KEYS FOR WRITERS

A Brief Handbook

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How to Find Information in

*𝒦*EYS FOR WRITERS

THE MAIN ROUTES:

- **Key to the Book** *(at right)*: Directory to the book's ten parts.

- **Tabbed Dividers:** Red tabs cover matters of writing and working with sources. Gold tabs deal with nuts-and-bolts issues such as grammar and punctuation. On the back of each divider is a table of contents for that part.

- **Table of Contents** *(inside back cover)*.

- **Index** *(p. 387)*: A complete alphabetical list of topics and terms.

THE ALTERNATE ROUTES:

- **Common Correction and Editing Marks** *(p. 407, back of the book)*.

- **Specialized Indexes** for MLA *(p. 74)*, APA *(p. 106)*, and ESL *(p. 288)*.

- **Glossary of Usage** *(p. 367)*: Clarifies words such as *affect/effect* and *your/you're*. **Glossary of Grammatical Terms** *(p. 375)*.

- **List of Boxes** *(facing the title page)*: A directory to special features: Key Points, Computer Notes, and Language Across Cultures boxes.

MAKE YOUR OWN ROUTE:

KeyTab™ cards let you personalize the handbook to meet your own writing needs. When you find information that is especially helpful, take a KeyTab™ card from the back of the book and insert it into the binding at the page you wish to mark. Write the topic at the top of the card and add your own notes and examples on the main part below. The KeyTab™ cards will stay in place, allowing you quick access to the information you need most.

PREFACE

I wrote *Keys for Writers* with you, the student writer, in mind. Throughout the process, my guiding principle has been simple: The best handbook is the one that you will use. From that main idea flowed many others: Information must be easy to find. The handbook should serve *your* needs, and be adaptable as those needs change. Explanations must be crystal clear, examples illuminating, and the tone helpful, not scolding. Working with sources must be thoroughly covered. The diversity of today's college campuses and the challenges faced by ESL students must be addressed. The book should help you harness the power of computers as a tool for writing and research. Finally, for a handbook to have lifelong usefulness, it must address writing needs in a range of disciplines and careers. It is my hope that *Keys for Writers* reflects those principles.

The overview that follows will familiarize you with *Keys for Writers*.

MAIN FEATURES OF *KEYS FOR WRITERS*

Designed for easy use. *Keys for Writers* has a sturdy "comb" binding that allows the book to lie flat and tabbed dividers that let you flip right to any of the ten parts. The tabs are arranged in two color-coded rows to help you quickly locate what you need. Use the red tabs (Parts 1–5) to find coverage of the writing process and how to work with sources. Use the gold tabs (Parts 6–10) to find information about sentence-level issues such as style, grammar, and punctuation. (For more on finding information, see the inside front cover.)

KeyTab℗ cards let you make the book your own. Created especially for *Keys for Writers*, KeyTab℗ cards enable you to interact with the

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handbook and to personalize it. Ten KeyTab℠ cards are stored at the back of your book. When you find information that is helpful, take out a card and insert it into the book's plastic spine at the page you wish to mark. Then add your own notes or examples. Make sure the tabs extend above the top of the book so you can get back easily to the places that address your needs.

Working with sources is treated ·as integral to college writing. Research and documentation are treated as an essential part of the preparation of college essays. Parts 2–4—which cover research methods, using sources, and documentation—follow the section on the writing process.

Up-to-date coverage of four documentation styles. Parts 3 and 4 help you document many kinds of sources correctly in your papers. The information is based on the current editions of four style handbooks. It includes guidelines for citing electronic sources such as databases, CD-ROMs, and the Internet. The coverage of a range of styles makes the handbook useful as you write papers in many college courses.

Key Points boxes highlight vital information. In many sections, the basic information you need appears early and is summarized in easy-to-find Key Points boxes or in tables or charts. Key Points are often in the form of a series of questions designed to get you thinking critically about your writing and to help you become your own best editor. (A list of these Key Points appears next to the title page.)

Working with computers. Throughout the book, Computer Notes give advice on using a word processor and a variety of writing software. (A List of Computer Notes appears next to the title page.) An electronic version of *Keys for Writers* (Mac/IBM) is available with the book or through your college bookstore.

Help for ESL writers. Having taught and written for ESL students for many years, I have tried to make *Keys for Writers* especially helpful for students whose native language is not English. Part 8 reviews the language areas that often cause difficulty for ESL students. An index specifically for ESL writers is found on pp. 288–290. "Language Across Cultures" boxes contrast conventions of written English in the United States with those of other languages and cultures. (A list of Language Across Cultures boxes appears next to the title page.)

Writing across the curriculum and in your career. This book will help you in courses across the curriculum and in your career. Part

5 gives advice on writing essay exams, oral reports, lab reports, response journals, portfolios, and literature papers. Sections 9a–9c cover research in different disciplines. The coverage of four documentation styles will help you cite sources in most of your courses. Advice on writing résumés, business letters, and memos appears in sections 25–26.

Help with style. Becoming a successful writer in college and beyond means more than just writing grammatically correct sentences. Part 6 helps you write more effectively with advice on "the Five C's of Style": Cut, Check for Action, Connect, Commit, and Choose Your Words.

Sample student writing. The samples in the book were written by real students for real courses. The revision process (4a–4f) is illustrated by two drafts of a student paper. Full student essays show documentation in MLA style (13) and APA style (16). Other student samples include a freewriting journal entry (1d), a formal topic outline (2e), and summary and paraphrase examples (7d).

A NOTE FOR INSTRUCTORS

Keys for Writers is accompanied by a full range of instructional support. Student items can be ordered in free or discounted shrinkwrap packages. Please call Houghton Mifflin's Faculty Service Center at (800) 733-1717 for more information.

Free upon adoption: Instructor Support Packet, *The Writing Teacher's Companion*, Computerized Diagnostic Tests, and Grammar Exercise and Review Software.

Free when shrinkwrapped: *Writing about Literature* booklet (use ISBN 0-395-34557-8), *Keys to Argument and Critical Thinking* booklet (use ISBN 0-395-78824-2).

Discount when shrinkwrapped: *Exercise Booklet*, Electronic Handbook, *American Heritage College Dictionary*, *Identities: Readings from Contemporary Culture* by Ann Raimes, and more.

PRACTICE RUNS

The better you know *Keys for Writers*, the more easily you will find the answers that will improve your own writing. The following exer-

cises let you practice using the handbook in situations when you are writing or revising and come up against a problem (Practice Runs 1 and 2) and in situations when you are responding to the comments of your instructor or a peer (Practice Runs 3 and 4). You might find it helpful to work through these exercises with other students. Answers appear after the Practice Runs. Note: Be sure to read "How to Find Information," inside the front cover, before proceeding.

Practice Run 1 (while writing)
Imagine you are writing a paper on women in the armed forces. You write:

```
The army has it's unwritten rules.
```

Then you wonder whether or not you need an apostrophe in *it's*. Try getting an answer using the Key to the Book, the Table of Contents, the Index, and the Glossary of Usage. Which search is fastest and easiest? What answer do you find to the *it's* question?

Practice Run 2 (while writing)
You have just written this sentence:

```
After interviewing many women, Rogan comes to the conclusion
that "the more integrated the Army became, the more trouble
there was."
```

You have quoted from p. 159 of a book called *Mixed Company* by Helen Rogan. It was published by G.P. Putnam's Sons in New York. The copyright date is 1981. What do you need to include in your sentence? How do you need to change your sentence to include the correct source information, using MLA documentation style? How do you cite the work in your list of works cited, using MLA style? Which is the best route for finding the information you need?

Practice Run 3 (responding to comments)
You get a paper back from your instructor with the following comments: "You need to focus your topic more and not just write generally about women in the armed forces. What do you want to tell us about the army? What is your thesis in this paper? You begin to get close to one in your last two paragraphs." Which route would you take to follow up on these comments and find more information in the handbook?

Practice Run 4 (responding to comments)
You write:

```
In World War II, women demanded to be sent overseas. Which
led to the formation of the Women's Army Corps.
```

Your instructor writes *frag* in the margin. How do you find out what *frag* means? How do you fix the problem?

Answers to Practice Runs

Practice Run 1:
Fastest route: Usage Glossary: entry on *it's/its,* more at p. 332.
Other routes: From the Key to the Book: Part 9, Punctuation → Menu on divider: 50f *It's* versus *its* → p. 332.
From the Table of Contents: Apostrophe → *It's* versus *its* → Tabbed divider for Punctuation (50f) → p. 332.
From the Index: *It's* versus *its* → p. 332.
Correct usage: Use *its.*

Practice Run 2:
Possible routes: Start from the Key to the Book, the Table of Contents, the Index, or the MLA Index.
Fastest route: Going straight to the MLA Index is best, as it refers you right to the page number for a citation of a book with one author.
Correct citation within your sentence:

```
After interviewing many women, Rogan comes to the conclusion
that "the more integrated the Army became, the more trouble
there was" (159).
```

Correct entry in your list of Works Cited:

```
Rogan, Helen. Mixed Company. New York: Putnam's, 1981.
```

Practice Run 3:
Three routes to find what you need:
1. From the Key to the Book, looking under "Finding a Focus" → on tabbed divider: 2a, 2b "Narrowing your topic" and "Formulating a thesis" → pp. 15, 17.

2. From the Table of Contents → 2a, 2b "Narrowing your topic" and "Formulating a thesis" → tabbed dividers 21, 2b → pp. 15, 17.
3. From the Index → *Focus* or *topic* or *thesis* (key words in the comment) → pp. 15, 17.

Practice Run 4:

Best route: From "Common Correction/Editing Marks" → *frag* → section 35.

Answer:

```
In World War II, women demanded to be sent overseas. This
led to the formation of the Women's Army Corps.
```

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PART

1

The Writing Process

Part 1   The Writing Process

The process of writing brings a valuable gift: the opportunity to get feedback and to revise. When you speak to other people, spontaneity rules. You might say things that you don't mean or that are unclear to your listeners. When you write, you do not have to stick to your first thoughts. You can look back over what you have written and make improvements. Writing, unlike speaking, can be revised, a fact you can use to your advantage.

1 Getting Started

1a Writing: a nonlinear process

Many inexperienced writers would like to have a quick recipe for the one fail-proof way to write, but such a thing does not exist. The most important features of the writing process are these:

> The process is not linear.
> It is messy; it is not done according to a formula.
> Very few writers "get it right" on the first draft.
> Writing is a process of discovery, so it can be exciting.

The activities in the writing process (identifying your purpose, audience, and topic; generating ideas; gathering information; organizing ideas; drafting; revising; editing; and proofreading) are often artificially distinguished from one another to make them easier to talk about. In reality, virtually no one who is faced with a writing task marches in a linear fashion through a series of distinct steps. Rather, the writing process is a messy adventure. You might change your topic in the course of gathering information; you might revise and reorganize as you draft your paper; or you might get a firm sense of the point you want to make only in the course of revision. Don't feel that you have done something wrong if you consider revising while you are drafting or if you write a few drafts before you discover the main point you want to make. Nevertheless, writing *is* a process, and it is helpful to keep in mind that generating ideas, planning, drafting, and revising are all aspects of that process. Keep notes of good ideas that occur to you as you go along, and save all your notes and drafts.

1b Defining your purpose

Before you begin writing, consider the question "What is the main purpose of this piece of writing?" The following questions will help guide you to an answer.

KEY POINTS

Asking About Purpose

1. Is your main purpose to explain an idea or provide information? (Writing with this purpose is called *expository writing*.)

2. Is your main purpose to persuade readers to see things your way or move them to action? (This aim leads to *persuasive writing* or *argumentation*.)

3. Is your main purpose to describe an experiment or detailed process? (Writing with this purpose, such as in a lab report, is frequently referred to as *scientific* or *technical writing*. See also a sample paper in **16** and an excerpt from a lab report in **20b**.)

4. Is your main purpose to record and express your own experience, observations, ideas, and feelings? (In the humanities, such accounts are known as *expressive, autobiographical*, or *personal writing*.)

5. Is your main purpose to create original works of art, such as poems, stories, plays, or novels? (Writing with this purpose is known as *creative writing*.)

The first three purposes listed (expository, persuasive, and technical) are generally seen as the main ones behind college writing. There can be considerable overlap among categories, however. Some assignments may require you to explore and test concepts and opinions against what you know from your own experience and to connect other people's ideas to your prior knowledge. Other assignments may ask you to blend explanation with persuasion. Whatever you determine to be the main purpose or purposes of a given assignment, let that aim guide you as you begin writing.

COMPUTER NOTES: **Programs Examining Purpose**

Some software programs contain sets of questions about your purpose and what effect you want your writing to have. The questions probe your interests and lead you to explore a subject in more detail. Such programs are particularly useful in the initial phases of getting started with a piece of writing, particularly when you have no assigned topic. (See also **1f**, Using a word processor.)

1c Assessing your audience

Unless you are jotting down a list or journal entry solely for your own use, you write for an audience of readers. When you write letters and memos, you have specific readers in mind. In other writing situations, however, you need to think more carefully about who your audience is and what needs and expectations this audience will have. Although you do not want concern for audience to get in the way of generating ideas, it is helpful to consider audience early in the writing process. Profiling your audience will help you determine what to include and what to leave out as you write.

Is your reader a college professor who wants to find out what articles you have read and how you evaluate the authors' views? Is your reader an employer who is considering promoting you to a more responsible job? As you approach any new writing project, make a profile of your audience by answering the questions that follow.

KEY POINTS

Profiling Your Readers

1. Who will read what I am writing?

2. If a course instructor is my main audience, is this instructor a stand-in for a larger, "general" audience?

3. What would a general reader already know about the topic, and what will he or she need me to explain?

4. What does the reader expect from me in terms of purpose, content, the presentation on the page (format), length, level of formality and objectivity (tone), organization, and date of delivery?

5. How can I best engage and interest my reader and make the experience of reading my work rewarding and not frustrating?

■

In college, your audience is usually your classmates and your instructor. Don't be intimidated by the fact that your instructor knows more than you do about the course material. Your instructor, in most cases, is a stand-in for a larger audience of general readers. A general reader is familiar with some terminology of a particular discipline but not with obscure jargon. Ask your instruc-