# THE LONGMAN POCKET WRITER'S COMPANION
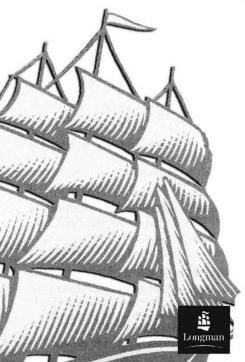
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# THE
# Longman Pocket Writer's Companion

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# GUIDE FOR USING THIS HANDBOOK

When you're a busy writer in academic, work, and public communities, you want to make the most of your time. This book is designed to help you find what you need quickly and efficiently.

**Strategy 1: Try the index at the end of the book.** It includes key terms, subtopics, and related entries.

**Strategy 2: Use the menu inside the front cover.** This menu identifies sections and chapters so you can easily find main topics.

**Strategy 3: Use the table of contents inside the back cover.** Skim the contents to track down the chapter or topic you need. The chapter numbers and section letters noted there are used in cross-references and are easy to spot on the tabs on each page.

**Strategy 4: Match editing symbols on your paper with corresponding sections of the text.** The fold-in page on the back cover lists common revising and editing symbols. Identify the marks on your paper, and turn to the relevant section of the text.

**Strategy 5: Check the Resources for Editing and the Glossary.** Refer to useful grammar charts, or look up terms and usage questions in the Glossary.

**Strategy 6: Use the special features of the text.**

- **Look for the "read, recognize, and revise" approach.** Many chapters, especially those on grammar and usage, first introduce a problem using a Reader's Reaction and sample sentences. Then the chapter shows how to recognize and revise or edit the problem in your writing.

- **Use Read, Recognize, and Revise Ten Serious Errors.** Turn to this guide on p. 265. Look for a sentence like yours, and turn to the section noted for advice about how to recognize and remedy the problem.
- **Apply the Strategies.** Each Strategy suggests how to apply general advice, recognize problems, or revise and edit your own writing.
- **Compare the examples with your own sentences.** Skim the draft sentences in the section that seems the most likely place to look for a problem. Find a sentence like your own. Read the explanation with the example, and note any label so that you can learn how to recognize the problem. Use the revised or edited sentence as a pattern for your own changes.
- **Look for boldfaced terms.** These key terms are explained right in the text.
- **Find the ESL Advice.** If you are not a native speaker of English, look for the ESL Advice integrated in the text and in the Resources section at the back.
- **Look for charts and checklists.** Boxes help make useful information easy to spot.
- **Turn to sample documents.** Selections from two sample research papers (using the MLA and APA styles) show how other students have presented their papers. Sample documents in Chapter 6 also show how you might design a paper, letter, résumé, or poster.

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# Handbook Menu

# SECTION 1
# Writing and Reading

## Voices from the Community

❝ Every story is an act of trust between a writer and a
reader; each story, in the end, is social. Whatever a writer sets
down can harm or help the community of which he or she is
a part. ❞

Barry Lopez, "A Voice," *About This Life: Journeys on the
Threshold of Memory*

# 1 | Writing and Reading in Communities

Whether you are drafting a history paper, a memo at work, or a neighborhood flyer, try to envision the **community of readers and writers** you are addressing—people with shared, though not necessarily identical, interests, goals, and preferences. Their expectations govern their responses to writing and can help you decide how best to shape ideas, information, and experiences you want to share with them.

Participating in academic, work, and public communities means talking, reading, and especially writing. As you communicate in these broad communities, you'll find that they share some preferences—such as favoring clear, specific writing—and differ on others, such as addressing the reader as *you*. Understanding such preferences can help you recognize readers' expectations and writers' limitations and choices.

## 1a Understanding your writing situation

Begin by "reading" your situation, often a specific task, occasion, project, or assignment.

- What is your purpose? What do you want or need to achieve?
- How will you relate to readers? What do they expect?
- What is your subject? What do you know, or need to know, about it?

### STRATEGY Pinpoint your task.

Look over your job description or assignment. Draw a straight line under words (usually nouns) that specify a **topic.** Put a wavy line under action words (verbs) that tell what your writing needs to *do*, its **purpose.**

| THREE COMMUNITIES OF READERS AND WRITERS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **ACADEMIC** | **WORK** | **PUBLIC** |
| **GOALS** | Create or exchange knowledge | Solve problems, inform, promote | Persuade, participate, inform |
| **FORMS** | Analysis, interpretation, lab report, proposal, article, bibliography | Memo, letter, ad, report, minutes, proposal, instructions | Letter, flyer, newsletter, position paper, fact sheet |
| **WRITING CHARACTERISTICS** | Reasoning, analysis, insights, evidence, detail, fair exploration | Clarity, accuracy, conciseness, focus on problem | Advocacy, evidence, shared values, recognition of others |

**Assignment:** Analyze a magazine ad for hidden cultural assumptions. Describe what happens in the ad, noting camera angle, color, and focus.

Whatever your task and whatever your broad community (academic, work, or public), you need to address your specific readers, actual or potential. Always ask "Exactly what do my readers expect?"

**STRATEGY** **Analyze your readers.**

**Size and familiarity.** How large is your audience? How well do you know them? Are they close or distant?

**Community.** Which expectations of readers are typical of the community in which you are writing?

**Knowledge.** What are your readers likely to know about your topic? What do they want or need to know?

**Social context.** What defines your readers socially, culturally, or educationally? How do they think?

**Power.** Are your readers peers or superiors? What do they expect you to do? What do you expect them to do?

## 1b Focusing on writing processes

Experienced writers expect to use all the composing stages.

**Discovering and planning.** Begin by looking for a promising topic.

**STRATEGY** Generate ideas.

- **Freewrite** by writing quickly by hand or at the computer for five or ten minutes. Don't stop; just slip into engaging ideas.
- Try **focused freewriting,** exploring a specific idea.
- Ask **strategic questions** to stir memories and suggest what to gather. Begin with *what, why,* and *why not.* Next try *who, where, when, how.*
- Use **interactive prompts** from the Web, computer lab, tutoring center, or your software.

Move toward a design or structure to guide your drafting.

**STRATEGY** Focus and organize.

- Try **clustering.** Write an idea at the center of a page, and jot down random associations. Circle key ideas; add lines to connect them.
- **List ideas and details** you want to discuss.
- **Chunk** related points and material in computer files (organized by topic or by section of the paper).
- Consider a **formal outline** (numbered and lettered sections) or a **working outline** (introduction, body, conclusion) to order points.

**Drafting.** Begin drafting once you have a main idea (or **thesis,** see 2a) and a general structure. Draft quickly; don't worry about perfect sentences. Or try **semidrafting,** writing until you stall out, noting *etc.* or a list instead of full text, and moving on to the next point.

**Revising, editing, proofreading. Revision** means critically *reading* and *reworking.* It precedes fine-tuning sentences (**editing**) or **proofreading** to check for small errors.

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### REVISING, EDITING, AND PROOFREADING

**Major revision.** Redraft passages, reorganize, add, and delete.

**Minor revision.** Adopt a reader's point of view. Rework illogical, wordy, or weak passages.

**Collaborative revision.** Ask peers to suggest improvements.

**Editing.** Improve clarity, style, and economy; check grammar, sentence structure, wording, punctuation, and mechanics.

**Proofreading.** Focus on details and final appearance, especially spelling, punctuation, and typing errors.

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## 1c  Reading analytically and critically

Good writing often builds on what others have written.

**Reading analytically.** Concentrate on understanding the content of the article, book, or Web page. (See p. 260-T.)

### STRATEGY  Discover what a text says.

- How can you sum up or restate its ideas in your own words?
- What are its major ideas, insights, and persuasive points?
- How does the reading relate to others on the topic?

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**Reading critically.** Analyze as you add your own insights.

### STRATEGY  Interact with a text.

**Question.** What do you want or need to know?

**Synthesize.** How does it relate to other views? What other views does it acknowledge (or fail to anticipate)?

**Interpret.** What does the writer mean or imply? What do you conclude about the text's outlook or bias?

**Assess.** How do you evaluate its value and accuracy? How does it compare to other texts that are read in the community?

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# 2 | Developing a Thesis

Most writing needs a clear **thesis**—a main idea, insight, or opinion that you wish to share. Announcing it in a **thesis statement** helps readers follow your reasoning and helps you organize and maintain focus.

## 2a Creating a thesis statement

You may choose to state your thesis near the beginning to guide readers, perhaps after introducing your topic and giving any needed background. Begin with a **rough thesis,** a sentence (or two) that identifies your perspective and states your assertion, conclusion, or opinion.

| | |
|---|---|
| **VAGUE TOPIC** | Ritalin |
| **STILL A TOPIC** | The use of Ritalin for kids |
| **STILL A TOPIC** **(NO ASSERTION)** | Problems of Ritalin for kids with attention-deficit disorder (ADD) |
| | **READER'S REACTION: But what should parents do?** |
| **ROUGH THESIS** **(ASSERTION)** | Parents should be careful about Ritalin for kids with ADD. |

Extend a rough thesis, making it more precise and complex. For example, what stance should parents take: Avoid Ritalin? Use it cautiously?

**EXTENDED THESIS**  Although Ritalin is widely used to treat children with ADD, parents should not rely too heavily on such drugs until they have explored both their child's problem and all treatment options.

**STRATEGY**  **Sharpen your thesis until your final draft.**

Treat your thesis as tentative. Refine it to offer a clear assertion—focused, limited, and yet complex enough to warrant readers' attention.

## 2b  Designing an appropriate thesis

Refine your thesis to suit your purpose or readers.

**General thesis.**  Readers will expect to discover your conclusions or special perspectives.

Sooner or later, teenagers stop listening to parents and turn to each other for advice, sometimes with disastrous results.

**Informative thesis.**  Readers will expect to learn why this information is of interest and how you'll organize it.

For parents choosing kids' videos based on their moral lessons, the job of selection is simplified by watching for three main categories of videos.

**Argumentative thesis.**  Readers will expect your opinion, perhaps with other views on the issue, too.

Although bioengineered crops may pose some dangers, their potential for combating worldwide hunger justifies their careful use.

**Academic thesis.**  Readers will expect you to state your specific conclusion and a plan to support it in terms that fit the field.

My survey of wedding announcements in local newspapers from 1960 to 2000 indicates that religious background and ethnicity have decreased in importance as factors in mate selection.

# 3 | Providing Support and Reasoning Clearly

Whether exploring an academic topic, making a recommendation at work, or urging people to take a stand on an issue, the path your thinking takes is called a **chain of reasoning.** Readers will find your writing logical and convincing if it's careful and critical, providing details and support suitable for your subject, purpose, and community.

## 3a Reasoning critically

What processes support critical reasoning?

- Exploring a question, problem, or experience
- Uniting ideas and information to reach a conclusion
- Focusing on the end point of the chain of reasoning—the main conclusion—often your thesis statement

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### TYPES OF CONCLUSIONS YOU MIGHT DRAW

**Interpretations** of meaning (experience, literature, film), importance (current event, history), or causes and effects (problem, event)

**Analyses** of elements (problem, situation, phenomenon, subject)

**Propositions** about an issue, problem, or policy

**Judgments** about "rightness" or "wrongness" (action, policy), quality (performance, creative work), or effectiveness (solution, course of action)

**Recommendations** for guidelines, policies, or responses

**Warnings** about consequences of action or inaction

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| CRITICAL REASONING IN THREE MAJOR COMMUNITIES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **ACADEMIC** | **WORK** | **PUBLIC** |
| **GOAL** | Analysis of text, phenomenon, or creative work to interpret, explain, or offer insights | Analysis of problems to supply information and propose solutions | Participation in democratic processes to contribute, inform, or persuade |
| **REASONING PROCESS** | Detailed reasoning, often explained with tight logic leading to conclusions | Accurate analysis of problem or need with clear explanation of solution | Plausible reasoning to support own point of view without ranting |
| **SPECIAL INTERESTS** | Citations of others as well as insights beyond common knowledge | Sharp focus on task, problem, or goal that promotes organization | Shared values and goals, often local, that support a cause or policy |
| **EVIDENCE** | Specific references to detailed evidence, presented to support conclusions | Sufficient evidence to show the problem's importance and justify a solution | Relevant evidence, often local, to substantiate views and probabilities |
| **VIEWPOINT** | Insightful but balanced, recognizing and explaining other views | Task-oriented but aware of alternatives and likely results | Partisan but fair, recognizing other interests and goals |

**STRATEGY** **Focus on your conclusions.**

List all your conclusions, interpretations, or opinions. What others come to mind? Which are main and which secondary? What explanation or evidence connects these points? Does each lead logically to the next?

## 3b  Providing support

A convincing chain of reasoning gives readers information that supports generalizations. **Information** includes facts of all kinds—examples, data,

details, quotations—that you present as reliable, confirmable, or generally undisputed. **Generalizations** are conclusions based on and supported by information. Information turns into **evidence** when it's used to persuade a reader that an idea is reasonable.

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#### TYPES OF EVIDENCE

**Examples** of an event, idea, person, or place, brief or extended, from personal experience or research

**Details** of an idea, place, situation, or phenomenon

**Information** about times, places, participants, numbers, consequences, surroundings, and relationships

**Statistics**, perhaps presented in tables or charts

**Background** on context, history, or effects

**Quotations** from experts, participants, or other writers

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## 3c  Evaluating support

Assess evidence critically. How **abundant** is it? Is it **sufficient** to support conclusions? Is it **relevant, accurate,** and **well documented**?

**STRATEGY** Align your evidence with your thesis.

**General thesis.** Supply evidence that fits your claim and readers' expectations (statistics, interviews, examples from experience).

**Informative thesis.** Give evidence showing a subject's elements.

**Argumentative thesis.** Supply information, examples, and quotations to support your stand, answer objections, and refute opposing views.

**Academic thesis.** Provide evidence that meets the discipline's standards; cite contributions of others.