

OPTIONS IN RHETORIC

WRITING AND
READING ○○

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OPTIONS IN RHETORIC

Writing AND Reading

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PREFACE

Today college students and composition instructors need textbooks which effectively illustrate realistic options for writers. These materials should be based on contemporary scholarship in rhetoric and linguistics. They should help students make purposeful decisions and judgments when they read and write. They should allow for individual differences among students. *Options in Rhetoric: Writing and Reading* is in response to the need for textbooks with these characteristics. This book is intended to be used with a handbook on rhetoric.

Options in Rhetoric provides a structural, analytical approach to writing and reading, yet makes students aware that more than one approach or method may be viable for any writing task. The student who studies this textbook can: (a) learn to recognize and understand basic rhetorical principles and devices; (b) increase reading comprehension (i.e., ability to discern the main idea, the sub-points, and the supporting evidence) through knowledge of rhetorical structures and relationships; (c) learn to make wise choices based on sound criteria (instead of guesses) for effective—clear, purposeful, interesting—written communication; (d) increase active reading and writing vocabulary. *Options in Rhetoric* is practical and liberating.

The editors wish to thank all of those who have contributed to

Options in Rhetoric, especially William H. Oliver at Prentice-Hall for his assistance and support; our reviewers—Eric Hibbison, Douglas Butturff, and Dorothy Seyler—for their helpful comments; our students for their vitality, enthusiasm, and challenge; the student writers for permission to use their essays as samples; and our families for their help as well as their patience and tolerance.

Sylvia A. Holladay
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INTRODUCTION:

TO THE STUDENT _____

We live in an electronic age, an age of telephone, telegraph, television, radio, stereo, tape, computer, and satellite. Although most messages are sent by these electronic means today, reading and writing are still essential.

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

Reading is important as a source of information. Most of what the student learns in school comes through reading. The job seeker discovers openings through reading job listings and want ads. The employee receives information through memos, letters, written instructions, and reports. The consumer learns of new products through reading advertisements and consumer reports. The citizen keeps up with governmental activities through newspaper, magazine, and governmental reports. We all enjoy reading letters from family and friends. *Options in Rhetoric: Writing and Reading* will help you to increase your comprehension through knowledge of the structures and strategies of written English.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITING

Writing is important as a means of communication and discovery. We need to know how to compose and communicate information and ideas in written English. The student writes themes, does research papers, takes tests, and makes reports. The job applicant writes letters and resumés. The employee—nurse, fashion coordinator, scientist, businessperson—writes reports and instructions for other people. The consumer writes letters of complaint about a faulty product, and the citizen writes letters of inquiry to government officials. All of us write letters to family and friends. The success of our written communications depends largely upon our skills in composition. Ability in composition may determine whether the student makes a good grade, whether the applicant gets the job, whether the employee gets a promotion, whether the buyer receives a refund, whether the citizen gets action on his or her request from the government representative, whether the father sends the money needed to cover the overdrawn bank account, or whether the girlfriend or boyfriend comes for a visit. *Options in Rhetoric* will acquaint you with the fundamentals of composition and thus help you to improve your writing skills and achieve your purpose in writing.

Writing is not only a means of communicating; it is also a means of discovery. Through the process of composing, you learn what you want to say as well as uncover knowledge about yourself. Through examining your thoughts and experiences to decide what to say, you define and clarify yourself, and you understand yourself better than you did before you began the writing task. When you understand the steps in the writing process and learn the options available to you for writing, you will find composition much easier. *Options in Rhetoric* will introduce you to the procedures and options for writing.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING AND WRITING

Options in Rhetoric is based on the interrelations between reading and writing skills, and as you work through this textbook, you can improve both. Mature reading and effective writing are systematic processes. You should not attempt to read a paragraph sentence by sentence or an essay paragraph by paragraph; neither should you write sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph. If you do, you end up with a bunch of unrelated, confusing details. In both processes you should focus on the whole and the relationship of the parts. As a reader and as a writer you should be aware of thought relationships, connections between parts (words, sentences, paragraphs, sections) of the written selection, the structures or patterns which tie the parts together, and the functions of the parts in rela-

tionship to the whole. To be a good reader, you must recognize these relationships in what others write; to be a good writer, you must perceive the relationships in what you think and then convey them to others in what you write. In *Options in Rhetoric* you will move from analysis of these relationships in reading selections to use of them in writing assignments. Study of rhetorical elements in written materials can help you improve your reading comprehension and your writing ability. The more you know about the process of writing, the closer you as a reader can get to the workings of another writer's mind and meaning, and the more easily you as a writer can convey your intended meaning from your mind to those of your readers.

THE PROCESS OF COMPOSITION

Composition is a skill which you can learn and which you can improve through knowledge, guidance, and practice. Knowledge of the process of composition will help you to be a better reader and writer.

The process of composition includes three stages: *prewriting*, *writing*, and *rewriting*. Weak writers often consider only the second stage necessary; mature writers realize the process is not complete until all three stages are complete. *Prewriting* is the thinking and planning stage. Everything else in the process depends upon how thoroughly and logically you complete this stage. *Writing* is the actual composing stage—expressing, arranging, and connecting the parts to form a unified whole (the essay, the report, the exam answer, or the letter). *Rewriting*, the final stage, is checking your work to be sure it effectively does what you intend it to do and making any changes necessary to strengthen your writing. As you work through this process, both your conscious and your subconscious will be involved. If you hit a snag and don't know how to proceed, put your notes away for a few hours, forget your work, and let your ideas incubate or develop in your subconscious. When you return to your task, you will probably be able to move ahead rapidly. If not, ask your instructor for assistance.

The three stages of the process of composition can be divided into ten steps. These steps are not mutually exclusive. Sometimes you will work on several steps at once, sometimes you will do them out of order, and when you are an experienced writer, you may omit some of the steps. However, as you begin learning to write, you will benefit from performing each step in the order suggested below. But remember that your original notions or intentions may evolve or change as you work through the steps. Although ten steps are outlined, the process is actually an integral procedure, one in which you work back and forth until all parts fit and the whole accomplishes what you want it to accomplish.

STAGE ONE: PREWRITING

1. *Choose your subject.*

Choose a subject that you know a lot about so that you can think of plenty of details and examples. Also choose a subject that is interesting to you, one that you can be enthusiastic about, so that you can arouse interest in your readers. Be sure that your subject is adequately restricted or limited so that you can cover it fully and specifically in the time and space available to you. The essays and exercises throughout this textbook will help you select subjects appropriate for your writing assignments.

2. *Decide on your purpose.*

Decide what you want to do in your writing. Among the purposes you may choose are:

- a. *To explain*—to help your readers understand an event, idea, opinion, or process.
- b. *To persuade*—to convince your readers to agree with an opinion of yours or to act to change an undesirable situation.
- c. *To evaluate*—to judge or determine the value of an item or process and express your judgment to your readers.
- d. *To amuse*—to give your readers pleasure, causing them to laugh or smile.

Because purpose is such an important part of the writing process, Part 1 of *Options in Rhetoric* concentrates on this aspect of writing, and the exercises in this section as well as others spaced throughout the textbook will help you decide on the appropriate purpose for each of your writings.

3. *Define your audience.*

Determine the person or group of people to whom you are writing, the ones who will read what you have written. Be aware of the characteristics of your readers, and take care not to alienate them. Always have a specific person or group in mind as you write; that awareness will help you make many decisions in your writing. A sense of audience is directly related to purpose and viewpoint in written communication. The exercises throughout this textbook, especially in Parts 1 and 2, will help you to be more aware of audience.

4. *Determine your viewpoint.*

Decide upon your persona or role in writing—in other words, who are you in relationship to your material, or your viewpoint or position in regard to your subject. You play many roles in your life—for example, student, child, citizen, employee, taxpayer,

sports fan, driver, perhaps parent. In any writing task, you must clarify your role for yourself before you start writing so that varying viewpoints will not conflict and cause lack of continuity and confusion for your readers. Because viewpoint is such an important part of the writing process, Part 2 of *Options in Rhetoric* concentrates on this aspect of writing, and the exercises in this section as well as others spaced throughout the textbook will help you determine your viewpoint in writing.

5. *State your thesis.*

A thesis sentence is a one-sentence statement of your main idea or the controlling idea of your essay. It is a one-sentence summary of your entire essay, an umbrella statement which suggests everything in the essay and to which every point in the essay is directly related. Your thesis should contain your restricted subject plus your point of view or opinion toward that restricted subject. The exercises throughout this textbook will help you understand and compose thesis statements.

6. *Choose relevant details.*

Choose specific details to develop—that is, explain, clarify, and support—your thesis idea. Make a list of all the ideas that come to mind as you think about your thesis. Check your list to be sure that each point is directly related to the thesis and that you have jotted down plenty of specific details to achieve your purpose. The exercises throughout this textbook, especially in Part 3, will help you understand relevance of details in the reading selections and will help you learn to select appropriate details for your own writings.

7. *Organize the details.*

Arrange the details you have selected in a logical order. Group and classify ideas on the same topic or subdivision of your subject. Three major types of organization will be useful to you:

- a. *Spatial Order*—organization according to position in space; useful in description of a place or person.
- b. *Chronological Order*—organization according to time; useful in narration, in explanation of a process, or for instructions.
- c. *Logical Order*—organization according to idea, such as from the least important to the most important, or from the general to the specific; useful for explanation or persuasion.

Many composition instructors and students find an outline helpful at this point in the process. The exercises throughout this textbook, especially in Part 3, will help you to understand organization of details and to organize your writings.

STAGE TWO: WRITING

8. *Express your ideas effectively.*

Using your notes and outline or plan from the prewriting stage, write out your ideas in clear, orderly, interesting sentences and paragraphs to compose an essay or report or letter. Your composition should be *unified*—every point directly related to the thesis; *logically organized*—details arranged in a logical, easy-to-follow order; *adequately developed*—plenty of specific details to accomplish your purpose for your audience; *coherent*—details and parts connected and flowing smoothly from one part (i.e., sentence or paragraph) to the next; and *clear*. Three basic types of paragraphs which you may use are:

- a. *The introductory paragraph*—a paragraph which introduces the subject, indicates the main idea or thesis, and gets the reader's attention and interest.
- b. *The body paragraph*—a paragraph which states, clarifies, and supports with specific details one of the subdivisions of the thesis.
- c. *The concluding paragraph*—a paragraph which summarizes and points up the significance of what has been discussed, reaffirms the main idea, and climaxes the interest.

The essays and exercises throughout this textbook, especially in Part 3, will help you master the writing stage of the process of composition.

STAGE THREE: REWRITING

9. *Proofread.*

10. *Revise.*

These two steps go together. Carefully proofread what you have written, and make any changes necessary to improve your written expression. These last steps in the process of composition include checking and correcting errors in the spelling, punctuation, grammar, and mechanics of Edited American English, but go beyond that to checking and rewriting the rhetorical elements of your writing, such as precise and appropriate word choice, effective sentence structure, adequate explanation and examples for development, or transitional words and phrases to connect ideas. To satisfactorily complete these steps of the process, read over your paper several times, checking each time for different aspects of writing. Try reading your paper aloud; that will slow down your eyes and your mind and help you to spot weaknesses in your writing. The exercises throughout this textbook will help

you learn what to look for when you proofread and will help you recognize what needs to be revised or corrected.

OPTIONS IN RHETORIC

Throughout the process of composition, the writer has various options or choices of what to do or how to write, and must make decisions constantly. In *Options in Rhetoric* the editors will identify and illustrate some of these options for you. Three major controls for a writer's choice of options are *purpose*, *audience*, and *viewpoint*. As you read and study the selections in this textbook, you will learn to determine whether the options chosen by other writers are in keeping with their purpose, audience, and viewpoint. As you write, you will learn to keep these points in mind and ask yourself if the word, construction, approach, method, example, or device you are considering is suitable for your purpose, appropriate for your audience, and consistent with your viewpoint. The editors will also provide some guidelines to help you make wise decisions in your writing. Understanding rhetorical patterns and techniques will help you make purposeful choices from among the options available to you.

PLAN FOR THE TEXTBOOK

Options in Rhetoric: Writing and Reading has four parts. Each section and each subsection begins with a short explanation of the concepts and options illustrated. Part 1, Options in Purpose, illustrates several options in purpose—to explain, to persuade, to evaluate, and to amuse. This section will help you understand how purpose gives a writer control in writing. Part 2, Options in Viewpoint, illustrates two major viewpoints which writers may choose to achieve their purposes: the objective viewpoint and the subjective viewpoint. Part 3, Options for Development, presents variations in options for development of ideas. The methods illustrated are detail (narrative and descriptive), example, definition, analysis/classification, process, comparison-contrast, and cause and effect. Each section includes brief selections by professional and student writers. Part 4 consists of three professional essays which exemplify how writers combine composition options; the rhetorical techniques are noted in the margins of two of these essays.

The selections in this book are not intended as models for your writing; rather, they are examples from the broad scope of options writers may choose. For publication of the student samples, the editors have corrected the mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation), but have not changed the content or the rhetorical elements