays that emphasize contrast may also use comparison, just as those that emphasize comparison will surely include some contrasts.

Technically, the comparison/contrast option is not limited to two subjects. A writer could compare three subjects (or four, or ten, or twenty, for that matter). But a three-way comparison asks a great deal of your reader, and any number beyond three would probably be too hard for your reader to comprehend in an essay. The three-way approach tends to appear only in technical/business contexts that use a point-by-point approach. In the opening vignette, for example, Bob could have requested an analysis of three scanners rather than two. However, for general purposes, most essays concentrate on two subjects only. If a situation seems to call for a three-way analysis, you may find that using a classification or definition approach is a better option.

Note also that you can use comparison/contrast to help you develop essays that concentrate on other rhetorical options. For a good example, see Umberto Eco's "How Not to Use the Fax Machine and the Cellular Phone" in Chapter 9 ("Process Analysis"). While showing how consumer technology can come to dominate the consumer, Eco makes a firm distinction between people who need cell phones and those who do not.

The comparison/contrast essay can be difficult to write yet a joy to read, as the following essays indicate.

READING THE COMPARISON/CONTRAST ESSAY WITH A WRITER'S EYE

In the works that follow, Ellen Currie contrasts murder in the past with a more contemporary form of murder, namely, serial murder; Bharati Mukherjee examines two very different ways for immigrants to approach life in a new

Consider Your Options

- How might you use comparison/contrast strategies at work?
- How could this approach help you evaluate situations as they arise?

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ESSAY B: Point-by-Point Approach

It's obviously true that you can't go home again, and I'm glad I spent another summer in Bristol Park to confirm this idea. At least now I won't be tempted to go back and buy my parents' old house in this now unfriendly, dangerous, and declining neighborhood.

EXERCISE 13.1

Write an outline of either "Let the Unimportant Things Change" or "Neighborhoods and Memories." (For help with outlines, see Chapter 2, pages 41–42.) How effective is the approach the writer has chosen (subject-by-subject or point-by-point)? Would the other approach have been a better choice? If so, why?



Revising Your Draft

After you have completed a draft of your comparison/contrast essay, your next step is to revise it, using your own analysis and comments from classmates and friends. Use the peer review stage to make sure that your essay's structure and

Questions for Reviewing a Comparison/Contrast Essay

- 1 Does the introduction give the reader enough context? Does it capture the reader's interest? How could the introduction be strengthened?
- 2 What is the thesis statement? Has the writer placed it in the best position within the essay? How could it be improved?
- 3 Does the essay have a clear and interesting general point? Is the writer doing more than mechanically comparing and contrasting two subjects?
- 4 Is the approach that the writer chose—point-by-point or subject-by-subject—appropriate for the topic and for the intended purpose?
- 5 If the essay uses the point-by-point approach, has the writer established coherence by using the appropriate transitions? Where are transitions needed?
- 6 If the essay uses the subject-by-subject approach, has the writer referred the reader to the contrasts and/or similarities between the two subjects? In other words, has the writer connected the second subject to the first, or do the two subjects seem separate and unrelated?
- 7 Regardless of the method used, is the analysis thorough and complete? Has the writer left out any obvious points or areas of discussion? If the essay is intended to paint two pictures, are the pictures vivid? If the essay has an evaluative purpose, is the coverage of the two subjects balanced?
- 8 Does the essay have an effective conclusion? How could it be improved?

pendent film that makes it to the Gigaplex 9000, and some independent fans are frequenting the latest Hollywood release during the slow time of the year. With any luck, this crossover will be a positive movement: the blockbuster audience may learn to respond to a film in more nuanced ways, and a few of them will even be exposed to higher-quality films. But, more likely, the independent fans may just give in to the ruder ways of the typical moviegoer, and the only place to watch any type of movie in relative peace will be at home—now if I could just get that big screen and film projector installed in the living room.

Sam's First Draft

The Two Sides of the Aisle

Movie studios are concerned with target markets and audiences: they tailor certain movies for certain types of people. The advertising for the latest adventure flick will appeal to different folks than the advertising for the new British art film. And it works. When I go to the movies, I get myself ready in different ways. Most towns have an art-house theater and a few dozen multi-plex theaters that play the big blockbusters, but with independent films gaining a margin of profitability, some of them are showing up at the local multi-plex. Crowds attending independent films have a few distinct characteristics that separate them from the average viewer.

Independent filmgoers tend to arrive early. The movie is more important to them, whereas it doesn't really matter if you miss the first five minutes of a natural disaster movie. The trip to the concession stand is also a giveaway. The blockbuster crowd loads up on anything they can carry, drag, or stuff in their or their girlfriends' purses. The independent film fan realizes that the concession money supports the movie theater and, not wanting to encourage them, will pass the counter frequently.

Once in the theater, audiences are relatively similar—both have the propensity to be just as rude. The talking is directed differently in the two

This essay needed more detail—more of a sense of "reality" instead of just commentary.

I worked on the second and third paragraphs of the rough draft, turning them into three paragraphs.

Revision is crucial to Writing Today. Writing Today approaches revision in three ways. Part 1 shows you how to revise. Part 2 reinforces this instruction with revision questions for each writing option. Finally, revision exercises with realistic first drafts offer you an opportunity to practice your revision skills.

Professionals and students alike are Writing Today. When you approach a particular kind of writing, you probably find it most helpful to see real examples from writers facing similar challenges and choosing similar options. Throughout **Writing Today**, we stress the importance of reading to developing your skills as a writer. **Writing Today** provides more than 20 sample student essays, many in draft as well as final form.