



PENGUIN ACADEMICS

\$19.95  
net price\*

# A SHORT GUIDE TO COLLEGE WRITING

SYLVAN BARNET • PAT BELLANCA • MARCIA STUBBS



PROFESSIONAL COPY — NOT FOR SALE

# A Short Guide to College Writing

**Sylvan Barnet**  
*Tufts University*

**Pat Bellanca**  
*Harvard University*

**Marcia Stubbs**  
*Wellesley College*



PENGUIN ACADEMICS



New York San Francisco Boston  
London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore Madrid  
Mexico City Munich Paris Cape Town Hong Kong Montreal

Senior Vice President/Publisher: Joseph Opiela  
Acquisitions Editor: Lynn M. Huddon  
Executive Marketing Manager: Carlise Paulson  
Production Manager: Denise Phillip  
Project Coordination, Text Design, and Electronic Page Makeup:  
Electronic Publishing Services Inc., NYC  
Cover Designer/Manager: Nancy Danahy  
Cover Illustration/Photo: © PhotoDisc, Inc.  
Photo Researcher: Julie Tesser  
Manufacturing Buyer: Al Dorsey  
Printer and Binder: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company, Harrisonburg  
Cover Printer: Phoenix Color

For permission to use copyrighted material, grateful acknowledgment is made to the copyright holders on p. 370, which are hereby made part of this copyright page.

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Barnet, Sylvan.

A short guide to college writing / Sylvan Barnet, Pat Bellanca,  
Marcia Stubbs.— 1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-321-09101-9

1. English language—Rhetoric. 2. Report writing. I.  
Bellanca, Pat. II. Stubbs, Marcia. III. Title.

PE1408 .B4315 2002

808'.042—dc21

2001050429

Copyright © 2002 by Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. Printed in the United States.

Please visit our website at <http://www.ablongman.com>

ISBN 0-321-09101-9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10—DOH—04 03 02 01

## *Advance Praise for A Short Guide to College Writing*

"This has to be about the best written book on college writing I have read in years. It has all the essentials one requires in a book, written in a clear and inviting style. I particularly liked the chapters that dealt with analysis, argumentation and research papers."

"I like the selection of materials and examples the best—the authors have used materials from a variety of sources and disciplines, and they are refreshingly free of the trite and overused materials most books use."

Rachana Sachdev  
*Susquehanna University*

"The writing samples are excellent in that they show how a writer moves from the messiness of first drafts to the polished finished draft. Few guides do this well."

"I would tell colleagues that this *Short Guide* is one of the best I have read.... I think it's important to approach writing as a matter of making good choices and this guide does that particularly well."

Chere L. Peguesse  
*Valdosta State University*

"The text is rich with examples selected from a range of disciplines and interests and representing both student and professional writers. The discussion represents the best of what is known about current theories on composition, presented in clear language, and illustrated with the experiences of both student and professional writers."

"This text, though 'short,' is thorough in its discussion of the writing process and of how writers read their writing from an audiences' perspective, an ingredient I'm seeing for the first time here. Prior discussions of this topic have been brief and unsatisfying. I find the chapters on clarity and conciseness helpful; every student will find something to refer to here to aid revision."

Bruce Closser  
*Andrews University*

"It is refreshing to find a rhetoric so clearly targeted to the right level of our students.... Too often rhetorics are aiming for a level above our students. The hypothetical assignments here are plausible and are nicely expanded as subsequent examples return to them."

Amy Pawl  
*Washington University*

“I am pleased to find a rhetoric that does not dictate particular assignments or order of work. This should make this book more valuable to students in all situations across the country. The quality of thought and writing is good and certainly sincere.”

Mary Sauer  
*Indiana University and Purdue University*

“Its sound advice, helpful handbook, and economical size make it possible for students to have a ready reference text adaptable to the pursuit of almost any subject matter without a lot of extra material....”

Von Underwood  
*Cameron University*



Sylvan Barnet was born in Brooklyn, New York, and educated at Erasmus Hall High School, New York University (BA), and Harvard University (MA, PhD). For a while he was a semi-professional magician, but when he found that he could fool all of the people all of the time the work became boring, and so he became a college professor. He taught Composition and English Literature at Tufts University, for thirty years, published scholarly articles on Shakespeare, and is the author and co-author of several books about the art of writing.

Pat Bellanca was born in East Hanover, N.J.; she holds degrees in English from Wellesley College (BA) and Rutgers University (MA, PhD). She teaches in the Expository Writing Program at Harvard College and is Director of Writing Programs at the Harvard Extension School, the university's open-enrollment evening division. Her research interests include Composition Studies and Gothic Fiction, fields that are not unrelated.



Marcia Stubbs was born in Newark, N.J., where she was drum majorette of Weequahic High School's band, and she was educated at Stanford University and the University of Michigan. She has taught at Tufts University, Harvard University, and Wellesley College, where she has directed the Writing Program. In addition to annotations on students' compositions, she has written poems and verse translations, and is the co-author of several books on writing.

# A Short Guide to College Writing

# Preface

*A Short Guide to College Writing* offers students practical advice on writing successful college essays from the beginning of the process to the end. The student, having received a writing assignment, can turn to this book for advice about choosing a topic, developing a thesis, writing an analysis, constructing a paragraph, documenting a source, using a semicolon. The instructor can suggest chapters or passages the student should consult in generating ideas, revising a draft, editing a revision, or preparing a final copy.

We emphasize analysis, argument, and research because skill in these matters is central to college writing—whether the student is writing a short essay for a required first-year composition class, or a longer essay for an art history course, or a term paper for a cultural studies seminar. When students write essays, most of what they write sets forth a thesis and its support, which is to say that their writing advances a point of view, explains ideas, and lets the readers see how the writers arrived at them.

Because they want to be believed, writers must present their ideas and evidence persuasively, and cite and document their sources accurately. *A Short Guide to College Writing* offers practical and accessible advice on all these matters. The book will be useful not only to students in first-year composition courses, but also to students in writing-intensive and Writing Across the Curriculum courses—courses that focus on a particular academic topic. We therefore omit writing assignments and extended readings. When there is too much, the saying goes, something is missing. This book, we hope, offers just enough.

## Acknowledgments

We thank the following reviewers for their suggestions: Alan Baragona, Virginia Military Institute; Bruce Closser, Andrews University; Gloria Gitlin, Baylor University; J. Paul Johnson, Winona State University; Mary



M. Juzwik, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Joan Livingston-Weber, Western Illinois University; Craig N. Owens, Indiana University; Amy Pawl, Washington University; Chere L. Peguesse, Valdosta State University; Rachana Sachdev, Susquehanna University; Mary Sauer, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis; and Von Underwood, Cameron University.

We are deeply grateful to Frances FitzGerald for giving us permission to reprint portions of her notes and manuscript for *Fire in the Lake*. We also thank Dr. Howard Gottleib, Director of Special Collections at Boston University's Mugar Library, and Sean D. Noël, Public Service and Fiscal Administrator at Special Collections, for their generosity in making those materials available to us.

At Longman, our editor, Lynn Huddon, watched over the project with exemplary care and patiently guided us through the several revisions of the manuscript. At Electronic Publishing Services Inc., Alan Kaplan, our production editor, turned the manuscript into a book: It was a pleasure to work with him. We also thank Diane Kraut and Julie Tesser for securing text and photo permissions respectively; and Nancy Danahy for her work on the cover design.

Finally, we thank the following friends and colleagues for their advice and support: Marilyn Brown, Peter Buck, Patricia A. Cahill, Nora Cameron, Jody Clineff, Michael Curley, Nancy Sommers, Kerry Walk, and Wini Wood.

Sylvan Barnet

Marcia Stubbs

Pat Bellanca

# Contents

Preface xix

## PART ONE THE WRITING PROCESS 1

### CHAPTER ONE Developing Ideas 3

#### Starting

- How to Write: Writing as a Physical Act 3
- Some Ideas About Ideas: Strategies for Invention 3
  - Asking Questions and Answering Them* 4
  - Listing* 6
  - Clustering* 8
  - Freewriting* 9

#### Focusing 9

- What to Write About: Subject, Topic, Thesis 9
  - Finding a Topic* 10
  - Developing a Thesis* 11

#### Developing Ideas 12

- Thinking About Audience and Purpose 13
- Writing the Draft 14

### CHAPTER TWO Drafting and Revising 16

#### Reading Drafts 16

- Imagining Your Audience and Asking Questions 16

#### Peer Review: The Benefits of Having a Real Audience 18

- From Assignment to Essay: A Case History 20
  - First Draft* 24

<i>Summary of Peer Group Discussion</i>	25
<i>Final Version</i>	27
SUKI HUDSON <i>Two Sides of a Story (Student Essay)</i>	28
Notes, Drafts, Revisions: An Historian Revises	
Her Work	31
FRANCES FITZGERALD <i>Prospero's Army</i>	32
FitzGerald's Notes and Drafts	37
<i>Pre-draft Notes</i>	37
<i>Working Outline</i>	38
<i>Early Draft</i>	38
<i>Later Draft</i>	40

## CHAPTER THREE Shaping Paragraphs 43

### Paragraph Form and Substance 43

#### The Shape of a Paragraph 45

### Paragraph Unity: Topic Sentences, Topic Ideas 46

#### Examples of Topic Sentences at Beginning and at End, and of Topic Ideas 46

### Unifying Ideas into Paragraphs 48

### Organization in Paragraphs 50

### Coherence in Paragraphs 52

#### Transitions 52

#### Repetition 54

### Linking Paragraphs Together 54

#### CHERYL LEE *The Story Behind the Gestures* *(Student Essay)* 55

### Paragraph Length 60

#### The Use and Abuse of Short Paragraphs 61

### Introductory Paragraphs 63

### Concluding Paragraphs 70

### ✓ *Checklist for Revising Paragraphs* 73

**CHAPTER FOUR Revising for Conciseness 74****Instant Prose 75**

How to Avoid Instant Prose 76

**Extra Words and Empty Words 77**

Weak Intensifiers 78

Circumlocutions 79

Wordy Beginnings 80

Empty Conclusions 81

Wordy Uses of the Verbs To Be, To Have, and To Make 81

Redundancy 83

Negative Constructions 84

**Extra Sentences, Extra Clauses: Subordination 85**

Who, Which, That 86

**It Is, This Is, There Are 86****Some Concluding Remarks About Conciseness 87****✓ Checklist for Revising for Conciseness 88****CHAPTER FIVE Revising for Clarity 89****Clarity 89****Clarity and Exactness: Using the Right Word 91**

Denotation 91

Connotation 92

Avoiding Sexist Language 94

Quotation Marks as Apologies 95

Being Specific 96

Using Examples 97

Jargon and Technical Language 99

Clichés 102

Metaphors and Mixed Metaphors 102

Euphemisms 104

Passive or Active Voice? 105

The Writer's "I" 107

**Clarity and Coherence 109**

Cats Are Dogs	109
Items in a Series	110
Modifiers	111
<i>Misplaced Modifiers</i>	111
<i>Squinting Modifiers</i>	112
<i>Dangling Modifiers</i>	113
Reference of Pronouns	113
<i>Vague Reference of Pronouns</i>	114
<i>Shift in Pronouns</i>	114
<i>Ambiguous Reference of Pronouns</i>	114
Agreement	115
<i>Noun and Pronoun</i>	115
<i>Subject and Verb</i>	116
<i>Three Additional Points</i>	116
Repetition and Variation	118

Clarity and Sentence Structure: Parallelism 119

✓ *Checklist for Revising for Clarity* 120

## CHAPTER SIX Writing with Style 122

Academic Styles, Academic Audiences 122

Defining Style 125

Style and Tone 126

Acquiring Style 129

Clarity and Texture 129

A Repertory of Styles 130

Originality and Imitation 131

## PART TWO COLLEGE WRITING 133

## CHAPTER SEVEN Analyzing Texts 135

Analyzing a Drawing 136

Analyzing Texts 136

Analysis at Work: A Student Analyzes a Short Story 137

KATE CHOPIN	<i>Ripe Figs</i>	138
ANTONIA TENORI	<i>Images of Ripening in Kate Chopin's "Ripe Figs" (Student Essay)</i>	139
	A Brief Analysis of the Student's Analysis	142
	A Note on the Use of Summary in the Analytic Essay	142
	Classifying and Thinking	143
	Examples of Classifying	144
	Cause and Effect	145
DOLORES HAYDEN	<i>Advertisements, Pornography, and Public Space</i>	145
	Analysis and Description	150
	Description at Work in the Analytic Essay	151
	Comparing	152
	Organizing Short Comparisons	153
	Longer Comparisons	156
	Ways of Organizing an Essay Devoted to a Comparison	158
✓	<i>Checklist for Revising Comparisons</i>	160
	Analyzing a Process	160
ANNE HEBALD MANDELBAUM	<i>It's the Portly Penguin That Gets the Girl, French Biologist Claims</i>	161
	Explaining an Analysis	164

## CHAPTER EIGHT Persuading Readers 166

	Emotional Appeals	166
	Making Reasonable Arguments	167
	Claims and Evidence	169
	Three Kinds of Claims: Claims of Fact, Value, and Policy	169
	Claims of Fact	169
	Claims of Value	170
	Claims of Policy	171

Three Kinds of Evidence: Examples, Testimony,  
Statistics 172

Examples 172

Testimony 174

Statistics 175

A Note on Definition in the Persuasive Essay 176

Definition at Work 177

LENA FLORA *The Plight of the Politically Correct  
(Student Essay)* 177

How Much Evidence Is Enough? 178

Two Kinds of Reasoning: Induction and Deduction 179

Avoiding Fallacies 180

Wit 184

Avoiding Sarcasm 185

Tone and Ethical Appeal 186

Organizing an Argument 187

✓ *Checklist for Revising Drafts of Persuasive Essays* 189

Persuasion at Work: Two Writers Consider the Death  
Penalty 190

EDWARD KOCH *Death and Justice: How Capital Punishment  
Affirms Life* 190

An Analysis of Koch's Argument 195

DAVID BRUCK *The Death Penalty* 197

An Analysis of Bruck's Response to Koch 201

DIANE RAVITCH *In Defense of Testing* 203

A Brief Examination of Ravitch's Ways of Presenting an  
Argument 205

CHAPTER NINE Using Sources 207

Why Use Sources? 207

What Is a Source? Primary and Secondary  
Materials 210

Developing a Research Topic	210
Finding Sources	211
The Library's Central Information System	212
Using the Internet	212
✓ <i>Checklist for Evaluating Websites</i>	213
Reading and Taking Notes on Secondary Sources	214
A Guide to Note-Taking	215
Acknowledging Sources	218
Using Sources without Plagiarizing	218
<i>Acknowledging a Direct Quotation</i>	219
<i>Acknowledging a Paraphrase or Summary</i>	219
<i>Acknowledging an Idea</i>	221
Fair Use of Common Knowledge	222
"But How Else Can I Put It?"	222
Writing the Essay	223
✓ <i>Checklist for Reading Drafts of Research Essays</i>	225
A Sample Research Essay (MLA Format)	226
BEATRICE CODY <i>Politics and Psychology in The Awakening</i> ( <i>Student Essay</i> )	227
A Brief Analysis of Beatrice Cody's Use of Sources	241

## **PART THREE    A WRITER'S HANDBOOK    243**

### **CHAPTER TEN    Punctuation    245**

A Word on Computer Grammar and Punctuation Checks	247
--	-----

Three Common Errors: Fragments, Comma Splices, and Run-On Sentences	247
--	-----

Fragments and How to Correct Them	247
Comma Splices and Run-On Sentences, and How to Correct Them	249



The Period	251
The Question Mark	252
The Colon	252
The Semicolon	253
The Comma	255
The Dash	262
Parentheses	262
Italics	263
Capital Letters	265
The Hyphen	266
The Apostrophe	267
Abbreviations	269
Numbers	270

## CHAPTER ELEVEN Usage 272

A Note on Idioms	273
Glossary	274

## CHAPTER TWELVE Documentation 300

Documentation	300
MLA Format	301
<i>Citations within the Text</i>	301
<i>A Note on Footnotes in an Essay Using Parenthetical Citations</i>	311
<i>The List of Works Cited</i>	312
APA Format	330
<i>An Overview of the APA Format</i>	330
<i>Citations within the Text</i>	331
<i>The List of References</i>	332