

The Writer's

Harbrace

Handbook



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Handbook

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Preface

A compact yet comprehensive guide, *The Writer's Harbrace Handbook* responds to the demand for a “writing first” handbook that offers the ease of reference and attention to detail that have made the *Harbrace Handbook* a standard of reliability since 1941. While drawing on that tradition, especially in the discussion of grammar, style, punctuation, and mechanics, *The Writer's Harbrace* emphasizes the importance of writing process and discusses a diverse range of writing assignments.

The first ten chapters all focus on writing with a purpose, for an audience, in a specific context. Designed to meet the needs of students when they first arrive in college and to anticipate the challenges they will face as writers in the years ahead, the first ten chapters provide clear and useful advice for developing an effective writing process and communicating successfully with readers.

Chapter 1, “Reading and Writing Critically,” recognizes where students are at the beginning of a course, addressing what they need to know if they are to succeed and then building carefully on this foundation. Like many introductions to a “writing first” handbook, this chapter discusses how the process of writing involves assessing the rhetorical situation: purpose, audience, and context. But this chapter also demonstrates the close relationship between the process of reading and the process of writing, a connection that is made repeatedly throughout the book as a whole. Moreover, the chapter offers the kind of practical advice many first-year students need (and which textbooks too often overlook), such as how to

read a syllabus, how to read a writing assignment, and how to benefit from visiting a writing center.

Chapter 2, “Planning and Drafting Essays,” includes a full discussion of prewriting as well as strategies for discovering and focusing a subject: journaling, freewriting, listing, clustering, and questioning. The importance of a clearly defined thesis is explained and illustrated by examples. This chapter also discusses how to outline an essay and how to use details and examples to develop ideas.

Chapter 3, “Revising and Editing Essays,” includes a detailed discussion of how to benefit from peer review as well as advice on writing introductions and conclusions. The chapter explains the difference between revising and editing but emphasizes the importance of both. Three versions of a student essay are included—together with comments generated by peer review—to illustrate how revision can improve a draft.

Because formatting an essay for submission is closely related to editing it, chapter 4, “Document Design,” discusses MLA standards for headings, margins, and spacing as well as how to use the computer to format a paper and to submit it electronically. Given the ease computers bring to using graphics in documents, chapter 4 also offers advice on using such elements as charts, maps, drawings, and photos in papers. In addition, this chapter includes advice on how to construct a Web page.

Chapter 5, “Writing Arguments,” demonstrates how critical thinking is essential in argumentation. This chapter will help students distinguish fact from opinion, evaluate a writer’s credibility, determine the nature of a claim or proposition, and understand how to reason logically. In addition to discussing principles from classical rhetoric (such as induction, deduction, ethos, and arrangement), chapter 5 also includes an explanation of Rogerian argument and the Toulmin model of reasoning.

Chapter 6, “Research: Finding and Evaluating Sources,” has a detailed discussion of searching the World Wide Web and other electronic sources throughout the research process. This chapter reflects research showing that many students turn to the Web as their

primary source of information but need advice on how to determine the credibility of Web sites. Reliance on Web-based research, however, has not eliminated the need for drawing upon sources that cannot be accessed electronically. This chapter also addresses how to find and benefit from sources that are available only in print (such as the texts of most books) as well as how to conduct interviews and surveys.

Chapter 7, “Research: Using and Citing Sources,” includes an extensive treatment of MLA- and APA-style documentation, including current standards for citing sources accessed by computer. Prominently placed directories for MLA- and APA-style citations will help students find the model entries they wish to consult. An MLA-style paper analyzing the rhetorical and political implications of a controversial memoir by Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú and an APA-style paper on why adult children choose to live with their parents illustrate documentation and display strategies for organizing a research paper. This chapter also includes advice on taking notes, paraphrasing and summarizing, and avoiding plagiarism.

Advice on how to overcome writer’s block, as well as how to prepare and respond to essay exams, can be found in chapter 8, “Writing under Pressure.”

Chapter 9, “Writing about Literature,” includes a detailed discussion of terms used to discuss literary works, an introduction to literary theory, and a student essay using reader response theory to analyze a novel.

In addition to discussing how to use electronic mail effectively and how to write good memos and letters, chapter 10, “Writing for Work,” provides two different models for writing a résumé. Recognizing a kind of writing that is becoming increasingly common in professional life, but seldom addressed in handbooks, this chapter also discusses how to write a successful grant proposal.

The chapters devoted to writing essays and other texts are followed by seven devoted to **grammar**, demonstrating that

attention to grammar is part of the writing process rather than a separate subject that must be mastered before someone can draft an essay. The grammar chapters are followed by five on **style**, emphasizing the belief that understanding the grammar of a sentence helps writers make informed rhetorical choices, which, in turn, can lead to the writing of sentences that are more complex, emphatic, and varied. Four chapters on **diction** also address rhetorical choices, since diction is closely related to style. These chapters are followed by several on **punctuation** and **mechanics**, signaling that even details such as these often have a rhetorical dimension, although editing for them can be addressed toward the end of the writing process.

Within these chapters:

- Clear explanations give the reasons or purposes for specific elements of grammar, punctuation, style, and mechanics. Students make better choices when they understand the reasons behind the rules.
- In the same spirit, grammatical and rhetorical terms are defined when they are first used, reducing the extent to which students will need to consult the glossary.
- In addition, sample sentences with handwritten revisions illustrate the principles being taught, and exercises encourage students to write or to revise in context.

About the book as a whole

- Bulleted lists begin each chapter, providing users with a quick reference to what follows.
- Specific examples throughout the book demonstrate the principles of writing that are applicable to both course work and professional tasks, and frequent cross-references establish how these principles inform each other.
- Extensive advice on using the computer as a learning tool is integrated throughout the book. Computer boxes highlighting discussions involving electronic composition are placed through-

out virtually every chapter, and computer icons highlight additional references to electronic formats.

- Extensive discussions of writing difficulties common to dialect and to English as a Second Language are placed in context rather than in a separate chapter. This decision is in response to current national demographics as well as to the determination not to make international students feel as though their needs were addressed as an afterthought. Many of the problems identified by a globe icon are problems that American English-speaking students face as well, so this icon does not mean that a concept relates only to ESL students.
- A four-color-process design offers a clear and varied palette for the various boxes, screens, icons, and annotations that facilitate ease of reference. Another notable design feature is the large decorative letters that mark each of the six divisions of the handbook, allowing for immediate identification of the section for the reader.

The following supplements accompany *The Writer's Harbrace Handbook*.

Instructor Supplements

Instructor's Manual

Harcourt Brace Guide to Teaching First-Year Composition

Harcourt Brace Guide to Teaching Writing with Computers

Harcourt Brace Guide to Writing across the Curriculum

Harcourt Brace Guide to Peer Tutoring

Harcourt Brace Sourcebook for Teachers of Writing

Diagnostic Test Package

Transparency Masters

Instructor's Correction Chart

Exercise Bank (available in print and on disk for PC or Mac)

Student Supplements

College Workbook

Basic Writer's Workbook

ESL Workbook

Working Together: A Collaborative Writing Guide

The Resourceful Reader

Writer's Harbrace CD-ROM

Writer's Harbrace WebCT (course management software with exercises)

For additional information on these and other supplemental materials for *The Writer's Harbrace Handbook*, please visit the Harbrace Web site at <http://www.harcourtcollege.com/english>.

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