

# **Instructor's Manual**

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## **Steps to Writing Well** **TWELFTH EDITION**

## **Steps to Writing Well with** **Additional Readings** **NINTH EDITION**

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## Overview of *Steps to Writing Well*

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Part One—The Basics of the Short Essay provides fundamental instruction for college-level writing expectations, addressing all aspects of the writing process from prewriting through final draft, with discussion and practice sessions that employ strategies for drafting and revision. In addition, introductions to creative and critical thinking (with advice about procrastination, an enemy of critical thinking), effective sentence construction, word logic, and connections between reading and writing link students to essential details in the writing process while giving them the language to talk about writing. Equipped with these tools, students can begin to effectively negotiate the more detailed instruction and advice that Part Two—Purposes, Modes, and Strategies illustrates, while putting to use new skills and knowledge gained from Part One.

Part Two emphasizes strategies for developing ideas and text, organizing text, analyzing text, and assessing and revising text. The major focus in this section involves developing text based upon audience needs and purposes for writing. While this section covers four basic strategies—exposition, argumentation, description, and narration—Wyrick clarifies that most writing does not exist in “any one mode in a pure form.”

Rather, most writing reflects a writer’s primary goal or purpose, i.e., an argument or a story, but entails a combination of writing types/strategies throughout. Once students begin to recognize the structural elements of each type, they can begin to employ the elements logically at all stages of the writing process—prewriting (discovery of topics, theses, audiences, purposes, and content), drafting, and revision. Chapter 13 ends this section with a discussion of combining elements, analysis of an essay using multiple strategies, and as in all other chapters, practice and suggestions for writing.

Part Three—Special Assignments focuses on writing scenarios that students will encounter in college and beyond, familiarizing them more fully with 1) college-level writing and research methods, strategies, and formats, including using library and online sources; 2) practical advice on how to respond effectively to timed writing prompts, special emphasis on the “summary-and-response” essay, and a new section on writing for classroom presentations; 3) basic ways to read, analyze, and develop intelligent responses to literature and poetry; 4) advice for writing about the visual arts, including paintings, sculpture, and photography; 5) additional perspectives on ways to assess and write about film and film reviews; and 6) the do’s and don’ts of business writing, covering such elements as memos, letters, e-mail, and résumés in the world of work. Students have an opportunity to apply this chapter’s advice to the many visuals within *Steps*. Likewise, instructors hoping to cover each of the major concerns in this section can easily develop units using the topics here as themes—text-response, research, literature, work—incorporating chapters from other sections as appropriate. For instance, Chapter 8: The Reading-Writing Connection, and Chapter 9: Exposition (development by example and by comparison/contrast) could comprise a unit on text-response or timed writing. Add Chapters 16 and 33 (both of which focus on poems and short stories) and a unit on literature is born. Chapter 10: Argumentation, Chapter 13: Writing Essays Using Multiple Strategies, and Chapters 29 will build a strong scaffold for both analyzing and creating arguments. Finally, teachers wanting to incorporate work themes into their classrooms can begin or end a term with Chapter 19, asking students to create real résumés.

Part Four—A Concise Handbook offers support for those students needing to sharpen their grammar and punctuation skills.

Part Five—Additional Readings includes eleven chapters of added readings, illustrating exposition (using the strategies of example, process analysis, comparison/contrast, definition, division/classification, and causal analysis), argumentation, description, narration, multiple strategies, and literature. These chapters can be used in conjunction with Part Two reading assignments, either through themes suggested within the essays or through organizational considerations, as Wyrick’s text seems to suggest. In addition, should instructors choose to create units based on suggestions here about Part Three—Special Assignments, the additional readings will provide a variety of examples for further in-depth analysis and discussion. Wyrick has chosen challenging texts that offer not only clear examples of writing strategies and processes, but interesting, timely, and perhaps timeless topics for discussion.

## **Suggested Teaching Tools to Use with *Steps to Writing Well***

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The composition maxim “The only way to learn to write is by writing and rewriting” is underscored in *Steps* as emphasis is placed on writing and revision through creative and critical thinking (Chapter 5). Keeping journals (Chapter 1) and participating in collaborative activities (Chapter 5) are two ways instructors might encourage students to examine their own writing process and analyze the writing of others, enabling them to bring new insights to their own work.

### **■ The Journal**

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Chapter 1 of *Steps to Writing Well* discusses the benefits of keeping a journal and offers students suggested uses for the journal. Jean Wyrick notes that there are numerous advantages in requiring a journal:

#### **Benefits for the student:**

- encourages thinking, learning, discovery
- helps sequence the student’s writing processes—provides practice of skills
- improves the quality of the written product—reduces writing anxiety
- improves class participation

#### **Benefits for the teacher:**

- provides opportunities to intervene in the students’ composing stages
- ensures better “products” to evaluate
- may replace traditional assignments
- may reduce grading time and pressure
- discourages “passive” reading of assigned material
- allows the monitoring of class progress and understanding of material

For journals to be an effective part of a college composition course, expectations for journal assignments should be clearly communicated to the students. The journal provides them with a chance to write informally, perhaps experimenting with their writing and taking more risks than they would in a traditional, formal essay assignment. This is not to say, however, that journals are not to be taken seriously by student writers: if journals are to be a success, with assignments that are rewarding for the instructor as well as the students, there should be accountability. When students are thoroughly invested in their journals, a great deal of learning can take place, but if the journal is not incorporated into class discussion and reviewed periodically by the instructor, the journal’s effectiveness is likely to be diminished. Here is a sample description of a journal from one composition teacher’s course guide:

In much the same way that an artist uses a sketchbook to record ideas and preliminary sketches for larger works, your journal is a tool for you to document your ideas and progress in the writing field over the course of the semester. Assignments for the journal will be varied and will take place both in and out of class. A couple of notes: be sure to title and date each assignment, doing them in the order they are assigned. In addition to written assignments, class notes should also be recorded in the journal. In short, your journal should be a complete record of your preliminary writings for each essay. A suggestion: consider reserving the last few pages of your journal to record assignments for each class meeting.

## Structure

Please organize your journal by unit, labeling the first section “Introduction.” As we complete each unit and move on to the next, title each section according to the writing strategy currently being explored (“Narration,” “Description,” etc.).

## Grading

Journals will be collected at the conclusion of each unit, often the last class before an essay is due, and will be returned the following class period. Each assignment will be noted as complete or incomplete, with credit given for each thoroughly completed assignment. At the end of the term, your journal grade will be determined as a percentage (number completed out of the number possible) and converted to a letter grade.

When giving take-home journal assignments, detailed instructions help guarantee completed, thorough journal entries. Here is a sample assignment:

### Journal Assignment Three

For most of this course, we have been discussing the importance of writing clear, straightforward essays that communicate directly to the reader. These were characterized by unity, coherence, a clear, narrow focus, effective paragraph development, and creative introductions and conclusions.

For this journal assignment, choose a *cover story* from any *Time* or *Newsweek* magazine. Then do the following:

- Copy it on a copy machine and staple it to this assignment sheet. Make sure the entire article is included.
- Use a pen or pencil to mark up the essay (unmarked essays are not acceptable). Make note of things like transitional devices, thesis statements, interesting concrete language, paragraph development, etc. In other words, try to notice as many of the concepts we talked about in class as possible.
- In the margin or somewhere near each mark, identify what it is you are marking.
- On a separate sheet of paper, write four or five sentences evaluating the essay, making some comment about the audience for which the essay is intended, the transitional devices used, and in general how you would evaluate the overall quality of the writing, based, again, on the things we have been discussing in class.

## ■ Computer Activities

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For those who have access to computers in a classroom setting, any number of the Practice sessions, Writing Assignments, or activities listed in the text can be effectively translated into lessons that employ computer use.

1. Classroom discussion can take place through a variety of online forums or bulletin boards, or even e-mail if circumstances permit.
2. Prewriting, which asks students to explore ideas and to find connections, often suffers from the urge to edit. Ask students to practice free writing in class and/or at home or a computer lab while turning off the computer screen. Some will be discomfited by this activity as it prevents the flow of thought from being maintained in the normal fashion—writing, pausing to read what one has written, editing, etc.

Instead, the writer is forced to simply put down whatever comes to mind, even if that means not finishing thoughts. Freewriting in this fashion can generate a good deal of brainstorming that may or may not appear as completed text, but that is the intent—to generate material that one can later formulate into comprehensible text for a reader. This activity is a wonderful tool for the writer who has trouble “getting started,” but it needs to be practiced regularly for the writer to be able to overcome his or her discomfort.

3. Most word processing software includes some type of template for outlines. These templates can be utilized easily in both brainstorming and organization workshops suggested in Chapter 1—Prewriting. Meanwhile, presentation programs, such as PowerPoint, provide written guidelines for text development. Moreover, PowerPoint itself allows for creative presentation of student text and is especially useful to introduce students to electronic and multimedia forums for oral reports. Web pages, home pages, and the like require a bit more computer knowledge than some students have, so presentation software is an easier way to incorporate the principles of reader/audience-centered text development. Moreover, incorporating presentations into class content enables students to recognize more readily the benefits of audience analysis as well as the connection between text and context.
4. If Internet access is available, the most obvious benefit for first-year students will be easy access to research materials. Moreover, research itself can be not just a unit of study, but an essential or core element in the class, included in each assignment in some fashion. Ready access to libraries provides students with immediate access to biographical and historical data that may assist them to understand obscure references in readings, to gather additional information about authors, places, times, etc. Meanwhile, learning to incorporate sources while working in Chapter 14 can be enhanced by continued practice in doing so and by instant access to online handbooks and style formats when other such texts are not available.

## ■ Collaborative Activities

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In Chapter 5 of *Steps to Writing Well*, students are given advice on maximizing the effectiveness of revision workshops. There are also guidelines for the composition instructor to ensure successful collaborative activities. Jean Wyrick offers the following advice for instructors:

### Suggestions for Organizing Collaborative Activities

Small-group work and peer revision workshops sometimes aren't as productive as we'd like them to be. Here are some suggestions for organizing collaborative activities that you might find useful.

1. Hand out a sample student paper the class session before the workshop. Ask students, at home, to write a brief summary and to make a note of the paper's major strengths and weaknesses. Ask them to bring this paper, their notes, and their own drafts to class.
2. Hand out written instructions for the workshop or write them on the board before class. At the top of the sheet/board include a statement of your (realistic, limited) goals for this activity.
3. Discuss your goals with the class. Talk about the value of giving and taking constructive criticism. (What kinds of comments are most helpful, which aren't, etc.?) Go over the instructions for the workshop *before* they move into pairs or groups.
4. Clearly state in writing an “accountability factor.” Students must always know they are responsible for producing something that will be shared with the entire class at the end of the activity—a report, something to be written on the board, a reading of a revision, something.



5. State the time limit for this activity. (Tell them less time than you really can allow for this activity.) Fifteen to twenty minutes on one activity is probably tops. Always leave yourself maximum time to discuss the results of the activity. Whole-class discussion time should always be as long as (or longer than) the group time.
6. Always design the groups and match up students for pair work. Avoid matching buddies. Keep track of who is working with whom from week to week.
7. If you're doing small-group work, assign jobs: a recorder to keep notes, a timekeeper to move folks along, a reporter to present results, a facilitator to lead discussion, a "devil's advocate" to introduce a different point of view, and so on. Make each member of the group responsible for something.
8. Discuss the instructions for the workshop. If you're running a revision workshop, the instructions should be a limited number of clearly defined, specific tasks. Too many tasks addressing every aspect of the paper do not produce good results!
9. A note on the nature of the tasks: avoid simple yes/no questions (Is this paragraph adequately developed? "Yup"). It is frequently easier for students who are insecure about their ability to critique to offer advice after they have described what they see. Example: Underline the main thought of this paragraph. Number the specific examples (pieces of evidence, whatever) that support this idea. Would the paragraph profit from additional support? Why or why not? If yes, where?
10. Model the tasks on the sample student essay that you handed out last class. Modeling the responses shows students what you expect and also builds confidence in their ability to address these tasks and to critique a peer's paper.
11. Allow students to add at least one question to the list of tasks. They may do this as a class, or if they're in pairs, each student may add one individually. (As the semester progresses, the class should gradually take over the list of tasks.)
12. Circulate as they work. Move quietly from group to group. Listen, ask questions, but try not to assume leadership of the group. Note any common problems you might want to address at the end of the activity. Announce the time; give nearing-the-end warnings when appropriate ("Ten minutes left—you should have finished the first three tasks by this time").
13. Put the class back together as a whole and call for the results from some of the groups/pairs. Discuss the results and then demand that students apply wisdom gleaned from the activity to their own papers. Actual hands-on revision is best, but oral responses are good if you're short on time.
14. Always allow students to have the last word on the activity. Why was/wasn't it helpful? How could it be improved next time? These make good journal questions, especially if students want to complain about a partner who wasn't giving useful feedback.
15. When the papers are revised, let the peer-editor have a read before the papers come in. A quick read-and-pass is also fun—interesting, too, how the papers get better when students know many of their peers will be reading them.
16. Have many, many workshops on a paper, not just one huge one toward the end. Vary the kinds of questions/tasks: reader-based, criterion-based, descriptive, evaluative, and so on. Fit the workshops to the stage of the writing process—one on purpose and audience, one on organization and development, one on mechanics—whatever fits your purpose, your students, and the assignment.
17. After you've read through the papers, consider "publishing" some of the better efforts or read them aloud. You don't always have to reprint an entire essay—you can also present the class with a list of effective sentences, phrases, images, or even "A+" action verbs that were direct hits!

Here is a sample assignment for a small-group activity focusing on the argumentative essay “Students, Take Note!” (Chapter 10):

### **“Students, Take Note!”: A Group Perspective**

Instructions: As a group, discuss and answer each of the following questions. Choose a recorder to jot down group decisions, a facilitator to lead your group’s discussion, a timekeeper (you’ll have 15 minutes for this activity), and a reporter to present your findings to the class.

1. Consider the author’s thesis. What evidence does the author give to support his or her claim? Why is/isn’t this evidence effective? Where is the author most convincing? Least convincing?
2. Does the author acknowledge/refute opposition to his or her claim? Why is/isn’t this effective? What are some arguments against the author’s claim that the essay does not acknowledge?
3. Are there any logical fallacies in the essay? If so, identify them.
4. What is your group’s assessment of the overall effectiveness of the essay?

### **■ Suggestions for Effective Essay Assignments**

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Student writers may have faced an assignment with a vague verbal statement of topic, length, and due date. The students in this case are left with a bewildering array of questions. How should the paper be developed? Is research required? How formal should the presentation be? These unanswered questions often lead to confusion and writer’s block, resulting in a last-minute “shot in the dark” paper that does not accurately reflect the student’s writing ability. In short, vague assignments often yield unsuccessful essays; thorough assignments encourage clear and effective student responses. To revise a well-known phrase, “As composition teachers sow, so shall they reap.”

While classroom discussions, activities, and *Steps to Writing Well* will provide students with thorough guidelines for approaching a variety of writing strategies and styles, an effective essay assignment is vital to ensuring that student writers are able to transfer what they have learned in class and from the text to their own writing. Instructor’s expectations for major essay assignments should be clearly established, preferably in a printed form that students can refer to throughout their writing process.

Here is a sample assignment for an argumentative essay requiring research:

### **Argumentative Essay Assignment**

Argumentative skills are a part of everyday life: on a daily basis, each of us makes claims about issues large or small. Consider the argumentative elements of issues that you’re concerned about. To make this assignment a meaningful and successful endeavor, choose a topic of narrow scope so you can successfully support your stance. Consider the following guideline for your selection: avoid global issues and claims that are supported more by emotion or faith than fact. The key to a successful argumentative essay is to combine facts with logic to form a convincing argument.

Once you’ve selected a topic, examine the subject for a debatable claim. If the claim is arguable (is there an opposing side?) you have the focus for an argumentative essay. To clarify your purpose and goals for writing this essay, it is vital to define a specific audience.

Argumentative essays must be fully supported with a combination of personal perspective and research. This is a research paper: in addition to personal knowledge you must use the following support for your claim:

1. a minimum of 5 written sources to provide current, relevant support for your paper. Attach a photocopy or print-out of all sources to rough draft.
2. an interview with an authority on the subject

Essay Length: 4–7 pages, plus Works Cited page

#### Due Dates

Topic proposal presentation/review: Tues. 4/14 and Thurs. 4/16

Completed rough draft due for take-home peer review: Tues. 4/28

In-class workshop on rough draft: Thurs. 4/30

Final draft: Tues. 5/5

For particularly demanding assignments, a follow-up “suggestion” sheet, guiding writers away from pitfalls the instructor has often seen in student essays, is sometimes helpful as students work to select a topic.

#### **Guidelines for Selecting a Successful Argumentative Essay Topic**

1. Is the topic narrow enough to be successfully and convincingly developed in a 4–7- page essay? A very specific topic, well presented, is more effective than a broad (if seemingly more significant) topic that can’t be developed fully.
2. Is there a legitimate opposition?
3. Can you refute the opposition’s argument?
4. Can your position be argued and supported primarily with fact and logic rather than emotion, faith, or a morality-based stance?
5. Is it an issue you have experience with or have a vested interest in? To be convincing, your voice must be heard.

#### **Topics to Avoid**

1. Issues that have been argued for years (e.g., capital punishment or the drinking age) unless you have a new angle on an old topic.
2. Issues that you feel so passionately about that you can’t argue your position logically (rather than emotionally) or acknowledge arguments of the opposition.

After students have selected a topic and have begun drafting, a detailed reminder of essay criteria can be a valuable resource. A criteria sheet like the following sample not only provides student writers with a self-assessment tool, it can also be used in peer workshops as a tool for reviewing the writing of others. Finally, the instructor can use this same sheet as a grading guideline.

## Argumentative Essay Criteria Sheet

### I. FOCUS/THESIS

Clearly stated? \_\_\_\_\_

Appropriate for scope of essay? \_\_\_\_\_

Established as arguable topic? \_\_\_\_\_

### II. AUDIENCE

Strong sense of audience/purpose? \_\_\_\_\_

### III. SUPPORT FOR CLAIM

Each statement of opinion/assertion supported convincingly? \_\_\_\_\_

A logical rather than emotional base for argument? \_\_\_\_\_

Avoidance of logical fallacies? \_\_\_\_\_

Convincing support of overall claim? \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledgment/refutation of opposition's claim? \_\_\_\_\_

### IV. STRUCTURE

Logical, coherent structure? \_\_\_\_\_

### V. USE OF SOURCES

Use of required research sources? \_\_\_\_\_

Effective use of sources as support? \_\_\_\_\_

Context/introduction of authority? \_\_\_\_\_

### VI. MLA/APA CITATION FORMAT

Correct format for in-text citations? \_\_\_\_\_

Sources acknowledged appropriately? \_\_\_\_\_

Correct Works Cited or References format? \_\_\_\_\_

### VII. MECHANICS

Free of mechanical errors? \_\_\_\_\_

### VIII. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Appropriate title? \_\_\_\_\_

Effective lead-in? \_\_\_\_\_

Clear transitions? \_\_\_\_\_

Meaningful conclusion? \_\_\_\_\_

Overall maintenance of focus/coherence/unity and development? \_\_\_\_\_

## ■ A Few Notes on Portfolio Grading

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Many times an instructor looks at a student paper and thinks something like, "If Mary just had one more shot at this assignment, she'd have it," or "With some additional evidence, this would be a darned good argument!" How many times, after a week or more of rest from a project, has Mary been able to look at what she's written and then make similar comments about her own work?

Because of the typical structure of a composition class, however, teacher and student too often have to settle for what can be accomplished in a given time frame. To combat these somewhat arbitrary and

frustrating limitations, instructors now sometimes turn to portfolio grading, or more appropriately, portfolio writing. In a portfolio class, students write and revise assignments continuously throughout the term and submit a final collection of their essays for a course grade. The obvious idea is that students can achieve better results with the benefit of time and perspective to help them revise. In this way, then, portfolio grading is one way to match class structure more closely to current *process* writing theory. Students can be evaluated on their cumulative efforts, on their overall assimilation of class concepts, and on their revising ability.

Portfolio writing can be integrated into class structure in a variety of ways. A student's grade might depend, for instance, on one final review of his or her portfolio with no grades given on any writing to that point. Comments on drafts might include general strengths and weaknesses or notes regarding specific mechanical issues you are working on in class, but no score is suggested. Students are encouraged by this system to focus more on their process than just on the outcome. Instead of meeting an artificial deadline established only by the syllabus and a teacher's need to space assignments efficiently throughout the term, students can try an unlimited number of drafts, different versions, or new approaches, until they are satisfied with the result.

Another option is to collect and review student portfolios periodically, giving a grade for progress and quality at each review. Some teachers use a midterm and a final portfolio, concentrating the grade to between 66–75 percent on the final collection to maintain the emphasis on revision. Others choose to review portfolios three times during the term, once for progress, once for a preliminary grade determination, and once for final analysis.

Still other instructors employ a configuration that combines traditional grading with the portfolio concept. You might, for example, collect essays and give grades as usual, making sure to make comments directed toward the student's pending revision. Then students can rework these graded essays throughout the term for inclusion in their final portfolio, which will be reviewed for a final cumulative grade and averaged with their other term grades, similar to a final exam.

Whatever method is employed, successful instructors mold the style of portfolio writing to their own strengths and teaching styles as well as to their particular situations. The teacher with one hundred students per term cannot possibly do traditional grading and then tack on an additional element of portfolio grading if he or she intends to maintain any level of sanity. On the other hand, a teacher with one composition class might want to try using a number of individual conferences throughout the term, one or two preliminary portfolio reviews, and a culminating final portfolio. Assess your techniques and teaching conditions carefully and honestly, then design a configuration appropriate to those constraints.

When introducing a portfolio system, keep the following potential pitfalls in mind.

1. *Avoid grading your own work.* Too often, through well-meaning comments and directions, a teacher can appropriate a student's paper. Looking at too many drafts and making too many detailed comments makes the student dependent and stifles independent critical thinking. The student is then writing to achieve the teacher's vision of the paper, not his or her own. If a final portfolio reflects the teacher's expertise rather than the student's, the system is not working well. Questions ("What experience can you share to support this point?") and reader response comments ("At this point, I wasn't sure how these two paragraphs related") can be the most helpful in guiding students and avoiding this problem.
2. *Avoid grading **another** student's work.* As in any composition classroom, the portfolio class offers many opportunities for a student to get inappropriate help from others. A certain amount of in-class writing, of individual conferencing, and of requiring and checking multiple drafts will help minimize this problem.
3. *Expect and learn to manage student grade anxiety.* Students may worry greatly if their final evaluation will be satisfactory when they are not receiving periodic grades. On the other hand, some students may have an inflated idea of the quality of their work if they do not receive some early evaluation. Providing some method of early progress/quality assessment will help them understand

where they stand in relationship to your standards. Such a preliminary assessment can be anything from an informal conference ending in a joint teacher/student determination of a grade and suggestions for improvement (a grade which is not recorded since every item is subject to revision) to a formal teacher-generated score that counts toward the term grade.

4. *Avoid increasing your workload.* While portfolio grading is not a way to cut back those lengthy hours of reading student work, it need not add to your hours either. Remember that when you are looking at multiple drafts, you need not make as many comments on each. Pointing out one paragraph that needs a topic sentence, for example, and suggesting others can benefit from the same revision, helps the student review essays independently; such instruction may lead to improved learning since the student is not dependent on your comments. Highlighting one or two comma splices and suggesting the student look for other mistakes of this kind can have the same result. Also, since the student is going to go back and rework these papers, you need not comment on issues you have not yet addressed in class. You can concentrate on single issues on each draft, a practice that will make both your job and the student's job more targeted and effective, less fragmented and frustrating.
5. *Avoid procrastination.* Some students might be inclined to hand in less carefully done work on early drafts when they know only the final product "counts." If you allow this to happen, you are either doing the student's revision work by reading and commenting or wasting your efforts before he or she has really put enough thinking or writing into the project. To avoid this problem, many instructors give appropriate credit for early drafts, encouraging students to present their best work at each stage. (See Chapter 5 for advice for students about procrastination.)

Teacher procrastination is another possibility. Although the temptation might be to wait to look at papers carefully until the end of the term, only spot-checking early drafts, the quality of the final portfolios will be directly related to early and continuous guidance. Lengthy review and comments on the final collection might be interesting to some students, but will not be particularly instructive and will keep you working until the last minute before grades are due. One of the best ways to assign a final grade to the portfolio is to schedule individual conferences (these can be done in 15–20 minutes) in which the student reviews the portfolio with you and, together, you assess improvements, remaining weaknesses, and overall quality of the pieces in the collection, taking time to point out particularly strong revisions you have noted in several of the essays.

Implemented thoughtfully and individually, portfolio writing/grading can be very rewarding. For students, it can be a step toward more intrinsic motivation and greater independence as writers. For the instructor, it is a way to reflect a more realistic notion of the way good writing *really* happens—through a continual process of revision—and the portfolio can provide a better opportunity to observe and acknowledge substantive change in students' skills and habits.

## Sample Syllabus: 15-Week Semester

In this syllabus, students write essays in four modes: description, exposition by comparison and contrast, exposition by causal analysis, and argument. The argument assignment requires research and documentation. Each paper requires at least one draft.

### Week 1: Introduction

*Introduction to the course and the textbook:* Point out the chapters in Part 1, highlighting chapters 1–5, which present the writing process. Introduce the Concise Handbook in Part 4, focusing on the pages that cover a few common student errors, such as Errors with Pronouns or The Semicolon.

Reading: Chapter 1: The Basics of the Short Essay

In-class writing: Assignment p. 22, A & B

Assignment: 2–3 page journal entry: description

### Week 2: Description

Reading: Chapter 11: Description

Chapter 30 “The Battle of the Ants” p. 668

Grammar Review: Part 4 A Concise Handbook: Review Parts of Speech and Sentence Components and Classifications, pp. 541–546

In-class writing: Practicing What You’ve Learned p. 328, A, B, or C

Assignment: Description paper draft

### Week 3: Description, cont’d

Reading: Chapter 4: Beginnings and Endings, p. 78 (Work on lead-ins and concluding paragraphs, using exercises and assignments in this chapter as needed.)

(Optional) Chapter 30 “A Day at the Theme Park” p. 663

Grammar Review: Chapter 20: Major Errors in Grammar: Errors with Adjectives and Adverbs (20p–q) and Errors in Modifying Phrases (20r–s)

In-class writing: Use “A Revision Worksheet” in Chapter 11, p. 339 for individual or peer review of drafts.

Assignment: Description paper final (due next week)

### Week 4: Description, cont’d

Reading: Chapter 11, p. 339 “Reviewing Your Progress”

In-class writing: Journal entry: reflection on writing the description paper

Assignment: 2–3 page journal entry: how are things alike and different?

### **Week 5: Exposition: Comparison and Contrast**

- Reading: Chapter 9: Exposition: “Strategy Three: Development by Comparison and Contrast, p. 225–247  
Chapter 25 “My Real Car” p. 625
- In-class writing: Chapter 9, Essay Topics, p. 229 (Students work in groups to come up with specific topics based on the general suggestions.)  
Journal entry: the difference between the Point-by-Point and the Block pattern
- Assignment: Comparison and contrast paper draft

### **Week 6: Exposition: Comparison and Contrast, cont’d**

- Reading: Chapter 6: Effective Sentences, p. 125 (Work on whatever would help students most, including the Practicing What You’ve Learned exercises that go with the sections chosen.)  
Chapter 5: Drafting and Revising: Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, p. 100–110.
- Grammar Review: Chapter 20: Major Errors in Grammar: Errors with Pronouns (20k–o)
- In-class writing: Use “A Final Checklist for Your Essay, Chapter 5, p. 109 for individual or peer review of drafts.
- Assignment: Comparison and contrast paper final (due next week)

### **Week 7: Exposition: Comparison and Contrast, cont’d**

- Reading: Chapter 9, p. 247 “Reviewing Your Progress”
- In-class writing: Journal entry: reflection on writing the comparison and contrast paper
- Assignment: 2–3 page journal entry: why do things happen as they do?

### **Week 8: Exposition: Causal Analysis /Optional Midterm Exam**

- Reading: Chapter 9: Exposition: “Strategy Six: Development by Causal Analysis, pp. 273–284  
Chapter 28 “Cell Phones and Social Graces” p. 656
- In-class writing: Chapter 9, Essay Topics, p. 277 (Students work in groups to come up with specific topics based on the general suggestions.)  
Journal entry: the difference between cause and effect
- Assignment: causal analysis paper draft

### **Week 9: Exposition: Causal Analysis, cont’d**

- Reading: Chapter 3: The Body paragraphs, p. 46 (Work on Topic Sentences and Paragraph Development, including the Practicing What You’ve Learned exercises that go with these sections.)



Punctuation Review: Chapter 21: A Concise Guide to Punctuation: The Comma (20d), The Semicolon (21e), The Colon (21f)

In-class writing: Use “A Revision Worksheet, Chapter 9, p. 285 for individual or peer review of drafts.

Assignment: Causal analysis paper final (due next week)

### **Week 10: Exposition: Causal Analysis, cont’d**

Reading: Chapter 9, p. 285 “Reviewing Your Progress”

In-class writing: Journal entry: reflection on writing the causal analysis paper

Assignment: 2–3 page journal entry: opinions

### **Week 11: Argument**

Reading: Chapter 10: Argumentation, pp. 286–295

Chapter 29 “Guns on Campus: More Harm than Help” p. 659

Chapter 14: Writing a Research Paper, pp. 368–376, pp. 383–388, and pp. 389–391 (Focus on parts of Beginning Your Library Research, Preparing a Working Bibliography, Choosing and Evaluating Your Sources, and Taking Notes)

In-class writing: Chapter 10, Assignment, p. 300

Chapter 10, Essay Topics, p. 301 (Students work in groups to come up with specific topics based on the general suggestions.)

Journal entry: Answer the questions in A Topic Proposal, p. 302

Assignment: Argumentation paper draft

### **Week 12: Argument, cont’d**

Reading: Chapter 2: The Thesis Statement, pp. 30–46 (Students can do the Practicing What You’ve Learned and Assignment activities as needed.)

Chapter 14, pp. 392–398 (Focus on parts of Incorporating Your Source Material and do Practicing What You’ve Learned, B, p. 396 and Assignment, B, p. 398)

Chapter 10, Common Logical Fallacies, pp. 295–299

In-class writing: In pairs or small groups, students correct each other’s drafts for logical fallacies.

Assignment: Argumentation paper draft 2

### **Week 13: Argument, cont’d**

Reading: Chapter 7: Word Logic, pp. 154–177 (Work on Selecting the Correct Words and Selecting the Best Words)

Review selected items from Chapter 14, pp. 399–413 (MLA style) or pp. 413–421 (APA style).

Grammar Review: Chapter 20 Errors with Verbs (20a–g)

In-class writing: Practicing What You've Learned exercises that go with the Chapter 7 sections above.  
Use "A Revision Worksheet" Chapter 10 p. 321 for individual or peer review.

Assignment: Argumentation paper final (due next week)

#### **Week 14: Argument, cont'd**

Reading: Chapter 10, p. 322 "Reviewing Your Progress"

Punctuation Review: Chapter 21: A Concise Guide to Punctuation: The Comma, p. 576 (21d); The Semicolon, p. 582 (21e); The Colon, p. 584 (21f)

In-class writing: Journal entry: reflection on writing the argumentation paper

Assignment: Journal entry: reflection on grammatical and punctuation errors in the four assigned papers

#### **Week 15: Chapter 15: Classroom Writing: Exams, Timed Essays, and Presentations / Final Exam**

Reading: Chapter 15, pp. 441–454 (Work with selections from these pages, including Practicing What You've Learned p. 448.)

In-class writing: Final Exam: Timed Essay

# **Part 1**

## **The Basics of the Short Essay**

- **Prewriting**
- **The Thesis Statement**
- **The Body Paragraphs**
- **Beginnings and Endings**
- **Drafting and Revising: Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking**
- **Effective Sentences**
- **Word Logic**
- **The Reading-Writing Connection**

# Chapter 1

## Prewriting, p.3

### Getting Started (or Soup-Can Labels Can Be Fascinating)

Getting started writing can be hard, so this chapter encourages students to remember they have valuable ideas to tell their readers and to care about their subjects so their readers will. Another helpful idea in communicating those ideas is for students to go beyond writing for themselves and develop an awareness of their readers' reactions.

### Selecting a Subject

It helps to begin choosing a subject early and to not be rushed. Another helpful suggestion is for students to find their best space for working. If students get to choose the subject, they should choose one they are interested in. They can make a list of things they are good at or look in local newspapers or blogs for ideas. Once students choose a subject, they may need to narrow it and make it less general.

### Finding Your Essay's Purpose and Focus

Two crucial elements are *purpose*—what students want their writing to accomplish—and *focus*—the direction students want their papers to take.

### Pump-Primer Techniques

These ten pre-writing strategies can help with both purpose and focus.

1. *Listing*: Students jot down ideas without holding back and then look for the large ideas or connections between ideas.
2. *Freewriting*: Students write for a set period of time without stopping, allowing the mind to roam freely over a subject. This may help students discover new topics.
3. *Looping*: Students identify a central idea from their initial freewriting, write it in a sentence, use it to freewrite more, and so on, focusing ideas as they go.
4. *The boomerang*: In freewriting, students approach the same subject from different perspectives to help them see it in new ways.
5. *Clustering*: In this more visual technique, also called mapping, students write their general subject in a circle and draw lines to other circles with related ideas.
6. *Cubing*: Here students draw or imagine a six-sided cube and answer a set of related questions about their subject on each side.
7. *Interviewing*: Students ask a classmate to use reporters' questions to help them discuss their subject.
8. *The cross-examination*: Students ask themselves questions about their subject as if they are on a witness stand, using categories such as definition and circumstance, adapted from Aristotle.
9. *Sketching*: This technique can help visual learners to remember details and make connections as they draw or sketch their ideas.
10. *Dramatizing the subject*: Students think about their subjects as dramas unfolding and answer questions based on terms such as action, actors, motivation, etc.

### After You've Found Your Focus

Think about writing a working thesis statement.

### Discovering Your Audience

Knowing who their audience will be helps students determine what information to include as well as the voice and tone of the essay.

## How to Identify Your Readers

1. *Determine who the audience is for the assignment.* Even if the assignment does not have a specific intended audience, it's helpful for students to imagine one.
2. *If a specific audience is designated, determine their reasons for reading.* Specific questions can help students discover purpose and content.
3. *Find out what knowledge the readers already have of the subject.* Students should put themselves in their readers' place and ask what else readers need to know.
4. *Explore readers' identities, including their attitudes and emotional states.* How are readers predisposed toward the subject?
5. *Determine special qualities readers might have.* This addresses word choice and tone.

The following tips are useful in analyzing audience.

1. *Readers don't like to be bored.* Students should grab readers' attention.
2. *Readers hate confusion and disorder.* Writing should be clear and direct and avoid frustrating readers.
3. *Readers want to think and learn.* Enlighten readers with something new or a new point of view.
4. *Readers want to see and feel what the writer sees and feels.* Use clear, precise language with details and specific examples to get readers involved and interested.
5. *Readers are turned off by pretentious, phony voices.* Students should write in a natural voice and avoid sounding scholarly or sophisticated.

## Keeping a Journal (Talking to Yourself Does Help)

Students can use a journal for reflection and to explore their ideas or pre-writing techniques.

### Uses of the Journal

1. *Confront your fears of writing; conquer the blank page.* The more you write, the easier it is.
2. *Improve your powers of observation.* Help readers see what the writer sees.
3. *Save your brilliant ideas.* Expand or elaborate on them later.
4. *Save other people's brilliant ideas.* Record interesting ideas, and note the sources.
5. *Be creative.* Use poetry, song, parody, and other imaginative strategies.
6. *Keep pre- and post-reading notes.* These can help students analyze other writers' work.
7. *Record responses to class discussions.* Students' reactions could become ideas for good essays.
8. *Focus on a problem.* Writing about a problem can help solve it.
9. *Practice audience awareness.* This helps with content, organization, and tone.
10. *Describe your own writing process.* Students might find patterns in their writing process that either help or hinder the process.
11. *Write a progress report.* Students list the skills they have mastered so far.
12. *Become sensitive to language.* Play with language to make it less threatening.
13. *Write your own textbook.* Students make their own grammar, punctuation, and spelling handbooks to remember what's important for them.

## Answers to Chapter 1 Assignments

### Practicing What You've Learned, p.18

- A.
1. This subject is far too broad. It might be narrowed by defining the university's role in a specific field, such as researching solar energy for use in homes.
  2. This subject could be adequately treated in a short essay.
  3. Because of the number of Shakespearean characters, this subject is too large. It might be narrowed to one or two characters of one play.
  4. Obviously, this subject covers too much ground.

5. A short paper might give a satisfactory overview of this hobby, but for a better essay the student might focus on some specific aspect, such as “how to find rare/older cards,” “how to assess the value of a baseball card,” or “types of baseball cards.”
  6. This subject could be discussed in a short essay, though the student might profit from focusing on some specific aspect or particular kind of gun control laws—the state/city they govern.
  7. The most serious disadvantages could be covered in a short paper.
  8. The various models and functions of computers are a complex subject, too broad for a brief essay.
  9. This subject could be described adequately.
  10. Once the subject is narrowed to a specific type of bike (e.g., mountain, road, touring), selecting a bicycle would be a good topic for a process paper.
- B.** You will, of course, receive a variety of suitable answers here. Be sure that the students narrow the subjects sufficiently instead of stopping halfway. For example, a student might be tempted to narrow “music” to “rock music” or “education” to “college,” but these subjects are still too broad for a short essay. Better answers will be more specific: “music” to “Melissa Etheridge’s latest album,” “education” to “required courses,” etc. If done properly, this exercise should show students that selecting and narrowing a subject is the first step to discovering the main purpose of their essays. Once this step is mastered, students should find that formulating a thesis is not the difficult problem they might have imagined.

***Practicing What You’ve Learned, p. 22***

- A.**
1. The Geico ad appeals to an older audience: middle-aged males and females who were teenagers and young adults in the 1960s. The ad reaches across social and economic class boundaries and connects to audiences on a emotional, nostalgic level.
  2. This audience may still be interested in the same types of activism and causes they embraced in their youth and the natural imagery in the background of the ad may resonate with the audience’s “free spirit.” As aging members of society, and nearing retirement, this audience is also concerned with making smart financial decisions and would, therefore, appreciate Geico’s “Special Treatment” and good value.
  3. Geico “rewards” customers who “survived” the wild ‘60s. This may evoke feelings of camaraderie and understanding between the customer and the company, which creates a strong emotional appeal. The “experienced driver discounts” and claims of “average savings of \$500” also appeal to a more mature, value-conscious customer.
  4. The phrase—“Survive the ‘60s? You deserve special treatment.”—strongly resonates with the target audience.
- B.** Answers will vary.
- C.** Answers will vary, though many ads will have identifiable target audiences.

***Discussion of Assignment, p. 23***

- A.** The radio audience will want details about the supposed benefits of Breatharianism, even though the students may be skeptical and probably think Brooks is a phony. Including comments such as, “Sure, I know you are probably skeptical,” **may** show audience awareness and make the ad more believable.
- The parade permit application would try to show that these people would not pose a threat to public order. Moreover, this might lead to more business for the community as well as a sense that the town was interested in the health and welfare of its citizens and even the environment.
- In the report, details such as a nutritional study showing the bad effects this diet would have on health, a record of Brooks’s activity in other states and cities, and some personal testimony from other former Breatharians all would strengthen the case. Students will need to remember to do more than just say, “He’s obviously guilty; let’s leave it at that!”

***B. Collaborative Activity, p. 25***

Answers will vary.

## Chapter 2

### The Thesis Statement, p. 30

#### What Is a Thesis? What Does a “Working Thesis” Do?

The thesis is the main point or controlling idea of an essay. A “working thesis” is a thesis in draft form that helps students work through the writing process from prewriting through drafting and revising. Students should refer to the working draft often, using it as an organizational tool and to help make sure everything in the essay supports the thesis.

#### Can a “Working Thesis” Change?

Writing is an act of discovery, so as students write, they may find that their ideas and focus change. If this happens, students can either rework or expand their original thesis or, like many professional writers do, create a new draft with a new thesis and go in a different direction.

#### Guidelines for Writing a Good Thesis

In the thesis, students should state their clearly defined opinion on some subject and be specific and precise in the language they use. Students should put forth one main idea to avoid the confusion of arguing more than one issue in their essay. If students avoid ideas that are overly obvious and tiresome, they are more likely to have something worthwhile to say to their readers.

The thesis should be limited in scope to fit the assignment. Students should not promise in the thesis more of a discussion than they can deliver in a short essay. Alternately, a vague thesis reflects lack of clarity in the writer’s thinking, so students should state their thesis clearly and in specific terms, avoiding imprecise and vague language. Let students know that they should not hesitate to state the thesis as the clearly recognizable main idea in the first or second paragraph. Readers need to be able to assess the supporting details in the essay and shouldn’t have to work hard to figure out the main idea.

#### Avoiding Common Errors in Thesis Statements

It’s easy to make mistakes in forming a thesis statement, and here are five common ones.

1. Students shouldn’t merely announce or describe their intentions in the thesis. They should also state an attitude toward their subject that they will explain and illustrate in the essay.
2. Expressions such as “in my opinion” clutter and weaken the thesis and make students sound timid and uncertain. Students should be forceful and speak directly, with conviction.
3. Making irrational or oversimplified claims will make students sound unreasonable or insulting. They should especially avoid irresponsible charges, name calling, and profanity.
4. Encourage students to avoid creating a thesis that states a self-evident or dead-end idea. Instead, the thesis should make a point that can lead to an interesting discussion.
5. Unless the answer is obvious, students should not express a thesis in the form of a question.

#### Using the Essay Map

An essay map is a brief statement in the first paragraph that introduces the major points students will discuss in the essay. It tells readers where the writer will be taking them. In a thesis, the writer takes a stand on an issue and defines the purpose of the essay. The essay map expands that idea so the reader knows the route the writer will take to accomplish the purpose. An essay map also guides students in organizing their essay and keeps them from wandering from the main idea. If the essay map sounds too obvious or mechanical, students can use them in their drafts and take them out of the final essay.

## Answers to Chapter 2 Assignments

### *Practicing What You've Learned, p. 38*

- A.
1. Inadequate. It is unnecessary to say "I think," and "interesting" is too broad to have much meaning. What is it about the movie that is interesting—the subject, the acting, the cinematography? A good thesis is more specific.
  2. Inadequate. First, a thesis should be expressed in a declarative sentence, not in a question. Second, comparing Japanese automobiles to American automobiles is too broad.
  3. Inadequate. This is merely a statement that "some people" have this opinion. The purpose of a paper, however, is to reveal and support the author's opinion. Moreover "bad" is simply too subjective, not specific; still, it does provide for the heuristic question "in which ways?"
  4. Inadequate. "My essay will tell you" is an announcement.
  5. Adequate. This specific assertion will lead to a discussion of the reasons why final examinations should be given before the winter break.
  6. Inadequate. Thesis is vague ("burden") and moves in two different directions.
  7. Inadequate. The writer's point is unclear. Does she believe body piercing should be illegal, or is it merely unsightly? It is also unclear whether the writer is unable to look people in the face who are "into body piercing" or if she finds facial piercing particularly offensive.
  8. Inadequate. This statement is unreasonable in its claim.
  9. Adequate.
  10. Inadequate. The phrase "very important" is too vague. The thesis should assert a specific idea, such as "having a close friend you can talk to makes adjusting to dorm living a lot easier."
- B. These weak or faulty theses may be rewritten in a variety of ways; the comments below are intended to help you identify the problem with each example.
1. "Negative experience" is too broad; students should substitute specific descriptions.
  2. This is a "so what?" thesis. Students should either take a stand on the issue or state why it is important for the reader to know the advantages and disadvantages.
  3. "One big headache" is too vague.
  4. Students should omit the phrase "In this paper I will debate." Also, the writer's position should be clear.
  5. Too vague. What is it we need to do about billboard clutter?
  6. What is missing from this thesis statement is a purpose. Why do the insurance laws need to be rewritten? Which laws?
  7. Too vague. In what ways is it good for the rider?
  8. "In my opinion" can be deleted, and "fantastic" is too vague.
  9. Too broad. What effects did the Civil Rights movement have?
  10. This thesis lacks a clear, single focus/purpose. Does the writer want to discuss the band's merits or its venue selection choices?

### *Practicing What You've Learned, p. 41*

- A.
1. because of its . . . innovative editing.
  2. Such a move . . . highway maintenance.
  3. To guarantee . . . personalized design.
  4. because it's . . . more luxurious.
  5. To qualify . . . and training.
  6. Through . . . squads.
  7. Because . . . fatty tissue.
  8. deductions . . . will be taxed.
  9. They're . . . fun to grow.
  10. His spirit of protest . . . arrangements



**B.** Student responses will vary.

**C.** *Collaborative Activity:* Student responses will vary.

***Discussion of Assignment, p. 42***

Many of these quotations lend themselves to essays developed by example or narration, and teachers may wish to use one of them as an assignment prompt when those methods of essay development are being studied. Some of these topics would also make excellent prompts for an in-class “response” essay assignment (see Chapter 15).