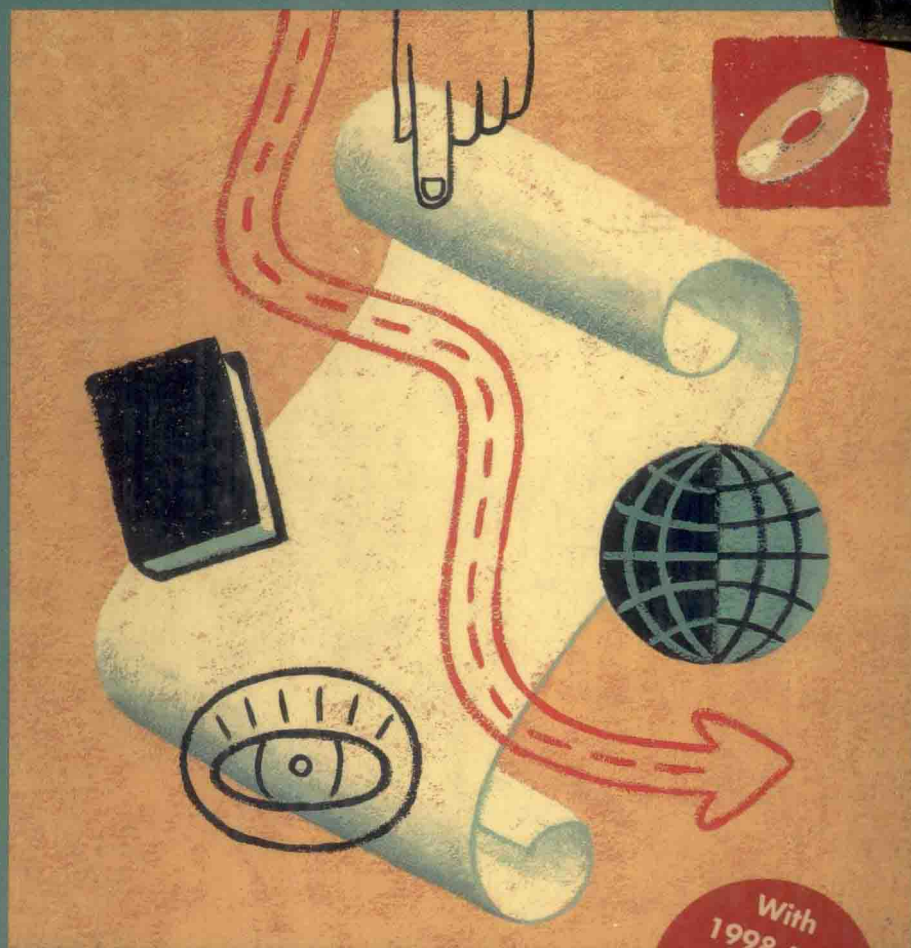


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With  
1998 MLA  
guidelines for  
citing Web  
sources

# A WRITER'S GUIDEBOOK

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### ***Acknowledgments***

Acknowledgments and copyrights are continued at the back of the book on page 456, which constitutes an extension of the copyright page.

## INTRODUCTION

*A Writer's Guidebook* is a brief reference handbook that offers help with the research and writing you will be asked to do in college and in your career. Keep it on the shelf with your dictionary, computer manuals, and other reference works. It includes guidelines and basic information that will help you plan, research, write, edit, and present any essay or research project. You can turn to *A Writer's Guidebook* in any writing situation, confident that it will complement the requirements for research and writing that you will be expected to follow in different college courses and on the job.

*A Writer's Guidebook* has been designed to give you quick access to the information you need. An easy-to-follow, well-designed guide, it will help you find answers, avoid errors, and become a more confident, effective writer.

### Twenty-five frequent errors

To prepare *A Writer's Guidebook*, we carried out a nationwide study of the problems first-year college students have with the conventions of standard edited English. College writing instructors and professional editors noted the errors in over five hundred essays in nine different types of writing. (Spelling errors were not counted in our study.)

As a result of this study, *A Writer's Guidebook* offers a list of the twenty-five errors that appeared most frequently in the approximately fifteen thousand sentences we analyzed. The errors, listed on the next page in order of descending frequency, can guide you in editing your own writing. The numbers in bold following each error indicate where in *A Writer's Guidebook* you can find help with understanding and correcting each error.

- 1 Missing or unnecessary commas (37a, 37b, 37c, 37d, 38a, 38b)
- 2 Errors in word choice (34a, b; 35a, b)
- 3 Errors in pronoun reference, agreement, or use (19, 20, 24f)
- 4 Verb tense errors (23a-c)
- 5 Errors in recognizing and punctuating sentences—comma splices, fused sentences, fragments (16, 17, 18)

## Keeping a record of your own errors

In addition to checking your work for the errors college students usually make, you might find it useful to keep a record of the errors that *you* usually make. Recording errors in your writing can help you to discover your own most frequent errors and error patterns. You can then work toward reducing them.

To use the Record of Errors form on the next page, note the name and section number of each error in the left-hand column. (See the table of contents inside the back cover or the list of correction symbols that immediately precedes it for the names of errors.) For example, if in your first essay your instructor or another student marks a vague use of the pronoun *this* at the beginning of two of your sentences, locate the section that provides help in correcting this error (19c) and enter the error name in the left column along with the section number: Vague use of *this*, *that*, and *which*, 19c. Then under *Essay 1* and next to the name of the error, enter the number 2 to indicate how many times you made this error. As you edit subsequent essays, you can easily review this section in *A Writer's Guidebook* to make sure you have avoided this pronoun problem.

By your second or third essay, you should begin to see patterns in the errors you make and also begin to understand how to recognize and correct them.

| RECORD OF ERRORS  |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Name of Error and<br/>Section Number in<br/>A Writer's Guidebook</i> | FREQUENCY          |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |
|   | <i>Essay<br/>1</i> | <i>Essay<br/>2</i> | <i>Essay<br/>3</i> | <i>Essay<br/>4</i> | <i>Essay<br/>5</i> | <i>Essay<br/>6</i> | <i>Essay<br/>7</i> |
|   |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

*A Writer's Guidebook* provides many possible routes to the practical information you need to plan, research, or edit your writing: color-coded menu, comprehensive index, list of instructor's correction symbols, table of contents, and Glossary of Usage. Each of these resources is described below, with an activity that provides a model for using the resource followed by an opportunity for you to practice using the resource yourself.


### Color-coded menu

The color-coded menu on the first page of *A Writer's Guidebook* briefly outlines the book's contents. Each of the eleven parts of the book is associated with a different color and an icon. Colored tabs with icons on the outside margin of every page allow you to flip quickly to the part of the book you need to consult. After the first page of each part you will find a list of contents for that part.

Is the second sentence a fragment or a complete sentence?

Parents are focused on what they care about. Rather than their children, who are the ones they should be caring about.

To answer this question, you need to find the chapter in *A Writer's Guidebook* that covers sentence fragments. (If you cannot name the potential problem or find someone to help you name it, you can use the index, which is described in the following section.)

1. Turn to the menu on the first page of this book. Under "Part 4, Sentence Boundaries," you will find "Chapter 18, Sentence Fragments." Notice that Part 4 is identified by an icon (  ) and the color green.
2. Find Part 4 by turning to the pages with green tabs. The first green-tabbed page provides a complete contents for Part 4 along with page numbers. The chapter on sentence fragments begins on page 234.
3. Turning to page 234, you will find the answer by looking at the first example. The phrase *rather than*, like *because* in the example, is a subordinating conjunction introducing a dependent clause. Reading further, you learn that to convert a sentence fragment like this one into a complete sentence, you need to attach the fragment to the preceding sentence.

### Model



**Practice**

Is a comma needed between the two independent clauses in this sentence?

Libertarians believe that government should not intervene in the free market and they advocate maximum personal freedom for everyone.

Using the color-coded menu, find the page that gives you the information you need to edit the sentence. (The clues you need are in the question.)

**Index**

A comprehensive index at the back of *A Writer's Guidebook* includes terms relating to every aspect of research and writing. For example, if you are not sure whether to use *a* or *an*, you can look under “articles,” or simply look under “*a*, *an*, *the*.” As you can see, the index provides several routes to the information you need. This flexibility makes the index especially useful for answering nearly any writing or research question you might come up with.

**Model**

Can I use *this* in the second sentence to refer to the entire first sentence?

In groups, men tend to speak not to individuals but to the group. This may indicate an attempt to establish leadership in the group.

Let's assume that you do not remember that *this* is a *pronoun*, and you have no idea that using *this* to refer to the whole sentence is called *vague pronoun reference*. To find the answer in the index, all you need is the word *this*.

1. Look for *this* in the index. You will find the entry “*this*, 240–41.” You may not be sure that this entry is the right one until you turn to page 240 to see whether the example looks like your sentence.
2. Turn to page 240, where you will find section 19b: “Rewrite to eliminate vague uses of *this*, *that*, and *which*.” The first example answers the question: after *this* in the second sentence, you need to insert a noun such as *tendency* to make it clear that you are referring to the idea in the first sentence that “men tend to speak” in a certain way.

**Practice**

Is a comma needed in the following sentence to separate the introductory element from the main part of the sentence, which begins with *the choice*?

When we have to choose between carrying out everyday activities and starting a challenging task the choice is usually to do the small stuff.



Use the index to find the information you need to answer the question. Try both of the question's two obvious clues—*introductory element* and *comma*.

### Correction symbols

Your instructor may mark your errors with correction symbols like *mm* (misplaced modifier). If so, the alphabetical list of correction symbols that immediately precedes the table of contents at the back of this book will lead you to the chapter and section you need.

My instructor has marked the following sentence *cs*.

Liberals believe that federal programs are neither intrusive nor oppressive, these programs guarantee to all citizens the same rights and opportunities.

1. Turn to the list of correction symbols on the last right-hand page of this book. Find *cs*, which is followed by the name of the error and a chapter number: "Comma splice 16."
2. Flip through the book, looking at the chapter and section numbers at the top of the page, and stop at Chapter 16. After surveying the options for editing comma splices, you decide that the most appropriate editing strategy is "16d Separate the independent clauses with a semicolon or period, and add a conjunctive adverb or transition." Revise the sentence accordingly.

My instructor has marked the following sentence *num*.

Among the 7 tabloid TV segments I viewed involving personal relationships, 5 segments represented relationships based on distrust or deception.

Using the search above as a model, find the information you need to correct the error.

### Contents

Your instructor may mark your errors with chapter and section numbers.

My instructor has marked the following sentence "46a."

Not even street smart young men can protect themselves from violence.

### Model

### Practice

### Model

1. Turn to the table of contents inside the back cover and locate 46a. Chapter 46 covers the use of hyphens. Section 46a, “Compound adjectives,” provides information and examples about a special problem with hyphens: omitting the hyphen in compound adjectives or using it incorrectly (a high-frequency error in our research study).
2. Turn to the page number for Chapter 46, 371, or flip through the book, stopping when you see 46 at the top of the page. You will find that the explanation and examples (*after-school activities*, *fast-growing business*) show you how to correct the error.

### Practice

My instructor has marked the following sentence “42b.”

“Most people who come here aren’t homeless”, Carol says.

Using the search above as a model, find the information you need to correct the error.

### Glossary of Usage

The Glossary of Usage offers quick advice on words that are frequently confused or misused, the second most frequent error revealed by our research.

### Model

Have I used the word *further* correctly in the following sentence?

If we drive any further on this spare tire, we’ll have two flat tires to repair.

1. Turn to the Glossary of Usage on page 439 and look for the word *further*, where you will find a cross-reference.
2. Checking the entry *farther/further*, you discover that the answer is *farther*.

### Practice

In the following sentence, have I used the word *relationship* correctly?

Some writers insist that there is a relationship between a shortage of decent-paying jobs and violence among young men.

Look up the word in question, study the explanation, and decide whether the word is correct or must be changed. If you cannot find the word you are looking for in the Glossary of Usage, look for it in your dictionary.

## PREFACE TO INSTRUCTORS

The idea for *A Writer's Guidebook* came after years of trying out different ways of teaching students to edit their own writing. We developed a method in which instructors point out sentence-level problems in a portion of an essay and students use a quick-reference handbook to solve the problems themselves. Then instructors review the students' work. This focus on identifying problems, giving students initiative, and providing follow-up proved highly effective, but students sometimes had difficulty finding help even when we directed them to the relevant section in the handbook we assigned. They found too much explanation and too few examples, with too little coverage, or, in some cases, no coverage at all of the errors they were actually making.

To remedy these problems, we organized a nationwide study to find out which errors occur in typical college writing situations. Focusing on the part of each essay characteristic of its genre, our team of twelve experienced writing instructors and professional editors analyzed approximately fifteen thousand sentences in over five hundred essays in nine genres of college writing. The essays, written by students in universities, four-year colleges, and community colleges, were revised drafts completed without the benefit of advice on style and sentence-level conventions. The findings from this research gave shape to *A Writer's Guidebook*.

*A Writer's Guidebook* provides quick, explicit answers for students working on their own. The text relies on examples of student writing, rather than abstract and complicated explanations, to illustrate grammatical concepts. Like a trail guide, *A Writer's Guidebook* shows students what to do and how to do it—how to quickly identify and correct their own errors. In addition to providing thorough coverage of the conventions of grammar and usage, the *Guidebook* supports students' research and writing in their college courses.

## FEATURES OF A WRITER'S GUIDEBOOK

### Brief guides for six writing tasks

Condensed from the *St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, Fifth Edition, these brief guides offer specific advice on writing essays that present personal experience, explain concepts, argue positions, evaluate texts or ideas, speculate about causes, or interpret literature. Each brief guide helps students plan, draft, and revise their essays, providing a sample outline of one student's essay as well as questions students can use to evaluate one another's drafts.

### Numerous examples from actual student writing

Sentences illustrating common errors and grammatical concepts are taken from actual student essays. The student sentences come from essays representing the wide range of subjects first-year students write about and the many genres they write in. The realistic examples make it easier for students to match a flawed sentence to a good model.

### Sentence problems organized by frequency

Our research findings have led us to present error categories in order of their frequency, making it easier for students searching for help on their own to find what they need. For example, the section on grammatical sentences in *A Writer's Guidebook* begins with pronoun reference, the single most common grammatical error covered in that section. In Chapter 19, "Pronoun Reference," the three prominent types of errors appear in order of frequency. The organization and content of all the chapters on grammar, punctuation, and mechanics are informed by our research findings and offer students extra help where they need it most.

### Detailed coverage of the writing problems and topics identified by our research

Our research revealed several types of errors that occur with some frequency but that are not covered, or not covered in enough detail, by most current handbooks. As a result, *A Writer's Guidebook* provides chapters on relative pronouns (21); noun agreement (28); and errors in spacing around punctu-

ation marks (48). Chapter 31 offers help with integrating quotations, questions, and thoughts in addition to the advice on integrating source material in Chapter 8. *A Writer's Guidebook* also provides a chapter on dashes (41), with thorough coverage of this useful punctuation mark.

We also offer stronger coverage of the following problem areas uncovered by our research than is offered by most other brief handbooks:

- Missing prepositions, conjunctions, and other small words (26a)
- Unnecessary prepositions (34e)
- Incorrect prepositions (35c)
- Comma needed with trailing participial phrases (37c)
- Unnecessary commas with trailing adverbial clauses (38d)
- Semicolon needed to join a pair or series of independent clauses with internal punctuation (39c)

Finally, Chapter 33, “Emphasis and Clarity,” includes coverage of strategies that increase readability, including using cohesive devices (33c), making sentence topics visible (33d), and putting familiar information ahead of new information (33e).

### **Grammar definitions highlighted in the margins**

To help streamline the explanations, grammar definitions appear in the margins so that students can read them as needed or skip right to the examples.

### **Integrated coverage of library and online research**

Reflecting the way students actually do research today, Chapter 7 integrates coverage of both traditional and online sources. It also provides guidelines for evaluating both, including a separate section on evaluating Internet sources. Abundant coverage of how to cite online sources appears in our documentation chapters. Chapter 9 includes new guidelines from the Modern Language Association for citing sources from the World Wide Web.

### **Attention to ESL issues**

For students who have learned to write English as a second language, *A Writer's Guidebook* covers the most common problem areas in four separate chapters in Part 10. In addition, boxes throughout the text provide additional information for ESL writers or refer them to Part 10 for more help.

### **Full-color guidebook format**

Designed to help students find what to do and how to do it, the *Guidebook* minimizes lengthy explanations and uses color icons, tabbed sections, and other quick-reference features to lead students to the information they need.

### **A sample student assignment**

To give students a specific, realistic example of how to respond to a college assignment, Chapter 1 of the *Guidebook*, "Organizing and Managing College Writing Assignments," follows one student through the process of researching, writing, and revising an essay for a history course.

### **Digital Hints**

Throughout the book, Digital Hint boxes provide useful tips on using technology in all stages of the writing process.

### **A chapter on critical reading strategies**

Chapter 12 includes important strategies to help students become more active, critical readers and, consequently, better writers. Strategies covered include annotating, outlining, summarizing, reflecting on the writer's perspective, and evaluating the writer's logic.

### **Additional Resources**

- *Interactive Handbook and Exercise CD-ROM* includes an electronic reference and interactive exercises. The exercises provide opportunities for practice and are linked directly to the handbook explanations, giving students immediate help with questions and problems.
- *Web Site* <[www.smpcollege.com/guidebook](http://www.smpcollege.com/guidebook)> gives students and instructors information on using the World Wide Web for research as well as links to useful sites for writers.
- *Transparency Masters* include student essays and revision checklists.

- *Exercise Booklet with Answer Key* provides additional opportunities for practice and is available in print or with the handbook on CD-ROM.
- *Diagnostic Tests* help students and instructors identify the grammatical concepts that students need to work on.
- ***Who Are We? Readings on Identity, Community, Work, and Career***, by Rise Axelrod and Charles Cooper, provides twenty-six selections in a brief reader.
- ***Free Falling and Other Student Essays***, edited by Paul Sladky, Augusta College, a collection of essays by students using the *St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, makes available fine writing from students at colleges across the country.

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Rise B. Axelrod  
Charles R. Cooper

- 1 Wordiness **34a, b**
- 2 Misused word **35a, b**
- 3 Incorrect or ambiguous pronoun reference **19**
- 4 Verb tense errors **23a-c**
- 5 Missing comma between independent clauses **37a**
- 6 Problems with hyphens between compound adjectives **46a**
- 7 Missing comma after introductory elements **37b**
- 8 Capitalization of proper or common nouns **47a**
- 9 Unnecessary comma between compound elements **38a**
- 10 Incorrect spacing **48**
- 11 Missing words **26a-d**
- 12 Missing comma with nonrestrictive word groups **37c**
- 13 Comma splice or fused sentence **16, 17**
- 14 Problems in using quotation marks with other punctuation **42b**
- 15 Missing or unnecessary hyphens in compound nouns **46b**
- 16 Missing comma with transitional and parenthetical expressions, absolute phrases, and contrasted elements **37d**
- 17 Problems of pronoun-antecedent agreement **20**
- 18 Incorrect preposition **35c**
- 19 Misuse of *who*, *which*, or *that* **24f**
- 20 Unnecessarily complex sentence structure **34c**
- 21 Spelling out or using figures for numbers incorrectly **49a**
- 22 Problems with apostrophes in possessive nouns **43a**
- 23 Sentence fragment **18**
- 24 Missing comma in items in a series **37e**
- 25 Unnecessary comma with restrictive word groups **38b**

This list of the top twenty-five errors can be categorized into five major patterns of errors. You may find it useful to keep these patterns in mind as you edit your work.