The **COMP-LAB** Exercises
Level 2

EDITING
YOUR WRITING

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To the Instructor

EDITING YOUR WRITING is a self-instructional text designed for students in developmental writing courses or advanced ESL courses—students who need help in improving the correctness, as well as the content, of their writing. The book consists of 12 modules of self-teaching exercises that grew out of our efforts to develop materials that would enable students to learn the basic grammar and conventions of written English on their own, thus allowing students and teachers, in class, to devote their energy and attention to matters of greater concern, like composing and the more complicated aspects of syntax. But the exercises grew also out of our awareness that correctness *does* count, and our frustration with the fact that teaching the "rules" of grammar and usage so often had little impact on the writing of error-prone students.

This text is built upon the approach used in THE COMP-LAB EXERCISES, a successful self-instructional program for students at the introductory basic writing level; it extends that approach to students who have greater familiarity with written English, and who are working at a somewhat more advanced level. Both THE COMP-LAB EXERCISES and EDITING YOUR WRITING attempt first, to speed the acquisition of written language forms, structures, and conventions, and second, to give students guidance in applying what they have learned, in the editing process. However, the emphasis is on *acquisition* in THE COMP-LAB EXERCISES, and on *review and application* in EDITING YOUR WRITING. Either text can be used independently, as appropriate to the needs of students in your program.

In colleges like ours, that provide a two-course developmental sequence prior to the standard freshman English course, the two texts can comprise a two-semester sequence of work on written English.

INSTRUCTIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND DESIGN

The exercises in this program have been designed both to complement classroom instruction based on insights from the "writing as process" movement, and to extend those insights in a way that is critical for developmental writers. In recent years, as we teachers have come to realize that students can be taught the *processes* of developing ideas on paper, our professional literature has grown rich in suggestions for coaching students in techniques of prewriting and composing and revising. Generally speaking, however, this crucial insight—that writing consists of many related, teachable processes—has not been extended to aspects of writing that concern control of the written language.

In fact, a bias against the teaching of grammar has become associated with process pedagogy. Teachers are often advised—wisely—to urge students to avoid "premature consideration of correctness." But then when the time is ripe to edit for correctness, instruction turns to exhortation. A warning to "proofread carefully" is not sufficient for students who have serious problems with correctness in writing: They are not yet in possession of the knowledge, skills, and strategies that would help them to see what needs to be corrected, and then to know how to make those corrections. Behind this book lies the recognition that *editing for correctness is a process, too*—one that involves far more than proofreading, and one that can be taught and learned.

Instruction in Editing

What do students need to learn to edit their writing? First, they need to learn the *place* of editing in the total writing process. In any developmental writing course, primary emphasis should be placed on composing, especially on fluency of expression and clear communication of ideas. Students need to develop the confidence to set aside considerations of correctness until they are satisfied (or essentially satisfied) with the content and organization of what they have written.

However, editing for correctness should also receive explicit attention in instruction at this level. Error-prone writers need to learn that editing *is* necessary, and how to go about it. They can learn this only through repeated practice; like all writing skills, editing is truly developmental. Only gradually will students attain the metalinguistic awareness that makes this process of regularizing a text virtually automatic for practiced writers. As a colleague once remarked, just because editing comes at the end of the writing process, that doesn't mean that instruction in editing should be deferred until the end of the semester. By then it's too late.

Teaching a Grammar for Editing

To edit successfully, students do need to learn grammar, but "grammar" of a special kind—a *grammar for editing*. Our approach has been guided by these principles:

(1) *Grammar instruction should not dominate classroom time or students' consciousness*. This book is designed as a *complement* to classroom instruction in composing, one that makes it possible to give composing primary emphasis without slighting students' difficulties in the area of correctness.

(2) *Grammar instruction should be systematic*. One frequently hears advice that instruction should be offered only in the features a particular student appears to "need." This may be good advice for students who speak standard English, but many, if not most developmental writers have a nonstandard English or foreign-language speech background. They need to grasp the grammar of written English as a *system*, not its parts in isolation, and to understand how different forms and structures interact with—and influence—one another.

(3) *Instruction should be selective, emphasizing the forms and structures that are most likely to induce error*. Each module in this book focuses on a single feature of the written language and treats it in depth. The features emphasized are those that are "stress points" in students' writing because they produce the most frequent and the most systematic errors. And so, in doing the exercises, students are learning—implicitly—*what to look for* when they edit their writing.

(4) *Instruction should include inductive learning and practice*. Fill-in exercises help students sort out their conceptual understanding of a feature, but this is only a first step toward mastery. The longer exercises in each module, adapted from the best we have seen in basic writing and ESL instruction, are designed to

provide practice in varied contexts, giving students a chance to assimilate new patterns and to develop the kind of understanding that leads to real control.

(5) *Grammatical terminology should be kept to a minimum.* This text presents a simplified form of grammatical analysis, one that students generally find easy to grasp and to apply. We do in this book (more than in THE COMP-LAB EXERCISES) relate these terms to some of the more traditional terms that students are likely to have heard in the past—but not, most likely, to have fully understood.

Perceptual Skills and Self-Instruction

Knowledge of grammatical and orthographic conventions is essential to successful editing, but students need more: They need to develop the *perceptual habits and skills* that will enable them to read for the visual symbols that represent meaning, as well as for meaning itself. Research suggests that lack of ability to attend to details on the page—*not* lack of acquaintance with the "rules"—is the single characteristic that error-prone writers most often have in common.

This brings us to yet another principle, one intimately related to the development of perceptual skills: *Where possible, written language instruction should be autotutorial.*

The self-teaching approach has many virtues. The most obvious is practical: As we've noted, class time that might otherwise have to be devoted to rather basic instruction in correctness is freed for writing activities that really demand a teacher's guidance. Then, too, the approach itself teaches a great deal implicitly about how to learn. Students move at their own pace, and they develop habits of monitoring their own progress and understanding. Most important of all, however, is the fact that self-instruction offers an element of perceptual practice that simply cannot be provided in any other way. In checking forms in their own handwriting against the printed forms of the Answers, students exercise perceptual skills that are crucial for successful editing.

SEQUENCE AND STRUCTURE

Order of the Modules

An introductory module, "How to Use This Book," orients students to the self-teaching approach and provides the instructor with an early chance to monitor students' understanding of it. This is followed by an introduction to the editing process (Module 1) that alerts students to the need to change their reading habits when they are editing for correctness, suggests how to hone perceptual skills, and helps diagnose weaknesses in this area.

Subsequent modules each treat one feature or one group of related features, moving from the surface (or visual) aspects of written English, which students are most likely to understand and be able to control (writing conventions, spelling, and "wrong words"), to its more organic structures (nouns, verbs, and syntax) and the conventions of punctuation.

The final module focuses on the conventions of quotation, which affords an effective way to reinforce work on syntax. While few developmental writing courses are likely to include direct instruction in use of source material, assimilation of the conventions of quotation and citation is an essential first step toward use of sources later. Furthermore, occasional use of proverbs, poetry, and fragments of speech comes naturally (and should be encouraged) in the type of essays most students at this level will be writing, those developing general ideas on the basis of personal experience and observation.

Work on noun possessives is included as an Appendix, because the appropriate time to assign this material will vary from group to group and student to student.

Sequence of Activities

Our intent throughout is to present students with activities that help bridge the gap between learning the rules and applying them in their own writing. Each module begins with a section called Rules Review. (This title reflects our assumption that most of the conventions of standard written English will be familiar to students, even though they may have a somewhat uncertain grasp of some of them.) This is followed by a Practice section, longer sentence and paragraph exercises that present more challenging editing tasks, in contexts that we have sought to make interesting and informative in their own right. Answers to all exercises, even the most complicated, are provided at the back of the book, so that students can check their work as they go along.

Each module ends with advice (Application to Your Own Writing) about how to make active use of the learning of the module—followed by a Writing Test that gives specific practice in doing so. (This Writing Test is the only exercise that must be marked by an instructor.) The Writing Tests are directed writing assignments that call for exercise of the feature just studied. For example, at the end of Module 6, on verb agreement, the Writing Test asks students to write about a topic in a way that is certain to test control of agreement with a third-person singular subject. In this way, the Writing Tests are designed to present focused *editing* tasks.

The Writing Tests are designed, as well, to provide interesting assignments that move students further along the road to mastery of college writing. Students should be able to do the Tests successfully on their own, following the instructions in the book. But we suggest also that instructors use the Tests as springboards to more demanding rhetorical tasks, in ways that are outlined in the *Instructor's Manual*.

Several Editing Review exercises, presented at intervals throughout the book, offer tasks designed to help students pull together the editing tactics they have been working on. And midway through the book, after most basic editing principles and grammatical topics have been covered, two special sections (the Editing Summary and Individualizing Your Editing) help students to develop first general and then specific strategies for editing their drafts.

DIFFERENCES FROM THE COMP-LAB EXERCISES

Those familiar with THE COMP-LAB EXERCISES may wish to know more specifically how the two texts differ:

(1) We assume here a fair acquaintance with the basics of written English, whereas in THE COMP-LAB EXERCISES we tried to take little prior learning in this area for granted.

(2) We assume less direct influence from speech patterns. This text devotes less attention to such "interference" features as the verb BE and simple noun plurals, stressing instead common errors that persist in the writing of virtually all developmental students. (Because of this shift of emphasis, this text is not accompanied by audiotapes.)

(3) EDITING YOUR WRITING integrates work on more advanced topics: pronoun agreement, tense consistency, and more details of sentence punctuation, as well as the mechanics of quotation and noun possessives.

(4) Although we continue to rely more on examples (and commentary on

those examples) than on lengthy written explanations, we do sometimes allow ourselves at this more advanced level to "tell" as well as "show."

(5) The reading level of sentences and paragraphs in this text is more demanding. In their subject matter and mode, the balance has shifted from narrative to exposition—as we think the balance should shift in students' own writing.

SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE

Assigning the Modules. This book is intended for writers who have moderate to substantial problems with correctness, and for them, we recommend assigning all twelve modules, in order. Each module builds on what has been taught before, and anticipates what follows, so the work is most effective when done in sequence. Considerable work on syntax is integrated into the word-form modules, and the exercises toward the end of each module are sufficiently challenging that doing them is likely to be valuable even to students who may seem not to need work on a particular topic. However, the modules are sufficiently independent of one another that, for a more heterogeneous class, they can be assigned selectively to students whose problems with correctness are relatively slight.

Managing the Self-Teaching Approach. The self-teaching approach can save time for the instructor over the course of the term, but it will work most successfully if the instructor spends time in the beginning helping students learn to use it. The introductory section on "How to Use This Book" is an important orientation. Spot-checking students' work on the exercises is crucial in monitoring how well they are succeeding in the self-teaching process.

Instructor's Manual. The *Instructor's Manual* offers more specific advice about managing the self-teaching approach, as well as module-by-module comments on the material presented and suggestions for helping students apply it. It contains suggestions for teaching composing, for integrating students' work on the Writing Tests into that instruction, and for marking students' papers in a way that reinforces what they are learning in this self-instructional program. The *Instructor's Manual* includes also (as pages that may be reproduced) alternate Writing Tests and additional Editing Review Exercises. To request a copy, contact your local Prentice Hall representative or write to: Marketing Manager—Humanities, College Book Division, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like the act of teaching itself, making a textbook is a work of synthesis. We are aware of our debt to a host of teachers, researchers, and friends whose conference presentations, writings, and conversations about written language learning and editing have contributed, directly and indirectly, to our thinking and so to this book. However, to begin to name them is inevitably to leave many out. We are grateful to all.

Our largest debt is to our York College colleague Michael Southwell, co-author of THE COMP-LAB EXERCISES and longtime collaborator with us on basic writing instruction. In ways it would be impossible to trace, the methodology of this new text and the philosophy of instruction represented in it are built upon the foundation of our extended three-way partnership. Even though his own work has taken him for the time being in other directions, Michael's thoughtful reading and comments on an early version of this text helped us—as no one else's could have—to see our own direction and follow it more surely.

Contents

How to Use This Book

NAME _____

As you complete each exercise, record your number of mistakes below.

0.1 _____

0.2 _____

0.3 _____

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS

_____ You are reading the instructions carefully.

_____ You are not reading the instructions carefully enough.

Checking:

_____ Careful.

_____ Not careful enough to catch all your mistakes.

_____ When you check, be sure to write in the *entire* correct answer, using your green pen.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This is a book designed to teach what you most need to know to edit your writing successfully. The term *editing* describes a systematic approach to making your writing correct and easy for others to read and understand.

Is correctness all that counts? No! Of course the part of writing that matters most is what it communicates. A paper that is 100 percent correct but doesn't have anything to say won't impress anybody. But on the other hand, a paper that is full of good ideas and insights—but hard to read because it is full of mistakes—isn't likely to impress a reader, either.

An essential part of learning to write is learning how and when to give attention to each of these two matters: content and correctness. No one, not even a professional writer, can avoid making mistakes while prewriting and drafting. In fact, trying to avoid errors while you are actively writing is counter-productive, because it is almost certain to stop the flow of your ideas. We assume that users of *Editing Your Writing* are also writing papers, probably for a composition course in college. This book is intended to help you develop strategies for finding and correcting mistakes in your writing *after* you have finished the process of putting your ideas on paper.

The Self Teaching Approach

This is a self-teaching book: It is designed so that you can work through it at your own speed, checking your work, exercise by exercise, against the answers provided at the back of the book. The book is designed in this way so that you can learn material related to editing on your own. This will leave more time in class for you and your instructor to give attention to the crucial first part of the writing process, organizing and developing ideas.

Editing Your Writing deals with the features of the written language that cause the most serious problems in writing, with each module (or chapter) focused on one area of difficulty. Like most students, you will probably find that some modules are simply "review" for you, and that these are relatively easy. Other modules will be more difficult, treating material that is less familiar and harder for you to apply. As you work through the modules, try to develop an awareness of the particular features that cause you problems, not only in doing the exercises, but also (especially) in your own writing.

One caution: Unless you are familiar with programmed instruction, some of the exercises may seem overly simple at first. Keep in mind that the object is not simply to "do" these exercises, but to learn from them—and to learn what they teach so completely that it becomes almost second nature in your writing. Resist the temptation to rush. The more thoughtfully you do the work, the more you will gain from it.

Here is what you need to have before you begin:

(1) Two different colored pens (we suggest a black one to work with, and a green one to check your answers with),
(2) A three-ring notebook, and
(3) A good dictionary.

Whenever you use this book, keep these materials handy.

The Parts of a Module

First you need to understand how this book works. Look now at the table of contents which follows the title page. Notice that the chapters are called modules, and that most have several parts. Notice also that the answers to all the exercises are at the very end of the book. And notice that each page in the book is perforated, so that you can tear it out easily.

EXERCISE 0.1 Now turn to Module 6 for a close look at how a module is put together. Use your black pen to fill in the blanks below. (Even when you are absolutely sure of an answer, writing it down helps you remember it.)

1. Each module is about one grammatical feature or area of attention for editing. Module 6 is all about _____.

2. The first page of Module 6 (like the first page of every module) is a cover page with spaces where you and your _____ keep notes on the module.

3. Next, there is a section called the _____ _____, containing explanation, examples, and short exercises.

4. In the Rules Review, it is easy to pick out the key ideas (important rules or statements about the features of written English) because each one is printed in dark type at the head of a new section marked off by a black box in the margin. Each rule has a number (corresponding to the module number) and a _____ so that it will be easy to refer back to that idea later.

5. Look at the end of Exercise 6.1. Here you are told to _____ your work as you go along.

6. To check your work, you will compare what you have written for each exercise to what is printed in the Answers in the back of the book. Find the Answers for Module 6 and look them over. Write here the answer that is given for the fifth question in Exercise 6.11: _____.

7. After the Rules Review come longer, one-page exercises labelled _____ at the top of the page. These help you to apply the rules to writing and editing.

8. Look at Exercise 6.14. At the top of this exercise (and every one-page exercise) is a space for your number of _____, so that you can record how well you did (and keep track of what gave you trouble). You will also keep track of how well you are doing on all the exercises on the cover page of the module, which provides the same information to your instructor.

9. Exercise 6.28 is the last one-page exercise in the Part 2 Practice section. After it comes a page of suggestions for application of the rules to your own writing. After that comes a Writing _____. This asks you to write a paragraph to show that you can apply the rules of the module in your own edited writing.

10. Now turn to the very end of Module 7, after the Writing Test. Here is an exercise called _____. Exercises like this, which appear in several places in the book, will help you to remember and apply what you have learned in the earlier modules.

Checking Your Work

Second, to get the most out of this book, you need to check your work accurately, so that you can learn from your mistakes. Remember that the exercises are not tests, but a chance for you to develop the skill of *teaching yourself*.

Each exercise in this book teaches something you need to know in order to do the next exercise. So as soon as you do an exercise, it's important for you to look at the answers and correct any mistakes *immediately*, before you go on. Compare what you wrote to what is printed in the Answers. If you made a mistake, use your green pen to *write in* the correct answer above your mistake. This will help you to learn the correct answer. And when you review your work, it will help you to identify the places where you had trouble. These are likely to be the same features that will give you problems when you edit your papers.

Then of course it's important to think about *why* you made a particular mistake. Were you in a rush to finish? Or did you misunderstand a rule, or forget it? Checking your work will let you know whether or not you need to slow down or to go over the rules one more time (with special attention to the examples and comments on the examples) before you go on.

Here is the best way to check your work. As you follow these steps to check Exercise 0.1, put an X in each box.

☐ Carefully tear out the page containing Exercise 0.1 and get your green pen.

☐ Find the answers for Exercise 0.1 at the back of the book. Compare what you wrote to what is printed in the Answers.

☐ If you made a mistake, use your green pen to *write in* the entire correct answer above your mistake.

☐ Now record on the cover sheet of this introduction the number of mistakes that you made on Exercise 0.1. If you didn't make any mistakes, write 0.

☐ As soon as you have completed all the work on this (or any) page, put it in your three-ring notebook. But don't put it in your notebook until you have done everything on both sides of the page.

Follow the same five steps to check every exercise except the Writing Test at the end of each module. This is the only exercise that you cannot check by yourself. Your instructor will mark it for you.

Following Instructions

Third, to get the most out of working on your own, you need to pay close attention to instructions.

EXERCISE 0.2 Turn to the Writing Test at the end of Module 7. Read carefully the comments and instructions at the top of the page. Then fill in the blanks below.

1. The purpose of this Writing Test is to _____

_____ _____.

   In a similar way, each Writing Test, placed at the end of each module, will show whether or not you

   can apply in your own writing the rules you have just reviewed and practiced in the module.

2. You can get help in doing a good job on the Writing Test by referring to the _____

   _____ and your _____.

3. According to the instructions for Writing Test 7, you must write at least _____ sentences in each

   of the paragraphs.

IMPORTANT: If you need more space for any Writing Test or any exercise, you should continue on a sheet of your own paper.

4. In every sentence in the first paragraph, you must use a verb in the _____ tense.

5. In your finished Writing Test, you are asked to _____ every verb.

6. To be sure you have used the minimum number of verbs in your Test, you must count them and write the total number at _____.

7. In this, as in all the Writing Tests, it is important to stick to the _____ you are given.

    (Otherwise, you may not really test yourself on applying the rules of that particular module.)

Now check your work on Exercise 0.2 by turning to the Answers at the back of the book. Correct any mistakes with your green pen, and record the number of mistakes on the cover page.

IMPORTANT: You must follow *all* the instructions if you are to learn everything you should from an exercise. Sometimes instructions may seem more complicated than they really are. Be sure to follow them step by step, *in order*. Exercise 0.3 below will help you see how good you are at following instructions.

EXERCISE 0.3 For the sentence below, do the following: (1) The word at the beginning of the sentence is not capitalized. Underline it. (2) One word has been omitted. Put a caret (∧) where this word belongs. (3) Two words don't make sense. Underline those two words. (4) The period at the end of the sentence is missing. Put it in. (5) In the space above the line, write correctly the words you underlined, and insert the omitted word. (6) Circle every correction you made.

        a tiny mistake, like a decimal pint in wrong place, my cause large problems

Before you look at the answers for Exercise 0.3, consider these questions: Did you *write out* the words point and may? If you followed the instructions, you should have written out the words completely (not just added or changed letters). Did you draw five circles? Did you write in a capital A? How much you learn from this book depends very much on how carefully you follow the instructions as you work through the exercises.

Now get your green pen and turn to the Answers for Exercise 0.3 to check your work.

Learning on Your Own

The self-teaching approach shifts the responsibility for learning to you. If you made any mistakes in doing any of the exercises in this section—and whenever you make mistakes—try to understand *why* your answers were wrong. Did you read the instructions too quickly or too carelessly? Do you need to read instructions more than once to understand them? Did you think about the *point* of each exercise before you started to work on it?

    If you have any remaining questions about how to use this book, be sure to ask your instructor.

    Good luck in your work in *Editing Your Writing*. The authors hope that you will find the self-teaching approach profitable and interesting—even, perhaps, an enjoyable change of pace.