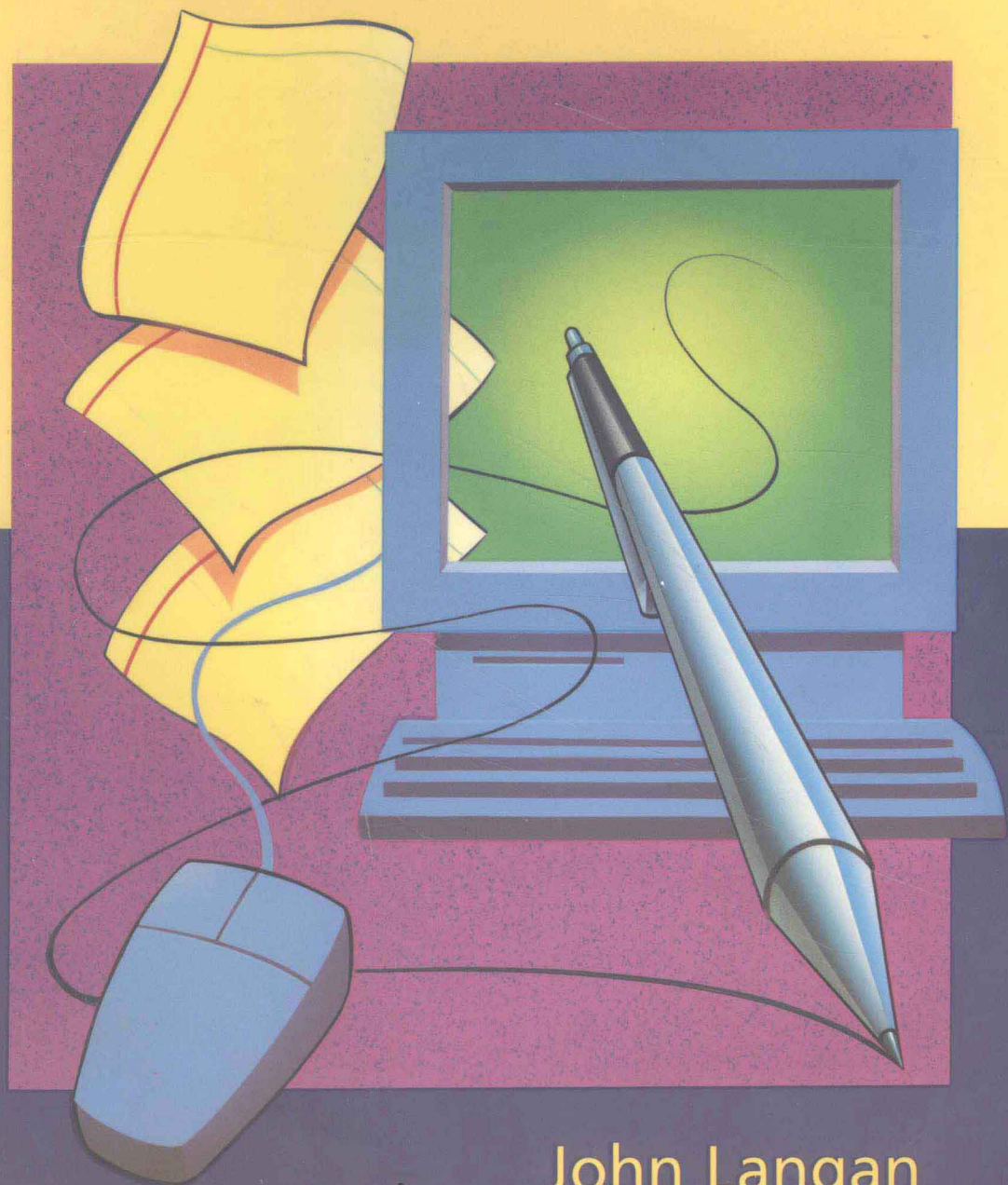


# College Writing Skills, Media Edition

Fifth Edition



John Langan

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John Langan

Atlantic Cape Community College



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## COLLEGE WRITING SKILLS

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# About the Author

John Langan has taught reading and writing at Atlantic Cape Community College near Atlantic City, New Jersey, for over twenty years. The author of a popular series of college textbooks on both subjects, he enjoys the challenge of developing materials that teach skills in an especially clear and lively way. Before teaching, he earned advanced degrees in writing at Rutgers University and in reading at Glassboro State College. He also spent a year writing fiction that, he says, “is now at the back of a drawer waiting to be discovered and acclaimed posthumously.” While in school, he supported himself by working as a truck driver, machinist, battery assembler, hospital attendant, and apple packer. He now lives with his wife, Judith Nadell, near Philadelphia. Among his everyday pleasures are running, working on his Macintosh computer, and watching Philadelphia sports teams on TV. He also loves to read: newspapers at breakfast, magazines at lunch, and a chapter or two of a recent book (“preferably an autobiography”) at night.

# To the Instructor

The Media Edition of *College Writing Skills* will help students master the traditional five-paragraph essay and variations of this essay. It is a very practical book with a number of special features to aid instructors and their students.

## *Key Features of the Book*

- *Four principles are presented as keys to effective writing.* These four principles—unity, support, coherence, and sentence skills—are highlighted on the inside front cover and reinforced throughout the book. **Part One** focuses on the first three principles and to some extent on sentence skills; **Part Four** serves as a concise handbook of sentence skills. **Parts Two** and **Three** show, respectively, how the four principles apply in the different patterns of essay development and in specialized types of writing. The ongoing success of *College Writing Skills* is evidence that the four principles are easily grasped, remembered, and followed by students.
- *Writing is treated as a process.* The first chapter introduces writing as both a skill and a process of discovery. The second chapter, “The Writing Process,” explains and illustrates the sequence of steps in writing an effective essay. In particular, this chapter focuses on prewriting and revision as strategies to use with any writing assignment. Detailed suggestions for prewriting and revision then accompany many of the writing assignments in Part Two.
- *Activities and assignments are numerous and varied.* For example, in Part One there are more than ninety activities to help students apply and master the four principles, or bases, of effective writing. There are over two hundred activities and tests in the entire book. A variety of writing assignments follow each pattern of essay development in Part Two. Some topics are highly structured, for students who are still learning the steps in the writing process; others are open-ended. Instructors thus have the option of selecting those assignments most suited to the individual needs of their students.
- *Clear thinking is stressed throughout.* This emphasis on logic starts with the opening pages of the book. Students are introduced to the two principles that are the bedrock of clear thinking: *making a point* and *providing support to back up that point*. The focus on these principles then continues throughout the book, helping students learn that clear writing is inseparable from clear thinking.

- *The traditional essay is emphasized.* Students are asked to write formal essays with an introduction, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. Anyone who has tried to write a solidly reasoned essay knows how much work is involved. A logical essay requires a great deal of mental discipline and close attention to a set of logical rules. Writing an essay in which there is an overall thesis statement and in which each of three supporting paragraphs begins with a topic sentence is more challenging for many students than writing a free-form or expressive essay. The demands are significant, but the rewards are great.

At the same time that students learn and practice the rules of the five-paragraph essay, professional essays representing the nine patterns of development show them variations possible within the essay form. These essays provide models if instructors decide that their students will benefit from moving beyond the traditional essay form.

- *Lively teaching models are provided.* The book provides two high-interest student essays and one engaging professional essay with each assignment. Students then read and evaluate these essays in terms of the four bases: unity, support, coherence, and sentence skills. After reading vigorous papers by other students as well as papers by professional authors and experiencing the power that good writing can have, students will be encouraged to aim for a similar honesty, realism, and detail in their own work.
- *The book is versatile.* Since no two people use an English text in exactly the same way, the material has been organized in a highly accessible manner. Each of the four parts of the book deals with a distinct area of writing. Instructors can therefore turn quickly and easily to the skills they want to present.

## Changes In the Fifth Edition

There are major changes and additions in this new edition of *College Writing Skills*:

- The most substantial change in the book is its *far greater emphasis on prewriting and revision*. A new chapter titled “The Writing Process” uses a model student essay to demonstrate how prewriting and revision are essential parts of the act of writing. And while Part One of the book continues to focus on four bases of effective writing—unity, support, coherence, and sentence skills—students also learn how prewriting and revision will help them achieve the four bases. Finally, detailed strategies for prewriting and revision are now part of many writing assignments that accompany the nine rhetorical patterns of essay development in Part Two.

- A major addition to the text is *the inclusion in Part Two of professional essays that illustrate each of the nine rhetorical patterns*. While the book continues to teach the traditional essay model, the professional essays show students other uses and treatments of the essay form. Students still learn the rigors and rewards of the strict five-paragraph essay, but they also see the rich variations that are possible once the rules, having been learned, can be broken. Questions on unity, support, coherence, and sentence skills follow each of the professional essays, just as they do the model student essays, further reinforcing the four bases of effective writing.
- The book includes a *new model research paper* that examines a contemporary topic and follows the latest MLA guidelines, including citation of sources found on the Internet.
- A *revised and updated chapter—Chapter 21—provides a highly practical guide to the library and the Internet*. This chapter illustrates how the author of the model research paper was able to draw on the resources the traditional library and the Internet.
- *Pointers and brief activities for ESL students* have been added to the book (Chapter 45).
- As part of the book's *new design*, chapters are now numbered, making the text even easier to use.
- A major new section on revising sentences in Part One, Chapter 5 introduces essential skills that deal with writing effective sentences (parallelism, consistent point of view, the use of specific and concise language, and sentence variety).
- A *new section on word processing* has been added to Chapter 1.
- *Student models and practice materials* have been updated and revised throughout the book.

## About the Media Edition

This media-enhanced version of the fifth edition of *College Writing Skills* improves the link between the text and its class-tested media supplements: *College Writing Skills*' Student CD-ROM and On-Line Learning Center; and *AllWrite!* 2.0, McGraw-Hill's acclaimed grammar tutorial software. Each of the 45 chapters in this Media Edition features new marginal icons, or TextLinks, that alert students to additional exercises, extended explanations, and supplemental resources for the topic at hand.



*TextLinks to the Student CD-ROM/Online Learning Center:*

**Chapter Outlines/Key Terms:** Chapter outlines and definitions of key terms supplement each chapter of the textbook.





**Writing On- and Off-Line:** Online activities encourage students to activate new concepts in writing – for example, one exercise in Chapter 12 foregrounds cause and effect by asking students to relate the plot of a favorite movie.



**Interactive Exercises:** Crossword puzzles, matching exercises, and true-false and multiple-choice questions reinforce comprehension of key concepts.



**Additional Resources:** Offerings include a comprehensive glossary; guides to using the Internet, avoiding plagiarism, and doing electronic research; a study skills primer, and more.

*TextLinks to AllWrite! 2.0:*



**AllWrite! 2.0's** more than 300 interactive exercises, complete with video clips and animations, help students get grammar right. (The number tells you exactly which chapter and section of AllWrite! to consult; for instance, the TextLink at left refers to Chapter 15, Section 4.)

## Acknowledgments

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**John Langan**



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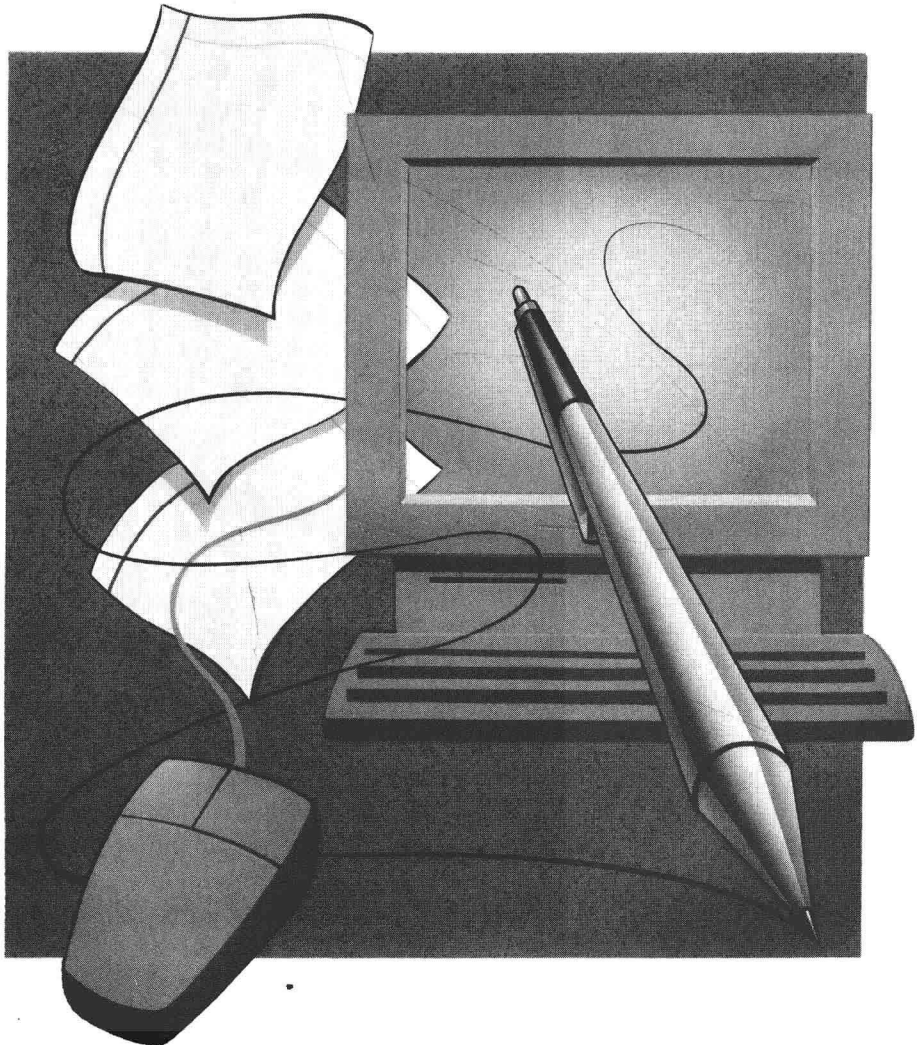
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# Part One

## Essay Writing





# 1 An Introduction to Writing



This chapter will explain

- the importance of supporting a point in writing
- the structure of the traditional essay
- the benefits of writing the traditional essay

The chapter will also

- present writing as both a skill and a process of discovery
- suggest keeping a journal
- recommend word processing

The experience I had writing my first college essay has helped shape this book. I received a C– for the essay. Scrawled beside the grade was the comment, “Not badly written, but ill-conceived.” I remember going to the instructor after class, asking about his comment as well as the word *Log* that he had added in the margin at various spots. “What are all these logs you put in my paper?” I asked, trying to make a joke of it. He looked at me a little wonderingly. “Logic, Mr. Langan,” he answered, “logic.” He went on to explain that I had not thought out my paper clearly. There were actually two ideas rather than one in my thesis, one supporting paragraph had nothing to do with either idea, another paragraph lacked a topic sentence, and so on. I’ve never forgotten his last words: “If you don’t think clearly,” he said, “you won’t write clearly.”

I was speechless, and I felt confused and angry. I didn’t like being told that I didn’t know how to think. I went back to my room and read over my paper several times. Eventually, I decided that my instructor was right. “No more logs,” I said to myself. “I’m going to get these logs out of my papers.”

My instructor’s advice was invaluable. I learned that clear, disciplined thinking is the key to effective writing. *College Writing Skills* develops this idea by breaking down the writing process into a series of logical, easily-followed steps. The four steps, combined with practical advice about prewriting and revision, will help you write strong papers.

Here are the four steps in a nutshell:

- 1 Discover a clearly stated point or thesis.
- 2 Provide logical, detailed support for your thesis.
- 3 Organize and connect your supporting material.
- 4 Revise and edit so that your sentences are effective and error-free.

Part One of the book explains each of these steps in detail and provides many practice materials to help you master them.

## Point and Support

### An Important Difference Between Writing and Talking

In everyday conversation, you make all kinds of points or assertions. You say, for example, “My boss is a hard person to work for”; “It’s not safe to walk in our neighborhood after dark”; or “Poor study habits keep getting me into trouble.” The points that you make concern personal matters as well as, at times, outside issues: “That trade will be a disaster for the team”; “Lots of TV commercials are degrading to women”; “Students are better off working for a year before attending college.”

The people you are talking with do not always challenge you to give reasons for your statements. They may know why you feel as you do, or they may already agree with you, or they simply may not want to put you on the spot; and so they do not always ask, “Why?” But the people who read what you write may not know you, agree with you, or feel in any way obliged to you. If you want to communicate effectively with readers, you must provide solid evidence for any point you make. An important difference, then, between writing and talking is this: *In writing, any idea that you advance must be supported with specific reasons or details.*

Think of your readers as reasonable people. They will not take your views on faith, but they are willing to accept what you say as long as you support it. Therefore, remember to support with specific evidence any point that you make.

## Point and Support in a Paragraph

In conversation, you might say to a friend who has suggested a movie, “No, thanks. Going to the movies is just too much of a hassle. Parking, people, everything.” From shared past experiences, your friend may know what you are talking



about, so that you will not have to explain your statement. But in writing, your point would have to be backed up with specific reasons and details.

Below is a paragraph, written by a student named Diane Woods, on why moviegoing is a nuisance. A *paragraph* is a short paper of around 150 to 200 words. It usually consists of an opening point called a *topic sentence* followed by a series of sentences which support that point.

### The Hazards of Moviegoing

Although I love movies, I've found that there are drawbacks to moviegoing. One problem is just the inconvenience of it all. To get to the theater, I have to drive for at least fifteen minutes, or more if traffic is bad. It can take forever to find a parking spot, and then I have to walk across a huge parking lot to the theater. There I encounter long lines, sold-out shows, and ever-increasing prices. And I hate sitting with my feet sticking to the floor because of other people's spilled snacks. Another problem is my lack of self-control at the theater. I often stuff myself with unhealthy calorie-laden snacks. My choices might include a bucket of popcorn, a box of Milk Duds, a giant soda, or all three. The worst problem is some of the other moviegoers. Kids run up and down the aisle. Teenagers laugh and shout at the screen. People of all ages drop soda cups and popcorn tubs, cough and burp, and talk to one another. All in all, I would rather stay home and wait to see the latest movie hits on cable TV in the comfort of my own living room.

Notice what the supporting evidence has done here. It has provided you, the reader, with a basis for understanding *why* the writer makes the point that is made. Through this specific evidence, the writer has explained and successfully communicated the idea that moviegoing can be a nuisance.

The evidence that supports the point in a paper often consists of a series of reasons followed by examples and details that support the reasons. That is true of the paragraph above: three reasons are provided, with examples and details that back up those reasons. Supporting evidence in a paper can also consist of anecdotes, personal experiences, facts, studies, statistics, and the opinions of experts.

### Activity

The paragraph on moviegoing, like almost any piece of effective writing, has two essential parts: (1) a point is advanced, and (2) that point is then supported. Taking a minute to outline the paragraph will help you understand these basic parts clearly. Write in the following space the point that has been advanced in the paragraph. Then add the words needed to complete the outline of the paragraph.

Point

Support

1. 

---

  - a. Fifteen-minute drive to theater
  - b. 

---
  - c. Long lines, sold-out shows, and increasing prices.
  - d. 

---
2. Lack of self-control
  - a. Often stuff myself with unhealthy snacks.
  - b. Might have popcorn, candy, soda, or all three.
3. 

---

  - a. 

---
  - b. 

---
  - c. People of all ages make noise.

## Point and Support in an Essay

An excellent way to learn how to write clearly and logically is to practice the traditional college *essay*—a paper of about five hundred words that typically consists of an introductory paragraph, two to four supporting paragraphs (the norm in this book will be three), and a concluding paragraph. The central idea, or point, developed in any essay is called a *thesis statement* (rather than, as in a paragraph, a topic sentence). The thesis appears in the introductory paragraph, and the specific support for the thesis appears in the paragraphs that follow. The supporting paragraphs allow for a fuller treatment of the evidence that backs up the central point than would be possible in a single-paragraph paper.

## Structure of the Traditional Essay

### A Model Essay

The following model will help you understand the form of an essay. Diane Woods, the writer of the paragraph on moviegoing, later decided to develop her subject more fully. Here is the essay that resulted.