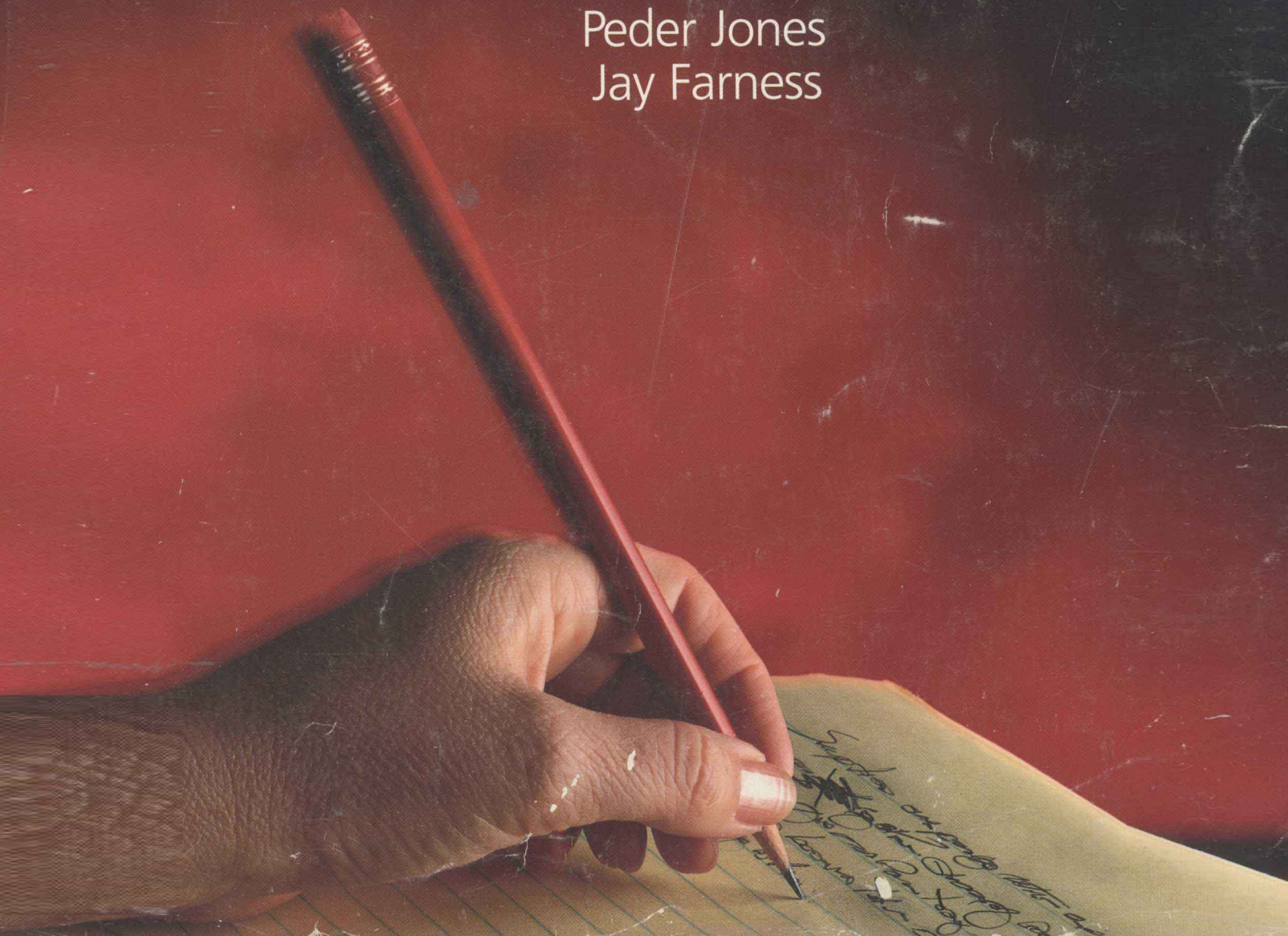


College Writing Skills

THIRD EDITION



Peder Jones
Jay Farness





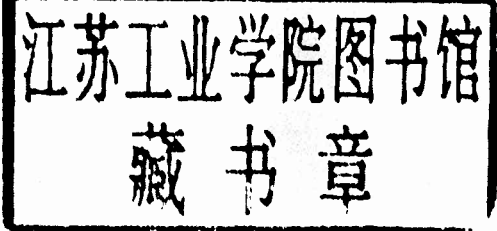
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Northern Arizona University



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Preface

College Writing Skills teaches, through description, demonstration, and practice, those skills essential to success in college writing. A glance at the table of contents shows how we have constructed a framework of rhetoric—work in composing paragraphs and essays—around disciplined study of sentences and words. In this way the book combines the most useful features of contemporary and traditional approaches to college English. Our overall aim, however, is to present a limited number of skills, techniques, and strategies that, when mastered, will enable the beginning college writer to compose clear and effective sentences, paragraphs, and compositions.

For this new edition:

1. We have substantially increased the book's coverage of college-level essay writing by adding chapters on revision and on papers that require library research.
2. In discussions of paragraphs and essays, we have laid greater stress on the rhetoric of college-level writing—on purpose, audience, and voice—and on the writing process.
3. To better serve students acquiring proficiency in English, we have added an appendix of exercises supplying practice with grammatical structures and idioms that frequently are troublesome to non-native speakers and writers of English.
4. Elsewhere we have updated or replaced many of the exercises from earlier editions, and in a number of instances—on the topic sentence, for example—we have expanded coverage of topics critical to students' success as writers.
5. Marginal cross-references throughout the book now link many related descriptions and exercises.

We have been guided in many of these changes by reports from users of the earlier editions; we are grateful for their perceptive comments.

Basic features of this text have not changed, however. As a hybrid of textbook and workbook, it continues to stress focused practice leading to directed independent composing activities; it emphasizes student writing rather than students reading about writing. The new edition includes more than 500 sets of exercises, more than 100 optional workshop activities, and an additional 26-exercise appendix covering special problems in the acquisition of English. These exercises embody our belief that practice is crucial to developing one's writing skills.

Accordingly, this text provides practice in forming ideas, in getting ideas out of one's head and onto paper, in experimenting with various sentence structures in order to achieve clarity, in following models of correct grammar and effective style, and in making the writing process pay off through effective revision and editing.

It is also important that beginning college students become conversant with the basic terms and concepts that successful writers commonly employ. As much as possible we have tried to avoid the intimidating aspect of prescriptive grammar and have striven instead to help student writers assemble a toolchest of terms they can use to talk about their own writing and editing. This book presents the basic principles of English grammar in simple and concise form, gives examples of effective applications, and then offers exercises in which students develop facility with structures and concepts. Of course, the extent to which students experience such practice as helpful to the writing process depends very much on the insight, imagination, and patient support of their instructors. By covering the structure of sentences as well as the rhetoric of paragraphs and essays, we have tried to furnish material that is both comprehensive and adaptable to the literacy levels of every group of beginning college writers.

We encourage instructors to take advantage of the modular structure of the text and to tailor the sequence of instruction to fit the focus of their particular courses as well as their vision of effective practice in the writing process. Our arrangement of chapters envisions students beginning and sustaining work in the book by studying, developing, and writing paragraphs. Throughout its sentence, word, and essay sections, the text returns to and reinforces paragraph writing skills. This emphasis on paragraph writing reflects the view that the paragraph is a composition in miniature. Moreover, experience has shown us that the paragraph is the most accessible unit of discourse for impromptu classroom discussion and that paragraph writing can cultivate rhetorical sense even in students busy with work on sentence and word difficulties.

By beginning with paragraph writing and patterning most of our exercises after paragraphs, we afford meaningful contexts for sentence and word study. Matters of grammar, style, and usage can then take their place as parts of a larger writing—and learning—process. While our arrangement of topics has proven to be effective in getting students thinking and writing productively at an appropriate level as quickly as possible, we know that it is not the only effective sequence for building college writing skills. Some instructors may wish to begin with sentence or word sections, or they may wish to interweave work in these sections and in the appendix with assignments in paragraph or essay sections of the book. For the sake of illustration, here are some alternate ways of plotting a course through this text:

Rhetoric Focus

- *Assign* Chapters 1–4 and 14–17 in sequence.
- *Supplement* this work with sentence expansion exercises from Chapters 5–8.

- After diagnosing grammar, usage, or mechanics weaknesses of individual students, *remediate* by assigning appropriate activities from Chapters 9–13.

Traditional Grammar and Usage Focus

- *Assign* Chapters 10–13 in sequence.
- *Assign* Chapters 5–9 in sequence.
- *Assign* Chapters 1–4 in sequence.
- *Integrate* writing by having students work independently throughout the term to compose a research paper by following the steps specified in Chapter 17.
- *Encourage* students to use chapters 14–16 as a resource for helping them craft their research papers effectively.

Fluency Focus

- *Assign* Chapters 1–4 in sequence.
- *Select* and *assign* exercises from Chapters 5–8 and 10–13 that involve composing or revising sentences; omit those that involve identifying structures or parts of speech.
- *Assign* Chapters 14–16 in sequence.

English Proficiency Focus

- *Adapt* activities in Chapters 1–8 for use in group or whole-class oral activities; have students write responses to exercises collaboratively or independently only after they have completed them orally.
- *Supplement* with Extra Practice activities from the Appendix.
- *Discuss* topics in Chapters 9–13 in class; selectively *assign* work on topics that are sources of confusion to students.
- *Enrich* the course content for students who have developed greater proficiency by assigning work from Chapters 14–16 or Chapter 17.

We would also stress that students can be assigned or encouraged to work on their own, on topics of particular interest or need. This book has proven very effective in independent study situations; and, where resources permit, such individual work can be bolstered by supervision from a writing center or from tutors. To further tailor the text to particular needs, instructors are encouraged to adapt exercises to alternate uses. They may wish to redirect the content of a usage exercise to a paragraph writing and polishing activity, for example, or to an activity offering practice in writing consistent tenses.

In all our exercises, we have tried to supply content that interests, informs, amuses, or at least means something to college-level language users. We have avoided bundling random sentences into exercise sets, since this in effect models the opposite of the purpose, coherence,

and meaning in written language that we seek to teach. It is our intent that *College Writing Skills* exemplify the discourses that higher-level reading and writing skills enable student writers to share in while it makes as many connections as possible to students' real-life interests and experiences.

We have also sought to promote a broader cultural perspective among students using the text by including information about the accomplishments of individuals and groups of many ethnicities, nationalities, and cultures. Besides increasing students' general knowledge of topics they are likely to encounter in their college coursework, the text may also contribute, we hope, to students' emergence as knowledgeable, imaginative, empathetic adult members of an increasingly multicultural society.

Despite our best efforts, though, there may be particular instances within this text where exercise content is either not accessible or not appropriate for particular groups or students. In those cases, we strongly urge instructors to adapt material supplied elsewhere in the book, or to import material into the course from other sources, so that their students can be included as genuine participants in a discourse and can enjoy the benefits of writing within a whole-language framework.

Finally, we are happy to express our gratitude to students, colleagues, and friends for their professionalism, their help in our growth as writers and educators, and their good wishes. From San Francisco: thanks to those talented and conscientious individuals with whom it has been a privilege to work on development of instructional materials over the past two decades: Lana Costantini, Jacalyn Mahler, Alex Behr, Robyn Raymer, Michael Miovic, Mark Stuhr, Katherine Wood, Lisa de Avila, Anita Gillespie, Jane Horii, Meredyth Carrick, Lisa Yount, Jane Driscoll, Mariah Marvin, James O'Donnell, Noah Griffen, Rob Moore, Paul Mann, Barbara Moss, Nancy Sargeant, Madeline Ling, Marlowe Teig, and John Ridley. From Arizona: thanks to an exemplary writing faculty at Northern Arizona University, to the student writers heard and published here, and particularly to Bryan Short, Paul Mann, Sharon Crowley, Jim Bartell, Deidre Hughes, Tilly Warnock, John Warnock, Bill Burke, Fredricka Stoller, and Arnold Johnson.

We are also indebted to the late Matthew Milan, college editor extraordinaire, who championed the publication of the first edition of this text; and to Steve Barta and Arlyne Lazerson of Collegiate Press, who have helped us revise the text to answer the needs of greater numbers of instructors and students. Last and best, thanks to Nancy and Amy and Laura for their great support and for tolerating the many scheduling adjustments during the writing of this new edition; and thanks to Georgianne and Peter and Emily for nursing the frenzies of an English teacher.

P.J. & J.F.

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UNIT ONE

Writing Paragraphs

1

Putting Your Thoughts to Work

A. HARNESSING THE POWER OF NEGATIVE THINKING

Language is so complex, and the human being's capacity for language is so immense that scientists are continually awed by ordinary speech—your speech. Nature and culture seem to have adapted human beings for nothing so well as for using language. By age four, when our physical and mechanical movement is still imperfect, we have already mastered the grammar and many of the codes of our native language.

True, a child's vocabulary is limited, and the child will continue to study the tricky and uncertain corners of grammar throughout the school years and beyond. But even a four-year-old composes sentences and thus shows a very impressive mental and verbal skill. For the sake of illustration, suppose a child knows only one simple sentence pattern (the four-year-old actually knows several): adjective-noun-verb-adverb ("Big balls bounce high"). And suppose the child's vocabulary is limited to fifty adjectives, fifty nouns, fifty verbs, and fifty adverbs (the average child's vocabulary is actually far larger and more complex). The child could then speak this many possible sentences:

$$50 \times 50 \times 50 \times 50 = 6,250,000$$

This imaginary child controls and can produce millions of meaningful utterances even before starting kindergarten!

Most of your sentences are longer and more complex, involving many more word choices than this simple example. Actually you have *billions* of possible sentences at your disposal when you speak or write. Linguists—scientists of language—assert that you regularly combine and utter sentences never before spoken in the history of the universe. Your amazing linguistic skill makes this inventiveness routine.

Linguistic scientists face the enormous challenge of understanding and explaining the language talents of human beings. But the rest of us have only to use and develop these talents, which indeed are among nature's greatest gifts to our species.

The vast majority of college students have the motivation, ambition, and good sense to invest in and work at their strongest talents, including their impressive linguistic talents. Even students who may not have sufficiently worked up their writing skills are fluent speakers, able thinkers, skeptical listeners, and sensible readers; they are sophisticated users of a complex instrument they have spent a lifetime mastering.

So what happens when the typical student comes face to face with a writing task? The typical student lets loose his or her verbal and mental