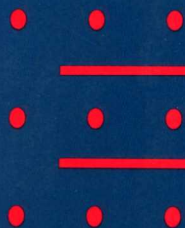


THE  
RANDOM  
HOUSE  
PRACTICE  
BOOK

SECOND EDITION



MICHAEL HENNESSY

# The Random House Practice Book

Second Edition

Michael Hennessy  
Southwest Texas State University

McGraw-Hill, Inc.

New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá  
Caracas Lisbon London Madrid Mexico Milan  
Montreal New Delhi Paris San Juan  
Singapore Sydney Tokyo Toronto

This book was developed by STEVEN PENSINGER, Inc.

## THE RANDOM HOUSE PRACTICE BOOK

Copyright © 1992 by McGraw-Hill, Inc. All rights reserved. Previously published under the title of *The Random House Practice Book for Writers*. Copyright © 1988 by McGraw-Hill, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

*Acknowledgments appear on pages 429–430, and on this page by reference.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOH DOH 9 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 0-07-013646-7

ISBN 0-07-013637-8

This book was set in Times Roman by Chelmarc, Inc.  
The editors were Steve Pensinger and James R. Belser;  
the production supervisor was Kathryn Porzio.  
The cover was designed by Armen Kojoyian.  
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

# About the Author

---

MICHAEL HENNESSY (Ph.D., Marquette University) is Professor of English at Southwest Texas State University, where he directs the first-year writing program and teaches courses in beginning and advanced composition, modern literature, and the teaching of writing. He has also taught at Memphis State University and John Carroll University. His publications include *The Borzoi Practice Book for Writers* as well as articles and reviews on composition pedagogy and on the work of Shakespeare, Auden, and the contemporary British poet Charles Tomlinson. He has recently served as chair of the Texas Association of Writing Program Directors.

# Preface

---

*The Random House Practice Book*, second edition, is a collection of some 250 exercises designed to accompany *The Random House Handbook*, sixth edition, by Frederick Crews. The *Practice Book* offers a full range of material for students who need to review basics, but it also stresses rhetorical effectiveness, with ample coverage of the larger elements of composition. Because the book is available, shrink-wrapped with new copies of the *Handbook*, instructors can adopt it at only a small added cost for their students.

In its new edition, the *Practice Book* continues to take a positive approach to writing. Students learn to correct errors, but they also learn to use language effectively. The chapters on the sentence, for example, put as much emphasis on constructing strong sentences as they do on revising weak ones. In the exercises on usage, punctuation, and mechanics, students study errors in context by editing sentences and paragraphs rather than filling in blanks. Wherever possible, the book stresses flexible practice rather than rote drill.

Several of the book's distinctive features are strengthened in this edition:

- *Exercises on every aspect of the writing process.* I have enlarged or added nearly fifty exercises, some adapted from a related text, *The Borzoi Practice Book for Writers*, and others designed specifically for this book. There are new exercises on thesis, peer editing, and note taking; on idioms, jargon, and figurative language; on fragments, comma splices, and agreement; and on semicolons, dashes, and capitalization. Many exercises ask students to revise draft prose. And three new review exercises invite them to examine paragraphs, sentences, and words in the context of finished student essays.
- *Exercises based on student and professional writing.* I have added more than twenty samples of student writing to the dozens already in the book. There are now eight complete essays, including research papers showing both MLA and APA styles. (An asterisk at the end of a selection indicates student writing.) Also, new examples of professional writing appear throughout the book, including excerpts by Joan Didion, Annie Dillard, Paul Fussell, Thomas Jefferson, Martin Luther King, Richard Rodriguez, Alice Walker, and Virginia Woolf.
- *Exercises drawn from an array of colorful, informative sources.* Many exercises incorporate material from speeches, popular magazines, newspapers, historical documents, novels, short stories, and classic essays. Students study diction in the United States Constitution, parallelism in a speech by John F. Kennedy, and paragraph coherence in a passage by Eudora Welty. They learn about mermaids, cucumbers, elephants, and computers; about colonial women and Viking warriors; about theories of language and styles of dress. Exercises are meant to delight as well as to teach.

The organization of the *Practice Book* follows that of the *Handbook*. The first part introduces various prose strategies, illustrating them with model passages and inviting students to practice the strategies in their own writing. In the second and third parts of the book, students will find a step-by-step guide for writing essays, including a detailed treatment of prewriting, drafting, and revising, as well as a set of chapters on writing a research paper. Parts Four through Six emphasize the shaping of effective paragraphs and sentences as well as the selection of precise, lively words. And the last three parts of the book (Seven through Nine) give ample coverage to the nuts-and-bolts of writing—usage, punctuation, and conventions.

Each exercise in the *Practice Book* is keyed to the section of the *Handbook* that students should consult as they do the exercise. This scheme makes it easy to use the two books in tandem and helps students

learn the *Handbook's* reference system. An Answer Key for the *Practice Book* is available on request from McGraw-Hill.

I owe special thanks to Frederick Crews for his continuing support of my work and to Steve Pensinger for his expert advice in developing the *Practice Book*. At McGraw-Hill, James Belser, Kathy Porzio, and Alice Jaggard quickly turned a bulky manuscript into a finished book; they have my thanks. I am also grateful to colleagues at Southwest Texas State University who helped in various ways—especially Lisa Lundstedt, Carolyn Pate, Pat Pohl, and Miles Wilson—and to the many students who allowed me to reprint, and often adapt, their writing in the exercises. Those who supplied full essays are credited in the text; others whose writing is new to this edition include Shelby Cash, Dana Cobb, Chris Jenkins, Heidi Prather, Eva Reed, and Lisa Valerian. Another student, Lovell White, helped track down sources. Finally, I wish to thank my family—Susie, Nora, Kevin, Bridget, and Mary—for their many contributions to the book.

Michael Hennessy

# Contents

---

**Preface**     *xi*

**I. Exploring Prose Strategies**     *1*

**1 Strategies of Description and Narration**     *3*

Exercises 1.1–1.17     *3*

*Review Exercise: Identifying the Elements of an  
Effective Description 1.10     12*

*Review Exercise: Analyzing a Descriptive Essay 1.11     14*

*Review Exercise: Analyzing a Narrative Essay 1.17     19*

**2 Strategies of Analysis and Argument**     *23*

Exercises 2.1–2.22     *23*

*Review Exercise: Exploring Strategies of Analysis  
and Argument 2.21     65*

**II. Composing Whole Essays**     *67*

**3 Planning an Essay**     *69*

Exercises 3.1–3.27     *69*



|      |                                                                       |     |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 4    | Supporting a Thesis                                                   | 93  |
|      | Exercises 4.1–4.13                                                    | 93  |
| 5    | Collaborating and Revising                                            | 109 |
|      | Exercises 5.1–5.7                                                     | 109 |
|      | Review Exercise: Examining a Finished Essay 5.7                       | 128 |
| III. | The Research Essay                                                    | 133 |
| 6    | Finding and Mastering Sources                                         | 135 |
|      | Exercises 6.1–6.5                                                     | 135 |
| 7    | Documenting Sources                                                   | 147 |
|      | Exercises 7.1–7.5                                                     | 147 |
| 8    | Planning and Writing a Research Essay                                 | 151 |
|      | Exercises 8.1–8.8                                                     | 151 |
| IV.  | Paragraphs                                                            | 173 |
| 9    | Paragraph Unity and Continuity                                        | 175 |
|      | Exercises 9.1–9.9                                                     | 175 |
|      | Review Exercise: Peer Editing for Paragraph Unity and Continuity 9.9  | 188 |
| 10   | Paragraph Development                                                 | 189 |
|      | Exercises 10.1–10.5                                                   | 189 |
|      | Review Exercise: Peer Editing for Paragraph Development 10.5          | 197 |
| 11   | Opening and Closing Paragraphs                                        | 199 |
|      | Exercises 11.1–11.10                                                  | 199 |
|      | Review Exercise: Exploring Paragraphs in Context—Student Essays 11.10 | 206 |
| V.   | Sentences                                                             | 207 |
| 12   | Writing Distinct Sentences                                            | 209 |
|      | Exercises 12.1–12.8                                                   | 209 |
|      | Review Exercise: Clarifying Indistinct Sentences 12.7                 | 217 |
|      | Review Exercise: Peer Editing to Improve Indistinct Sentences 12.8    | 218 |
| 13   | Subordination                                                         | 219 |
|      | Exercises 13.1–13.9                                                   | 219 |
|      | Review Exercise: Using Subordination to Combine Sentences 13.7        | 228 |

|             |                                                                                                                |            |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
|             | <i>Review Exercise: Using Subordination in a Paragraph</i> 13.8                                                | 231        |
|             | <i>Review Exercise: Peer Editing for Improved Subordination</i> 13.9                                           | 231        |
| <b>14</b>   | <b>Sentence Emphasis and Variety</b>                                                                           | <b>233</b> |
|             | Exercises 14.1–14.8                                                                                            | 233        |
|             | <i>Review Exercise: Exploring Sentences in Context—Student Essays</i> 14.8                                     | 241        |
| <b>VI.</b>  | <b>Words</b>                                                                                                   | <b>243</b> |
| <b>15</b>   | <b>Appropriate Language</b>                                                                                    | <b>245</b> |
|             | Exercises 15.1–15.14                                                                                           | 245        |
| <b>16</b>   | <b>Efficient Language</b>                                                                                      | <b>263</b> |
|             | Exercises 16.1–16.5                                                                                            | 263        |
| <b>17</b>   | <b>Figurative Language</b>                                                                                     | <b>271</b> |
|             | Exercises 17.1–17.5                                                                                            | 271        |
|             | <i>Review Exercise: Exploring Words in Context—Student Essays</i> 17.5                                         | 278        |
| <b>VII.</b> | <b>Usage</b>                                                                                                   | <b>279</b> |
| <b>18</b>   | <b>Complete Sentences</b>                                                                                      | <b>281</b> |
|             | Exercises 18.1–18.7                                                                                            | 281        |
| <b>19</b>   | <b>Joining Independent Clauses</b>                                                                             | <b>291</b> |
|             | Exercises 19.1–19.6                                                                                            | 291        |
| <b>20</b>   | <b>Joining Subjects and Verbs</b>                                                                              | <b>301</b> |
|             | Exercises 20.1–20.8                                                                                            | 301        |
|             | <i>Review Exercise: Editing for Fragments, Comma Splices, Fused Sentences, and Subject-Verb Agreement</i> 20.8 | 310        |
| <b>21</b>   | <b>Modifiers</b>                                                                                               | <b>313</b> |
|             | Exercises 21.1–21.9                                                                                            | 313        |
|             | <i>Review Exercise: Placing and Punctuating Modifiers</i> 21.9                                                 | 326        |
| <b>22</b>   | <b>Noun and Pronoun Case</b>                                                                                   | <b>327</b> |
|             | Exercises 22.1–22.3                                                                                            | 327        |
| <b>23</b>   | <b>Pronoun Agreement and Reference</b>                                                                         | <b>331</b> |
|             | Exercises 23.1–23.7                                                                                            | 331        |
|             | <i>Review Exercise: Editing a Passage to Eliminate Problems with Pronouns</i> 23.7                             | 337        |
| <b>24</b>   | <b>Parallelism</b>                                                                                             | <b>339</b> |
|             | Exercises 24.1–24.3                                                                                            | 339        |

- 25 Relations between Tenses 345**  
 Exercises 25.1–25.6 345  
*Review Exercise: Editing a Passage for Errors in Parallel Construction and Shifts in Verb Tense* 25.6 350

## **VIII. Punctuation 353**

- 26 Periods, Question Marks, Exclamation Points 355**  
 Exercise 26.1 355
- 27 Commas 357**  
 Exercises 27.1–27.9 357  
*Review Exercise: Editing a Passage for Comma Errors* 27.9 366
- 28 Semicolons and Colons 369**  
 Exercises 28.1–28.6 369
- 29 Dashes and Parentheses 375**  
 Exercises 29.1–29.5 375  
*Review Exercise: Using Commas, Semicolons, Colons, Dashes, and Parentheses* 29.5 379
- 30 Quoting 381**  
 Exercises 30.1–30.4 381
- 31 Forming and Spacing Punctuation Marks 387**  
 Exercise 31.1 387

## **IX. Conventions 391**

- 32 Verb Forms 393**  
 Exercises 32.1–32.6 393  
*Review Exercise: Editing a Passage for Errors in the Use of Verb Forms* 32.6 399
- 33 Plurals and Possessives 401**  
 Exercises 33.1–33.3 401
- 34 Spelling and Hyphenation 407**  
 Exercises 34.1–34.6 407
- 35 Capitals 415**  
 Exercises 35.1–35.2 415
- 36 Italics, Abbreviations, Numbers 419**  
 Exercises 36.1–36.2 419  
*Review Exercise: Editing a Passage for Errors—Plurals, Possessives, Spelling, Hyphenation, Capitals, Italics, Abbreviations, and Numbers* 36.2 421

**Notes 423**

**Acknowledgments 429**

---

I  
=

EXPLORING  
PROSE  
STRATEGIES

---



# 1

## Strategies of Description and Narration

---

---

### DESCRIPTION

#### 1.1 Sharpening Your Powers of Observation (*RHH 1a*)

Vivid descriptive writing often begins with careful observation of the physical world. Find a place that interests you—a park, a beach, a crowded shopping mall, a cluttered kitchen—and spend some time there observing and recording details. Try not to limit yourself to things you see; use your ears, nose, and skin as well as your eyes. Record the details below.

Place observed \_\_\_\_\_

Details \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 1.2 Using Details to Build a Descriptive Paragraph (RHH 1a-b)

Review the details you gathered for Exercise 1.1. Then write a paragraph describing the place you observed. Start the paragraph with a general statement that summarizes your overall impression; then supply concrete, specific details to flesh out that impression.

## 1.3 Using Concrete, Specific Language (RHH 1a)

Expand the following sentences, using concrete, specific language to sharpen their descriptive power.

Example: The ashtray was full.

*Standing among empty glasses, bottles, and Coke cans, the yellow ashtray overflowed with a week's worth of stale cigarette butts and discarded gum wrappers.*

1. The lawn was well groomed.

---

---

---

---

2. The air felt very cold.

---

---

---

---

3. The snack was delicious.

---

---

---

---

4. Paul's kitchen smelled wonderful.

---

---

---

---

5. Julia's face looked strained.

---

---

---

---



## **1.4 Establishing a Descriptive Point of View: Physical Perspective (RHH 1b)**

Write two paragraphs in which you describe the same person, animal, object, or scene from drastically different physical vantage points. Use your imagination.

*Example:* A baby's view of an adult, first looking up from the floor, then face-to-face after the adult picks up the child.

## **1.5 Establishing a Descriptive Point of View: Attitude (RHH 1b)**

Choose one of the following topics or a topic of your own, and write two descriptive paragraphs, one indicating a favorable attitude toward the subject, the other an unfavorable attitude. Instead of directly telling the reader your attitude, use descriptive details that show how you feel. Be prepared to discuss the kind of detail you selected for each paragraph.

1. A thunderstorm
2. A ride in a speeding car
3. A desert landscape
4. An actor's face
5. A weightlifter's body

## **1.6 Using a Characteristic Action to Describe (RHH 1c)**

We recognize animals most obviously by the way they look, but we also associate certain actions or mannerisms with many animals, actions that reveal the animal's "personality"—a kitten playing with a string; an elephant swaying rhythmically from side to side, the top of its trunk brushing the ground; a bat swooping and dipping in the night air. Write a paragraph in which you describe an animal, revealing its "personality" through characteristic actions.

*Example:* Two of the most appealing characteristics of *Lutra canadensis* are its playfulness and the fact that it is easily tamed and shows no great fear of humans. During the winter otters often