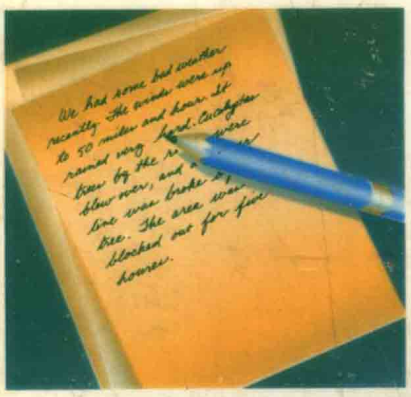
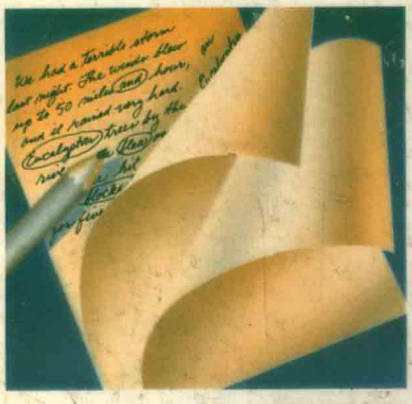
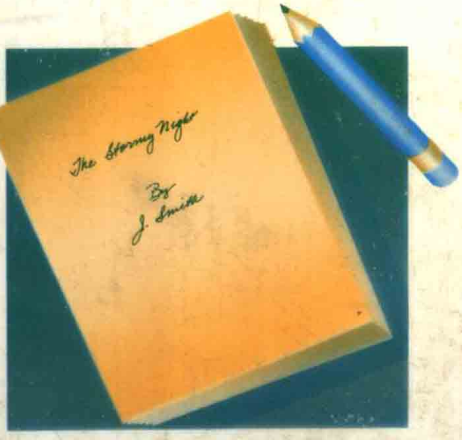
COLLEGE *Writing* BASICS

A Progressive Approach







Thomas E. Tyner

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A Progressive Approach

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Wadsworth Publishing Company
Belmont, California
A Division of Wadsworth, Inc.

To Patti, Tim, and Lori
for their encouragement
and support

English Editor: John Strohmeier
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Printed in the United States of America
5 6 7 8 9 10——91 90 89

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tyner, Thomas E., 1944–
College writing basics.
Includes index.
1. English language—Rhetoric. 2. English language—Grammar—1950– I. Title.
PE1408.T95 1987 808'.042 86-15712
ISBN 0-534-06888-X

Preface

In teaching developmental writing courses, I have found that the language and educational backgrounds of students vary greatly, affecting each student's rate of progress in acquiring new writing skills I have also found that students develop and retain skills best through regular practice and reinforcement, and that as a course progresses, students can handle increasingly sophisticated writing structures and assignments *College Writing Basics* was designed for developmental writing courses with those three considerations in mind to provide for as much individualization of instruction as is needed, to reinforce basic skill learning throughout the text, and to gradually increase the difficulty and sophistication of the material as students are ready to handle it

College Writing Basics has a rather unique format that allows it to meet the needs of developmental writers It is divided into six 'levels" with each level presenting more challenging material as students build their skills and confidence Each level also covers the same basic skill areas, albeit with increasing sophistication, so that students receive regular skills reinforcement Finally, each section within a level contains answer-keyed exercises, an end-of-section practice quiz, and an instructor's manual section quiz so that both student and instructor can monitor an individual's progress Hence, *College Writing Basics* may be used with any degree of individualization that the instructor feels is beneficial for a given class

College Writing Basics contains a number of features that make it particularly useful for developmental writing courses

Progressive Skill Development

Each of the six levels is divided into three sections: "The Paragraph," "The Sentence," and "The Word." In Level One, these sections contain very basic material on paragraph unity, simple sentence combining, basic run-on sentence correction,

identification of subjects and verbs, using pronouns to replace nouns, and spelling plurals correctly.

By Level Six, the same basic sections on "The Paragraph," "The Sentence," and "The Word" require students to write multiparagraph compositions for specific audiences, to generate compound and complex sentence combinations, to identify and correct dangling modifiers and nonparallel constructions, to identify and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tenses, and to spell difficult "double-letter" words like "occasionally" and "embarrass." The increase in writing sophistication from Level One to Level Six is marked but logical, given the progressive skill development approach in each level.

Process Oriented

In the first section of each level, "The Paragraph," students plan, organize, and draft paragraphs with the emphasis on content. In the following "The Sentence" section, students revise paragraphs for sentence variety, smooth, clear wording, and correct sentence construction. Finally, in "The Word" section, students learn to use correct grammatical constructions and to spell a range of problematic words correctly. Therefore, each level follows the basic writing process, moving from the broader concerns of content and organization to the more specific concerns of expressing ideas in clear, correct prose. Since each level follows the same format, the concept of writing as a process is reinforced throughout the text.

Individualized Learning

The text is designed to allow for as much individualization of learning as the instructor desires. The text "talks" to students in clear, direct language and provides simple, straightforward instructions and a multitude of examples that help guide a student independently through a level. The students can check on their progress through the answers keys, the practice quizzes, and the instructor-monitored section quizzes. Through the section quizzes and the end-of-level writing reviews (discussed below under "Writing Component"), an instructor can make sure that students aren't allowed to move from one level to the next without showing real progress. Through instructions in many exercises that require students to share their work with their instructor, the students never feel like they are "going it alone," and the instructor never feels like an intruder in offering his or her help.

Testing Component

Although *College Writing Basics* is a writing-oriented text, it also contains a testing component for both students and instructor to monitor individual progress on a

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regular basis. The diagnostic quizzes in the instructor's manual can give students an indication of their familiarity with a given topic. The end-of-section practice quiz helps a student prepare for the section quiz. The instructor may use the section quizzes as progress checks, as graded work, or both. All quizzes are multiple choice, require a positive response selection, and can be taken on Scantron cards and electronically graded for instructor convenience. The instructor's manual also contains comprehensive review quizzes at the end of the second, fourth, and sixth levels which may be used as the objective parts of mid-term and final exams.

As an added feature, the instructor's manual testing component is also available (free of charge to *College Writing Basics* users) on Wadsworth's Micro-Pac software system that is compatible with IBM and Apple computers. This software, which greatly reduces the time needed to prepare tests, includes a Systems Diskette, Test Item Diskettes with the *College Writing Basics* quizzes on them, and a User's Manual. Any instructor with access to a computer should consider ordering the Micro-Pac software that goes with the text.

Writing Component

Throughout each level, students are given numerous writing opportunities. They write individual paragraphs, combine sentences, generate a variety of sentence constructions, and revise textbook sample paragraphs as well as their own writing. In the last three levels, they begin writing compositions, and by Level Six, they are writing papers with openings, middles, and conclusions. At the end of each level is a "Writing Review" assignment which requires students to apply what they have learned to a writing assignment following a step-by-step process of draft and revision. These "Writing Review" assignments serve as excellent "exit tests" for determining a student's readiness to move to the next level.

Skill Reinforcement

The text is designed so that students re-encounter the same basic skill areas in each level. For example, the paragraph is introduced in Level One and picked up again at the beginning of Levels Two and Three, with new elements introduced and old elements reinforced in each level. Similarly, students deal with run-on sentence correction, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun usage in every level in the text. By the end of the text, students have literally had a full semester's exposure to most of the key elements of effective writing. This kind of reinforcement produces optimum student learning and retention.

In addition, *College Writing Basics* seeks to integrate grammar usage into the writing process in a way that helps students understand its relevance. Too many texts isolate grammar sections from real writing so that there is little carryover from doing exercises on dangling modifier correction to eliminating dangling modifiers in a student's writing. *College Writing Basics* deals with grammar in each level as the final

phase of the writing process, and the grammar usage topics covered in a particular level are applied immediately to writing assignments through the process of revision. Students begin to understand that grammar has a logical place in the writing process and also an important function—to allow readers to concentrate fully on the writer's ideas.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to a number of reviewers for offering suggestions and insights that helped shape this text. In particular, I wish to thank Shain Graham, Orange Coast College; Anthony Garcia, Saddleback College South; Kathryn Osterholm, Clarion University of Pennsylvania; William Condon, Arkansas Technical University; Daniel Lynch, La Guardia Community College, C.U.N.Y.; Larry McDoniel, St. Louis Community College; Gail Hemmeter, East Stroudsburg University; Mark Reynolds, Jefferson Davis State Junior College; and Sandy Meyer, the Pennsylvania State University.

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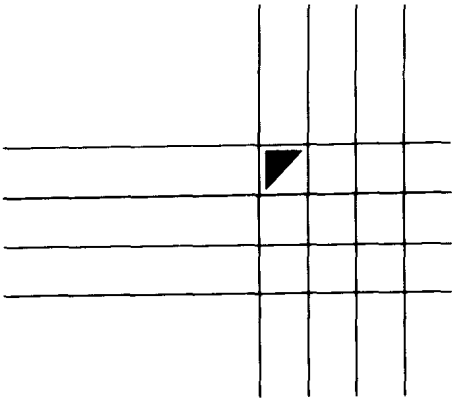

LEVEL 1

This is the first of six levels in this book. In Level 1, you are introduced to a few basic concepts about writing paragraphs and sentences. You may find many of the Level 1 activities rather easy, but as you progress through the levels, the material becomes more challenging. What you learn in one level helps prepare you for the next level. Working through the book, you develop skills that will help you write more effectively. Level 1 provides your first step toward that goal.

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