A GUIDE TO TEACHING

Everyone’s an Author
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Everyone’s an Author

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Preface

Everyone’s an Author aims to introduce undergraduate students to writing as it really is today—with words, images, and sounds; in print and online; on Facebook and in college essays—and to do so within a strongly rhetorical framework. In short, this book challenges students to think of themselves as authors and to get their words and ideas out there for others to read and respond to. Faced with almost limitless opportunities for authorship, students need help understanding that each opportunity constitutes a rhetorical situation and that every rhetorical situation comes with its own constraints. Our goal is to help students develop the ability to think strategically about how best to develop those opportunities within the constraints that inevitably accompany them.

There are many ways of approaching this goal. So, while one teacher might begin with Part I, The Need for Rhetoric and Writing (particularly Ch. 1, THINKING RHETORICALLY, and Ch. 2, RHETORICAL SITUATIONS) to provide the foundation for a course grounded in an understanding of rhetoric, another might choose to begin with Part III in order to focus on the role of argument in all forms of communication. Yet another approach might center on the genre chapters in Part II (ARGUING A POSITION, WRITING A NARRATIVE, WRITING ANALYTICALLY, REPORTING INFORMATION, WRITING A REVIEW), each of which includes guidelines to help students consider their rhetorical situations in the context of a particular genre. For any of these approaches, you can be guided by the structure of the chapters, or you can select parts from various chapters to create your own specific plan for your own teaching situation.

No matter what approach you take, it’s a good idea during the first class to go over Everyone’s an Author with your students. Explain how you’ll be using the book, and help them to understand how they can best use it. We especially recommend explaining the book’s system of color-coding, icons, and links—all things that will greatly enhance their use of the book, and that will help them with their goal of learning how to write.

- **YELLOW** is used to highlight writing guidelines.
- **BLUE** pages include readings; the version of the book with readings includes blue boxes in the margins that refer students to specific examples in the readings (e.g., p. 153).
If You’re Using Everyone’s an Author with Readings

This version of the book is designed as two books in one, with the rhetoric in the front and a brief anthology of readings in the back. You’ll find a Menu of Readings at the very back of the book, organized alphabetically by author as well as by genre and theme. Each reading is followed by questions for “Thinking about the Text,” the last of which is a writing suggestion you could use as an assignment.

Please note that all the readings are on blue pages, to make them easy to spot. Be sure to point out to students that there are links in the margins that help them navigate between the readings and the rhetoric: the blue boxes (e.g., on p. 153) refer them to useful examples in the readings, and that the white boxes (e.g., on p. 752) refer them from the readings to places in the book explaining how to do something done in that reading. This system allows you to center your syllabus on the rhetoric or the readings; the marginal notes will help you draw from elsewhere in the book as you need to.

Using the Tumblr Site

Everyone’s an Author includes a companion Tumblr site (at everyonesanauthor.tumblr.com), which offers additional readings—essays, articles, cartoons, videos, podcasts, interviews, and more—all indexed by genre, theme, and medium. Each reading is followed by questions to spark analysis, discussion, reflection—and writing, along with a space where students can literally join (or start) a conversation. We’re posting new items regularly, so the Tumblr site will be a good source for fresh, timely readings and a place where students can post comments and questions and practice being an author!
Sample Syllabi
EVERYONE’S AN AUTHOR TEACHES THE genres that college students are most often assigned or expected to do, along with instruction in rhetoric, argument, research, style, design, and more. Chapters can be assigned in any order: while one teacher might begin with Part I for a course grounded in an understanding of rhetoric, another might choose to begin with Part II for a course that focuses on a number of specific genres of writing. Whatever approach you take, we’ve included links to help you draw from other parts of the book as need be.

If you’re using Everyone’s an Author with Readings, you’ll find links in the margins throughout the book that will help you navigate between the instruction in the front of the book and the readings in the back. It’s a format that will allow you to center your syllabus on the rhetoric or the readings, with links to help you connect the two. With both versions of the book, our goal has been to cover the topics teachers need or want to teach—and to include some new topics that we think are important for student writers today.

Given our own different perspectives, it’s not surprising that the authors of this book approach teaching in different ways, and so we’ve written Everyone’s an Author to be usable in classes with a variety of focuses by teachers with a variety of interests. Following are several course plans and syllabi that suggest some of the ways to use this book.

For a Course Focused on Academic Writing

Weeks 1–2  Orient students to the expectations of academic writing with Ch. 28 ON MEETING THE DEMANDS OF ACADEMIC WRITING. Help them see how strategies they use in social media transfer to academic writing with Ch. 27, TWEETS TO REPORTS. Extend their basis for participating in the academic conversation with Chs. 1 and 2 ON THINKING RHETORICALLY and considering RHETORICAL SITUATIONS. Assign a brief piece of academic writing—for example:

• a one-page ANALYSIS of a reading, perhaps something on our Tumblr site
• a NARRATIVE about students’ own use of social media
• a REPORT on the conventions used on various social media sites

Schedule group sessions for discussion.

Weeks 3–5  Introduce the basics of argumentative writing with Ch. 7 on ARGUING A POSITION and Chs. 13 and 14 on ANALYZING ARGUMENTS and STRATEGIES FOR ARGUING. Ask students to go back to the text they wrote and decide whether or not they were making an argument. Schedule a peer review session focused on strengthening their arguments.

Weeks 6–8  Introduce the basics of analysis with Ch. 9 on WRITING ANALYTICALLY. Writing activities could include drafting a causal analysis of a decision students made recently (choosing a college, buying a laptop), a process analysis of something they’re good at (sudoku, knitting), or a rhetorical analysis of an ad (the laptop they purchased, their college).

Weeks 9–10 Once they’ve learned to analyze and argue a position, introduce them to the basics of academic research by reading and discussing the introduction to Pt. IV on pp. 325–27. Assign a topic on which they need to gather info from several sources, both online and in the library (expect groans), using Chs. 16 and 17 on FINDING SOURCES and KEEPING TRACK.

Weeks 11–12  Using Ch. 15 on STARTING RESEARCH, have students choose a topic to research, narrow that topic, and do background research in order to develop a research question.

Weeks 13–14 Have students use Ch. 10 on REPORTING INFORMATION and Chs. 21–23 to report their findings. Introduce documentation, assigning Ch. 24 for MLA or Ch. 25 for APA.

Week 15 Students should reflect on their progress toward academic writing by using pp. 647–48; if you’re asking them to ASSEMBLE A PORTFOLIO, assign Ch. 32.

If your students need help with the WRITING PROCESS, Ch. 3 can help.

If your campus has a WRITING CENTER, assign Ch. 33.

If you want to promote group work, Ch. 4 focuses on COLLABORATION.

If you want students to have some understanding of the role of rhetoric in academia, you might assign Ch. 5, WRITING AND RHETORIC AS A FIELD OF STUDY.

IF YOU TEACH ON THE QUARTER SYSTEM, you could introduce the expectations of academic writing in one week rather than two, and eliminate the assignment on Reporting Information.
For a Course Focused on Argument

Weeks 1–2 Since rhetoric is the basis for argumentation, begin with Chs. 1 and 2 on THINKING RHETORICALLY and RHETORICAL SITUATIONS. And since your students will be writing in an academic context, you should consider assigning Ch. 28 on MEETING THE DEMANDS OF ACADEMIC WRITING.

Weeks 3–4 Ask students to identify arguments—both verbal and visual—from their own experiences. Then use Ch. 13 on ANALYZING ARGUMENTS to identify and explore what makes an effective argument. Ch. 14 introduces the basic STRATEGIES FOR ARGUING, ways of supporting any argument.

Weeks 5–6 Because analysis is central to both understanding and creating arguments, you might then assign Ch. 9 on WRITING ANALYTICALLY and have students compose a written analysis of a given argument. They could work with a verbal argument or a visual one; it should just be something in which they can clearly identify the essential elements of an argument.

Weeks 7–8 Ch. 7 on ARGUING A POSITION shows students how to identify an arguable subject, articulate a position, and argue for their position.

Weeks 9–10 Have students incorporate audio, video, or other media in their position essay, using the multimedia assignment in this Guide.

If your students need help with the WRITING PROCESS, Ch. 3 can help them.
If your campus has a WRITING CENTER, assign Ch. 33.
If you want to promote group work, Ch. 4 focuses on COLLABORATION.
If you require portfolios, you’ll want to assign Ch. 32, ASSEMBLING A PORTFOLIO.
If you want students to share their work with a wider audience, Ch. 35 on PUBLISHING YOUR WORK provides many specific suggestions for doing so.

IF YOU TEACH ON THE SEMESTER SYSTEM, you could add a research component to the course—or you could cover an additional genre. Ch. 11 on WRITING A REVIEW would be a good choice, since it calls on writers to write an evaluative argument.

For a Course Focused on Research

Weeks 1–2 Begin with the Pt. IV introduction and have students do the exercise on p. 327 as a way to begin thinking about the role of research in their lives. Working through Ch. 15 on STARTING RESEARCH should culminate in a well-thought-out plan and working thesis.

Weeks 3–4 Chs. 16–18 on FINDING SOURCES, CONSIDERING RESEARCH METHODS, KEEPING TRACK, and EVALUATING SOURCES all help with the process of gathering information and data.
Assign students to write a project proposal (Ch. 19) and Ch. 12 to help them think about what genre(s) to use. Schedule at least one peer review workshop for the proposals and ask students to present them orally in class.

Weeks 7–8 Then have them annotate a bibliography (Ch. 20) and submit a rough draft.

Weeks 9–11 Assign Chs. 21–22 to help students synthesize ideas and quote, paraphrase, and summarize source material—and Ch. 23 to help them give credit and avoid plagiarism.

Weeks 12–13 Assign a documentation chapter: Ch. 24 for MLA Style or Ch. 25 for APA Style.

Weeks 14–15 Have students reflect on their research and writing process using the guidelines in Ch. 32, assembling a portfolio, and make an oral presentation based on their research.

If your campus has a writing center, refer students to Ch. 33.

If you want students to present or share their work (with classmates or a wider audience), Ch. 30, designing what you write, and Ch. 35, publishing your work, will help with lots of specifics.

For a Course Focused on a Theme

If you focus your writing course thematically, you’ll find readings on six broad themes in everyonesanauthor.tumblr.com. You could consider as well using Everyone’s an Author with Readings; the Menu of Readings on the inside back cover will lead you to find readings on those same themes. If you’re focusing on a theme where you supply the readings, check out Beverly Moss’s syllabus on p. 000 to see how she organized a writing course on one particular theme.

If you’re using one of the themes covered in the book, links in the margins will help you move between the readings and the writing instruction, allowing you to base your syllabus on either the readings or the rhetoric.

Weeks 1–2 Assign readings on the chosen theme. Have students generate ideas on the theme using the strategies in Ch. 3, writing processes, with the goal of finding a topic they’d like to research and write about. You could have them collaborate in small groups, using the guidelines in Ch. 4. Have them do some informal writing on their topic; one prompt our students like is “If my topic were a food, it would be . . .”

Weeks 3–4 Using Chs. 16–18, students should then research their topic and begin to narrow it to a manageable topic. Using Chs. 19 and 20, have them write a project proposal and an annotated bibliography.
A Sampler of Course Plans and Syllabi

Weeks 5–7 Assign students to write a REPORT on their topic, using Ch. 10, or allow them to CHOOSE A GENRE, using Ch. 12.

Weeks 8–10 Students then write an essay ARGUING A POSITION, using Ch. 7.

Weeks 11–12 Students write about their topic in another genre, using Ch. 12 for guidance.

Weeks 13–14 Ask students to select their best effort to revise as a present to the class, using Ch. 30 for help DESIGNING slides or other visual components.

Week 15 End the term by having students reflect on and ASSEMBLE A PORTFOLIO of their work, using Ch. 32 for guidance.

If your students need help with the WRITING PROCESS, refer them to Ch. 3.

If you want to promote group work, Ch. 4 focuses on COLLABORATION.

For a Course Focused on Genres

If you’re using Everyone’s an Author with Readings, see the inside back cover for a Menu of Readings demonstrating each genre.

Weeks 1–2 Ch. 1, THINKING RHETORICALLY; Ch. 2, RHETORICAL SITUATIONS; Part II intro, pp. 57–60; Ch. 12, CHOOSING GENRES

Weeks 3–4 Ch. 8, WRITING A NARRATIVE. Point students to Ch. 14 for help with comparison, description, and other strategies that are often used in composing narratives. Ch. 29, on WRITING GOOD SENTENCES, may also provide help.

Week 5 You might follow the first writing assignment by discussing what’s expected of ACADEMIC WRITING and also at how the strategies students use routinely in social media transfer. Chs. 27 and 28 can help.

Weeks 6–8 Ch. 9, WRITING ANALYTICALLY. This chapter covers four kinds of analysis; you may want to choose one or two to focus on.

Weeks 9–11 Ch. 10, REPORTING INFORMATION. Here you will probably want to work with Ch. 14, focusing on how the STRATEGIES presented there can be useful in reports.

Weeks 12–14 Ch. 7, ARGUING A POSITION. Students will also benefit from reading and discussing Chs. 13 and 14.

Week 15 Students ASSEMBLE A PORTFOLIO of their best work from the course, with a letter to you reflecting on what they’ve learned, using Ch. 32 as a guide.

If your students need help with the WRITING PROCESS, refer them to Ch. 3.

If you want to promote group work, Ch. 4 focuses on COLLABORATION.

*IF YOU TEACH ON THE QUARTER SYSTEM, assign one less genre.*
For a Course Focused on Style

Week 1  The Pt. V introduction (pp. 511–14) and Ch. 26 (WHAT’S YOUR STYLE?) define style in terms of appropriateness and get students thinking about how stylistic choices they make depend on their rhetorical situation. The exercise on p. 525 to imitate a favorite author can spark rich discussion about rhetoric and style. See also Chs. 1 and 2 (THINKING RHETORICALLY, RHETORICAL SITUATIONS).

Week 2  Explore practical applications of stylistic choices in Chs. 27 and 28 (TWEETS TO REPORTS, MEETING THE DEMANDS OF ACADEMIC WRITING). Have students bring in tweets, Facebook updates, and such and discuss how they would write them for an academic context.

Weeks 3–4  Have students choose a topic to write about. Refer them to Ch. 3 for help generating ideas, to Pt. IV for help researching the topic, and to Ch. 12 for help CHOOSING GENRES.

Weeks 5–6  Assign students to write an essay in a genre of their choice. Have them read Ch. 29 on HOW TO WRITE GOOD SENTENCES to work on sentence-level style and work with a peer group to review their drafts.

Weeks 7–8  Students write on the same topic in a different genre, this time working with Ch. 30 to think more about how they DESIGN what they write. Again, schedule a peer review workshop.

Week 9  Then have students incorporate additional media, or revise their text in a different medium. Refer them to our Tumblr site to study texts in various media. Final peer review workshop.

Week 10  Have them reflect on what they’ve learned about style and ASSEMBLE A PORTFOLIO of their writing, using the guidelines in Ch. 32.

For a Course Focused on Multimodal Writing

To introduce the idea of composing a text that is more than words on paper, start by analyzing an example or two, focusing on the use of words, images, and whatever else the texts include. This analysis will provide students with a kind of template and some foundational vocabulary for thinking about and then composing multimodal texts themselves.

Weeks 1–2  Ch. 1, THINKING RHETORICALLY, and Ch. 2, RHETORICAL SITUATIONS, will introduce students to issues of audience and purpose that they’ll need to draw on as they develop essays using multiple media. Have them look at the Super Bowl ad in the “Think beyond Words” exercise on p. 11 and to think about how the ad uses words, images, and audio.

Writing: Discuss the Margaret Mead quotation on p. 17; then have students Google “small group of thoughtful committed citizens”
and click on Images. They’ll find dozens of images; have them choose one and write a brief analysis of how it conveys Mead’s message—with words? photos? something else? You may want to refer them to the discussion of rhetorical analysis on pp. 144–47 in Ch. 9, WRITING ANALYTICALLY.

Weeks 3–5 Send students to everyoneisanauthor.tumblr.com looking for examples of multimodal texts that can be used for discussion or as models. Discuss how the media affect the author’s rhetorical choices, and how those choices affect the way the audience reacts to and understands the message.

Writing: Assign Ch. 8, WRITING A NARRATIVE. Discuss the use of narratives Across Media (see pp. 105–6) and ask students to visit the site in the “Think beyond Words” activity on p. 107. You might have students select an inspirational quotation that they like and use their essay to tell the story of that impact. Telling them that they will then revise the essay to tell the story in a different medium will get them thinking rhetorically about the choices they have as authors.

Weeks 6–7 Have students revise their narrative, incorporating images, graphics, audio, and/or video; or have them convert the narrative into a photo essay or a short video montage that conveys the same story. Refer them to Ch. 30 for help DESIGNING WHAT THEY WRITE.

Weeks 8–9 Assign Ch. 7, ARGUING A POSITION, or another genre and have students incorporate images, audio, video, or other elements in their writing. Discuss the use of the genre Across Media, and be sure to assign the “Think beyond Words” exercise (p. 69). If the class has a website, publish the students’ essays there. Alternatively, they could create a public service announcement on a poster or short video.

Weeks 10–11 Ch. 12, CHOOSING GENRES. Have students compose an essay using words and images—and audio or video if appropriate to their topic and medium.

Weeks 12–14 Using Ch. 32, have students ASSEMBLE A PORTFOLIO of the writing they did in the course, including a letter to you reflecting on their progress in moving from words-on-a-page to writing across media.

Week 15 It’s a good idea to end a course like this with a show-and-tell, where each student shares a favorite work.

For a Two-Course Sequence

For a two-course sequence, you might want to might structure the first term on a number of genres and the second on research. Here is a sample of how you might structure such a sequence on a semester system:
First term

Weeks 1–2  Ch. 1, THINKING RHETORICALLY, and Ch. 2, RHETORICAL SITUATIONS
Weeks 3–5  Ch. 8, WRITING A NARRATIVE, and Ch. 29, HOW TO WRITE GOOD SENTENCES
Weeks 6–9  Ch. 7, ARGUING A POSITION, and Ch. 28, MEETING THE DEMANDS OF ACADEMIC WRITING
Weeks 10–13 Ch. 9, WRITING ANALYTICALLY
Week 14  Have students compose a letter to you reflecting on their individual progress, using pp. 647–50 as a guide.

Second term

Weeks 1–2  Begin with the Introduction to the Research section (pp. 325–27) and have students do the exercise on p. 327 as a way to begin thinking about the role of research in their lives. Working through Ch. 15, STARTING YOUR RESEARCH should help students come up with a well thought out plan and working thesis.
Weeks 3–5  Ch. 16, FINDING SOURCES, Ch. 17, KEEPING TRACK, and Ch. 18, EVALUATING SOURCES all help with the actual process of gathering information and data as well as structuring the project.
Weeks 6–7  Once students have begun the process of gathering information, indentifying and evaluating sources, assign them to write out a proposal and annotated bib using Ch. 19, WRITING A PROJECT PROPOSAL, and Ch. 20, ANNOTATING A BIBLIOGRAPHY.
Weeks 8–9  At this point, they’ll need to think about what genre is most appropriate for their project. Ch. 12, CHOOSING GENRES, can help them to do so, and then they can begin drafting, following whichever genre chapter they need.
Weeks 10–11 Ch. 21, SYNTHESIZING IDEAS, and Ch. 22, QUOTING, PARAPHRASING, SUMMARIZING, will help them blend ideas they find in their sources in with their own. Ch. 23 will help them learn how and why to GIVE CREDIT and acknowledge their sources.
Weeks 12–13  Time to get response and revise, following the guidelines in the appropriate genre chapter.
Weeks 14–15  Final revision and documentation checks, using whichever style you prefer: Ch. 24, MLA STYLE, or Ch. 25, APA STYLE.
Syllabus for a Theme-Based Course

Professor Beverly J. Moss

English 1110: Sport in Contemporary Society

Course Description

In this first-year writing course, you will enhance your writing and critical thinking skills by discussing, doing research on, and writing about issues related to the role of sports in contemporary society, particularly American society. This is not a course about a favorite sport, athlete, or team, and you do not need to be a sports fan. We will examine sports from sociological, political, and economic perspectives, paying particular attention to attitudes toward sports and to sports as an important entity in our culture. For example, we will read about the relationship between sports and the economy, sports and gender, sports and race, sports and performance-enhancing drugs, and so on. Think about some of the important headlines from the sports world within the past several months. The Augusta National golf club invited, for the first time ever, two women to become members. In the 2012 London Olympic Games, female boxers were allowed to compete for the first time. New research on the consequences of concussions has put professional football under increased scrutiny. Children are participating in organized sports at earlier ages than in the past, and experts are debating the physical and emotional consequences. These are just a few of the many topics available for you to investigate and write about this semester.

In addition to the required writing, for this course you will be expected to keep up with all reading, participate in class discussion, collaborate with classmates, and make a formal oral presentation.

Course texts (available in university bookstore)

Hoop Dreams (documentary)
Articles on Carmen

English 1110

• Focuses on expository writing. Students write papers that employ/develop their skills in analysis, argumentation, and the use of evidence.
• Provides extensive experience in writing but also experience in reading, listening, and speaking.
• Stresses revision. For most if not all papers, students have the opportunity to revise after receiving instructor and/or peer comments.
• Introduces basic research skills. Students will be expected to identify, evaluate, and employ secondary and primary research sources.

GEC goals/rationale

Writing courses across disciplines develop students’ skills in writing, reading, critical thinking, and oral expression.
GEC learning objectives

1. Students apply basic skills in expository writing.
2. Students demonstrate critical thinking through written and oral expression.
3. Students retrieve and use written information analytically and effectively.
4. Students use appropriate technology to complete assignments.

To these goals and objectives, we add visual thinking, understanding, and expression—visual literacy—and collective/cooperative thinking, understanding, and expression.

Required Assignments

Spend some time during the first week of class flipping through *Sport in Contemporary Society* and other sources (newspapers, magazines, journals, blogs and other online sources, and so on) on current sports issues and concerns. You will be asked to pick an issue/question dealing with sports that interests you. Think of this issue in terms of a question that you would like to investigate for fourteen weeks.

Proposal memo on a sports issue

Once you’ve chosen the issue you wish to write about for the semester, write a one-to-two-page single-spaced proposal memorandum to me in which you introduce your issue (including a brief description, background information, and tentative research question), discuss why it is important to examine this issue (and for whom it is important), and provide a bibliography of at least four secondary sources on the issue (see sample proposal in *Everyone’s an Author*, Chapter 19). \( 10\% \)

First essay: analysis of media coverage

For your first essay, you will examine how specific media outlets characterize or cover the sports issue that you’ve chosen. Is this issue covered differently, for example, in national versus local media—or in print versus electronic sites? You may compare and/or contrast two or more media outlets’ coverage of an issue by focusing on specific news articles or broadcasts, films, documentaries, books, or other viable sources. For this first essay, you will write a 4–6 page, double-spaced essay in which you analyze how the media represents/presents the issue, including:

- how they identify their purpose and their audience,
- how they use (or ignore) specific evidence, and
- how they use language, visual images, and document design, among other features.

Your goal, as a writer, is to analyze rather than describe or summarize. \( 20\% \)

Second essay: research report

For your second essay, you will learn as much as you can about the issue/question that you’ve identified. You will then write a 5-to-7-page (double-spaced) essay that essentially reports on the “state of the sports issue.” This assignment calls for an informative
essay in which your major purpose is to report on the issue rather than pick a side to argue for or against. For example, you might write an informative essay on the state of funding, particularly as it relates to the “pay to play” rule, for high school sports in Columbus area public school districts. What are the arguments being presented on either side of this issue? Who are the stakeholders and what is at stake? Why is the debate important to stakeholders and non-stakeholders alike? This essay requires that you do research with secondary (and maybe some primary) sources. You should have six to eight sources beyond class texts. 25%

**Final project: the argument**

The first essay requires that you analyze public discourse on an issue to determine how others—namely media outlets—discuss this issue and how that coverage affects how a general audience understands the issue. The second essay requires that you do research with secondary and primary sources to begin to understand the complexity of an issue. You are, in effect, examining an issue taking sides on it. This third essay calls on the skills you used to write the first two essays. While doing research for the second essay and analysis for the first essay, you should have begun to see an argument taking shape about your issue/question. In this final project, you will compose a 6- to 8-page (double-spaced) essay in which you argue for a specific position on the issue you’ve chosen. In other words, you are presenting evidence (using secondary and primary sources) to persuade your audience that your position is credible and desirable. In rhetoric, ethos, pathos, and logos (rhetorical appeals) are important elements in shaping an effective argument. You will need to give considerable thought to how you use these appeals—as you would in any argument. For this assignment, you may incorporate a visual or audio component as part of the essay. If you choose to include a visual or audio component, it should enhance your argument (rather than be “just for show”). 30%

**Collaborative projects / presentations**

You will participate in a collaborative project in which you and two classmates will pick an example of effective sports journalism (one or two print essays or columns, or a brief audio or video essay—no longer than eight minutes) that you deem as particularly successful. You can choose something related to a topic that we’ve read about in class or a topic that we have not discussed. Your group will do a 15 minute oral presentation in which you provide an analysis of the piece (author’s position, use of language, use of evidence, type of evidence, quality of writing, and so on), address why the piece is successful (identify the criteria you use to evaluate the essays), and provide a list of questions for class discussion of the issues raised in the essay(s). A copy of the essay should be emailed to me at least three days before the group presentation. Each group member must have a visible role in the presentation; however, the group will be assessed a group grade. If a group member does not carry his or her weight, I reserve the right to lower that person’s grade. You will be evaluated based on quality of content and quality of presentation. Collaborative presentations begin during week eleven. 15%
## Syllabus

| Week 1 | Introduction to course and syllabus; potential issues and research topics  
| Sport in Contemporary Society, Pt. 1: “Sport as a Microcosm of Society,” pp. 1–22 |
| Week 2 | Everyone’s an Author, Pt. I: “The Need for Rhetoric and Writing”  
| Ch. 1 Thinking Rhetorically  
| Ch. 2 Rhetorical Situations  
| Ch. 3 Writing Processes  
| Ch. 4 The Need for Collaboration  
| Ch. 5 Writing and Rhetoric as a Field of Study  
| Sport, Pt. 2: “Sport and Socialization: Organized Sports and Youth”  
| Everyone, Ch. 9 Writing Analytically  
| Due: Research topic/question |
| Week 3 | Sport, Part 3: “Sport and Socialization: The Mass Media”  
| Everyone, Part IV: “Research”  
| Ch. 15 Starting Your Research  
| Ch. 16 Finding Sources  
| Ch. 19 Writing a Project Proposal  
| Due: Research Project Proposal |
| Week 4 | Sport, Part 4: “Sport and Socialization: Symbols”  
| Everyone, Part III: “The Role of Argument”  
| Ch. 13 Analyzing Arguments  
| Everyone, Part V: “Style”  
| Ch. 26 What’s Your Style?  
| Ch. 27 Tweets to Reports/Moving from Social Media to Academic Writing  
| Ch. 28 Meeting the Demands of Academic Writing  
| Due: Draft of Essay #1—Media Analysis of Issue; Peer Response |
| Week 5 | Everyone, Ch. 29 How to Write Good Sentences  
| Sport, Pt. 5: “Problems of Excess: Overzealous Athletes, Parents, Coaches,” Chs. 12–15  
| Due: Final Draft of Essay #1 |
| Week 6 | Everyone  
| Ch. 10 Reporting Information  
| Ch. 30 Designing What You Write  
| Sport, Pt. 7: “Problem of Excess: Performance-Enhancing Drugs in Sports” |
| Week 7 | Sport, Pt. 8: “Problems of Excess: Big Time College Sport” (Chs. 21–26)  
| Everyone  
| Ch. 18 Evaluating Sources  
<p>| Ch. 14 Strategies for Arguing |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Task Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Everyone</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ch. 33 Taking Advantage of the Writing Center&lt;br&gt;Ch. 34 Joining a Writing Group&lt;br&gt;<strong>Sport, Pt. 9: “Problems of Excess: Sport and Money” (Ch. 27)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Pt. 10: “Structured Inequality: Sport and Race/Ethnicity” (Ch. 31)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Due: Intro and working thesis for 2nd essay—State of the Issue; peer response</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>View Hoop Dreams documentary outside of class&lt;br&gt;Discuss Hoop Dreams&lt;br&gt;Due: Draft of State of the Issue Report (second essay); peer response</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Everyone</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ch. 20 Annotating a Bibliography&lt;br&gt;Ch. 17 Keeping Track / Managing Information Overload&lt;br&gt;Ch. 7 Arguing a Position&lt;br&gt;<strong>Sport, Pt. 11: “Structured Inequality: Sport and Gender”</strong>&lt;br&gt;Due: Final Draft of 2nd Essay</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Sport, Pt. 12: Structured Inequality: Sport and Sexuality (all chapters)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Everyone</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ch. 21 Synthesizing Ideas&lt;br&gt;Ch. 22 Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing&lt;br&gt;Ch. 23 Giving Credit, Avoiding Plagiarism&lt;br&gt;Group Presentations #1 and #2&lt;br&gt;Due: Working thesis and annotated bibliography for position paper (final project)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td><strong>Group Presentations #3–#7</strong></td>
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<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Individual Conferences</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Sports, Pt. 13: “Sports and Globalization,” Chs. 38 and 39</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Everyone, Ch. 24 MLA Documentation</strong></td>
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<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Sports, Ch. 40</strong>&lt;br&gt;Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Oral Presentations</strong>&lt;br&gt;Course evaluations&lt;br&gt;Due: Draft of Position Paper; Peer Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Final Papers Due by 2 p.m.</strong></td>
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Syllabus for a Course Emphasizing Argument and Analysis

Professor Carole Clark Papper
Writing Studies and Composition 001

Course Description
An introduction to expository writing at the college level, with an emphasis on analysis and argument. Assignments in reading and writing are coordinated. In-class exercises including workshops and oral presentations.

Expository writing is written communication that explains, describes, defines, or informs using fact and example as support. Exposition is the most commonly practiced type of writing; you find it in letters to friends, instructions on how to use your new iPhone, the reviews of the latest movies and video games, descriptions of products advertised. You see it in manuals, pamphlets, articles in magazines and newspapers, blogs, and you have written it in school papers, reports, and research assignments. You may not have known its name, but you have known it.

In this class, we will work at expanding that knowing by doing. Good writing doesn’t just happen; there is no magic pen or keyboard, no secret tricks that enable writers to produce clear, engaging prose. Good writing requires sustained effort.

Course Goals
After successfully completing Writing Studies and Composition 001, students will be able to
• Compose clear, grammatical sentences
• Use various sentence forms effectively to achieve rhetorical goals
• Plan and develop an essay based on a focused thesis sentence
• Respond to writing assignments using appropriate style, structure, and voice
• Summarize, analyze, and respond to a variety of texts in support of a coherent argument
• Summarize, quote, and respond to reliable texts to support and develop claims
• Conduct research using the variety of information sources available to them
• Use the resources of the Axinn Library effectively
• Demonstrate the ability to evaluate the relevance and utility of different sources
• Integrate sources effectively and ethically in support of an argument
• Document sources correctly
• Apply editing, proofreading, and revising strategies effectively

Required text

Suggested

Additional reading selections will be provided by the instructor.
Course Requirements and Grading Criteria—1,000 points

Diagnostic in-class essay (Thu 9/6) P/F
Attendance, participation 150 pts
Writer's Notebook 200
Writing Project #1: Narrative 150
Writing Project #2: Position 150
Writing Project #3: Analysis 150
Writing Project #4: Research 200
  • Proposal = 10
  • Annotated Bibliography = 10
  • Oral Presentation = 10
  • Final Paper = 170

Syllabus

Goals for the Day       Class Activities       Assignments

WEEK 1: Introduce students to FYC, to each other, to me, to rhetoric, and to daily writing

Tue 9/4
1. Sharing personal info to begin building community. Beginning to understand how to select details to fit specific purpose and audience.       1. Compose a short personal bio, in class, on large index card/single sheet of paper. Then select several details you feel comfortable sharing with the class. Put those on a smaller index card. Pair up; swap cards; introduce each other; then introduce your partner to the class.       Read: "Introduction: Is Everyone an Author?" The chapter articulates several questions about what it means to be "an author."

2. Exploring and understanding the structure of this class
3. Examining writing processes / preferences

2. We'll go over the syllabus and how the class will work. Ask any questions that come to you.       Writer's Notebook: 1. A short response to the question "Is everyone an author?"

3. Discussion—Writing: What is it? How have I used it? 2. A short list of questions about the book and how we'll use it.

3. Fill out the Writing Inventory and the Writing Groups Inventory.

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<th>Date</th>
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| Thu 9/6  | Examining our ideas of what it means to be an author, a researcher, a student— especially in a writing class. | 1. What is an author?  
   - Read aloud your response to Tuesday's assigned writing.  
   - Discuss what being an author entails.  
   - Revise your statement based on our discussion.  

2. Discuss processes involved in writing. | Read: Chs. 1–2  
Writer's Notebook: Write out your definition of rhetoric—of “thinking and acting rhetorically”—and then examine and explain that definition. |

**WEEK 2: Exploring rhetoric and argument**

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<th>Date</th>
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</table>
| Tue 9/11 | Measure your understanding of the reading and assessing the collaboration in your group. | • Quiz on readings to date  
   - p. 17, in-class writing  
   - Share responses  
   - Exercise on p. 23  
   - Share responses  

   - In groups of four (based on responses), come up with a plan for doing an analysis of the rhetorical situations. | Read: Ch. 4  
Writer's Notebook: Write a page reflecting on your group meeting today: What did or didn’t “match up” with the description of effective collaboration in Ch. 4? |

| Thu 9/13 | Establishing individual guidelines / benchmarks for writing skills. | NO CLASS—Individual Conferences | Read: Ch. 8, pp.101–7  
Writer's Notebook: Respond to prompts on pp. 104 & 107 |

**Writing Project #1: Narrative**

**WEEK 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Goals for the Day</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</table>
| Tue 9/18 | NO CLASS—Rosh Hashanah                                                          | Narrative as a genre Discussion: everyday narratives; impact of presentation medium on narratives | Read: Ch. 8, pp. 108–17  
Writer's Notebook: Based on your readings so far, identify two or three potential topics for your first essay—a narrative. For each topic, explain how you will include the 5 characteristic features. |
<p>| Thu 9/20 | Demonstrate understanding of the importance of collaboration and how to do it effectively | | |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Goals for the Day</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 4</strong></td>
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<td>Tue 9/25</td>
<td>Writing Workshop</td>
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<td>Writing Workshop—Invention</td>
<td>Read: Essay by Roman Skaskiw, pp. 118–21</td>
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<td>• Share your topics and characteristic features with your group. Elicit feedback from them and from me. Decide which narrative topic you will write on.</td>
<td>Draft your essay. Consult the guidelines on pp. 122–27. Revise to be sure you have followed the Roadmap.</td>
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<td>• Begin brainstorming, noting ideas, etc.</td>
<td>Bring two copies of the revised essay to class Thursday.</td>
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<td>Thu 9/27</td>
<td>Writing Workshop</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing Workshop—Peer Response</td>
<td>Read: Ch.7, pp. 61–66</td>
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<td>• Swap 1 copy of your paper with one of your group members</td>
<td>Writer’s Notebook: Exercises on pp. 62, 66.</td>
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<td>• Annotate both your essay and the other author’s following the model on pp. 118–21. In other words, identify the Characteristic Features within the essays.</td>
<td>Revise your narrative.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Discuss the annotated essays.</td>
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<td>• Make notes for a plan to revise the essay.</td>
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**Writing Project #2: Taking a Position**

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<tr>
<th>Goals for the Day</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 5</strong></td>
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<td>Tue 10/2</td>
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<td>To focus on the multiple ways of taking a position and explore audience reactions</td>
<td>DUE: WP #1: Narrative Discuss responses to exercise on p. 66.</td>
<td>Read: Ch. 7, pp. 66–78</td>
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<td>Writer’s Notebook: Write out two or three questions you wonder about or don’t understand in the readings so far.</td>
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<td>Thu 10/4</td>
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<td>Focusing our understanding of academic arguments supporting a position on a given topic</td>
<td>1. Begin w/the questions from Tuesday’s Writer’s Notebook entries. 2. Make a list of things you care enough about to want to write about them.</td>
<td>Read: Ch. 7, pp. 79–80</td>
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<td>Writer’s Notebook: Exercise on p. 80</td>
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<td>WEEK 6</td>
<td>Goals for the Day</td>
<td>Class Activities</td>
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<td>Tue 10/9</td>
<td>Class-wide collaboration to help focus our topics toward an academic audience.</td>
<td>Each of you will:</td>
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<td>Introducing summarizing and building collaboration skills.</td>
<td>• share your responses to p. 80 (be sure to have the URL for the website!) and</td>
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<td>Practicing orally presenting a short, specific summary of your ideas.</td>
<td>• present your annotations.</td>
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<td>Thu 10/11</td>
<td>Same as above.</td>
<td>Class will respond and discuss. (We’ll try to get through nine today, which</td>
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<td>gives you less than nine minutes for both presenting and getting response.)</td>
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<td>Same as above for the remaining writers.</td>
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<th>WEEK 7</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 10/16</td>
<td>NO CLASS—Presidential Debate</td>
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<td>Read: Essay by Bob Herbert, pp. 89–91</td>
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<td>Write: Exercise on p. 91. Produce a one paragraph of summary (#1 on p. 91) and one paragraph of response to Herbert’s argument (#5).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 10/18</td>
<td>In your Writing Group, go over your summaries and responses and respond to them.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Read: Essay by Katherine Spriggs, pp. 92–100</td>
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<td>Writer’s Notebook: Exercise, p.100, #1–4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals for the Day</td>
<td>Class Activities</td>
<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>We’ll discuss the approaches and points made.</td>
<td>Draft your position essay and revise it by 10/23 and bring two copies to class (one for me, one for Workshop).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

WEEK 8

**Tue 10/23**

**Writing Workshop—Peer Response**

Swap one copy of your paper with one of your group members. Annotate both your essay the other author’s following the model on pp. 79–80. In other words, identify the characteristic features within the essays. Discuss the annotated essays.

**Complete Final Draft**

**Thu 10/25**

**DUE: WP # 2: Position Paper**

In-class writing activity: reflection.

**Read:** Ch. 9, pp. 137–41

**Writer’s Notebook:** Exercises on pp. 138 & 141

Writing Project #3: Rhetorical Analysis of an Advertisement

WEEK 9

**Tue 10/30**

1. On index cards, write out 1–3 questions about your readings, the upcoming essay, etc.

2. Discuss questions and exercises

3. Watch Ken Robertson’s TED video on YouTube


**Read:** Ch. 9, pp. 141–59

**Thu 11/1**

Groups: using the list of Characteristic Features (p. 141), annotate the sample analysis essay you’ve drawn.

**Read:** Ch. 9, pp.170–75

**Writer’s Notebook:** Respond to #1–4 on p. 175

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goals for the Day</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</table>
| As a class, we’ll discuss the process each group used and whether the essay “fits” the criteria laid out in the list of Characteristic Features | In your group, share your responses to #1–4 on p. 175; rough draft a collaborative analysis (#5) | Read: Ch. 9, pp. 176–81 & pp. 160–69  
Writer’s Notebook: Respond to #1–4 on p. 181 (note that this is your rough draft of the essay for WP #3) |

**WEEK 10**

**Tue 11/6**

In your group, share your responses to #1–4 on p. 175; rough draft a collaborative analysis (#5)  

**Thu 11/8**

Writing Workshop—Peer Response  
1. Swap one copy of your paper with one of your group members  
2. Annotate both your essay the other author’s following the model on pp. 79–80. In other words, identify the characteristic features within the essays.  
3. Discuss the annotated essays.  

Revise your essay using the guidelines on pp. 168–69. Bring a hard copy to your conference.  

Writer’s Notebook: Compose a reflection piece on the process of doing this essay.

**Writing Project #4: Research-based Essay**

**WEEK 11**

**Tue 11/13**

Intro basics, demonstrate how to use the Research chapters  

DUE: WP #3  
Overview of project: Research basics  
Begin brainstorming potential research topics. Considering the scope and rhetorical dimensions  

Read: Research part intro and Ch. 15  

Writer’s Notebook: Assess your list of potential topics. Identify two or three that are interesting (to you and your audience), feasible to complete in remaining time.  

Consider your rhetorical situation (pp. 331–32)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals for the Day</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</table>
| Thu 11/15        | Selecting and narrowing topics, developing guiding questions, determine what sort of sources you’ll need and how best to locate them | Read: Ch. 16  
**Writer’s Notebook:** Create your schedule (see p. 336). Identify three sources for your topic. |
| **WEEK 12**      |                  |             |
| Tue 11/20        | Research Workshop | Read: Ch. 19  
**Writer’s Notebook:** Work out your proposal. |
| Thu 11/22        | No Classes–Thanksgiving Day |             |
| **WEEK 13**      |                  |             |
| Tue 11/27        | DUE: Project Proposal  
Research Workshop: Discuss how to summarize sources for an annotated bibliography; how to incorporate sources into the essay. | Read: Ch. 20  
**Writer’s Notebook:** Create an annotation for each source you are considering. Turn in two or three of them on Thursday. |
| Thu 11/29        | DUE: annotated bibliography | Read: pp. 381–400 |
| **WEEK 14**      |                  |             |
| Tue 12/4         | Research Workshop: Incorporating sources (we’ll use Ch. 22 in workshop) | Read: Ch. 32  
**Writer’s Notebook:** Identify which writings you will include and why. Bring all the drafts to class on Thursday. |
| Thu 12/6         | Portfolio Workshop. Be prepared to discuss your portfolio and your responses to the questions on p. 648. | **Writer’s Notebook:** Draft your reflection. Complete your research essay. |
| **WEEK 15**      |                  |             |
| Tue 12/11        | Last Class  
DUE: WP #4: Research-based Essay |             |
WPA Outcomes
Using *Everyone’s an Author* to Meet the WPA Outcomes

The National Council of Writing Program Administrators has identified the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should have by the time they finish a first-year composition program. *Everyone’s an Author* was written with these outcomes clearly in mind, and the text supports their teaching. Here is how *Everyone’s an Author* will help your students achieve the WPA Outcomes.

### Rhetorical Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Student Outcome</th>
<th><em>Everyone’s an Author</em></th>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on a purpose</td>
<td>Ch. 2, <a href="#">RHETORICAL SITUATIONS</a> and all the genre chapters (7–11) include explicit guidelines prompting students to think about their purposes for writing. Such prompts are also found elsewhere in the book—e.g., in Ch. 6, <a href="#">WRITING AND RHETORIC IN THE WORKPLACE</a>, Ch. 30, <a href="#">DESIGNING WHAT YOU WRITE</a>, and Ch. 15, <a href="#">STARTING YOUR RESEARCH</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the needs of different audiences</td>
<td>Ch. 2, <a href="#">RHETORICAL SITUATIONS</a>, and all the genre chapters (7–11) include explicit guidelines prompting students to think about the audiences they aim to reach. Such prompts are also found elsewhere in the book—e.g., in Ch. 6, <a href="#">WRITING AND RHETORIC IN THE WORKPLACE</a>; Ch. 27, <a href="#">TWEETS TO REPORTS</a>; Ch. 30, <a href="#">DESIGNING WHAT YOU WRITE</a>; and Ch. 15, <a href="#">STARTING YOUR RESEARCH</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations</td>
<td>Students are prompted throughout the book to consider their rhetorical situation: in Ch. 2, which introduces the basic elements of the RHETORICAL SITUATION; in each genre chapter (continued)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desired Student Outcome</td>
<td>Everyone's an Author</td>
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<td>(7–11); and in the chapters on WRITING IN THE WORKPLACE (6), doing RESEARCH (15), and DESIGNING texts (30).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation</td>
<td>Document design and formatting conventions are explained in the following chapters: DESIGNING WHAT YOU WRITE (30), MLA STYLE (24), APA STYLE (25), and MEETING THE DEMANDS OF ACADEMIC WRITING (28). In addition, each genre chapter (7–11) includes discussion of how to organize an essay in that genre (see pp. 86–87, for example).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality</td>
<td>Six chapters on style—especially WHAT'S YOUR STYLE? (26), TWEETS TO REPORTS (27), MEETING THE DEMANDS OF ACADEMIC WRITING (28), and HOW TO WRITE GOOD SENTENCES (29)—cover these topics thoroughly. Appropriate tone and level of formality are also discussed in the chapters on RHETORICAL SITUATIONS (2) and WRITING AND RHETORIC IN THE WORKPLACE (6).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand how genres shape reading and writing</td>
<td>Ch. 12, CHOOSING GENRES, explains that genres guide both readers and writers—and evolve over time. Each genre chapter (7–11, 19–20) explains the characteristic features that readers expect and that can guide writers. See also the introduction to Pt. II, pp 57–60.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write in several genres</td>
<td>Pt. II (Chs. 7–11) covers five genres college students are often assigned to write: ARGUMENTS, NARRATIVES, ANALYSES, REPORTS (with profiles), and REVIEWS—and includes a chapter that helps them decide which genres to use when the choice is theirs (12). Chapters elsewhere in the book provide similar guidance for writing PROPOSALS (19), ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES (20), and job letters and résumés (6).</td>
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## Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

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<th>Desired Student Outcome</th>
<th>Everyone’s an Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating</td>
<td>Pt. I focuses on The Need for Rhetoric and Writing. See especially Ch. 1, THINKING RHETORICALLY; Ch. 5, WRITING AND RHETORIC AS A FIELD OF STUDY; and Ch. 6, RHETORIC AND WRITING IN THE WORKPLACE. Ch. 28 discusses what’s expected of writing in academic contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources</td>
<td>Ch. 3 explains the various elements of the WRITING PROCESS, and each genre chapter (7–11) guides students through the process of writing an assignment in that genre. Chs. 15–22 help students find, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize primary and secondary sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrate their own ideas with those of others</td>
<td>Ch. 21, SYNTHESIZING IDEAS, teaches students how to synthesize ideas from a number of sources. Ch. 22, QUOTING, PARAPHRASING, SUMMARIZING, shows students how to appropriately weave the ideas of others into their own writing. Ch. 23, GIVING CREDIT, AVOIDING PLAGIARISM, focuses on how to credit sources and avoid plagiarism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power</td>
<td>These relationships are stressed throughout the book, starting with Ch.1 which opens with Wayne Booth’s quote, “The only real alternative to war is rhetoric.” Ch. 1 emphasizes how developing rhetorical habits of mind increases the chances that one’s ideas will be listened to and heeded. See also Ch. 5, which quotes Susan Miller (“If you want to know how power works, you must understand how language works”) and LuMing Mao (“When there is more than one language . . . the . . . question of communication never goes away in terms of who has the floor, who understands what’s being said, and who gets listened to”).</td>
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WPA OUTCOMES

Processes

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<th>Desired Student Outcome</th>
<th>Everyone’s an Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text</td>
<td>Ch. 3 explains the various elements of the writing process and provides a roadmap that guides students through the process of composing a text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading</td>
<td>Ch. 3, WRITING PROCESSES, offers strategies for generating ideas and gets students thinking pragmatically about the processes that work best for them. Chs. 7–11 offer genre-specific advice for generating ideas, getting response, and revising. Ch. 29, HOW TO WRITE GOOD SENTENCES, and Ch. 31, CHECKING FOR COMMON MISTAKES, offer guidance for sentence-level drafting and editing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and rethinking to revise their work</td>
<td>Each genre chapter (7–11) poses genre-specific questions that encourage students to rethink what they’ve written in their drafts and to do additional invention work if needed. See pp. 168–69, for example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes</td>
<td>These topics are addressed in Ch. 4, THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION; in Ch. 33, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE WRITING CENTER; in Ch. 34, JOINING A WRITING GROUP; and throughout the book in focusing attention on audience and context as key elements of any rhetorical situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to critique their own and others’ works</td>
<td>Each genre chapter (7–11) includes genre-specific prompts for looking critically at a draft, seeking response, and revising. Ch. 13 focuses on ANALYZING ARGUMENTS. Ch. 31 provides a guide to CHECKING FOR COMMON MISTAKES, focusing on sentence-level issues. Ch. 4, THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION, and Ch. 34, JOINING A WRITING GROUP, offer suggestions for critiquing the work of others tactfully and helpfully.</td>
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Desired Student Outcome | Everyone’s an Author
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Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part | Ch. 4, THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION, and Ch. 34, JOINING A WRITING GROUP, offer advice on how to achieve this balance.
Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences | All examples and instruction in this book assume writers are using a variety of technologies, from texts and tweets to print reports and podcasts, to address audiences ranging from classmates and Facebook friends to instructors and employers.

Composing in Electronic Environments

Desired Student Outcome | Everyone’s an Author
--- | ---
Use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts | All the examples and instruction in this book assume writers are using a variety of digital technologies, from texts and tweets to email and podcasts, to address audiences ranging from classmates and Facebook friends to instructors and employers.
Locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic sources, including scholarly library databases; other official databases (e.g., federal government databases); and informal electronic networks and internet sources | Pt. IV covers research, with extensive coverage of working with online sources in Chs.15–18. Ch. 22 gives advice about incorporating visual and audio from the web, and Ch. 23 reminds students that using electronic sources requires particular care to avoid plagiarism. Chs. 24 and 25 provide guidelines and models for documenting electronic sources in MLA STYLE and APA STYLE.
Understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing processes and texts | Each of the genre chapters (7–11) discusses how that genre is used “Across Media” (see, for example, pp. 185–86). Roadmaps in these chapters prompt students to think about how their medium affects how they write. “Think beyond Words” exercises in the text send students online to watch videos, listen to podcasts, and view slideshows to show how genres are used in various media. A companion website—everyonesanauthor.tumblr.com—provides a collection of readings demonstrating rhetorical strategies in a digital environment.
Teaching with *Everyone’s an Author*
WE RECOMMEND BEGINNING AT THE beginning, with the INTRODUCTION. Students could be assigned to read this chapter on the first day of class as the foundation for class discussion and in-class writing. You might begin discussion by asking questions like these:

1. Do they think everyone’s an author?
2. How do they define author?
3. Is an author different from a writer? How? And in what specific ways?

After some discussion, ask students to respond in writing to these questions:

1. Do they consider themselves writers or authors?
2. What kinds of writing have they done before now?
3. Do they use social media? tweet? text? post on Facebook or Instagram? Is that authoring or writing? Why?

Then ask them to compose a short essay responding to the main questions: Is everyone today an author? Are you a writer or an author—and why?
TO BE SUCCESSFUL, STUDENT AUTHORS (all authors!) need to understand that every act of communication is inherently rhetorical. Every time they speak, write, act, or post on a blog or social media site, they are part of a rhetorical situation that involves audience, purpose, genre, stance, media and design, and some larger context. Thus we begin the book with six chapters focusing on the need for rhetoric and writing. Most students are not actively aware of the rhetorical nature of their communication and actions. They know that when they write an essay for a class the professor is their audience, but they may not consider how their stance might be received by classmates when they speak out in class. That, too, is a rhetorical situation, with its own context, medium, and purpose. Part I opens with a brief overview of the role of rhetoric in human communication and moves to specific rhetorical situations students will encounter in their everyday lives.

While the first four chapters can be used together as an introduction to both the book itself and the principles of writing and rhetoric that inform it throughout, Chapter 5, WRITING AND RHETORIC AS A FIELD OF STUDY, and Chapter 6, WRITING AND RHETORIC IN THE WORKPLACE, provide an initial understanding of how the principles and practices students will be learning and applying to first-year writing assignments extend beyond our classrooms to fields across the curriculum and the professional world. As such, they’ll help students see the real-world importance of what they’re doing in class. Many first-year writers view what goes on in our writing classes as “just freshman comp,” a distribution requirement to be checked off, but these two chapters help them understand the impact of what they learn in FYC on the rest of their lives.

Chapter 1: Thinking Rhetorically

Chapter 1 grounds introduces students to the principles of thinking, writing, and acting rhetorically—that begins with careful, attentive listening to and understanding what others are saying before deciding what we think and developing arguments of our own.

We open with Wayne Booth’s epigram on p. 5—“The only real alternative to war is rhetoric”—a statement that instantly generates discussion because few
students have ever actually considered the idea of rhetoric in a positive light; most are much more familiar with negative terms such as “empty rhetoric.” Beginning with Booth offers an opportunity to define rhetoric positively as the art, theory, and practice of ethical communication—and to refer to one of Aristotle’s formulations: rhetoric is the art of coming to sound judgment. Students have an opportunity to debate these definitions, craft ones of their own, and talk about how the use of ethical language use can lead us away from war and toward peace and understanding.

As we say in this chapter, thinking rhetorically begins with listening, the language art that has been until very recently most neglected in schools. Thanks to the work of Wayne Booth and Krista Ratcliffe, we have a firm theoretical basis for asking students to pay attention to the way they listen: many will admit that they don’t listen well and that they are usually thinking more about what they will say than what the other person is saying. So it’s worth taking time in class to stop and ask students to observe themselves, and those around them, listening: what are the signals of good rhetorical listening? How do we know when someone is really listening to us? How can we be better listeners? You might ask students to make some notes on their own practices and then to have a class discussion about a contentious issue (gay marriage, perhaps, which we mention on p. 9) and to follow it with a debriefing about how well each person listened and what they understood from the discussion: you can’t understand what others are saying if you don’t really and truly hear them. And that calls for rhetorical listening.

Think beyond words. Have your students watch the Super Bowl ad shown on p. 11, and ask them to think about what kind of rhetorical thinking the ad writers did—who was their target audience, and how did they go about appealing to them? If they were to write an ad for a car (or something else), what words would they use, and why? You might also ask students to look very carefully at the images on pp. 6 and 7, which feature young protesters in Cairo’s Tahrir Square and at Harvard. Ask them to think rhetorically about these images, teasing out what the basic arguments are in each one and how the visual images work to forward those arguments.

On pp. 15–16 you’ll find another reference to Wayne Booth, his brief analysis of how scientists James Watson and Francis Crick were thinking rhetorically when they announced their findings on DNA. Booth shows how careful their choice of words was and points to the rhetorical strategies (such as understatement) they used in making what amounted to a ground-breaking discovery. You are almost certain to have budding scientists in your classroom: consider asking them to identify a passage in a scientific text that they think is particularly effective and then carry out a similar brief analysis. Or you might check the science pages of the New York Times and look for an article that students could analyze together, working in small groups. In each case they would be trying to identify the examples of rhetorical thinking they see at work.

One goal in this chapter is to show students that they probably do some good strong rhetorical thinking without even being aware of it, and to make them conscious of how much such thinking can improve their understanding of others as
well as their own abilities to engage in effective communication. You might ask students to think outside the box a little here—to create metaphors or similes perhaps: rhetorical thinking is like X, Y, or Z, for example. Finally, ask them to bring in examples of rhetorical thinking they observe around them, either in class or with friends and family.

**Pause to reflect.** We conclude the chapter with a quotation from Margaret Mead, along with a prompt that we hope will encourage students to reflect on what she says. The exercise on p. 17 asks them to think about their own experience, and how they themselves have been called upon to think and act rhetorically in order to bring about some kind of change. You might ask students what Mead’s statement says, implicitly and explicitly, to those protesters on pp. 6 and 7.

**Chapter 2: Rhetorical Situations**

Unless they took a course that included instruction in rhetoric in high school, your students probably won’t be familiar with the term “rhetorical situation,” so it’s a good idea to take some time as your course starts to define and discuss it. We define the rhetorical situation simply as all the circumstances affecting any act of communication. While rhetorical situations can vary dramatically, some elements are common to most such situations: genre, audience, purpose, stance, context, medium and design.

**Genres** are categorizations, ways of classifying things. We find that most of our students are familiar with genres, having searched Netflix or iTunes for particular ones. In our book, genres are primarily treated as kinds of writing, ones that college students are assigned to do—and expected to be able to do.

Genres may be part of your assignment: that is, you may ask students to write a review, a report, or any other genre that fits your course. If you do, chances are that it’s one of the ones covered in Chapters 7–11 of our book, which teach students to **ARGUE A POSITION, WRITE A NARRATIVE, WRITE ANALytically, REPORT INFORMATION, and WRITE A REVIEW.** Each of these chapters describes the features characteristic of the genre along with several good examples and a Roadmap that guides students through all the work they’ll need to do writing an essay in that genre—including prompts to think hard about their rhetorical situation.

**Audience** is a concept students are increasingly familiar with from their use of social media, where their audiences are immediate and often quite vocal. You may want to talk with them about academic audiences and about the expectations academic audiences (like teachers) will have of their writing. In addition, you may want to ask them to list all the different kinds of audiences they may need or wish to write to or for, from intimate acquaintances to total strangers on the web—and to discuss the ways that appealing to those audiences they wish to reach will shape their texts.
Part I: The Need for Rhetoric and Writing

Purpose guides most of the choices students will make, and we find that it works well to introduce the concept by asking them to articulate the various purposes they have for writing. Some may say that their purpose is to complete an assignment or to get a good grade, and those purposes are very real ones, but students also need to think about what they want their communication to achieve, what goals it can or should accomplish: to express certain ideas? to inform an audience about some topic or issue? to argue a position? Whatever their purpose, they need to know that it could influence their choice of genre, medium, and the rest of their rhetorical situation.

Stance refers most simply to where the author is coming from in terms of their topic, purpose, and audience. It's the attitude a writer has about his or her topic—objective, skeptical, angry, and so on—and it's reflected in the tone he or she takes: reasonable, critical, ironic, and so on. Students can get quite creative in defining their own stances: one of our students claimed to take a “Marlboro Man” kind of stance, something one his classmates quickly tried to talk him out of. You might begin a discussion of stance by analyzing a piece of writing to identify its tone and then asking students to decide what stance that tone reflects. You could also have them decide how the piece might be revised to reflect a different tone.

Context refers to any conditions affecting the text: what else has been said about the topic; social, economic, historical, and other such factors; and any logistical constraints such as due dates, length, what access they have to information, and the like. Students will understand how due dates and length requirements affect what they write, but you'll likely need to explain the importance of considering what else has been said about the topic. Here would be a moment to explain that academic writing (and most writing!) is a way of entering a conversation about their topic, one that has been going for some time and that they need to be aware of. You might want to introduce Kenneth Burke's famous parlor metaphor, discussed on p. 7 of our book:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. . . . You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. —KENNETH BURKE, The Philosophy of Literary Form

This would also be a place to point out that in U.S. academic contexts, writers often present their ideas as a response to what else has been said about their topic (a pattern that is explained in detail in the chapter on academic writing, on p. 547).

Medium used to be a moot point for students, back in the day when they were required to write essays on paper. Their medium was print, and that was that. Today, however, they may have the opportunity to present their work orally or digitally, and to do so using sound, video, color, and more. We sometimes introduce
media by looking at a print text on a certain topic and then discussing how that
text would be different in another medium—that digitally it could include audio
or video or links to other texts, and orally it could and might even need to include
PowerPoint slides to help the audience follow what’s being said. Each of the genre
chapters in our book include brief discussions of how the genre plays out in vari-
ous media (see p. 63 for one example); these might help students think about what
the medium or media they write in allows them to do as writers.

Design too has suddenly become a very important element of most rhetorical
situations: how students lay out their projects, what fonts they use, whether
they include images, and other elements of design can now be crucial to the suc-
cess of a project. You might introduce the importance of design by looking at an
award-winning website, focusing on the choices that had to be made in coming
up with its design. Or you could ask students to bring in something they have
written recently, having them analyze the design choices they made, and then
doing a workshop on possible ways to redesign it—for a different audience, a dif-
cerent purpose, or perhaps just to make it more effective for the same audience
and purpose.

If the concept of “rhetorical situation” seems somewhat esoteric or foreign to
your students, choose a couple of provocative examples of “rhetorical situations”
that they may know: Beyonce’s “malfunctioning” costume during halftime of
Super Bowl XLIV; the opening of the George W. Bush Presidential Library at which
all five living presidents spoke; Lance Armstrong’s interview with Oprah Winfrey,
and so on. Show the clip(s) in class and then ask students to work together in small
groups to explore the elements of these situations: how do genre, audience, pur-
pose, stance, context, medium, and design affect each text—and how does under-
standing the full rhetorical situation shape, or reshape, their understanding of the
event?

Pause to reflect. Ask students to think about some of the writing they’ve done
recently, using the exercise on p. 23. Have them bring in examples of their writing
in different genres—anything from a tweet to a letter to an academic essay—and
then to analyze the rhetorical situation they faced in each instance. You could
have them do this in groups of three, with each student contributing one piece of
writing and then reporting their findings to the whole class.

Chapter 3: Writing Processes

This chapter provides guidance through all the stages of the process that most col-
lege writers will need to consider, from understanding an assignment and coming
up with a topic to editing and proofreading, while emphasizing that each writer’s
process is different and that students should approach writing tasks in a pragmatic,
individual way. We think it’s important to remember—and to assure our students—
that not all writers follow the same process. The paths from reading an assign-
ment to completing a draft will share some general steps (some work generating
ideas, some type of response from readers, some revising), but we need to remember that our students each need to develop writing habits that work for them.

Extroverted writers may start by talking out their ideas with others; introverts, on the other hand, usually often prefer to work out their plans on their own, or in libraries or coffee shops—places where they are surrounded by other people but not required to interact with them. Some writers will begin by listing ideas, others by writing them out in complete paragraphs; some will compose an outline, others may do a sketch. The point is that each writer has to find his or her own most productive approach. In our writing classes, we can encourage students to experiment with different approaches, and this chapter can help.

You might begin by asking students to think about how they usually approach an assignment to write. This is a good question to ask in the first week or so. Thinking about their usual practices—and discussing what works, what doesn’t, and why—can work well as an ice-breaker.

Chapter 3 includes a Roadmap that will help students think about the various parts of most writing processes. It’s self-explanatory, but we’ll offer here some general advice for dealing with questions that our students often ask.

**Understanding the assignment.** Just as we tell students to read assignments with an eye for key words that specify what they’re supposed to do—to argue, report, and so on—so too do we as teachers need to compose assignments that indicate clearly what they’re expected to do. If we want them to write in a certain genre, we need to name it explicitly and accurately—to say “narrate” rather than “write about,” and not to say “analyze” or “interpret” if we mean “evaluate.”

**Time management** presents difficulties for a lot of student writers. One way we can help them manage their time for writing is by creating assignments that include interim deadlines. Spelling out a progression of steps necessary for completing the assignment can also help.

**Coming up with a topic** is a challenge for many students. Each of the genre chapters in our book includes guidance that should help, and the strategies for generating ideas will help as well. We find that it often helps to devote some class time for students to try out brainstorming, clustering, and the other strategies presented on p. 26. **Brainstorming** often works well to help students come up with ideas to write about, and then to recognize what they know (or wish to know) about a topic. We find that brainstorming works well in small groups, and especially when done with the whole class. Sometimes we start with the whole class and then divide them into smaller groups to continue exploring an idea.

**Coming up with a tentative thesis.** Moving from a general topic to a thesis proves difficult for many student writers. You’ll find questions that will prompt them to think about what point they want to make about their topic on p. 27, and you might want to devote some class time to model the process for them. Make sure they know that at this point any thesis they come up with is tentative. Once they start writing, it could change—and that’s fine.
It always helps to ask the so-what question. What do students want to say about their topic, and so what? Who cares, and why does it matter? Why do they care, and why would their readers care? How can they make them care? What do they want them to take away from reading what they write?

**Planning and writing out a draft.** Many students tell us that the hardest thing for them is getting started. It can help to remind them that drafting is simply a way of working out their ideas; they don’t have to have them all worked out before beginning to write. And they don’t have to start at the beginning. For some students, beginning in the middle can be helpful; for others, creating a rough outline can be a way in. Tell those students who have to make each sentence perfect that they just need to get something down in order to revise. We can’t begin to polish until we have words on the page.

**Getting response.** Each of the genre chapters includes questions to help students look critically at a draft, get response—and revise. You might devote one class period to have students read and respond to one another’s writing. Sometimes we find that it helps to model peer response, providing a less-than-perfect draft for students to respond to. You’ll want to guide students to get beyond “Wow, I really like this” to asking substantive questions, and to encourage them to read the draft straight through before commenting.

Students could also seek response at the writing center. Chapter 33 provides guidance to help them take advantage of the writing center and offers an overview of what to expect when a student takes an assignment to the center. Writing center tutors are trained to read rhetorically, to be nonjudgmental, and to provide writers with an objective response that addresses the specifics of an assignment.

**Editing.** Once students have revised their texts, they need to pay attention to surface issues. This can be a good time to devote some time to sentence style, a topic covered in Chapter 29. Devoting part of several class periods to composing good sentences is time well-spent, especially if you use the students’ own sentences and build on their work as a group, using the guidelines in the chapter. And then you might refer students to Chapter 30, which provides help checking for common mistakes.

We find that most students are quick to understand the ramifications of thinking of writing as a process and actually enjoy discussing their individual processes, so using this chapter in the first week of class often generates some fruitful discussion that can prompt a reflective piece for a journal or blog entry.

**Chapter 4: The Need for Collaboration / Here Comes Everybody!**

Two of the authors of Everyone’s an Author (Andrea and Lisa) have been arguing for the necessity of collaboration for nearly thirty years now, and this book is itself a product of collaboration. As writers who believe that two heads are almost
always better than one, we want students to experience the positive effects of productive collaboration and to recognize the ways in which they are already collaborating constantly in their online lives. Universities still privilege the “single author” in many ways, especially in the humanities, but under the influence of technologies that make collaboration easier and more effective than ever and that call for collaboration, things are beginning to change. More and more, students will find themselves working in group projects for their college assignments—and most of them will be collaborating extensively in their out-of-class work and social settings.

Writing classes are by definition collaborative, with their use of peer review as well as many other group activities. It’s worth taking a little time, then, to talk about the ubiquity of collaboration today and about its importance to their success both in and out of the classroom. Because some students may have had less than successful experiences with collaboration in high school, give them some time and space to recount those experiences and help them to identify what went wrong and what the potential for fixing those problems might have been. You can also share your own experience with collaborations, both good and bad. And you can mention that there’s a mountain of research that indicates not only how much writing and communicating is done collaboratively today but how much writing demands the work of more than one person. We like to use the example of the BBC/PBS coproduction of the documentary The Great War, a series that helped shape public opinion and raise awareness of a whole new generation of British and American students. It took a group of distinguished historians working together with filmmakers, producers, editors—and lots of other dedicated experts—to produce a documentary that no single writer could have done.

So part of your job is to help students recognize the necessity of collaboration and to help them talk through any misgivings they may have (we always have at least one or two students who want to do everything on their own). In addition, you need to craft assignments or projects that truly call for collaboration, ones that could not be done as well by a student working alone. Such assignments

- Focus on broad or complex issues that call for some (often a lot of) research
- Build on student interest and prior knowledge (whenever possible)
- Lend themselves to being divided up into tasks that can engage each member of the group
- Operate on a fairly tight timeline that calls for cooperation and working together
- Call for drafting and revising that will engage each member of the group

You can help your students collaborate well first by setting small groups (an odd number, usually three to five and balanced to bring diversity in terms of gender, levels of ability, and other factors you think important) and then asking the class as a whole to come up with some guidelines for working effectively together—a kind of “contract” all will agree to. These guidelines might include most of the tips
on pp. 34 and 35 of the textbook, but students are likely to come up with additional
ones that are important to them. The bottom line is that each member will be
responsible to the group and that members can trust one another to do their work
and to do it well!

Students may like to assign roles for members of the group: someone to act as
leader/task manager, someone to serve as recorder, someone to do the first round
of editing, and so on. Being as specific as possible about what you want the final
project to look like (your expectations for presentation, from genre and style to
format and design) will help students keep on task.

One way to keep groups on track is to ask them to report frequently to you on
progress. You may do so by asking them to send a brief memo to you that addresses
these questions:

• What work has the group accomplished (in the last three days, week, etc.)?
• What did each member of the group contribute to the work?
• What problems did you encounter?
• What did you do to resolve any problems and what can you do to be sure
  that the problem doesn’t occur again?
• What do you think would make the group more effective?

We have found that reading the answers to these questions brings any trouble-
some issues to light pretty quickly. At the beginning of a project, for example,
every student in the group will report that he or she is doing all the work, which is
clearly impossible. A brief group meeting to discuss who is contributing what usu-
ally straightens this out and resolves what we call the “martyr syndrome.”

You should also consider asking the members of the group to evaluate the
project when it is complete and use these evaluations to help in your assessment
and grading of the project. Most teachers prefer to give a group grade for a collabora-
tive project, and doing so is easier and more fair if you have input from all
group members.

This chapter offers a variety of contemporary examples of collaboration,
including academic and work experiences as well as extracurricular ones like
MMORPGs and flash mobs. Because social media is both omnipresent and inher-
ently collaborative, many students don’t immediately make the connection between,
say, posting online and doing a group project for a class. You can encourage such
connections by beginning with the exercise on p. 30. You might assign it as an in-
class exercise to be done in small groups and then shared with the larger group. Be
sure to leave time for discussion, since the goal is to encourage an understanding
of the importance and benefits of working together with others.

You can also get your students working collaboratively on our Tumblr site
everyonesanauthor.tumblr.com), where they can read and then respond to lots of
interesting articles, websites, and more—and to one another.
Chapter 5: Writing and Rhetoric as a Field of Study

We wrote this chapter to make students aware that writing and rhetoric is a field they could study, like economics or biology—and to explain just why they might want to consider taking more courses in writing or even making it their major. Not all schools offer a writing major, but almost every college and university offers writing courses beyond those required in the first year.

It could be assigned in the first week of a first-year writing course to provide an initial understanding of how the principles and practices students will be learning and applying there extend beyond that course to the larger college or university. It’s only five pages long, so it would be a short enough to assign students to read.

For class discussion, you might write one of the three quotations we’ve set off in the margins on the board and inviting response. We especially like the one on p. 38:

I have something to say to the world, and I have taken English 12 in order to say it well. —W. E. B. Du Bois

Of course we like the way Du Bois’ words show that first-year writing does more than simply fulfill a requirement, but also it often sparks good discussion about the possibility of “say[ing] something to the world.”

For researching writing on your campus. The chapter concludes on p. 40 with an exercise that invites students to find out whether there’s a writing major on your campus and what other writing courses are offered. It’s an assignment that calls for some field research, but the rewards are worthwhile. Students are rarely aware of what other writing classes they might take, let alone why they ought to do so. We ourselves have sometimes extended the assignment by asking them to briefly interview faculty in their major (or intended major, in the case of first-year students) to find out about what role writing plays in the work done there. The results they bring back are always illuminating.

Chapter 6: Writing and Rhetoric in the Workplace

This chapter was inspired by a young man who applied recently to work at W. W. Norton. He wrote an excellent inquiry letter, the best of any applicant, leading the manager who was hiring to think he was the best candidate. His first interview went relatively well, and he would have made it to the next round. But he did not, for two reasons: first, he waited six days before sending a thank-you note; second, his note was too informal and focused more on himself than on the position he was applying for. The incident made us aware of how little students know about the importance of rhetoric and writing when they are applying for a job, and so we wrote a chapter to offer some of the advice and instruction they need.
Whether or not you make time for this chapter in class, we hope you’ll let students that it’s in their book. If they’re at all like our students, they’re applying for jobs or internships—or at least thinking about the need to do so in the near future. And if you wish to make some time for it in class, pairing it with Chapter 5, *Writing and Rhetoric as a Field of Study*, could provide a springboard for discussing how what they learn in your class will go with them throughout their years in college and on into the workplace. You might mention Deborah Brandt’s research, cited on p. 55 in this chapter and also on p. ix in our preface, showing that “a large majority of Americans … now make their living in the so-called information economy, where writing is part of what they do during their workday.” That will get them thinking about the importance of writing and rhetoric!
BECAUSE STUDENTS TODAY ARE SO aware of genres—in part thanks to the big role genres play in their social lives—we think it’s important to begin a discussion of genres by asking students to read this introduction, on pp. 58–60. Here we try to introduce students to a rhetorical way of looking at genres. Rather than thinking of them as static categories, we ask students to see genres as active engagements with the world, ways of knowing and doing that affect how we make meaning of what we see around us and how we communicate those meanings to others. You might ask students to “read” the images on p. 59, which offer a sweeping history of letter writing and other ways of communicating to see how such practices have changed over the centuries.

In a recent discussion on the WPA listserv, Jordynn Jack made several key points about a rhetorical perspective on genre. In response to a colleague who had said that naming genres (reports, reviews, etc.) didn’t seem very helpful, Jack—professor of English at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, said that genres don’t merely name entities. Rather they name “recurring rhetorical situations.” She went on to say that such naming is useful to students because it points to “recognizable recurrent situations they may encounter again.” Thus, the literature review is a genre because it names a recurring situation, “the need to summarize, analyze, and evaluate existing scholarship on a topic and for an audience of fellow researchers.”

As teachers, we can help students employ genres by asking them first to look closely at whatever rhetorical situation they are facing and then to identify what genre best addresses that situation. For an assignment that asks students to conduct a rhetorical analysis of a candidate’s speech and to present their findings to the class, they can look at that rhetorical situation—purpose, audience, context, and constraints—and then ask what kind of analysis best addresses that situation. An assignment that simply says “write an analysis paper” fails as a genre because it does not describe a recurrent rhetorical situation. Such an assignment is what Elizabeth Wardle, professor of writing and rhetoric at the University of Central Florida, calls a mutt genre, one that falls short of specifying a recurrent situation.

After you have introduced students to a rhetorical view of genres, consider asking them to come up with two or three rhetorical situations they often encounter in their classes: the need to explain a concept, for example, or to evaluate a text.
Then ask them to discuss the purpose of such assignments along with their audience(s) and contexts—and then to describe the genre they think would be most helpful in addressing these assignments.

The part opens with a general introduction to genres of writing. Many students today are familiar with the idea of genres, but here we try to get them thinking about those genres they deal with every day, those that have been developed across time, and those they need to know in college—and that they’ll learn about in *Everyone’s an Author*:

Chapter 7: Arguing a Position
Chapter 8: Writing a Narrative
Chapter 9: Writing Analytically
Chapter 10: Reporting Information
Chapter 11: Writing a Review
Chapter 12: Choosing Genres

The five genre chapters (7–11) all follow the same basic structure, so students will know what to expect and in what order they’ll find key information on the genre and the process of composing in it. Each begins with examples of that genre in the world or ways students may have encountered it, followed by a brief exercise (marked by ) that prompts them to think about ways that they have used the genre. These exercises are designed to generate class discussion and can also be used as writing prompts (for journal or blog entries, for example) or working points for collaborative work.

Then comes a brief discussion of how the genre is used Across Academic Fields, Across Media, Across Cultures and Communities, and Across Genres. We find that these topics help get students interested in the genre and thinking about what they can do with it. And if you’re interested in focusing on media, each chapter includes here an exercise that invites students to Think beyond Words, referring them to an example text on the web with prompts getting them to think about how the text uses words, images, audio, and other media to convey its message. Students can access these texts at wwnorton.com/write/everyonelinks—and to make them easy to use in class, you’ll find a link in the *Everyone’s an Author* coursepack.

Next comes a brief exercise prompting students to think about where they’ve encountered the genre in their everyday lives, and then to find one example text that interests them and analyze it to get a sense of how it goes about making its point.

We then explain each of the genre’s Characteristic Features, those elements that usually occur in most writing of that kind. And while these should not be seen as a one-size-fits-all recipe for writing, they can be very helpful to students who are learning to write in a particular genre. Each feature is explained and then illustrated with one or more short examples—and the examples come from across media, demonstrating how the genre is used in print texts, spoken texts, visual
texts, and so on. If you’re using Everyone’s an Author with Readings, you’ll find links in the margins to additional examples in the readings at the end of the book.

Following the section on Characteristic Features, you’ll find one annotated reading in which we point out how one writer uses each of the characteristic features in a short but complete essay. The annotated reading is followed by an exercise prompting students to annotate a text themselves to identify key genre features and think about how these features work to accomplish the author’s goals.

Next comes a Roadmap that provides explicit guidance in the process of composing an essay in the genre. They are designed to be used by students as they write, helping them move from an assignment to a finished text:

- choose a topic
- consider the rhetorical situation
- organize and get started writing
- look critically at a draft, get response, and revise
- reflect on what they’ve learned

The Roadmaps are built around a series of prompts, leading students to think systematically about the choices they have as authors, to get their ideas down in writing, and then to work with their writing. Key terms are highlighted, signaling that those terms are important—and that they’re defined in the Glossary/Index. This system will help students learn key terms, and it can serve as a reminder to new teachers of concepts that they might want to cover.

One especially important section of each Roadmap helps students look critically at their draft, get response—and revise. Designed to help writers read over their own drafts as well as those written by others, this section provides a detailed series of questions that will lead students to think about how well a draft makes its point and appeals to its audience, whether readers will be able to follow it, and so on—and how it needs to be revised.

Each Roadmap concludes with a brief exercise that asks students to reflect on what they’ve learned. How well did they do as writers? What would they change if they could? What will they keep in mind for the future?

**Chapter 7: Arguing a Position / “This Is Where I Stand”**

This chapter teaches a familiar assignment in many disciplines—taking a position on a pertinent topic and making a compelling argument in support of that position. Position papers challenge first-year students to move beyond simply expressing their opinions to making arguments and supporting their arguments with reasons and evidence. The chapter describes the features readers expect in writing of this kind, offers three example essays, and provides a Roadmap that will lead students through the process of writing an essay that argues a position.
Introducing the genre

You might begin teaching this particular genre by pointing out how often it’s assigned in college classes. Perhaps start by asking students to come up with examples of projects or assignments they have encountered that have called on them to take a stand and spend a bit of time talking about the demands of those specific assignments. Since they will likely cite assignments from a number of different disciplines and engage different audiences and even use different media, you can point out that, in spite of any differences across fields or media, most position papers share certain characteristic features.

Students will also be able to identify occasions out of class that call on them to take a position or argue a stand. If you ask them to come up with such examples, you can then point out what features they share with the academic tasks you’ve been looking at.

Using the exercises

You’ll find several brief exercises throughout the chapter that give students an opportunity to stop and think about key concepts. Exercises are italicized and are marked by a red flourish (–[ –]). They can be used as brief classroom exercises or could be assigned for journal writing or other homework.

Introducing the genre features

Each of the characteristic features is explained in the book, starting with a bulleted list of all of them on p. 66. In discussing these features, you may find it useful to refer to the readings, especially the one on pp. 79–80, which is annotated to point out how each of the features is used in one text. We like to introduce the features in class, asking the class to identify a good potential topic and then working together to formulate an explicit position, discuss how it responds to other positions, list background information we would need, indicate why the topic is important, come up with all the good reasons we can think of for supporting our position, address alternative points of view, decide how we could appeal to the values of our intended audience, and discuss strategies for establishing an authoritative tone. We’d suggest working through this sample topic fairly quickly, spending just enough time to call students’ attention to the characteristic features of this genre.

An explicit position. Students may have a sense of where they stand on a topic, but they often need help stating their position explicitly. Once your students are at the point of trying to figure out their positions, ask them to bring in several possible positions on the topics they plan to write about. This activity also works well in small groups, so after students have drafted some explicit position statements, they can try them out on others. Can their classmates understand the positions they are taking? Are their positions clear, or are they equivocal or wishy-washy? What can they do to make their positions less general and more explicit? You might
point them to the example from Thomas Friedman (p. 67) that shows a clear, very explicit position. Finally, you can ask students to turn in the position statement they think is the strongest and then go over them as a group.

**A response to what others have said.** When you’re teaching this chapter, it’s important to stress early on the degree to which all arguments are part of a larger conversation circulating around a topic—and that academic writers present their ideas as a response to what else has been said about their topic. Perhaps ask students to name a really “hot” topic that they are hearing a lot about: on one of our campuses such a topic would be the attempts by local conservation groups to make a small lake on campus off limits in order to protect a rare type of frog that is breeding there. Then ask students to come up with as many perspectives on or approaches to that topic as possible. In the case of our frogs topic, we could begin with an editorial in the student newspaper that raises the issue and argues against an off-limits policy—and then think about what other arguments the editorial is responding to—and then expand the conversation to include other perspectives, perhaps from the larger community, from students’ rights groups, from legal authorities, from the university administration, and so on. Your main goal here is to show students how arguments exist within a larger web: remembering this point will help them avoid rushing to an immediate judgment on their topic without considering all sides and perspectives. In addition, you’ll want to point out that in writing about what they think, they’ll be adding their voices to the conversation.

**Appropriate background information.** Providing background information about the topic will help bring readers into the conversation surrounding it and get them up to speed so that they can more easily follow the argument being made. Have students brainstorm about what they think their audience is likely to know about the topic and what they will not know. Then ask them to discuss their lists with another member of the class (or two), helping one another think of other information that audience members might need. For the endangered frog topic, readers would probably like to have some information about the history of this lake and its frog inhabitants as well as about how the lake has traditionally been used. Thinking about what the audience needs or wants to know will usually lead writers into doing some preliminary research—and then be on the way to finding information that will be important to the draft of the essay. Once students have some sense of background information they think their own audiences will need to know, ask them to do the digging necessary to come up with that information and then bring it to class: again, they might find it productive to work in groups, where they can analyze what they’ve come up with and help one another refine the information or identify additional information they will need.

**Clear indication of why the topic matters.** Because student writers do their best work when they are writing about issues that are significant to them, you might begin by asking them to write briefly in class about why their topics are important, first to them and then to others. Use this brief writing as a springboard for
classroom discussion and give students a chance to respond to one another: do they find each other’s topics as meaningful and important as the writer does?

We also like to ask students to study the readings in this chapter to see how those authors make topics that they care about interesting for their readers. Russel Honoré has chosen a very personal approach to a universal topic—work and its intrinsic rewards. Bob Herbert writes on a universal topic—education—and appeals to a general audience by pointing out a serious problem affects nearly everyone in the nation. Katherine Spriggs combines both approaches, addressing a universal topic—food production and consumption—with a personal investment: her experience growing up with farmers. All three authors connect with their audiences by demonstrating the importance of their topics with good reasons and examples supporting their positions.

In our experience, students often do choose topics that are interesting and significant—but far too broad or large to yield a good argument. They need help, then, in narrowing and focusing topics into ones that they can manage within the time and length limits of the assignment. Point them to the guidance in this chapter on cutting a topic down to size (p. 84) and to the discussion on narrowing a topic on pp. 332–33, which provides a good example of how a large general topic (women in sports) could be narrowed further and further to this one: “patterns of injuries among collegiate women basketball players compared with their male counterparts.”

Consider asking students to come to class with at least two (and no more than three) potential topics to explore. Then make time for them to work together in peer groups (two or three to a group works best, we find) to test out their topics on their classmates, seeing which ones will hold up to scrutiny as being manageable, interesting to the audience addressed, and important enough to spend time on. Explain to them that as authors, they’ll need to show why their topics matter.

Good reasons and evidence. We think it’s helpful to have an in-class peer workshop devoted to exploring good reasons and evidence. Ask students to make a bulleted list of their good reasons and evidence, listed in order of from those they think are the strongest points to those that are less strong or useful. We like to begin such a class by taking one good reason or piece of evidence from several students’ lists and then exploring and critiquing those together. What are their sources—and how trustworthy are they? What are their credentials? Can they find other sources making similar points or ones that would corroborate what they are saying? If students have done primary research—based on observations, surveys, or interviews, for example, ask them to describe exactly how they went about it. The goal of such a workshop is to test the strength of the evidence and the credibility of the sources students are using.

Attention to more than one point of view. It’s hard to defend a position you are arguing for if you haven’t considered alternative positions or arguments. That’s one reason why students need to consider multiple perspectives when they’re researching their topics—and to take seriously those they disagree with as well as those that support their own opinions. It’s important to remind students to try to see the
issue from the viewpoints of those who hold other perspectives before rejecting them (and before deciding what they themselves think). You might ask students to write out one- or two-sentence summaries of the various positions they find, and to plot them out visually, perhaps putting the topic in a circle in the center of a page and then arranging the various perspectives to the topic around that center. They could then brainstorm in groups to see if they can identify perspectives they’ve left out, to decide which ones they need to acknowledge in their own argument, and to think about how they can respond. Or you might ask students to prepare two-minute presentations on their positions, sketching in what they have found out about various points of view on the topic and then stating their positions explicitly.

**An appeal to readers’ values.** Even the strongest evidence may not be good enough to convince an audience—unless it is carefully framed to appeal to things that the audience values. Page 78 introduces students to the need to craft such appeals and provides several examples of authors doing just that (we especially like the one about the “Yes, We Can” video that went viral during the first Obama campaign: it succeeded so spectacularly precisely because it appealed to values that almost all Americans hold.) This is a topic we sometimes address once students have written out a draft, for example by having them bring in a draft of their opening paragraphs and reading those openings aloud to the class. We ask the class to listen for how they appeal to the intended audiences. What values are embedded in the opening of each draft, and how do they appeal to the intended audience? If they don’t, how might they do so?

**An authoritative tone.** Students need to demonstrate that they know what they’re talking about, and to be taught how to establish that authority in their writing. Katherine Spriggs’s essay “On Buying Local” (pp. 92–100) provides a good example. Show students how Spriggs cites expert sources and also describes her own personal experiences—and how that serves both to support her claims and to establish her own credibility as an author.

Once students have completed a draft, we recommend devoting at least one workshop for peer reviews. Here you can refer students to the guidelines for Looking Critically at a Draft (pp. 87–88).

**Teaching the essays**

Looking closely at the example essays can help students see the **Characteristic Features** in action, understand how these features function in writing that argues a position, and think about how they could use them in their own writing.

“**Work Is a Blessing,**” by Russel Honoré (pp. 79–80). This essay is annotated so that students can clearly identify the genre features and see how they function in the essay. As they’ll see, Honoré states his position in his title and reiterates it explicitly in his last sentence. Since it’s an audio essay, written for NPR’s *This I Believe*, you might have students listen to the audio version (posted on www.norton.com/write/everyonelinks). We like to ask students to pay attention to how Honoré...
establishes his authority as an author in his writing—and how that authority comes through in the spoken version.

After studying this essay, students could be assigned to find another essay that takes a position on an issue that interests them, to analyze its use of the genre features taught in this chapter, and to annotate it the way we did Honoré’s essay. They may discover that some of these features are not used, in which case they should consider whether including those features would have improved the text—and if so, how.

Next come two essays that are each followed by questions that prompt students to think about the text. These questions draw students’ attention to the ways each author uses genre features and appeals to their readers in arguing their positions and thus can help structure class discussion of the essays and the genre. The last question in each set invites students to respond in writing to what the author says.

“Our Schools Must Do Better,” by Bob Herbert (pp. 89–91). This essay begins with a question, one that will grab readers’ attention and at the same time serve as an example demonstrating the argument stated in the title: that our schools need to do better. It would be helpful here to point out that this piece was written for an op-ed column that Bob Herbert used to write for the New York Times, and that it follows op-ed conventions: it’s very short, it needs to open in a way that will grab readers’ attention, it offers facts and expert opinions to support its argument but does not include formal documentation. Here are suggested answers to the study questions:

1. The United States needs to drastically change its public school system to meet the challenges of a globalized, high-technology twenty-first-century economy. Small improvements in test scores are not enough; Americans need to radically rethink the twentieth-century model of how our children are educated. According to Thomas Kane of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, two possibilities provide the best opportunities for significant advances: raising the quality of teachers and applying knowledge gained from schools that offer alternatives to the traditional model. Although the best teachers can drastically improve student performance, success as a teacher has almost no relation to the kinds of formal credentials that have been the main concern of school authorities. Instead of focusing on credentials, schools need to closely monitor teachers within the first few years after they begin teaching so as to identify good ones and weed out poor ones before tenure is granted. Such observation-based assessment would be challenging to carry out, but well worth the effort. In addition, we need to closely study alternative school models like the Knowledge Is Power Program, which has had great success in educating low-income students in a variety of settings by lengthening the school day and making both teachers and students work much harder than in traditional schools.

2. Herbert’s tone is serious, as befitting a serious topic, as well as straightforward, down to earth, and fairly informal. He draws readers in by beginning with a simple anecdote about a conversation with a “high school kid” and
ends with references to “American kids”; he compares the difference between two approaches to education reform to “moving from a jalopy to a jet” (¶16). In between, in the body of the essay, he takes a slightly more formal tone, referring to “children,” as he describes the nation’s educational challenges and possible remedies for them in more abstract, general terms.

3. Herbert establishes his topic’s importance largely by the language he uses about it: “rigorous and unforgiving” (¶6), “that overarching 21st-century challenge” (¶7), “a wholesale transformation of the public school system” (¶8).

4. Answers will vary. Possibilities include ¶15, where Herbert says that identifying good teachers and weeding out poor ones “can be done without turning the traditional system of teacher tenure on its head” (suggesting that his readers see value in the system), and his closing paragraph, which assumes his readers agree that “all American kids, not just the children of the elite” deserve “a fair chance at a rewarding life.”

"On Buying Local," by Katherine Spriggs (pp. 92–100). This is a good example of a source-based academic essay. Spriggs states her position explicitly in a thesis at the end of her first paragraph, supports her argument with reasons and evidence, and carefully (and respectfully) considers and responds to counterarguments. Here are suggested answers to the study questions:

1. Answers will vary as to whether Spriggs has convinced readers that her topic matters. Students who feel she has done so may cite ¶3, where she discusses the contribution of agriculture to global warming, pollution, and dwindling world oil supplies, or ¶4–7, where she explains how buying local could “reverse the trend towards industrial-scale farming” and thus reduce these harmful environmental effects.

2. In ¶8, Spriggs addresses the arguments that buying local can actually have negative environmental effects because growing items where they grow best uses energy most efficiently, because small farms are less efficient than large ones, and because growing more food in the United States rather than in third world countries will lead to more use of industrial equipment. Her response to the first counterargument is to agree that buying local is a matter of “as much as possible”; to the second, that small farms that are less efficient only if they are monoculture; and to the third, that only a small percentage of U.S. food is imported and that as third world countries industrialize, their agriculture, too, will become more industrialized. In ¶9–10, Spriggs address the counterarguments that buying local hurts both poor workers abroad, because it threatens their jobs, and consumers in the United States, because it makes food more expensive. She concedes some validity to both of these positions, but responds to the first by saying that a commitment by American consumers to buying local “could open up new conversations about environmentalism” and
demonstrate Americans’ commitment to it, and to the second by pointing out that buying local “has clear positive economic effects in local communities.”

3. Answers will vary.

4. Answers will vary, but some may say that Figs. 2 and 3 dramatize the differences between the human scale of small polyculture farms and the industrial, abstract scale of large monoculture ones and that Fig. 4 effectively presents large-scale, long-distance trucking in an unattractive light.

Suggested assignments and evaluation criteria

You’ll find an assignment ready to photocopy and hand out, along with a rubric of criteria for evaluating a position essay, in the Worksheets and Handouts section of this Guide. If you decide to use it, we suggest going over it with the students when you begin the assignment so they will be clear on exactly how you’ll be evaluating their writing. There are several ways you can use these criteria, but you should adapt them to your individual class goals.

Chapter 8: Writing a Narrative / “Here’s What Happened”

This chapter teaches a genre that is often assigned in and of itself, especially in composition courses—but narrative is even more often used as an important part of another assignment. Many writing classes, for instance, may ask students to write literacy narratives, stories about key moments in how they became the writers and readers they are today. But assignments for other classes—an essay for history on the role a significant event played in the development of nationhood; a report for an economics class evaluating the successes and failures of a particular business model—may call for narratives as well.

Introducing the genre

It’s worth taking time to talk with your students about the ubiquity of narratives in our lives and about how stories function in much that we do every day. In fact, stories seem to be universal, a feature of every single known culture. So there must be something fundamentally human about stories, and about our close connection to them: perhaps that’s why one group of co-authors titled their book about the power of storytelling The Need for Story. You might introduce this topic by asking students to brainstorm about how they have encountered stories in the last week, keeping a cumulative list that may contain everything from tweets to stop-action cartoons, hip hop and other songs, and films of all kinds. Or you might ask students to try their hand at tracing stories as far back in history as they can: some may mention the Bible or another religious text as forms of early and important stories; others may remember Greek epics; some may even be familiar with ancient cave paintings that told stories.
Like language itself, telling stories seems to come naturally to us human beings. But as with all rhetorical acts, doing so artfully and with purpose requires conscious effort. Narrative essays challenge first-year students to move beyond simply “telling a story” to using a story to make a significant point. This chapter describes the features readers of narrative essays expect, offers three examples, and provides a Roadmap that will lead students through the process of writing a narrative.

Using the exercises
You’ll find several brief exercises throughout the chapter that give students an opportunity to stop and think about key concepts. Exercises are italicized and are marked by a red flourish (≈). They can be used as brief classroom exercises or could be assigned for journal writing or other homework. We especially like using the exercise on p. 107, which asks students to compare narratives in different media. We’ve found that students are very good at finding stories in social media—and often in venues that we simply don’t know, so it’s a chance for them to shine.

Introducing the genre features
Each of the characteristic features of narrative is explained in the book, beginning on page 108 with a bulleted list. In introducing and discussing these features, you might usefully refer to the readings, especially the one on pp. 118–21, which is annotated to point out how each of the features is used in one text. We like to introduce these features carefully in class, asking members to identify a good potential narrative topic and then working through the features together. For instance, just to get comfortable with the genre, the class might decide to about a coming-of-age story, which is something that most or all of them will have experienced. You can lead them in crafting a sentence or two that captures a key moment in coming-of-age and then ask them to work through the characteristic features: what is the specific event they want to write about? What specifically happened and who are the key players in the story? Then ask them to describe the setting they envision for this hypothetical narrative, filling in with vivid and descriptive details. We’ve found that we quickly fill up a white board with notes for a narrative doing an exercise like this, and we soon have enough of a sense of the story the class is creating to talk about point of view: who is going to be the narrator? Will it be a first-person narration? What other options can they imagine using. Finally, you can ask them the “so what” question: why is this coming of age story important and significant: why should it matter to us as listeners or readers? You can then use this whole-class discussion to launch students on their own narratives.

A clearly identified event. Begin by reading the passage from Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary* (p. 108) aloud, asking students to listen carefully. Then ask them to write down what they remember about the event he describes, but without looking at the passage. You can then look back to Rose’s paragraph and ask students how Rose identified and introduced this event so clearly and memorably.
You might then ask students to start brainstorming about highly significant events in their lives: if they bring three potential events to class for the next day’s discussion, you might give each student a few minutes to introduce these events and get response from you and the other class members. Students could then write for ten minutes, doing the best they can to clearly introduce their event. Since these writings will be very brief, you can probably look over them and give some quick response, letting students know if the events they are identifying would seem to lend themselves to a strong narrative.

A clearly described setting. Again, we like to begin discussion of description by focusing on the example on pp. 108–9, reading aloud and then asking students to jot down what they can remember about the setting. Ask them what helps them visualize Oxford and its locale and perhaps talk about some of the words Thompson uses (like “gap-toothed smiles of crenellated walls”) that may not be familiar. Then ask two or three students to describe the setting they are imagining for their narratives, with you and the rest of the class giving response. Then they can take ten to fifteen minutes to work individually on jotting down some features of their settings. If you have time, students can then work in pairs or groups of three to read their notes to each other and see how well they can visualize these settings.

Vivid descriptive details. It’s likely that students will have picked up on descriptive details in both the Mike Rose paragraph and the Writing Thompson passage about Myron Rolle at Oxford, because these details are probably quite memorable. So go back to those passages, asking students to identify what they find to be the most descriptive details in them—and then move on to the example about Haiti on p. 111. Ask them to underline or identify the most memorable details—in both the passage and the image (p. 112). You might also ask them to identify every verb in the passage and then talk about how choosing active, powerful verbs can bring an event to life.

By this time, your students will probably have started to draft their narratives. If so, ask them to bring the opening paragraph in to work on in class. You might decide to check out the material on opening sentences in Ch. 29, HOW TO WRITE GOOD SENTENCES (beginning on p. 561) and ask students to look at their first paragraphs and then revise the first sentence or two, following the advice provided. If time permits, ask them to revise the entire first paragraph, making it as vivid and descriptive as possible. Then ask several students to read their openings aloud: hearing what other students have written is almost always an inspiration to others to try to do as well—or better—on their own openings.

A consistent point of view. You might begin discussing point of view by looking closely at the two examples (pp. 113–14) and noting the differences between Kleege’s first-person narrative and the third-person point of view in Lewis’s description of a bone-breaking moment in football. Students could underline every use of first-person pronouns in Kleege’s piece and then discuss the fine line between using first person to build coherence and keep the focus on the topic at hand and over-using first person in ways that seem egoistic (and can get boring). Then ask
students to bring in an example of a first-person narrative and of a third-person narrative they find—it could be in writing or an audio essay—or even a YouTube video. The goal of these discussions and exercises is to get students to think carefully about the point of view they will use in their own narratives. Consider asking them to bring in part of their drafts and do a fairly brief (15- or 20-minute) peer review session in which they examine the drafts to see if the point of view is clear and consistent.

A clear point. By now students should have a full draft of their narratives, and that’s a good time, we find, to spend some time thinking about the overall meaning of their narratives. What point do they want to emphasize about the event they are narrating. What makes it so important to them and to their lives? Why should it matter to their readers? It’s worth reading the example passages from bell hooks and Emily Vallowe (pp. 116–17) and asking students to paraphrase the major points they are making. In addition, ask them to compare the two in terms of where to put the main point, with the goal of having them go back to their drafts to make sure the main point is clearly articulated and that it is placed appropriately. It’s likely that some students will lead with their main points and others will conclude with them: ask for volunteers to read the paragraph in which the main point appears and then talk together as a class about how effective that placement is. It’s also a good idea at this point to schedule another peer-review workshop and ask students to prepare careful critiques of each other’s narratives.

Teaching the essays

Looking closely at the example essays can help students see the Characteristic Features in action, understand how these features function in narrative writing, and think about how they could use them in their own writing.

“Bidding Farewell to Arms,” by Roman Skaskiw (pp. 118–21). The first essay, “Bidding Farewell to Arms” by former Army infantry officer Roman Skaskiw, is annotated so that students can clearly identify the characteristic features; after going over this sample, students could be asked to annotate other essays for these features and discuss them in class. As in all of the genre chapters, the three readings are samples that demonstrate the features, but manifest them in different ways, ways that reflect their individual rhetorical situations. You might ask students to characterize these differences, and then consider how they’d employ these features in the telling of their story.

One similarity that the three essays share is the placement of the point of the story, the answer to the question, Why does this matter? In each, the point is made in the last lines; yet from the first there is no doubt where the reader will end. The narrative line in each is clear. You could trace this line with them in Skaskiw’s, then ask them to do so in the others, and once they have a draft, ask them to find the line in each others’ stories. It’s not nearly as easy as it seems. Students may find that, in an attempt to make their writing very vivid, they have actually crammed in so many details that they obscure the main point. So pointing out...
how each of these authors pares down the prose to the essential details will help students attempt the same.

“Lydia’s Story,” by Jan Brideau (pp. 128–31). Brideau uses a first-person point of view to relate the events of another person’s story. Her background as a medical professional is clear in the kinds of details she provides; she uses this expertise to make the setting and other aspects of her context clear. Here are suggested answers to the study questions:

1. Brideau’s main point is stated in her last sentence: that of all the people she met and served in Louisiana, “it’s Lydia’s story that stay with me most, probably because it represents the essence of hope and determination in the face of terrible adversity.”

2. Brideau begins her narrative in first person but shifts to third person in ¶4 as she relates Lydia’s own story of her experiences; aside from one sentence in ¶9, she returns to first person only in her last two paragraphs, as she sums up the point of her narrative. Responses to the impact of this point of view will vary; some students may feel that Brideau should have let Lydia tell more of her story in the first person.

3. Answers will vary, but may include such details as “small, slender” and “with her short gray hair neatly tucked up inside a kerchief” (¶1), “the chemical odor of a cleaning solution so strong that it seemed toxic” and “the cackle of a television set” (¶2), and “the water spurted out of the kitchen sink like a fountain” (¶7).

4. Brideau’s audience was made up largely of professionals in the field of health policy—doctors, nurses, scientists and other academics—and her tone seems well suited to them: her emotional point about “the essence of hope and determination in the face of terrible adversity” is made through objectively observed and linguistically restrained narrative and descriptive details. Language that might be cited as evidence of an objective, emotionally restrained tone includes the explanation in ¶4 of how Lydia didn’t use the names of the hurricanes or the attention to the heights of the water and the linen closet in ¶8.

“Literacy: A Lineage,” by Melanie Luken (pp. 132–36). Luken’s literacy narrative is another first-person essay that is primarily focused on someone else: her father. Luken is not relating a story from her father, however, but using examples of her father’s history and experiences to tell her own. Here are suggested answers to the study questions:

1. Luken’s main point is that the greatest influence on her literacy has been her father, who inspired her love of and literature and writing—a point she states explicitly in her first sentence and then again in her conclusion. She supports the point with stories of his encouragement of her reading and writing throughout her childhood.
2. Luken cites several quotations from literary works that her father read or quoted to her and her brothers when she was growing up: an extended excerpt from a Longfellow poem in ¶1 (one line of which she echoes in her conclusion) and briefer excerpts from works by Kipling, Housman, Eliot, and Melville in ¶3. In ¶9, she also quotes her father himself asking about her reading. Student reactions to the use of these primary sources will vary, but they undoubtedly do support her argument about her father’s literary influence on her.

3. For Luken, the story matters because she regards her father’s literary influence as her most precious inheritance, “something from him that will last my whole life and will continue to give me joy as long as I live” (¶10). Answers to why the story matters to students will vary, but many students may feel it indicates the importance of passing on one’s values, literary or otherwise, to one’s children.

4. Luken’s narrative is in a sense about the role her father played as her “tutor” in reading and writing. In a class focused on writing memoirs, she might have given less emphasis to him and more to her own experiences and subjective impressions.

Suggested assignments and evaluation criteria

You’ll find an assignment ready to photocopy and hand out, along with a rubric of criteria for evaluating a narrative, in the Worksheets and Handouts section of this Guide. If you decide to use the rubric, we suggest going over it with the students when you begin the assignment so they will be clear on exactly how you’ll be evaluating their writing. There are several ways you can use these criteria, but you should adapt them to your individual class goals.

Chapter 9: Writing Analytically / “Let’s Take a Closer Look”

This chapter teaches a skill valued in essentially all disciplines: writing analytically. In order to compose an analysis, to write analytically, students must first learn to look closely and critically at something (the rhetoric of verbal or visual text, a data set, a process, etc.) to identify its component parts and determine how they relate to one another and what can be learned about the subject through analysis. By explaining the characteristic features readers expect in an analysis, the chapter helps students move from understanding to composing analysis, a process guided by the Roadmap.

Introducing the genre

As we note in the chapter, analysis is a practical skill used in everyday life as well as in the classroom, so you might begin by asking students to talk about decisions they’ve made that depended upon some type of analysis and from there
move to a discussion of assignments they may have done that required analysis. Having them look for patterns among the examples will provide you an opportunity to explain the basic characteristics shared by analyses across disciplines and situations.

**Using the exercises**

Throughout the chapter, you’ll find brief exercises that give students an opportunity to stop and think about key concepts. These exercises are italicized and are marked by a red flourish (**italicized**). You might use them as brief classroom exercises or assign them as prompts for journal writing.

**Introducing the genre features**

The characteristic features of the genre are listed in a bulleted list on p. 141, and each is explained and illustrated in the following pages. Introducing the features in class, by discussing the examples under each, works well especially if you then follow up with a discussion of the annotated essay (beginning on p. 155) to point out how each feature is used in a single text.

Analysis is a complex process, so students may need help in figuring out exactly what to focus on, how much description to provide, and what we mean by “insight gained from the analysis.” Working through this process with the group will help demystify analysis for them. Begin by having the students suggest several possible topics for analysis, then as a group evaluate each to determine whether it would serve as the basis for a good analysis by looking closely at the characteristic features.

**A question that prompts you to take a closer look.** Student writers, like any writers, work best when they are engaged by their topic, working on something that piques their interest and about which they want to learn more. That’s especially true for analytical writing. To get them started, you might use the exercise on p. 141, prompting them to “look for analysis in everyday use” as a platform to begin the discussion of how we use analysis and follow it with a brief in-class writing session where students list personal experiences with using analysis to come to a decision. You might lead off with an example of a time when you needed to do some analysis: one of the authors of this guide, for instance, had to do some analysis recently when she was asked to recommend a good “reasonably priced restaurant” in her city to a group of students visiting from New Zealand. She did a quick search of half a dozen popular restaurants, analyzing the range of prices in each and then comparing them before making her recommendations. Once students recall their own experiences with analysis, the discussion that follows can lead to identifying the specific questions that impelled their use of analysis—and from there to listing some possible topics they’d like to analyze.

For each topic, students should frame a question that will drive their analysis. You might direct them to look at the essays in this chapter to identify the
questions driving those analyses. Robert Connors’ question is the title of his essay, Melissa Rubin’s is in her introduction, but Heather Havrilesky’s question, while clear, is unstated. Encourage students to attempt a couple of topics and then run them by their peers (we’ve had success having students work in groups at this point). Once they’ve narrowed their possible topics to one or two viable ones, you’ll want to help them clearly articulate a question that needs to be answered. The questions should have no single factual or “correct” answers, and they should be ones that require students to gathering information: Which car should I buy and why? How do bills become laws? What caused the Great Depression? How can Jane Austen’s work be understood as feminist critique? Perhaps most critically, students should be personally engaged by their topics and eager to discover more about them.

Some description of the subject you are analyzing. While students may assume they know what’s involved in describing their subject, you’ll want to emphasize the importance of first identifying their intended audience and thinking hard about what kind of description that audience will need.

It might help to look at the example on p. 143 and discuss what kind of detail Christine Spines includes in an article about Twilight addiction written for a general audience. Would she have included the same detail if she were addressing an audience of Twilight fans? What about an audience of academics at a film studies conference?

Students should also consider that the way they describe their subjects will vary according to the kind of analysis they are doing. In analyzing a controversial law, a rhetorical analysis would call for quoting or summarizing or paraphrasing words or passages from the law itself; a causal analysis would call for a description of the circumstances that led to the law (or the effects it could have); a process analysis might call for description of how the law came to be or how it will work; and data analysis could call for a description of who is likely to be affected or the costs of implementation. You might choose one topic students are considering as an example and have students discuss as a class how they would describe that topic for various kinds of analysis.

Evidence drawn from close examination of the subject. Examining the subject closely is, of course, a form of close reading, so you might begin by asking students to bring in what they are analyzing and then choose one or two excerpts to analyze as a whole class. You could, for example, project the first stanza of song lyrics a student wants to analyze and the work together to look closely at how each word functions, how rhyme and repetition and rhythm illuminate the passage, even how the words are laid out on the page. Then ask if what you’ve discovered gives you any insight about the lyrics. It might also be helpful to look at the example of rhetorical analysis on pp. 144–45: ask students what details the author of this analysis has chosen to use as evidence in his analysis of what makes Apple ads memorable.

Because the approach a writer takes to analyzing a subject determines what kinds of evidence should be sought, you’ll want to be sure students understand
the type of analysis that you’ll be assigning or the options you’ll allow. This chapter covers four common kinds: rhetorical analysis (pp. 144–47), process analysis (pp. 147–49), causal analysis (p. 149) and data analysis (pp. 149–52). You might consider assigning a general topic and allowing students to respond to it using different analytical approaches. For example, after two presidential debates were held at Hofstra, some students were interested in discovering more about the process of selecting the site for those debates, some wanted to look closely at the language and visuals used in the promotional materials, some wanted to understand the effects the debates had on the elections.

Every campus has its own local issues that can be approached from a variety of perspectives and analyzed using multiple approaches. The important thing is to help students focus on what they’re interested in and understand how to show appropriate evidence for whatever topic and kind of analysis they choose.

**Insight gained from your analysis.** In teaching analysis, it is crucial to help students to fully understand the meaning of insight, the “aha” moment that authors often lead us readers to. In this regard, you might refer to the annotated essay by Robert Connors (pp. 155–59), in which he reaches multiple insights. His topic seems straightforward at first—his question “How do you get a skunk out of a bottle?” indicates that a simple process analysis will follow. But when we get to the end of his first paragraph—“Just another morning. Or so I think.”—we know this will be more complicated than it initially appears. See the annotations on pp. 157 and 159 pointing out two of the insights his analysis leads to.

**Clear, precise language.** All writing should be clear, but because analysis is so often a vehicle for helping others understand something, you’ll want to reinforce the need for clarity and precision in this kind of writing. Here again is reason to discuss audience—to make sure students are aware that what’s clear to some readers may not be at all clear to others. This might be a place to discuss some of the examples in the chapter. The speed skating process analysis on pp. 147–48 was written for an audience of students and their parents; how would its language have been different if it were written for physics students? The baseball data analysis on pp. 149–51, on the other hand, provides an example of how an author who’s writing primarily for knowledgeable readers makes a point of defining abbreviations for those who are not. In our experience, students’ ability to write clearly and precisely varies enormously, so you might approach this on an as-needed basis for those individuals who need it. Your campus writing center can also help.

**Teaching the essays**

Studying the example essays can help students understand the Characteristic Features of analytical writing and see how they function in a whole piece of writing.

“*How Do You Get a Skunk Out of a Bottle?*” by Robert Connors (pp. 155–59). This essay serves as a nice bridge between something students know how to do (tell
stories) and what we want them to learn to do (engage in analysis). Connors’ text demonstrates thoughtful analysis presented in a larger narrative. The title provides the question that drives the analysis and the annotations identify the other genre features—which all serves as a model students can use in analyzing other essays (and in then conducting their own analysis).

You might then assign the exercise on p. 159 and have students find an analytical article and annotate it as we’ve done with the Connors essay. Should they find articles that do not include all the genre features we list in our chapter, ask them if it would be a stronger piece if it did. You might even ask them to revise it to add in any missing features and decide if the analysis benefits as a result.

Next come two essays that are each followed by questions that prompt students to think about the text. These questions draw their attention to the ways each author uses genre features and appeals to their readers and can thus help structure class discussion of the essays and the genre. The last question in each set invites students to write some kind of analysis themselves.

“Mad Men: Stillbirth of the American Dream,” by Heather Havrilesky (pp. 170–75). Ask students to carefully read this analysis of the TV show Mad Men and annotate it as the Connors essay has been. This will lead them to pay attention to how Heather Havrilesky uses the genre features, and also to how she appeals to two kinds of readers, those who have seen Mad Men and those who have not. The first four questions following the essay can be used to generate class discussion; the fifth is a prompt for writing. Here are suggested answers to some of the study questions:

1. Answers may vary, but Havrilevsky’s main insight is that Mad Men symbolizes the glossy emptiness of “the American dream” of endless, unlimited material and psychological fulfillment, which blinds Americans to the ordinary happiness possible in their everyday lives. She states this point most directly in paragraph 4, where she says the show “underscor[es] the disconnect between the American dream and reality”; in ¶10, where calls it “a singular and resonant reflection of a particularly American puzzle”; and in the concluding paragraph (13), where she says, “The American dream itself is a carefully packaged, soulless affair.”

2. She discusses in detail the characters in the show and (in ¶10) its visual production values.

3. Answers will vary but might include her pointing out that Americans’ “dissatisfaction with the ordinary” blinds them to “the divine beauty and grace of everyday existence—the glimmer of sunshine on the grass, the blessing of a cool breeze on a summer day” (¶1) or saying that Don Draper’s hair “stir[s] long-buried childhood notions about one day having a husband who looks like a Ken doll” (¶10).

4. Answers will vary.

“Advertisements R Us,” by Melissa Rubin (pp. 175–81). This is a good example of a source-based academic essay, and one that we think serves as a good model of a
kind of visual analysis students are interested in doing. Here are answers to some of the study questions:

1. Answers will vary, but the general nature of Rubin’s insights about the ad have to do with the ways that its imagery and text reflect the values of the United States of 1950 in such areas as racial and gender roles, the prestige of the military, the urban and industrial environment, and the relationship between socioeconomic classes. Her evidence is drawn largely from a close analysis of the ad’s graphic elements along with some research into Coca-Cola’s history, and most students will probably agree that it is persuasive.

2. The whole essay is deeply informed by the historical context in which the ad appeared, which is the main focus of Rubin’s analysis. For example, she discusses the effects of World War II on society and industry in ¶4–6, the portrayal of relations between bosses and workers in ¶7, the soon-to-vanish idealization of cities and smokestacks in ¶8, and the absence of nonwhite figures in ¶9.

3. Answers will vary but might include “What kind of appeal is this ad making—emotional? logical? direct? ironic?” or “Who is the targeted audience for this ad?”

4. Answers will vary.

Suggested assignments and evaluation criteria

You’ll find an assignment ready to photocopy and hand out, along with a rubric of criteria for evaluating a rhetorical analysis, in the Worksheets and Handouts section of this Guide. If you decide to use the rubric, we suggest going over it with the students when you begin the assignment so they will be clear on exactly how you’ll be evaluating their writing. There are several ways you can use these criteria, but you should adapt them to your individual class goals.

Chapter 10: Reporting Information / “Just the Facts, Ma’am”

Although students may have had a lot of experience reading websites, magazines, newspapers, and other texts that report information, their experience writing them may be limited to high school research papers and lab reports. In college, they will likely be asked to write reports in a variety of disciplines; equally and perhaps more important, they will need to be able to report information from various sources as part of constructing other sorts of texts, including those that are clearly argumentative in nature. Thus, reporting information is an important skill for them to master.

The most important things students need to learn about writing reports are that they are built of information that is factual in some way and that those who write them seek to take an objective stance rather than an argumentative one. In
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fact, we find that the major challenge in teaching report writing, whether the students are freshmen or doctoral students, is helping authors work hard to maintain a stance of objectivity rather than veering into a place where they have subtly or overtly taken a stance in contexts where that is not what is called for. We find that one key issue is word choice.

Separating what’s factual from what’s opinion is frequently a challenge, especially when the subject involves humans or the interpretation of data, a point we frequently return to in class. For many reasons, students are quick to want to write about how they feel about a topic or information they have gathered, rather than reporting the information in cases where reports are what is called for. You might find it helpful to point out the bumper sticker on p. 183: “You are entitled to your own opinions—but not your own facts” in explaining to students that when they compose a report, their goal is to report information rather than to give their opinions about that information. This chapter introduces the genre, provides some information about using the exercises, discusses the key genre features in some detail, offers suggestions about teaching the readings and helping students use the Roadmap, and models a possible writing assignment on reporting information. It also provides some advice on teaching profiles.

Introducing the genre

Ask students to brainstorm about reports they have written or read—book reports in elementary school, lab reports in high school science classes, and so on. Students who are taking courses in the natural, social, or applied sciences may already have experience reading reports such as those produced by think tanks like the Pew Trust or the Heritage Foundation. A useful point of discussion will be to ask students to contrast these kinds of texts with the more argumentative texts—state a thesis and then argue for that position—they might associate with writing classes generally.

It may be useful to remind students, as the opening discussion of the chapter itself does, that things we often think we know to be true or factual are, in fact, not true (or are incomplete), a situation that then creates the need for the genre of reporting information.

Using the exercises

You’ll find several brief exercises throughout the chapter that give students an opportunity to stop and think about key concepts. Exercises are italicized and are marked by a red flourish (/>. They can be used as brief classroom exercises or could be assigned for journal writing or other homework.

Introducing the genre features

The bulleted list of genre features on p. 118 lists the five features that characterize effective reporting of information. The discussion of each includes concrete examples—and close reading and analysis of these examples should give students
both a good idea of what reports look like and concrete strategies for effectively composing them.

**A topic carefully focused for a specific audience.** Key here is the notion of audience. Effective reports are always tailored for a specific audience, and, as noted in the book, often a diverse one, a fact that has great consequences for the selection, organization, and presentation of the information included. As noted in the text (p. 191), the audiences for the Proud Ground annual report include donors and potential donors, including both individuals and foundations. When nonprofit organizations create annual reports for donors, the topic is chosen for them; the choices then become what information to present and how to do so. The page from the report reproduced on p. 190 provides an excellent example of the use of images and text to offer readers information while supporting an implicit appeal to readers’ emotions: give to this great cause if you don’t already; continue giving if you do give; or, better yet, give more. You might ask students to speculate on how the parts of the annual report presented here (the description on pp. 189–91, the illustration on p. 190, the charts on p. 196) differ from the reports Proud Ground must generate for government agencies that provide most of its revenues. We can predict that those reports, like all bureaucratic documents, are going to be far longer than twelve pages and contain far more detailed (and likely tedious) information and information of very different kinds than the example of Michelle given on p. 190.

You might also ask students to go to the Proud Ground website and download the current annual report or the one referenced in the text and to analyze how the complete document works as a report (www.proudground.org/about/publications/). Comparing and contrasting the annual reports for several years would give students an idea of how this nonprofit understands this genre in the context of its organization.

The questions about audience on p. 206 in the Roadmap should help your students as they begin to think about the audience for reports they will write and how particular audiences affect the way they write a report.

**Definitions of key terms.** It’s especially important to help student authors appreciate the need to clearly define terms and to be sure that any claims make sense in light of the definitions given. The examples on pp. 191–93 demonstrate how two authors, Michael Oden and Henry Fountain, use a range of textual techniques to provide definitions of important terms explicitly or implicitly.

Providing appropriate definitions is, of course, integrally related to the notion of audience because how authors define terms will depend on whom they’re defining them for. When writing for a diverse audience, authors will be teaching some readers—we didn’t know what economic incentives were before we read Oden’s report, nor did we know what a “freestyle aerialist” was before reading Fountain’s article. Other readers, however, will already have this information, and what they’ll be doing as they read these texts is assessing the extent to which each author knows his or her stuff and looking for what may be subtle cues about an author’s stance.
It’s worth pointing out that rarely will expert report writers cite a dictionary definition or use the formula “the definition of X is Y.” Instead, they employ a range of other strategies for letting readers know the definitions of key terms, a number of which are mentioned in this section. A useful activity might be to ask students to collect examples of the many ways authors of reports provide definitions. It can also help to remind students that one can define by giving examples (as Oden does in his report—“Incentives may take many forms,” p. 191) or by explaining something (i.e., explaining what something does as Oden does: “Austin . . . provides financial incentives designed to encourage specific economic outcomes, such as a desired company locating its headquarters here,” p. 191). In discussing these examples, you might point out the way that Oden moves between levels of specificity, from abstract to concrete—often a feature of well-constructed definitions that rely on examples or discussions of function.

**Trustworthy information.** Providing trustworthy information is obviously all about ethos, specifically creating and maintaining an ethos that persuades readers that the author and whatever he or she might say are to be trusted. Thus, relevant issues relate both to the choice of information and how it is presented.

A big challenge for student authors, especially when investigating a topic they have limited knowledge of—and this would include cases where they might think they are experts when, in fact, they are not—is figuring out which sources to trust. It might be useful to engage students in a discussion of how they determine which sources to trust and why and which they are suspicious of and why.

Equally important is demonstrating to readers why the information presented should be trusted. Obviously, a standard way to encourage readers to trust information is to provide documentation on sources in the form of footnotes or internal citations. It’s worth pointing out to students, however, that this process alone guarantees little since an author can footnote bogus sources just as easily as trustworthy ones.

As many of the reports cited in the chapter demonstrate, authors have additional resources for creating an ethos of someone who is presenting trustworthy information. These include using quotations from reliable sources; the essay by Sam Forman provides some good examples from interviews Forman did quite effectively. Other good examples can be found in the excerpt from the Proud Ground annual report (p. 190) and the profile from *Street Roots* (pp. 201–4).

Context matters a great deal when it comes to presenting trustworthy information. Take the challenge of providing appropriate definitions. Imagine a student writing a report for a psychology course on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among veterans of the recent wars in the Middle East. Rather than relying a definition from, say, Webster’s, the author would be much better served using the definition given in the most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*. Whatever Webster’s has to say would be far too general for a paper on PTSD for a psychology course—even an undergraduate one. You might ask students to consider this example: you could present it to them as a case of which source would be the better one and, further, ask why using the fourth edition of the *DSM* would be a less effective choice than using the fifth edition in

See Ch. 18 for help teaching students how to evaluate sources.
terms of presenting trustworthy information. Such a discussion will help students to realize the need to match the sources they use—even for things like definitions—with the audience(s) they’re writing for in terms of creating an ethos of trustworthiness. Doing so will involve choosing the most relevant and up-to-date information available and presenting it in a way that invites readers to believe they are getting all the relevant information presented in ways that honor the complexity of the issue.

**Appropriate organization and design.** Reports rely on any number of organizational strategies. A common one—and one that recurs in examples in this chapter (e.g., the essay by Estabrook and the profile by McCrow)—is a modified chronological one: setting the scene in the present, moving back into the past and then through the present (often projecting into the future), and then ending up in the present moment again. Annual reports and policy documents like the Liveable City report that look toward the future in different ways modify this strategy in various ways.

Other strategies include defining, describing (generally in rich detail), providing concrete examples, comparing or contrasting specific examples cited, and analyzing causes and effects—basically, any technique that can be used in developing a text.

It would be useful to remind students that when they are assigned to write a report for a course, their first question should be about format. If the format is prescribed—as it will likely be in a course in experimental psychology or an internship where they are to help a nonprofit create its annual report—their focus as authors shifts from what format to use to which information to include and how to organize it within the specified format.

This is also a time to point out to students that different disciplines mandate different textual conventions—the use of headings, the style of references, and so on—and that they should expect to have to familiarize themselves with several such systems. These might include the system of the Modern Language Association for writing in most English and literature classes, including literature in languages other than English; that of the American Psychological Association for psychology and many journals in education or related fields; that of the Council of Biology Editors for writing in the life sciences; that of the *Chicago Manual of Style* for writing in history; and so on.

A related issue regarding formatting and presentation of information is the use of visuals, whether charts such as the ones from the Proud Ground report reproduced on p. 196, the photo from that same report reproduced on p. 190, or the especially effective visuals in the Fountain video of the double-full-full-full, the URL for which appears on p. 186. Here, as elsewhere during the course, it is worthwhile to spend time with students discussing the ways that visuals can contribute to reports and the criteria for choosing effective ones. Although Ch. 30 on *Designing What You Write* is a valuable resource, our experience has taught us that it is best to integrate discussions about this topic into discussions of specific genres to help students move from understanding general principles of design to being able to apply those principles in specific contexts.
A confident, informative tone. Obviously, if readers are going to trust an author’s report, they’re going to have to believe the author is, at some level, an authority—again, a question of ethos. Creating such an ethos requires the use of a confident, informative tone.

The overwhelming challenge we find in teaching report writing, as we have noted, is helping student steer clear of reporting information in ways that are overly positioned (generally without acknowledging such positioning and often without being aware of it). This is basically a matter of word choice and framing. The rhetorical theorist and philosopher Kenneth Burke referred to this as the challenge of terministic screens: once the terms of a discussion are set (he was concerned with arguments, assuming that nearly everything was an argument), the argument completes itself. An example all students can understand will help explain this concept and what it means to them as authors. We would not expect someone who supports a woman’s right to determine the outcome of a pregnancy—that is, whether to abort the fetus or carry it to term—to use an express like *unborn child* to refer to the fetus, for if a fetus is an unborn child, then abortion must be murder because it ends the life of that child. On the other hand, we should not be surprised that those who oppose abortion use the term *unborn child* in reference to what medical professionals refer to as a *fetus*. As Burke contends, the choice of terms often shapes—if not determines—the outcome of the discussion, and the choice of terms cannot help but betray an author’s stance. This is the challenge those writing reports face: writing in such a way as to hold off on letting readers know exactly what they might think. Sam Forman does a great job of this in the student essay: while we know he believes reforms are necessary, we do not find out exactly what he has in mind until after he has reported what he perceives to be all the relevant information on the topic.

If students are struggling to find and maintain an objective stance on an issue, one possible solution is to shift the focus—to report on the nature of the controversy itself.

Teaching profiles

As noted, we have included the commonly assigned genre of profiles in this chapter. The example, “Hard Work, High Energy Means a Ticket Home,” a profile of an adolescent who is experiencing homelessness and who sells a newspaper produced with the assistance of local members of that community, illustrates a common kind of profile—one focusing on an individual who is noteworthy in some way. (In case students are curious, you can mention that such newspapers cost $1.00 with $0.75 going to the seller in your discussion of this profile.) Profiles (whether or not so named) are a common genre in many disciplines. Students in business classes are often required to investigate and report on the potential investment value of a specific company, and case studies in many fields represent particular kinds of profile. In all these cases, the individual case or situation being profiled is seen as informing (and even teaching) readers something useful about more general phenomena. It is useful here to remember Cicero’s aims of rhetoric: to teach, to delight, and to persuade. Again, we see that reporting information is much more
about teaching than about persuading, and if, along the way, we can delight the reader in some way, that is never a bad thing!

As noted in the discussion on p. 200, profiles are first-hand accounts. The author has to have direct experience of some sort with the specific person, place, event, or institution being profiled. For a business student reporting on the likely investment value of a particular start-up company, this experience could include a great deal of background reading, interviewing some members of the company, and perhaps even visiting it. For a student in a course on bilingualism writing about the linguistic and cultural challenges faced by Somali women who are refugees in the local community, it might involve interviewing some of these women as well as interviewing social workers who seek to assist the women and reading whatever is available about Somali women elsewhere in the United States or reading more broadly about the challenges women who are refugees to this country face. For a student in a course on the history of religion in America who is writing a profile about how the internment of Japanese citizens during World War II affected a Buddhist temple in her city, it would likely involve interviewing the priests at the temple as well as current members of the temple and surviving older members or their descendants. In sharing these examples with students, be sure to point out that all of these profiles focus on specific cases.

Such interviews, combined with more traditional research methods, should provide detailed information about the subject. In our experience, one challenge will be helping student authors choose selectively. It is, of course, better to start out with too much information and then have to discard bits of information that are not particularly relevant or compelling rather than starting with too little information. As students work on the research for profiles, it is often useful to have them keep a log of what they have done, what they have learned, and what they need to investigate next, given what they have learned. (A four-column chart—with the first of the four columns being the date information was collected—would be a simple and effective way for them, their classmates, and you to track progress.) This exercise would likewise be useful in helping model the research process as a whole, helping them see how each step of the research process generates new questions.

A key concern for a profile is finding an interesting angle. It will be helpful to point out to students that some assignments for profiles will assume or contain clear organizational templates to be followed. (In fact, many of these will be based directly or loosely on the IMRAD structure mentioned on p. 196.) Even in these cases, however, rather than simply reporting the information collected, it is often possible to find a hook—a counterintuitive fact or a compelling quotation—that pulls readers into the text. In cases where a student author has greater freedom—for example, if assigned to write a profile like Kaisa McCrow’s profile of Dymar Blanton (pp. 201–4), he or she may have to work harder to find that angle. It will likely be useful to discuss this issue with the class in light of the choices McCrow made, considering particularly the choices she didn’t make. The profile isn’t just a story about selling newspapers or even selling a newspaper created with the assistance of the community of homeless people. Rather, its focus is Dymar, the circumstances that led to his being homeless, his dreams, and his more immediate
concerns. We can easily imagine a dreadful, preachy essay about Dymar, one that sought to make us feel guilty because we have a place to live or one that led us to see him as a statistic. Instead, we get some insights into what life has been like and currently is for him and why he, like all of us, is a product of larger social forces. Importantly, McCrow has also found ways to grant Dymar agency and to portray him as a real person rather than a flat character or character type. Her angle was to begin the essay with Dymar selling papers in a specific location—one familiar to Portlanders and one known to many tourists—and to return to that context, both the physical location and the act of selling newspapers there, throughout the profile.

Teaching the essays

In this section, we offer some suggestions for using the essays in this chapter and provide answers to the discussion questions.

“Same-sex Marriage,” Wikipedia (pp. 198–99). This piece is annotated to show the Characteristic Features of the genre. Why Wikipedia? First, Wikipedia is an example of an encyclopedia, and readers expect encyclopedias to be sources of information, that is, reports about what is known about a topic, including where the controversies are to be found. Second, in addition to being the online starting point for most student research (and, truth be told, for most academics when we are in search of information at a general level), it provides interesting examples of report writing on a controversial topic. Importantly, as we note in the chapter, “Wikipedia explicitly warns users about problematic aspects of an entry, noting when the neutrality of an article has been disputed and pointing out sections that need ‘additional citations for verification.’” Thus it is clear when editors at Wikipedia believe that an entry that should be a report has failed to achieve that goal. You can use this warning as a discussion starter on the role of Wikipedia in academic research as well as the importance of conveying trustworthy, factual evidence in an objective manner. You could likewise ask students to seek out Wikipedia entries that are labeled as problematic and then in pairs discuss the sources of the problems.

“Hard Work, High Energy Means a Ticket Home,” by Kaisa McCrow (pp. 201–4). This essay, a profile, is annotated to show the features characteristic of that genre.

“Selling the Farm,” by Barry Estabrook (pp. 213–18). You might use this essay to discuss both the importance of facts presented in a neutral way and the connection between that presentation and the audience. Estabrook wrote this profile for Gourmet magazine, but it’s fairly easy to identify ways it could be tweaked as a factual report for a different audience and type of publication. Here are suggested answers to the study questions:

1. Answers will vary. Details likely to be mentioned include the opening sentence, noting that for the first time in 144 years no one at the farm got
up before dawn to milk the cows; the description of the setting and ambience of the auction in ¶6; Ken Borland’s concern in ¶6 that “I didn’t spend my whole life breeding up a good herd to see them beefed” (point out the way “beefed” is defined here); his speech about his cows and joke about anvils in ¶11–13; Nathan and Carol Borland’s statements in ¶9–10 about how they see no future in dairy farming; and Ken’s final milking of the cows and conversation with his neighbor in ¶15. The key to Estabrook’s success, of course, is focusing on a single case—the Borlands—and, more particularly, a specific event—the auction—related to that case.

2. Details that might especially appeal to Gourmet readers include Carol Borland’s statement “You will be witnessing what is going to be the fate of all heritage farms” in ¶5; the information about the quality awards and free-range pasturing of the Borlands’ cows in ¶6; and the information about maple sugaring in the ancestral nineteenth-century sugarhouse in ¶14. The general tone of nostalgia for real farms, real farmers, and traditional ways of doing things—a common trope of American literature since at least the nineteenth century—would likewise appeal to these readers.

3. In ¶3, Estabrook states, “For several months I’d been reading headlines and following the statistics behind the current nationwide dairy crisis” and he then provides a number of these statistics. In the account of the auction itself, he provides numerous descriptive details and quotations to convince readers that he is giving an accurate, informed account. The quotations, in particular, are key in establishing Estabrook’s ethos. We are convinced he was there and saw, heard, and felt the very things he is writing about.

4. For an objective report for a newspaper, Estabrook probably would have begun by simply stating that the auction took place and what the overall results were, then given details about what various items sold for and perhaps who bought them. He might have mentioned the Borlands’ reasons for selling and said that the auction was part of a trend of small Vermont dairy farmers getting out of the business, but he wouldn’t have included as much descriptive detail about the event, the farm, and the Borlands or as many quotations. In other words, the article would likely have been far less human than it is.

“The Future of Food Production,” by Sam Forman (pp. 219–28). This essay was written for a class assignment, and while ultimately argumentative in nature, Forman’s essay reports a great deal of information in just the way that students and authors in many disciplines and contexts are expected to do. Comparing it with Estabrook’s essay will highlight the different rhetorical situations the authors operated in.

You can orchestrate a fruitful class discussion by asking students to summarize the essays and articulate the similarities and differences in how each addresses particular aspects of the rhetorical situation. Although it is clear from the beginning of the text that Forman has misgivings about the industrial food system and
the status quo, he states his position explicitly only in the closing paragraphs of the essay, beginning in the last paragraph on p. 225 (“It is much harder to offer a solution”), and the solutions he proposes are, in fact, quite different from those many readers will likely have expected him to offer. (We’d at first anticipated an impassioned—if naïve—plea for the end of the industrial food system; what Forman produces is a more sophisticated analysis of the complexity of the relevant issues.) It is worth discussing this aspect of the essay explicitly because Forman has done what good report writing generally does. Even ultimately when taking a stance or offering a solution to a complex problem, authors of this genre present information in such a way that readers are not able to determine with certainty what stance is being taken; in other words, rather than opening with a stance to be explicitly supported, they present information in a way that tries to appear fair to a range of perspectives. Here are suggested answers to the study questions:

1. Forman states part of his position directly at the end of ¶4, where he writes, “The American food system needs significant modification” and that “[t]he most important change that could be made is a return to methods of food production that resemble nature’s traditional processes.” He fleshes out this position in his last three paragraphs, where he states, “[t]he solution is integration” of different kinds of agricultural production within individual farms (¶11), that “there needs to be a concerted effort by the government to refocus subsidies along with greater awareness on the part of consumers” of the benefits of local, chemical-free food (¶12), and that “[o]ur food system must achieve sustainability” and “[o]ur food must be produced in a manner that respects the plants and animals that we consume, and the system must reward the farmer as well” (¶13).

2. For an audience of farmers, Forman would probably devote less of his report to explaining the workings of large industrial monoculture and smaller polyculture farming, which farmers already understand, and more of it to explaining how moving toward the latter would benefit farmers themselves, as opposed to society in general—perhaps expanding on the ideas in ¶9 about how “CAFOs are as bad for the people who live around them as for the animals that live in them.” He also might not include the references in ¶12 to the local food movement at Grinnell College. Obviously, we want to know which specific group of farmers Forman is writing for: he’d need to present very different information and details if he were writing to famers of family-owned farms than he would to farmers who are part of the industrial food system, and writing to both these groups of farmers simultaneously would be particularly challenging.

3. Answers will vary. One major way that Forman conveys a confident tone is by his providing of so much evidence of his “reading and personal interactions and interviews” on the topic, his citing of “all kinds of opinions and arguments from proponents of both small-scale and large-scale agriculture” (¶4)—including academic experts and representatives of both
kinds of farmers. His use of quotations from actual interviews he conducted is especially effective.

4. He cites an extensive number of sources and carefully documents them. In addition, he respectfully acknowledges and addresses counterarguments to his own position (as in the last sentence of ¶1 and in ¶7 and ¶10).

Suggested assignments and evaluation criteria

You’ll find an assignment ready to photocopy and hand out, along with a rubric of criteria for evaluating a report, in the Worksheets and Handouts section of this Guide. If you decide to use the rubric, we suggest going over it with the students when you begin the assignment so they will be clear on exactly how you’ll be evaluating their writing. There are several ways you can use these criteria, but you should adapt them to your individual class goals.

Chapter 11: Writing a Review / “Two Thumbs Up!”

At its simplest, a review contains two parts: an evaluation or judgment of some kind and the criteria on which the evaluation is based. Students know this genre well in its more common manifestations—they read and write reviews on social media sites, and they share them with friends when they discuss films, products, and such. And they’re pretty good at issuing reviews of their own: “Great film!” “That place has awful pizza.” “Professor Smith’s class is hard.” What they need help with are the criteria—both identifying them and explaining them in an essay. This chapter describes the features readers expect in evaluative writing, offers three example essays, and provides a Roadmap that will lead students through the process of writing a review.

Introducing the genre

Students are experts at determining their own views on a product—whether that product is a movie, video game, pizza joint—or sports team. Students sometimes have difficulty, however, transitioning from the informal judgments they make in their daily lives to the kinds of reviews that they are likely to be asked to write as students. You can help them make this transition by showing them that even in the simplest and most opinionated of judgments there are certain rules of “fair play” that must be taken into consideration. You might begin by asking students to identify the best pizza place (or Thai food place, or any other popular cuisine) in town. Once they do so—and they are sure to disagree—informally take them through the characteristic features of reviews, such as criteria for the evaluation and attention to audience (in this case their peers).

Once you have done so, you can identify these characteristic features and then show students how they are at play in a particular review, using either an example from Everyone’s an Author or one of your own choosing.
Using the exercises

You’ll find several brief exercises throughout the chapter that give students an opportunity to stop and think about key concepts. Exercises are italicized and are marked by a red flourish (—). They can be used as brief classroom exercises or could be assigned for journal writing or other homework.

Introducing the genre features

Each of the characteristics features is explained in the book, starting with a bulleted list of all of them on p. 234. In discussing these features, you may find it useful to refer to the readings, especially the one on pp. 246–49, which is annotated to point out how each of the features is used in one text. We like to introduce the features in class, asking the class to determine a source to review (a current popular film often works well) and then working together to address the specifics of a particular hypothetical rhetorical situation. A review aimed at readers of The New Yorker would differ substantially from one aimed at readers of Entertainment Weekly or, for that matter, the readers of the student newspaper. Once the source and rhetorical situation have been identified and analyzed, then you can lead a discussion of each of the characteristic features of a review in the context of this particular subject and situation.

Relevant information about the subject. In determining what constitutes relevant information about the subject being reviewed, keep your students’ focus on the specifics of their hypothetical rhetorical situation. All writing is rhetorically situated, but this is especially true of reviews. You might take one potential subject, such as a particular video game, and establish a continuum of venues/situations in which it might be reviewed. In some situations, readers will expect and need a good deal of background information; in other situations (such as a review on a website for fans of a particular video game) authors can assume a good deal of knowledge on the part of readers. Some reviews (such as product reviews in Consumer Reports) emphasize the concise presentation of criteria and evaluation. Other reviews, such as book reviews that appear in magazines such as the New Yorker, privilege lengthy analysis and critique. It can be helpful to remind students that reviews can serve multiple functions for different readers. Imagine two readers reading reviews of a well-known politician’s recent memoir. One reader might read the review in order to decide whether to purchase and read this memoir. Another might read the review to gain a general knowledge of the content so that he or she could participate in a discussion of the book at a party.

Particularly if you want to use reviews as a means of introducing students to the rhetorically situated nature of all discourse, you may want to put together a case study of multiple reviews of a single text, cultural production, or product. Try to get the fullest and most diverse range of venues and reviews, from very brief thumbs up/thumbs down reviews to much more extensive analyses and from print to online, including social media. This can be a real eye-opener for students.
Criteria for the evaluation. Students easily understand the need for explicit and fair criteria for evaluation when they are reviewing popular subjects in popular contexts. But what is clear in reviewing a movie such as World War Z (where obvious criteria would include strength of plot, quality of acting, music, cinematography, and special effects, for example) is not so obvious when reviewing a book for an ethnic studies or political science class. The sample student book review, Christine Bowman’s review “Undocumented Lives: Migrant Latinos in America” (pp. 260–62) can be especially helpful in this regard. You might ask students to read Bowman’s review and then work together to identify the criteria she uses. You could begin by noting her emphasis on complexity in the first paragraph and asking students to read through the review looking for evidence the author provides that these “undocumented lives” are indeed complex. Other criteria to discuss would include the effectiveness of organization (see the first full paragraph on p. 261) or the effectiveness of telling the “other side of the story.” To give students a sense of what constitutes a strong review in other disciplines, you might ask colleagues in other departments for examples of successful student reviews written for their classes or for book review assignments that they have given. An review from philosophy, for example, would no doubt highlight meticulous logical progression as a key criterion, while a review for a music class performance might emphasize the quality of the works chosen for performance and the quality of the performers.

A well-supported evaluation. The question of what constitutes a well-supported evaluation is rhetorically situated. Take a look again at the RottenTomatoes.com and Roger Ebert evaluations of the movie Avatar. Think about how differently Consumer Reports and an environmentally oriented magazine might evaluate a new entry into the electric car market. Think as well about the varying roles that summary and evaluation can play in various academic contexts. In our experience, for instance, some assignments that technically fall under the category of book review are as much about summarizing a book as evaluating it. The opposite can be the case, depending upon both the discipline and the assignment. Given this variability, it will be especially important for you as instructor to be clear about the role of summary and evaluation in any review that you assign.

Attention to the audience’s needs and expectations. Both Ch. 11 in Everyone’s an Author and this chapter in the Guide have emphasized the rhetorical situatedness of all reviews, including academic reviews of all sorts. To help make this situatedness clear to students, you might pull up the website of the American Psychological Association. This association is, as its website announces, “is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA is the world’s largest association of psychologists, with more than 134,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students as its members.” Click on the hot link for “journals,” and you and your students will be astonished at the variety of journals available, from journals intended for every member of the APA to those targeting quite specialized audiences. You might then bring in two of these journals and examine them for what they tell you about the audiences they are
addressing and/or appealing to: look with students at the information provided in the front of the journal—and look for any advertisements for the journal: such advertisements usually will tell a lot about the audience the journal is targeting.

Or you might bring in a journal like *College English* and ask students to read the editorial policy printed on the page before the Table of Contents. You’ll see that this journal addresses most directly the College Section of the National Council of Teachers of English, so this is the primary audience for the journal. You can ask students to speculate about who these members are and what they value: they will probably identify teacher of English at the high school and college level. You can also point to the values the editorial policy focuses on, such as “the best emerging research and scholarship from teacher/scholars working within all institutional types” and note that they say they want to appeal “to a broad, informed readership within English studies.” Finally, you might ask students to bring in a journal from a field they are thinking of majoring in and let them give very brief presentations (two or three minutes at most) on what they can determine about the audience for these particular journals.

**Awareness of the ethics of reviewing.** The impact of reviews can be substantial—a negative review by an important critic can close down a Broadway show or take a movie out of theatres and into DVD distribution—or it can be limited. One of the authors of this book, in frustration at her experiences with mops for cleaning floors, went to Amazon.com and entered this phrase into its search engine: “a really good mop.” She was completely satisfied with the results and purchased the most recommended mop. Let’s imagine that this same author is trying to decide whether to purchase and read *Dear Life*, the latest collection of stories by Alice Munro, the noted Canadian short story writer. She might go to Amazon.com to help her make up her mind, but she would certainly read a variety of reviews in such journals as the *Atlantic*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and the *New Yorker*.

Reviewers—whether ordinary people deciding whether they like a product or critics deciding whether they like a cultural production—are in the business of making judgments. Making judgments is always an ethical activity, and so those writing reviews need to keep this at the forefront of their consciousness.

**Teaching the essays**

Looking closely at the example essays can help students see the **Characteristic Features** in action, understand how these features function in writing that writing reviews, and think about how they could use them in their own writing.

“Mind Matters,” by Steven Johnson (pp. 246–49). This essay is annotated so that students can clearly identify the genre features and see how they function in the essay. As they’ll see, Johnson works hard to establish his ethos and logos as a writer and reviewer in the first paragraph of the review. He balances summary (and knowledge of the context) of the book with analysis and evaluation. In ¶4, he clearly states his position on this publication.
After the Roadmap section of this chapter, there are two reviews—one by a professional critic (David Denby of the New Yorker) and one by a student (Christine Bowman) that are each followed by questions that prompt students to think about the text. These questions draw students’ attention to the ways each author uses genre features and appeals to their readers in writing their reviews and thus can help structure class discussion of the essays and the genre.

“Out of the West: Clint Eastwood’s Shifting Landscape,” by David Denby (pp. 256–59). Denby’s evaluation uses examples from several films and roles to support his claim about the evolution of Eastwood’s career. Here are suggested answers to the study questions:

1. Clint Eastwood, who as a young man seemed just a good-looking good-time guy, has over the last forty years gone from one triumph to another. From starring in TV’s Rawhide, he has moved on to become an Oscar-winning actor/director/producer and an iconic cultural hero and political figure. In his early films like the Dirty Harry series, Eastwood became a predictable symbol of angry, self-righteous vigilante justice. But then he broadened his scope to encompass humor, literary adaptation, and a generally more diverse, ambivalent, and thoughtful take on life, as evidenced by films like Unforgiven and Invictus.

2. Denby provides a great many details about Eastwood’s career, including individual films, and his comparison of different biographies of Eastwood suggested that he has a broad overall framework for viewing Eastwood’s career. His credibility is enhanced by his admission at the end of ¶3 that he was skeptical of Eastwood forty years ago but that time has proved him wrong.

3. Denby provides a lot of details in some places—such as the opening description of the scene from Unforgiven—while only briefly summarizing the aspects and high points of Eastwood’s career in others, such as in ¶3.

4. The description provides an extended example of the main point Denby makes in his essay, about how Eastwood’s later films move away from his earlier celebration of decisive, conviction-driven violence by loners to encompass doubt, ambiguity, and a broader social scope.

“Undocumented Lives: Migrant Latinos in America,” by Christine Bowman (pp. 260–62). Bowman’s review uses examples to give her audience a sense of the book’s content and examines how the choices made the book’s editor, Larry Siems, make his argument. Here are suggested answers to the study questions.

1. The main way that Bowman establishes her authority and credibility is by providing ample evidence that she has read the book closely and identified patterns in the letters. In ¶2, for example, she says that “the letters
from illiterate Latinos [written for them by others] . . . have a refreshingly emotional style that sounds like conversation,” and in ¶4, she characterizes the nature of the letters in each section of the book. She also provides evidence in ¶6–7 that she is aware of various aspects of the political controversy over undocumented Latino immigrants. Answers will vary as to the effect of her use of I (in the second sentence of the essay).

2. Bowman says the book “provide[s] powerful insights” into the lives of its subjects and those they leave behind (¶1) and that its editor “has chosen compelling letters and organized them to tell an important story” (¶4). As evidence, she provides both her analysis of patterns within the letters and quotations, paraphrases and summaries of individual letters.

3. As she says at the end of her introductory paragraph, Bowman seems to feel that a collection of letters like this one should give readers insights into the lives of its subjects. More specifically, though, she seems to consider it important that the book “takes readers behind scary anti-immigrant headlines” (¶4), “tell[s] a story different from those . . . told from the perspective of American taxpayers” (¶5), and “corrects many popular misconceptions” (¶6).

4. For an anti-immigrant audience, Bowman would have to avoid language like that in ¶7, where she says undocumented immigrants are “deeply misunderstood and shamelessly abused.” She would have to give greater and more sympathetic acknowledgment to the economic or cultural fears that motivate anti-immigrant feelings.

Suggested assignments and evaluation criteria

You’ll find an assignment ready to photocopy and hand out, along with a rubric of criteria for evaluating a review, in the Worksheets and Handouts section of this Guide. If you decide to use the rubric, we suggest going over it with the students when you begin the assignment so they will be clear on exactly how you’ll be evaluating their writing. There are several ways you can use these criteria, but you should adapt them to your individual class goals.

Chapter 12: Choosing Genres

While Everyone’s an Author teaches five genres that students are often assigned to write in composition classes, often they encounter assignments that do not specify a particular genre. This chapter offers some guidance to help them choose a genre when they need or get to.

We like to start by asking students to read the first page of the chapter, sometimes aloud, and then setting them loose coming up with and discussing genres, many of which they will know very, very well. You might ask them to call out their very favorite genres—of film or music—or almost anything else. Then spend
a little time talking about what they know about those genres—and how that affects the way they understand and evaluate them. Something that’s called a report, for example, sets up expectations that it will be in some sense factual; an argument, on the other hand, leads us to expect something that’s perhaps debatable.

We always ask our students what genres they are coming across in their other classes. If students report finding the same genres in different courses, it’s always interesting to see how they compare. How, for example, does a psychology analysis differ from a business analysis? We recommend using the assignment on p. 268 with your students, asking them to bring in assignments from other classes and examining them for ways in which they specify or invoke one or more genres. Such practice can help students learn to read their assignments more analytically and critically.

We also want our students to experience genres as living, flexible entities that get work done in the world, rather than as static templates. It’s also instructive (and fun) to alert students to the fact that genres evolve and change. Ask them, for example, what they know about how Facebook has evolved over the last few years. What has provoked those changes? Can they predict or imagine future changes?

In this regard, you might note some of the exciting scholarly work being done on genre today. We mention Carolyn Miller on p. 263: her essay “Genre as Social Action” is a touchstone for the renaissance of genre studies within composition and rhetoric. In addition, you might want to consult the work being done by Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, including their *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*, and by Amy Devitt, especially her book *Writing Genres*. The research of these scholars has greatly enhanced our understanding of genre and the way we ask students to think about, write about, and engage with genre. If you yourself are not familiar with this work, we recommend that you take a look.

**Useful Readings**


Wardle, Elizabeth. “‘Mutt Genres’ and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?” *College Composition and Communication* 60 (2009): 765–89. Print.
Part III: The Role of Argument

This section of the book can be used as the core of a course in argumentation or as a reference for details about analyzing and supporting an argument.

If you’re teaching a course in argumentation, you could pair this section with Chapters 1 and 2 on thinking rhetorically and rhetorical situations, Chapter 28 on academic writing, Chapter 7 on arguing a position, and perhaps some of the research chapters. You might start by assigning the introduction (pp. 269–74), which aims to make students aware that we are surrounded by argument—and prompts them to think about the kinds of arguments they encounter in their daily lives. In addition, it challenges them to think about argument in new ways—to consist of more than just words; to have many purposes, not just persuasion; and to vary across cultures and communities. (See a course plan on p. 00 for using Everyone’s an Author in a course focusing on argument.)

These chapters can also work as a reference, somewhere students can turn to from other chapters when they need help crafting an argument. Chapter 13 includes detailed guidance to help students analyze an argument, those they read and also those they themselves write. You might refer students to this chapter from any of the genre chapters for help making the three basic appeals, being on the lookout for common fallacies, and so on. Chapter 14 introduces the most common strategies for providing evidence for an argument: analogy, classification, comparison, and so on. It’s a chapter you can refer students to if they’re having trouble developing and/or organizing their writing.

Chapter 13: Analyzing Arguments / Those You Read, and Those You Write

Whatever the shape of your own writing course, it’s likely that you will want your students to be familiar with the material in this chapter, since argument features prominently in many college assignments, even informal ones. The chapter teaches students how to analyze an argument, making them aware of the elements of an
argument and how they work. As such, the chapter will help students consider arguments they read or otherwise encounter with a critical eye. At the same time, it will help them closely examine those arguments they make themselves; make sure your students are aware of the advice labeled “as an author,” which will help them with the arguments they write.

You might open discussion of the chapter, then, by asking students to list arguments they have run into in the last day or so—in other classes, in their homework, at their jobs or in extracurricular activities, or with friends and family. The purpose of this discussion is to broaden students’ sense of argument from the narrow definition that signals a fight or antagonism and to get them thinking about the degree to which argument plays a part in their everyday thinking as well as their college work.

The first section of the chapter asks students to think about where an argument is coming from, and what that tells us about its stance. This simple question can lead to complex answers demanding quite a bit of analysis, but you’ll find a couple of easy-to-understand examples on pp. 277–79. You might want to bring in one or two other short arguments—perhaps an advertisement or a very short editorial from the student newspaper—and ask students to work in small groups to analyze them. The goal is to help students read between the lines of an argument, looking for clues to the writer’s stance, which may be only implicit, or even purposely left unstated.

Stasis theory, used from the time of the ancients to the present day in order to find the crux of any issue, is introduced to students on pp. 279–80. We have used Hurricane Katrina as an example to work through the stasis questions; you might take a particularly hot topic on campus and ask students to do the same thing. As they work through the questions, they should see that the stasis questions are generative—they provide differing perspectives on an issue or topic and thus can help students both unpack the issue and find important things to say about it.

The discussion of claims on pp. 281–84 gives you a chance to work with students on how to identify and analyze claims made by others—and by extension how they can make good claims of their own. Because powerful claims are often left unstated, especially in visual arguments, it’s important to take some time to help students do the work of inference necessary to getting at the claim. Ask students to bring in a visual argument—a poster, advertisement, cartoon, etc.—and then have them get together with other students in small group to analyze them. Or you could bring in five visual arguments that offer subtle or implicit claims and that therefore call for special analysis and then divide the class into five groups to work through them, reporting on their findings to the rest of the class.

Emotional, ethical, and logical appeals. Students are usually fairly quick to pick up on emotional appeals (pp. 284–85), though they may have been taught to ignore or denigrate them. You might want to point out that current research indicates that most people make decisions based more on emotion than anything else and that emotional reasoning seems to play a very important part in cognition. The challenge, then, is to determine when emotional appeals are being used legitimately and thus should carry the day and when they are used in a damaging or
Part III: The Role of Argument

Manipulative way only. Students should realize, too, that a manipulative emotional appeal may be extremely effective and thus talk about ways that they can resist—or at least recognize—such appeals.

Ethical appeals (pp. 285–89) may be the most unfamiliar to your students. If so, you might begin by asking them to think about the ethos of this textbook. Have them read the Preface to Everyone’s an Author and then try to describe the characteristics they would attribute to the authors. What kind of ethos does the preface project—and what words or statements make them think so?

Logical appeals (pp. 289–95) will be more familiar, and students will likely give more credence to them than other kinds of appeals since U.S. society tends to privilege logic. It’s important, then, to ask students to “get to the bottom” of any logical appeals by asking where they come from and if those sources are credible and reliable. As Mark Twain (among others) famously noted, there are three kinds of lies: “lies, damned lies, and statistics.” Student readers need to remember Twain’s cautionary warning and make sure that any use of numerical evidence is sound. As an exercise, you might bring in several issues of USA Today and have students look at the bottom left of the front page where they usually run a small USA snapshot/graph that gives statistics on various issues. Ask students to work in small groups to do a little research checking out the reliability of the sources for these graphs.

Fallacies of reasoning are covered on pp. 295–97. Our students usually have great fun identifying fallacies in other people’s writing, so you might ask them to work together to uncover fallacies in, say, a New York Times editorial: even professional writers, they will see, are not above using them!

It’s also important to focus attention on the importance of providing alternative perspectives in any argument. Students need to remember to ask whether writers whose work they are reading have acknowledged and accounted for such alternatives or whether they are provided only a one-sided view. Looking carefully at the cigarette advertisement from 1946 on p. 298 will give them a very good idea of how such one-sided arguments can misrepresent in very serious ways. Ask them to bring in a contemporary advertisement that they think is similarly one-sided and use it for a class analysis.

The chapter ends with ways of organizing an argument, introducing students to two simple organizational structures. You can help students assimilate these structures by asking them to look at Katherine Spriggs’ argument “On Buying Local” (pp. 92–100) and analyze its organization. They might work in teams to outline the essay and then compare outlines. If they come up with differing organizational patterns, you can help them understand why those differences have occurred: are they reading or interpreting the essay in different ways? Finally, assign students sections of Spriggs’ argument and ask students to look for stylistic elements they find effective—the use of individual words, images and figurative language, sentence structure, and so on. Do they see any strategies she has used that they’d like to try out in their own writing?

Pause to Reflect. Have students look through something they’ve written to see how—or whether—they’ve made any ethical, logical, or emotional appeals.
Whatever they discover, have them then think about how doing so might help their readers accept their argument.

Chapter 14: Strategies for Arguing / Comparisons, Examples, Humor, and More

This chapter will help students with much of the writing they do in college because it introduces them to strategies that all authors use: analogy, classification, comparison/contrast, definition, description, example, humor, narration, problem/solution, and reiteration. Some composition teachers today are wary of such patterns, especially when they are used formulaically, as forms or kinds of writing. Our book presents them not as formulas but as strategies that writers can call on for all kinds of writing, and that can be especially helpful for making sound arguments.

Note that we have explicitly linked each of these strategies to those genres of writing in which they’re likely to be used. For example, on p. 311 we show how a student writing an analysis or a report might have good reason to provide definitions. And on p. 308 the discussion of comparison and contrast notes how these are strategies often used in reviews and reports. It’s important, we think, for students to know that these strategies are multi-purpose, and that they work across all the genres they’ll typically write.

To introduce students to the usefulness of these strategies, ask them to look over an assignment they have recently completed and to note which of the strategies they have used and to assess their effectiveness. If they find they have not used any of them, ask students to consider which ones might help them make their argument. If they’re making an argument that’s somewhat abstract, would an analogy help readers understand their point? If they’re analyzing a text, would it help to include some examples from that text? If they’ve written a profile of a place, do they need to describe that place in more detail?

In addition, the strategies taught in this chapter serve as useful tools for generating ideas. Since students often have difficulty developing their points, you could show them how these strategies can help them elaborate on what they’re trying to say. Similarly, they work well as revision strategies, to amplify what they have written. For these reasons, this chapter may be particularly helpful to students during peer review sessions, as they suggest ways to improve each other’s drafts.

You should also point out to students that these strategies can play out visually as well as verbally. Comparisons, for example, can be made with words alone—and sometimes they can be made visually, with photographs or some kind of graph. You can point to examples in the chapter—see the one from Dave Barry on p. 309 comparing in two paragraphs the way men and women look at themselves; then see the bar graph on p. 311 comparing the uneven fortunes of fourteen American cities. Ask students to imagine how much more difficult it would be to see the comparison of the fourteen cities in paragraph form. It might be fun to ask them to imagine how Dave Barry might have made his comparison more
visual with photographs! The point we like to make is that writers need to consider whether words, images, or both will work better to say what they want to say.

**Pause to Reflect.** Have students look over the examples in this chapter that are written in all words and to choose one or two and think about whether the same argument could be made visually—in a chart, with a photo and caption, and so on. If that doesn't seem possible, how might they illustrate the example? Then have them do the same with something they themselves have written.
STUDENTS DO INFORMAL RESEARCH EVERY DAY in order to make decisions and solve problems, but many first-year writers have little or no experience in conducting formal academic research. Their previous experience may have involved topics like gun control or underage drinking—issues that are perpetually or currently under public discussion and on which they can easily find information. They may select a couple of sources that support their beliefs and then one that takes the opposite position in order to acknowledge the counterargument. Then many will engage in what Rebecca Moore Howard has called “patchwriting”—altering a few words or grammatical structures and substituting synonyms in selections they’ve cut and pasted from sources.

We need to help students move beyond these initial encounters and into more meaningful relationships with research practices. Why? Because learning to discover, evaluate, and select appropriate material and then analyze, summarize, and paraphrase what others have said in order to incorporate it into an original argument will not only benefit them in all of their classes, but result in their becoming better at thinking, better at recognizing how to construct arguments ethically, and better able to recognize when rhetoric is being used to manipulate them.

Everyone’s an Author divides the process of undertaking academic research into nine steps, each presented in its own chapter, and concludes with chapters on both MLA and APA styles. Use this section in its entirety for a long-term project, or incrementally for smaller projects involving research.

Chapter 15: Starting Your Research / Joining the Conversation

Since “getting started” is the part of research projects that students themselves claim to have the most difficulty with, we begin with guidelines on discovering an engaging topic and narrowing it to a manageable focus and then walk students through the steps of developing a reasonable question, stating a working thesis, and setting up a schedule. Developing a research plan is an oft-neglected but essential step in controlling the process.
If you’re planning to assign a research-based paper as one of several essays, you might want to introduce the idea early on with a general discussion of what academic research means and why we do it. Our students need to understand that we ask them to do research in order to develop critical thinking skills, improve their abilities to discover ideas and investigate the ideas of others, and master the art of summarizing those ideas and integrating them into their original work to support their own thinking and ideas. Conducting research and writing it up will also help them to be critical of texts—verbal or visual—that play on their emotions or attempt to use fallacious reasoning. They will, in fact, become more critical of language and the expression of ideas in everyday life as well.

Parts of the chapter could be used in isolation as elements in other types of assignments; for example pp. 354–61 would work for an assignment on gathering primary data, while the early part of the chapter could be used as an exercise in identifying and locating particular kinds of sources.

**Helping students choose a topic.** The major difficulty will be moving students toward topics that they must investigate in order to understand. Have students write out a list of potentially interesting topics and then discuss them in class. The limitations of overly broad topics or ones that generate too much emotion frequently pop up in these initial discussions. Working as a group to identify limitations will help students clarify their own and each others’ ideas. Having classmates respond with questions can illuminate the murkiness of initially vague ideas.

Because research is, at its most basic, discovering information, students already have experience doing research in many small ways. Build on those experiences with activities that highlight the process involved and help them make that transfer. Encouraging students to make connections between what they are doing in our writing classes and what they are learning in other classes can also provide interesting sources for topics.

**Establishing a schedule.** Establishing firm timelines and goals to be met will help both you and the students manage the process of information gathering, analysis, interpretation and presentation. We provide a research schedule on p. 336 of this chapter to help students see the process in a progression of steps. Here is a version with the relevant chapters indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Everyone’s an Author chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choose a topic.</td>
<td>Ch. 15, STARTING YOUR RESEARCH (pp. 330–33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze your rhetorical situation.</td>
<td>Ch. 2, RHETORICAL SITUATIONS; Ch. 15 STARTING YOUR RESEARCH (pp. 331–32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do some preliminary research.</td>
<td>Ch. 15, STARTING YOUR RESEARCH (pp. 333–35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow your topic and decide on a research question.</td>
<td>Ch. 15, STARTING YOUR RESEARCH (pp. 333–35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot out a working thesis.</td>
<td>Ch. 15, STARTING YOUR RESEARCH (p. 335)</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Everyone’s an Author chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do library and web research.</td>
<td>Ch. 16, FINDING SOURCES, CONSIDERING RESEARCH METHODS (pp. 337–53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start a working bibliography.</td>
<td>Ch. 17, KEEPING TRACK; Ch. 18, EVALUATING SOURCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn in your research proposal and annotated bibliography.</td>
<td>Ch. 19, WRITING A PROJECT PROPOSAL; Ch. 20, ANNOTATING A BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan and schedule any field research.</td>
<td>Ch. 16, FINDING SOURCES, CONSIDERING RESEARCH METHODS (pp. 354–61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do any field research</td>
<td>Ch. 16, FINDING SOURCES, CONSIDERING RESEARCH METHODS (pp. 354–61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft a thesis statement</td>
<td>Ch. 3, WRITING PROCESSES (pp. 26–27); Ch. 15, STARTING YOUR RESEARCH (p. 335)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write out a draft.</td>
<td>Ch. 3, WRITING PROCESSES; Ch. 21, SYNTHESIZING IDEAS; Ch. 22, QUOTING, PARAPHRASING, SUMMARIZING; Ch. 28, MEETING THE DEMANDS OF ACADEMIC WRITING; Ch. 29, HOW TO WRITE GOOD SENTENCES; Ch. 30, DESIGNING WHAT YOU WRITE; Ch. 33, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE WRITING CENTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get response.</td>
<td>Ch. 7, ARGUING A POSITION (pp. 87–88); Ch. 8, WRITING A NARRATIVE (pp. 126–27); Ch. 9, WRITING ANALYTICALLY (pp. 168–69); Ch. 10, REPORTING INFORMATION (pp. 210–12); Ch. 11, WRITING A REVIEW (pp. 254–55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do additional research if you need to.</td>
<td>Ch. 16, FINDING SOURCES, CONSIDERING RESEARCH METHODS (pp. 354–61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise.</td>
<td>Ch. 29, HOW TO WRITE GOOD SENTENCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare your list of works cited.</td>
<td>Ch. 24, MLA STYLE; Ch. 25, APA STYLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit.</td>
<td>Ch. 29, HOW TO WRITE GOOD SENTENCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write your final draft.</td>
<td>Ch. 31, CHECKING FOR COMMON MISTAKES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proofread.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn in the final draft.</td>
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Chapter 16: Finding Sources, Considering Research Methods

Research is question-driven. The researcher wants to know why or how or what if and begins the search for answers by figuring out the best way to look for the information that will help get to those answers. We begin with what our students
know about research—or think they do: incorporating external source material. Most are familiar with the notion that research papers use source material; few understand the distinctions to be made between types of sources: primary or secondary? scholarly or popular? older/historical or current? Because our students have had some difficulty with both finding and discerning acceptable academic sources and recognizing the difference between primary and secondary sources, we begin this chapter with the process of locating and selecting which sources will best serve the writer’s needs and where best to locate them.

**Identifying the most helpful sources.** For a class in which the research-based essay is one of several, limiting the scope of the projects will help you—and your students—manage the time needed to complete the projects. For a class where you are focusing on research and argumentation, you have more time to spend exploring research options, so you might consider activities involving sequential steps over a series of classes: begin by presenting the class with a question or a problem, perhaps something campus-based:

> Smoking isn’t allowed indoors, but smokers tend to congregate around the doorways creating unpleasant—and unhealthy—environments for those who must walk past them. How can we solve this?

This is an issue that has been quite the focus of student discussion and debate on one of our campuses, but your students should identify the hot topics for your campus. And then work along with them, modeling the research process. Begin by identifying, together, the kinds of information needed:

- **From primary sources** like the Public Safety office, students could determine what campus rules and regulations are in place regarding this issue, whether they are being violated, and if so how frequently, and what penalties are assessed for violation
- **From concerned persons or stakeholders,** they could obtain firsthand information by interviewing smokers, nonsmokers, campus officials
- **From the library** they could find academic journals in medicine or psychology for articles discussing addiction or the effects of second-hand smoke
- **From the internet,** they could obtain data on peer institutions and how they handled this issue

Some may need help in quick assessment, so these questions may help initially:

- **Given your topic, are there limitations to look for immediately?** Should you only be looking at sources from a given time period? Or sources in particular formats? Something else?
- **Are popular sources useful?** They can help initially, and can sometimes steer you toward other questions to consider, but for the most part the better choice is to focus on peer-reviewed materials.
- **Do you need help identifying primary sources for your topic?**
Visit the library and go to the internet. In this chapter we discuss the mechanics of actually doing a variety of searches both in the library and on the internet. Students should also be expected to become familiar with the campus library and to contact and make use of the skills of research librarians. This chapter also provides extensive exploration materials for doing fieldwork, interviewing, and creating surveys and questionnaires—all methods of conducting primary research, which is something most of them have little experience with. Before completing your syllabus, check your campus library site for research support materials; most will be happy to work with you on setting up some sort of introduction to the library—guided tours, scavenger hunts, workshops on how to use the databases and conduct searches. Many libraries offer discipline-specific research support, and librarians frequently will offer a class in how to search and tailoring it to your students’ topics.

Meet the librarians. Take the class to the library—or have the library come to you. Students aren’t aware of the many benefits a research librarian can offer: librarians know how to use the most recent search techniques and data-bases owned by your library; they are also frequently under-utilized (because students tend to bypass the physical space and head toward the internet), and so many look forward to working with students. Establishing a relationship with them early on can benefit your students, and then assigning the sections on types of searches (pp. 337–54) will resonate more strongly with the students.

Consider introducing primary research. If you have time in the schedule to do so, introducing students to primary research can enliven the process of data gathering for them. Doing an observation, conducting an interview, or developing a survey can provide students with a useful skill set to be drawn on in other classes. Be sure to monitor carefully the selection and use of these techniques, but be open to the idea that primary research can generate excitement. If your students are investigating local issues or problems, on campus or in the immediate community, interviewing experts or observing critical actors involved in the area can provide a rich data source. Students working on larger issues can use primary research to provide an immediate connection that either supports or contends with regional or national claims.

Chapter 17: Keeping Track / Managing Information Overload

Our goal in this chapter is to help students figure out how best to make good choices about organizing the potential mountain of sources they can collect in the process of gathering information. We provide concise explanations of source labeling, tracking, and compiling as well as suggestions and guiding questions. Constantly reinforce the need to organize and stay on top of the information being gathered.

Use this short chapter to help students plan and practice good information management. Don’t merely ask them to read it; have them actually identify sources,
take notes, and begin a working bibliography, for which they’ll need to use the questions in the next chapter (pp. 369–71) to help determine the viability of their sources. You might try this initially as a class project for small groups. Using one topic, divide them into groups of three or four, provide teach group with a couple of sources (e.g., scholarly articles, popular magazines, newspapers, blog entries, op-ed pieces, book chapters), and have them critically read and take notes on the sources, and assess each as to its usefulness for developing an argument. Then meet as a class to share and discuss their assessments. This serves as an introduction to careful critical reading and note-taking and reinforces the need for legitimate sources. It also serves as an intro to the idea of building a working bibliography, which can be critical to managing information overload.

The working bibliography will be a new experience for many. You can help by emphasizing the importance of approaching this systematically and establishing some format standards for keeping track of information. We’ve had success combining this with the annotated bibliography, explaining to students—and reminding them periodically—that the sources they use in a working bibliography or the ones they annotate for an annotated bibliography are not necessarily all going to be used in their list of works cited. That list, we need to make clear, is only those works the students actually cite in the paper. Use the bulleted lists of required bibliographic information on pp. 365–66 as a guide.

Chapter 18: Evaluating Sources

Many first-year writers have trouble discerning between a strong, scholarly source, an academically acceptable source, and popular but un-vetted online sources. This chapter poses a series of questions collected under headings designed to enable just the sort of evaluation we need our students to engage in: Is the Source Worth Your Attention? and Reading Sources with a Critical Eye. You could provide a sample set of sources and ask students working in groups to assess them using the questions on pp. 369–71. Then discuss the findings and their decisions. This process is difficult for novice researchers; they’ll need practice, supervision, and support as they begin to develop the critical reading skills necessary to make good decisions about what sources to use and how to incorporate them. Explain also that these early steps—identifying and evaluating sources and creating a working bibliography—will make the final project much more manageable.

Be on the lookout for personal biases—students don’t necessarily recognize the distinction between objective information and personal beliefs or opinions. Explain the importance of establishing ethos through carefully selected sources—and be prepared for personal opinion blogs to be included. Some students haven’t learned how to discriminate among the plethora of internet offerings.

Also be on the lookout for the “I found it on the Internet, so it must be true” approach—and its parallel, “But it was in the library/on the library’s database.” The tendency to buy into whatever is in print or online and accord it the status of Truth can easily derail the research process for our students. Be aware, too, that students will often grab the first thing that pops up in their Google or Google
Scholar search, appropriate or not. One way to avoid this is to create a form using selected questions from pp. 369–71 and require them to respond in writing for a given number of sources.

Ascertaining validity is not the only difficulty for new researchers. We need to remember that our students have not had experience sifting through and evaluating the kinds of claims that we have. Help them to identify and use source material effectively by presenting them with biased and objective claims on the same issues. Ask them to distinguish between fact and opinion and then discuss the differences. We’ve used news stories on current issues from a variety of sources to illustrate how the language can be geared toward a particular audience, how to identify bias in such targeted claims, and then asked them to construct their own versions. This becomes an especially interesting exercise when done with websites. Because our students are so familiar and comfortable with the web, they tend to be quite accepting of what they find there. Asking them to assess the language and the visuals on some of the sites they select as useful for their research can help them identify subtle (and not so) biases and recognize credible sources.

Chapter 19: Writing a Project Proposal

Drafting a proposal to undertake the research is a critical step in many assignments, but it can also be used by itself to introduce students to another genre of writing, one that they will encounter as they progress through the university. Like the other genre chapters, this one identifies Characteristic Features and provides an example of a student-authored research proposal. For a course in which the research paper is one of several, you can still require a proposal, but you’ll want to make it brief and tightly focused. For a course with longer focus on research, the proposal can be a several page paper. Both formats can contain the same basic elements, but the difference will be in the amount of detail and development expected. Again, careful modeling and practice will help. See the Worksheets and Handouts section of this Guide for a sample proposal assignment.

Chapter 20: Annotating a Bibliography

Why do we ask students to create an annotated bibliography? Primarily because it’s an opportunity to practice in a small format most of the skills involved in becoming a competent academic writer and researcher: students need to discover and select sources; they must read each source critically enough to summarize it, analyze the piece to determine its purpose, scope, and limitations; and finally, evaluate its potential contribution to their project.

Show students how to annotate sources (we discourage over-highlighting in favor of actual notation on texts), but allow for flexibility: some students may be very comfortable with using Zotero, for example, while others may prefer note cards (really, some do).
This is another of those chapters that can be part of a larger research project or stand alone as a genre assignment. The Characteristic Features, concisely explained, are followed by a sample annotation from a student author, one that was used in a larger research project. Some students find it difficult to distinguish between the annotated bibliography and the list of works cited. Require an annotated bibliography part way through the research process to underscore the difference—not all the works in an annotated bibliography need to be used in the paper. Depending on how the research process goes, what information may be discovered later, a given source may no longer be helpful. Students need to understand that not using a source in the final paper isn't a negative or a problem. See the Worksheets and Handouts section of this Guide for a sample annotated bibliography assignment.

Chapter 21: Synthesizing Ideas / Moving from What Your Sources Say to What You Say

This chapter begins with a widely understood but definitely unexpected (at least in the context of academic research) example of synthesizing material from different sources: the musical mash-up. We chose this deliberately to reinforce the notion that conducting research—the practice of gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing information—isn't restricted to the classroom, but takes place everywhere. If everyone is indeed an author, everyone is also frequently a researcher. The questions we pose on pp. 382–84 will help students figure out how to move from just sprinkling in quotations as a way to spice up their papers to smoothly integrating source material as support for their original thinking. In our experience, this is one of the most difficult parts of the research process for novice writers.

Identifying and understanding relationships among ideas and among sources. Synthesis means both integrating an author's ideas with yours and integrating two or more author's ideas with each other. Inexperienced researchers and writers will often focus too much on one source (“But it says everything I wanted it to!”) or use multiple sources without understanding and explaining their connections. Finally, be sure to demonstrate and encourage practice in incorporating source material. You can’t emphasize enough that such material must be accompanied by a signal phrase:

Noted neuroscientist Gretchen Diefenbach’s work began by recognizing the decades of press articles and family interviews describing a situation where “human emotion undermines the foundation of scientific process leading to a rush to press without proper justification” (Diefenbach et al 68).

You will need to help them understand both when and how to incorporate the words of another, and you’ll need to provide models.
• One way to foster understanding is to have students engage in discussion with a text. Rather than highlighting passages they find interesting, have them use an index card or compose a response on their laptop to specific sentences or passages. Invite them to ask the text questions, or respond by identifying connections between ideas.

• Another would be to have several students act as recorders to a short lecture-discussion session. Then have the recorders share their recorded comments on the board or screen and invite the class to identify the connections or disconnects between responses. What relationships can be identified? What seems to have been most important and why?

• Then ask them to summarize the discussion based on blending the several recorded observations and their own experience as listeners. The skills involved are very sophisticated, if we are to get them right, so it’s worth spending some time on this.

Chapter 22: Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing

We believe that these three essential skills are among the most important for student researchers and writers to master. In this chapter, we provide guidance via explanations and precise examples of how and why to make the choice among these three options. Then we take that a step further by helping students see how to incorporate source material smoothly into their writing. We end the chapter with explanations and suggestions on how to incorporate visual and recorded sources. Demonstrating how to paraphrase and summarize is best accomplished by working with the same passage, so students can see the effect of and the differences between these choices. Paraphrasing is difficult for some because they might not have the vocabulary. As with so much of the research process, modeling can be enormously helpful. In addition to the examples in the chapter, you might want to ask students to bring in sources they are working with and workshop the processes of choosing and implementing incorporation of a quotation, a summary, and a paraphrase of one or more short passages.

When and how to quote. As an in-class exercise, provide students with several short passages on a single topic and ask them to identify short selections from each that would illustrate specific points. (You could post these points beforehand or have students work to develop them from the readings.) Review the selections as a group, looking for those that best support the claim being made, those that most effectively illustrate a specific point, and/or those that express the ideas so well that paraphrasing would not convey the exact same message. Reiterate the instructions on quoting: use quotations sparingly and only when the author’s own words are the only effective way to make his or her point.

When and how to paraphrase. It’s very tricky to paraphrase correctly; inexperienced writers tend to either use too much of the original (approximating plagiarism)
or to make a patchwork of it (also approaching plagiarism). Managing to convey the meaning of the original but do so in their own words is difficult for students. Provide students with multiple examples of both correctly and incorrectly paraphrased selections, being careful to go over why these are good examples and those are not. Modeling is really the best way to get writers to understand the distinction.

**When and how to summarize.** To teach students to summarize effectively, provide them with several passages that are short enough to be manageable, but long enough to provide sufficient text to work with. Have them work in small groups and highlight the thesis in each article, then rephrase it in their own words. Then have them highlight the main supporting ideas. Ask them to briefly review what they’ve selected, and then close the book/turn over the sheets of paper, minimize the window on the computer and open a new document in order to compose the summary—without consulting the original. Go over these summaries, sharing and discussing with the entire class, to compare them for most succinctly expressed main idea, or shortest and clearest statement, or most effective original words. At the end, as a class, try to compile one perfect summary from the many contributions.

**Chapter 23: Giving Credit, Avoiding Plagiarism**

This final chapter before the documentation chapters focuses on helping students understand what and why they must acknowledge and document sources of information beyond their own original thoughts and words. Contrary to popular opinion, little of what gets identified as plagiarism is actually an attempt to cheat. More often students don’t quite understand the distinctions involved. And the free-flowing information and sharing culture of the internet undergirds the belief that “if it’s on the web, it’s up for grabs, public information” available to any and all and unencumbered by the need to attribute authorship. In our writing centers, we see numerous examples of this as well as increasing numbers of multi-lingual students whose understanding of the conventions of our academic discourse vary. We believe in prevention rather than punishment, so here are some suggestions for avoiding the potential pitfalls:

- Create writing assignments that require multiple submissions in small increments: proposals, drafts, revisions of paragraphs, etc. (And avoid reusing older assignments; papers have a way of living forever on campus.)
- Set deadlines for each increment (this avoids the last minute topic change that frequently invites plagiarism.)
- Invite students to take a personal tack on your theme, with an explanation in writing of why they’ve made the connection.
- Hold one-on-one conferences to monitor students progress during the research and writing process.
- Explain the dangers of online term paper providers like EssayWriters.com
- Continually reinforce the importance of original work.

Note, too, the chapter includes an explanation of “Fair Use and the Internet,” a series of steps to take to avoid plagiarism.

Chapter 24: MLA Style / Chapter 25: APA Style

These chapters provide explicit guidance in using these two most commonly used formats for documenting sources, and the examples in each should help students see how to do so smoothly.
ONE OF THE REAL PLEASURES of teaching writing today is the opportunity to watch students experiment with style: to think not only about what they say, but how they say it. And they now have reason to think about more than just words; they have color, fonts, the ability to insert images with the click of a mouse, and all the other things that a good word-processing program allows. We think it’s becoming more and more important than ever to call students’ attention to the crucial role style plays in getting their messages across, which is why we’ve included a whole section on style in our book. Assigning students to read the introduction to the Style section will get them thinking about why style matters, and what it means to them as authors. As we say on p. 513, “messages that can get and hold our attention are the ones we are most likely to tune in to, remember, and act on.” Style is one way that good writers get and hold attention.

Style can be liberating for students because it allows for so much choice: seldom is there just one right way to say something. For us as teachers, this means being a coach or a guide or a respondent rather than a prescriber. That’s one reason we included the fascinating analogy about baseball and writing on pp. 513–14. It’s from a piece by rhetorician Brent Simoneaux that we found on the RhetHistoria blog analyzing the way a batter needs to be able to make split-second decisions based on deep knowledge of the game and its rhetorical situation. When the pitcher throws the ball, the coach can’t tell the batter what to do; he can only hope the batter will “do the right thing,” because what the right thing is can’t be specifically set out. The batter thus has a great many possible choices—but as Simoneaux says, “It doesn’t mean anything goes. Rather it’s an acknowledgment that the . . . terms of “rightness” are always shifting.” And so it is with writers: they don’t have unlimited freedom because they need to fit their messages to their purpose, audience, and context. But within those limits, they are free to stretch their stylistic muscles to powerful and good effect.

The concept of kairos—the ability to seize the opportune moment, to say just the right thing at the right, most appropriate, time—can be helpful in discussing style, so take time talk with students about it. You might want to show them a picture of Kairos, the god of opportunity, who runs with little wings on his ankles and a lock of hair on the front of his head, the better to be seized. It’s worth noting...
that once Kairos has passed by, it’s impossible to grasp him—the back of his head is completely bald! (You’ll find a couple of good images of Kairos on Wikipedia.)

You might also draw students’ attention to the image of Dame Rhetorica on p. 512 and ask them to describe her style: what do they make of the sword and lily coming out of Rhetorica’s mouth? You can explain that these represent two traditional functions of ancient rhetoric—the sword represents the power to persuade, whereas the lily represents the ways rhetoric can embellish a message—and that she’s surrounded by Aristotle, Virgil, Cicero, and other ancient philosophers. You might then invite students to have a little fun creating a “Dame Rhetorica” for the twenty-first century. What would she look like, and who would she have around her? What would she be wearing? What would be her style?

Chapter 26: What’s Your Style?

This chapter provides a general introduction to style in terms of rhetorical appropriateness—of what’s right for a particular situation—and of how writers present themselves as authors. One big goal is to help students think about and discover or develop their own sense of style. We suggest assigning students to read the chapter and then asking them to think about their own style.

You might begin by having them describe their general style of dress and then move from there to do the same about their style in writing. How does their writing style reflect their own personalities? Does the writing they do at school reflect their own style—and if not, ask them to suggest some ways they might make it do so. Would they add some figurative language? insert a bit of humor? incorporate another variety of English—or another language? The goal here is to help students discover their own sense of style and to think about how they can project their own style in their writing.

The chapter emphasizes that style in writing is a matter of appropriateness, not correctness—and that there are no easy rules to follow. As with all the choices writers have, making appropriate stylistic decisions will almost always depend on their rhetorical situation. You might ask students to analyze something they’ve written: what was its rhetorical situation, and how would they characterize its style? Refer them to the guidelines in Ch. 2 on thinking about a RHETORICAL SITUATION. Then ask them to imagine the same piece for a different audience or in a different medium. How would their style be different? Would their stance change? Would they change any words? design it differently? What does this demonstrate about making appropriate stylistic choices?

Writing in an appropriate style calls on writers to think about the level of formality they’ll use. We find Cicero’s categories useful—plain style to teach or explain, middle to please, and high to persuade. The excerpt from a speech by President Obama after the attempted assassination of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords that appears on pp. 519–20 demonstrates high style (you can listen to the speech on the book’s companion Tumblr site)—and is then contrasted with an example where Obama used a much less formal style for a less solemn occasion.
Stance is another important issue that affects what style a writer or speaker uses. On pp. 521–22 we compare the work of two restaurant reviewers—eighty-five-year-old Marilyn Hagerty and “Dive Bar Girl”—who have dramatically different styles (as do the restaurants they’re reviewing). In both these examples, you can point to the concept of appropriateness and talk about how the style in each case fits well with the audience and the rhetorical situation. Students can then build on the insights they gain from these examples by finding similarly contrasting styles in posts on a topic or issue that interests them.

You can also assign the exercise on p. 525, asking students to imitate the style of someone whose writing style they admire. We have found that students take to this activity enthusiastically and that they come up with some pretty fabulous imitations—of writers (Dr. Seuss is always a favorite, though Stephen King often shows up as well), singers, rappers, and so on. It’s a lot of fun to share these in class, and you might try your hand at doing one as well.

Chapter 27: Tweets to Reports / Moving from Social Media to Academic Writing

Our students (indeed, many of us) are awash in social media, posting, tweeting, and texting as easily as we breathe. But they also must communicate in a wide variety of other, more formal situations. This chapter has two goals: to show students that many of the rhetorical strategies they use comfortably on Facebook and in other social media transfer to their academic writing; and to get them thinking about how these strategies should be used somewhat differently in academic writing. It covers the following basic rhetorical issues:

- representing yourself in writing
- connecting with audiences
- providing context
- organizing what you write
- using images
- sharing information
- establishing an appropriate tone

For each of these issues, we’ve provided an example of the kind of social media writing our students do—in fact, several of these examples were found for us by Erica Wnek, then an editorial assistant at W. W. Norton and much closer to being a college student than any of us were at the time. Each example is followed by brief analysis of how it works in social media—and then we suggest ways it would likely need to change in academic writing.

You might begin by asking students to talk about the differences between the writing they do for social media and the writing they do in school. Look with them at the example by Stephanie Parker on pp. 528–29 and perhaps ask them to
rewrite her tweet as a formal paragraph to be published in an article in the school newspaper. They could also bring in some of their own Facebook status updates or tweets and try rewriting them in more formal academic English. (Or you could invite them to have a little fun rewriting some of their academic writing as a tweet or text!) You might help them look for features in their social media writing that would transfer well into academic prose, in the same way that we point out that Parker’s use of first-person pronouns can sometimes be appropriate in either setting. You could follow this same procedure with any of the examples in the chapter.

This chapter also provides an opportunity to focus attention on tone, which is a concept many students understand implicitly but may not have worked very much on in their own writing. Ask them to read pp. 536–37 carefully and then bring some of their own writing to class (either formal or informal) and work in pairs to characterize the tone. Ask them to read aloud to one another, so that they can really hear the tone that comes across. They might then contrast the tone of that writing with the tone they find in some of their tweets of status postings—just to see if they can identify similarities, or differences, in tone.

You might consider assigning this chapter in the first week or two of the term, especially if it’s the first week of college for many of your students. Used that way, it could serve as a bridge between the kinds of writing students are very familiar with and those kinds of writing they’ve come to your class to learn.

Chapter 28: Meeting the Demands of Academic Writing / “It’s Like Learning a New Language”

This is a chapter you may want to teach early in the term (and if so, you might pair it with Ch. 27, TWEETS TO REPORTS). Many students, and especially first-generation college students, have had few opportunities to reflect on the expectations of their teachers or to think in specific ways about how becoming a fluent academic writer is indeed like learning a new language. And all students can use help in learning how to talk the talk of this new language: no one, after all, is born speaking like an academic (and we say thank goodness for that!).

Taking initiative in class, learning to ask really good questions, contributing substantively to a discussion, reading beyond what is assigned, working to master challenging material—all are things that enable students to join the academic community in meaningful ways. It’s certainly worth taking time, then, to work through the characteristics discussed on pp. 539–50. Ask students to come up with examples from their own experience, and be sure to pause to define any unfamiliar terms. One caution: it’s important to emphasize that these expectations are not meant as straitjackets but rather as general guidelines that can help them participate in the conversations they’ll encounter in college.

For a class exercise, you might ask students to bring in an assignment they’ve recently done or one they’re working on right now. Then ask them to work in pairs or groups of three to analyze what they have written in terms of the characteristic features described in this chapter.
Chapter 29: How to Write Good Sentences

Not long ago, when one of us met with a first-year class at a University of California campus, a student asked a question we don't often get: "How can I make my sentences sing?" It's a question that has stuck with us and that we kept in mind while writing this chapter.

The chapter focuses students' attention on four common sentence patterns: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. These are patterns many students will likely have learned before now, but only as a way of classifying sentences. We present them here in a manner that we have found to be more useful, as a way of expressing ideas:

- **Simple sentences** are used to express a single main idea.
- **Compound sentences** are used to join ideas that are equally important.
- **Complex sentences** are used when one idea is more important than another.
- **Compound-complex sentences** are ways of expressing multiple, linked ideas—some less important, and some more.

You might have students work with something they've written using the advice on pp. 553–58, looking first to see what kinds of sentences they wrote and whether they are the best way to say what they wanted to say. Are the most important ideas expressed in main clauses? Are the ideas in compound sentences of equal importance, or should one of them be made subordinate by revising the sentence as a complex sentence? Are there any ideas that should be combined? And so on. Notice that the focus here is on the complex link between sentence structure (the shape of a sentence) and sentence function (the work that sentence does in creating a world through text).

Keep in mind the discussion of opening sentences and closing sentences on pp.561–66—something you might want to refer students to when they're revising a draft. Thinking about these ideas will be especially important in constructing complex and compound-complex sentences.

Another important concept in this chapter is variation: with sentences, as with life, variety is the spice! You can ask students to look at a brief essay and analyze how much variation it has in sentence type, in sentence length, in the way the sentences open and close. You could ask them to work together in small groups to come up with another version of the passage about Cape Town on p. 568: your students may well come up with a more varied and effective version than the one we give on p. 569.

Some of us begin discussion of this chapter by asking students to tell us how they would define a great sentence, a sentence that "sings." We ask them to read some of the sentences in the opening of the chapter aloud and then comment on what makes them particularly memorable. You could also ask them to find a sentence or two that they really like, and to explain why they like it. And, of course, you could ask them to identify a sentence or two in an essay they have written and then invite them to work on improving it using the advice in this chapter.
We hope your students will have some fun with this chapter and with working on their own sentences. Why not ask them to identify a sentence that someone else has written and that they think is really memorable and one from their own writing that they really like and then have a brief performance in class, with students not just reading their sentences but performing them, bringing in their own voices and rhythms?

**Chapter 30: Designing What You Write**

Although academic assignments don’t often ask students to think about design, we find that students today are aware of design elements: they know a good-looking webpage or a memorable advertisement when they see one, and they know that their design has a lot to do with what makes them effective. It might be interesting, then, to begin by asking your students to talk about what counts as effective design in an academic essay. Is the font particularly important? Do headings need to be designed? How might color be helpful for guiding readers? If the essay includes visuals (and many good academic essays now do), are there certain kinds that they think are more appropriate than others? What about layout—could they use sidebar columns or boxed text to help call attention to particular ideas?

From there you might move on to explain that any design decisions they make as authors are driven by their rhetorical situation. Especially for academic work, design should never be for the purpose of prettying up a text; rather, it should help a writer reach an audience and achieve a purpose—and suit the rest of their rhetorical situation. Here you might direct students’ attention to the list of prompts for **thinking rhetorically about design** on p. 572.

This chapter is designed to help students think about the various design elements they could (or might be assigned to) use, and to guide them in designing their texts so that they achieve their purposes. One way to get your students working with design is to have them revise a draft—even a graded one—to address a different audience or otherwise respond to a different rhetorical situation by applying some of the design techniques from this chapter. Or they can use the information here as a guide to developing new texts that address specific audience needs and rhetorical situations. The goal is making the familiar strange, in the way that an ethnographer who studies her own community must do. We are bombarded by visual design every day, all day. So much so that it no longer strikes us as “design.” It’s just a part of the world we live in. This chapter can help you help your students see the world of communication with fresh eyes.

**Chapter 31: Checking for Common Mistakes**

This chapter is designed for students to use as they revise what they write, and specifically to check for mistakes that writers often make. If you find any of these errors in your students’ writing, this is the chapter to refer them to for help.
We\'ve designed the chapter in two-page spreads, with each common mistake explained on the left-hand page, and a number of examples listed on the facing page. Those who need the explanation will find it, and those who are looking primarily for examples of how to edit a certain element will, we hope, find it among the many examples. As you\'ll see, we present some of the examples with the editing shown in red, so that students can see the error and how to edit it at a glance.

We suggest that you consider beginning by reading the first paragraph of this chapter aloud, emphasizing the degree to which everyone makes mistakes. *Everyone*—even the most accomplished and experienced writers. Stress that research shows that students will improve their writing more efficiently and effectively if they look on such mistakes as natural and inevitable—and as a source of important information.

If your students are nervous about making mistakes, you might briefly explore this chapter in the first week of class and refer students to it as you (and maybe the writing center) help them identify their individual patterns of error. You might also devote fifteen minutes of a class period every so often to questions about mistakes or errors, asking students to bring in anything they don\'t understand about the drafts they are working on and stressing that no question is too small. We find that these freewheeling Q&A sessions can be quite lively—and that students in the class can often provide the answers as well as the teacher can!

You might even want to share a little research with them, such as the essay by Joseph Williams called "The Phenomenology of Error." On the one hand, Williams makes certain arguments about error—but then at the end of his essay he tells readers that he has subtly inserted 100 errors in the essay—and asks how many readers noted any of them. When one of us first read the essay, she noted only 2 of the 100 errors! That\'s because she, as most readers do, was reading for meaning and because she respected Williams as an authority. His message is simple: "errors" are not something to get worked up about; they are, as Nikki Giovanni says, "a fact of life."

What all writers can do is to build on their strengths and develop the kind of knowledge that will lend their writing authority. As they become more experienced authors, they will gain credibility—and no doubt will reduce the number of mistakes they make as well!

**A Useful Reading**

Chapter 32: Assembling a Portfolio

Even if your school doesn’t have a portfolio requirement, you can opt to use one within your own classroom. The benefits for students include a sense of authorship and control: the individual writer must take responsibility for selecting and evaluating the writings over a term, choosing the best and explaining why they fit the criteria for inclusion in the portfolio. A suggestion: develop the criteria along with your students and they’ll take ownership even faster. The chapter explains all the necessary steps and provides a sample reflection letter so students can see how that genre works.

Chapter 33: Taking Advantage of the Writing Center

This chapter lays out the reasons to visit a writing center, explains what goes on in a tutoring session and how to prepare for one, and even suggests how students might become a tutor. Most of us have been involved in writing centers for a very long time, some since we were graduate tutors, so we all understand and believe in the benefits to students of using peer tutors. Students frequently aren’t aware their school offers a center, or they don’t know what to expect from it. This chapter demystifies the experience.

Chapter 34: Joining a Writing Group

All students—indeed, all writers—can benefit from working with other writers. Joining forces with several other committed writers creates a sense of responsibility, both to the group and to one’s own writing. This chapter describes what sort of work a writing group can accomplish and provides guidelines for organizing and participating in one.

Authors’ Resources

Chapter 32: Assembling a Portfolio

Chapter 33: Taking Advantage of the Writing Center

Chapter 34: Joining a Writing Group
Chapter 35: Publishing Your Work

One reason we say that everyone can be an author is that there are now so many opportunities for sharing and publishing our writing. From the tiniest tweets to a full-length novel, anyone with access to the internet can share their work with a wide audience. This last chapter provides a long list of suggestions for where to do so. At the end of the chapter is a great example: a student essay that began as an assignment in a composition class, went on to win the Norton Writer’s Prize, and then was published in a book. The chapter (and the book) concludes with a friendly directive—reminding students, “If everyone’s an author, that includes you, too”—and urging them to get busy and publish something they’ve written. We hope that our book will help them to do so.
Teaching the Readings
KEVIN ARNOVITZ

Man in the Middle

1. Arnovitz likely took this approach because he was emphasizing the ways in which Amaechi was an unconventional NBA player (gay, intellectual, and so on), which he sees as the most interesting things about the writer and the book.

2. We might infer that Arnovitz thinks that a sports memoir should be honest and reveal aspects of a sports figure’s life and personality that the public doesn’t already know. In addition, Arnovitz seems to respect and admire that Amaechi doesn’t indulge in celebrity gossip about his teammates or other league players; he simply tells his own story. Responses about the need for explicit criteria will vary.

3. Responses will vary.

4. Arnovitz avoids basketball and sports jargon and doesn’t mention any specific games or plays. He presents Amaechi as a complex, three-dimensional person, someone who is himself alienated from the pro-basketball world in some ways and would be interesting to meet.

5. Essay

DONALD L. BARLETT / JAMES B. STEELE

Monsanto’s Harvest of Fear

1. Responses will vary; however, the preferred answer is yes. Some possible examples include:

   ¶15, where Barlett and Steele simply explain Monsanto’s policy and the way genetically modified seeds can easily end up in a farmer’s field inadvertently;

   ¶19, where Barlett and Steele describe how Monsanto’s corporate purchases have made it the largest seed producer in the world;
TEACHING THE READINGS

¶41, where Barlett and Steele describe Edgar Queeny’s leadership of the company; or
¶50, the description of some of the consequences of a plant explosion in 1949.

2. Responses will vary.

3. Responses may vary; the most prominent examples are Pilot Grove Cooperative Elevator (beginning at ¶27); workers at the plant in Nitro, West Virginia (¶47); and Kleinpeter Dairy (¶69). Responses about which one was most interesting or surprising will vary.

4. Responses will vary; the preferred answer is yes. The most likely response to the question about a possible lack of evidence is that the evidence is complete. Some may mention a need for more international evidence.

5. Essay

DENNIS BARON

p. 705

Should Everybody Write?

1. Baron distinguishes between text copying and text creation; he addresses the numbers of readers and writers at various historical times and places; he discusses who was writing and for what purposes. The unifying theme is the technologies that writing has employed—principally pencil, typewriter, and computer.

2. Responses will vary; few students will report that their lives and time management would not be very affected.

3. Responses will vary, but it is unlikely that the images will be considered as distracting or as not making a positive contribution to the article. As the headnote mentions, Baron first delivered this piece as a lecture with accompanying slides. Thus, the images and narrative would have complemented one another.

4. Responses will vary; the likeliest responses will be in the affirmative. Students may mention their own reactions to current events and say that reading about incidents or situations inspired them to participate in groups or activities.

5. Essay

LYNDA BARRY

p. 721

The Sanctuary of School

1. Responses will vary; the preferred response is that her personal anecdote complements her political argument by showing the personal damage that would be caused to some children by depriving them of a vital resource. The concluding sentence ties the two strands together into a cohesive, complementary unit.
2. Responses will vary. Likely points of disagreement include: if there were no art instruction at all, there may come a time when there are no artists at all, and that would be a shame; even if students don’t become artists, the art instruction that they receive might help them understand art and other visual media in the future; art instruction helps develop other kinds of cognitive skills and spatial reasoning.

3. In ¶3, Barry uses the phrase literally to relate how she and her brother watched the TV late at night. In ¶5, the phrase is used figuratively to describe the silence of the streets in the hour before dawn. The final use of the phrase, in ¶10, figuratively describes how she and her brother were made invisible and neglected. The repetition enforces the argument that children should not be silenced or made invisible.

4. Barry is asking the schools to provide opportunities for children to develop their creativity during the hours before and/or after regular school hours. She emphasizes the security and stability that she felt at school—security that was missing at home; she also describes her teacher’s firm belief in the “natural healing power of painting and drawing” (¶17).

5. Essay

ALISON BECHDEL

Compulsory Reading

1. A preferred response is that the point of her narrative is that reading is a wonderful activity, that it can greatly enrich a child’s life, but that it cannot be forced upon a child; children can be encouraged to read, but force will not work.

2. Responses will vary.

3. Examples include “a hardened chain-reader” (p. 2, panel 3), “mainlining” (p. 2, panel 4), “Burn de Soleil” (sunscreen label, p. 4, panel 1), and the extended metaphor on p. 1 that equates reading with virtue and religious duty. Responses about effects on the narrative will vary.

4. Responses will vary; reasonable arguments are possible on both sides of the question of whether the strategy is effective.

5. Essay

MICHELLE CACHO-NEGRETE

Tell Me Something

1. The likeliest good response is that she was writing to express her opposition to the Iraq War and to war in general. Evidence is found in her description of
the death of Jamie, someone that she knew but was not close to, and the
comparison of Jamie’s and her brother’s deaths. Responses to the questions
about how successfully she achieved another purpose will vary.

2. Responses will vary; a good possible response is that “home” is interpreted
here as the United States, because the narrative deals with Cacho-Negrete’s relation-
ship with U.S. foreign policy. Another possibility is that the narrative is centered
around domestic routines and relationships.

3. Responses will vary; possibilities include that the understatedness adds to the
drama of the narrative because it allows more room for readers to feel for them-
selves the impact of the events.

4. Responses will vary; any of the eight could have high emotional impact.

5. Essay

NICHOLAS CARR

Flame and Filament

1. Responses will vary; possibilities include basic arithmetic skills or knowledge
related to landline telephones, broadcast (rather than cable or satellite) TV, daily
postal mail delivery, print newspapers, or analog clocks.

2. Responses will vary; likely responses include the kitchen, the TV, the bathroom,
and/or the sofa.

3. Responses may vary; a preferred response for the characteristics of Carr’s
audience is that they are educated adults with an interest in history and/or
technology. Since he refers to the very elderly in the third person, we could
argue that he excludes them from his likely audience. Carr presumes his audi-
ence is familiar with twentieth-century history; he mentions air raids in Ger-
many in 1944.

4. Possibilities here include lighting candles as memorials, candles on tables in
elegant restaurants (not necessarily romantic), scented candles to perfume or
deodorize household space, and so on.

5. Essay

DAVID CRYSTAL

2b or Not 2b?

1. Responses will vary widely.

2. Responses will vary; the greatest likelihood is that messages can always be
deciphered, and most students will report personalized shorthand. Non-English
conventions reported by bilingual students may be particularly interesting here.

3. Responses will vary; likely possibilities include mentioning a specific number of years’ experience with the medium, coursework in IT or computer science, and/or coursework in English or linguistics.

4. Responses to both sets of questions will vary; valid arguments can be made with either choice. The cognitive strategy may be more suitable to an argument framed within an academic context; the historical strategy may be more appealing for persuading a more general audience.

5. Essay

ROGER EBERT

Why I Hate 3-D (And You Should Too)

1. Ebert’s criteria are that a film should provide a satisfactory moviegoing experience at a fair price; its technology should not distract from the story, which is the essential element; neither a film nor its technology should cause discomfort or illness; and a technology should not provide an obstacle to the vision of the director. Responses to the questions about appropriateness of the criteria will vary.

2. Responses will vary; legitimate arguments can be made on both sides of the question.

3. Responses will vary; the preferred response is that the strategy was effective. The arguments might not have been numbered for Rolling Stone or other publications where long prose pieces are customary; numbering may have been retained for a newspaper or other publication that customarily chunks up prose in smaller units.

4. Ebert thinks that a 3-D movie can be worthwhile if it is planned and executed that way from the beginning. He reported loving Avatar in 3-D. He believes that a serious, accomplished director could use 3-D to good advantage, and he mentions Scorsese and Herzog. Responses to the questions about students’ own ideas of 3-D–worthy movies will vary.

5. Essay

BARBARA EHRENREICH

Serving in Florida

1. A preferred response is that the voices combine very effectively. In her waitress voice, Ehrenreich puts the readers right into the situation, so that it is nearly impossible not to identify with Gail, Claude, Joan, and the other coworkers.
When she pulls back to her author voice, as she does in the last several pages, we get an overview that permits readers to grasp the grimness and inescapability of the situation.

2. Responses will vary; the greatest likelihood is that Ehrenreich’s experience will be considered typical of, or even somewhat better than, current conditions in similar workplaces.

3. Examples include any of the content related to coworkers Gail or Joan or the customer Benny, the sewer repairman. Students will be especially likely to cite the “survey” describing the coworkers’ living arrangements.

4. The main point is that the minimum wage is not sufficient for even a meager subsistence, and that workers who must rely on minimum-wage work are not very likely to ever be able to improve their lot, even with discipline and hard work. This point is most clearly stated in ¶22 and ¶24. Responses to the question of how convincingly Ehrenreich made her point will vary; however, the preferred response is that the argument is convincing. A likely reason is that she presents the reality of conditions that most readers would not have been aware of.

5. Essay

LAURA FRASER

The Inner Corset

1. The preferred response is that she satisfies the requirement quite well. Possible examples include any part of ¶1, 6, 7, 10 (“As the 20th century got underway”), 11, and 12—that is, the paragraphs where Fraser is speaking in her own voice rather than citing or paraphrasing other sources.

2. Responses will vary. Possible responses to the main thread of the questions include: Americans are not generally interested in historical perspectives; fattening is presented as absolute and universal, and therefore, ahistorical; it may not be in the interest of diet- and thinness-related products and services to acknowledge a variant point of view. As for whether more historical knowledge would affect our perception of body shape, a preferred response is yes.

3. Possibilities include: ¶2, three quotations and two paraphrases of Hutchinson; ¶3, quotations and paraphrases of Hutchinson; ¶4, quotations and paraphrases of Hutchinson; ¶6, paraphrase of Mackenzie; ¶7, quotation of Sontag, quotation of Byron from other source; ¶8, quotations and paraphrase of B. Franklin; and ¶9, paraphrase of Banner. Fraser uses direct quotations, quotations from a secondary source, and paraphrase. Responses will vary, but the preferred response is that the integration is quite smooth.

4. The association came about with the high incidence (and survival rate) of tuberculosis among aristocratic persons. Tuberculosis decimates the body and leaves it extremely thin. Responses will vary as to what extent the association is still
active today; a preferred response is that intelligence is still associated with thinness. Possible evidence can come from anything in popular culture that shows fatness to be associated with sloth, lack of economic success, and unsavory habits.

5. Essay

MATTHEW GILBERT

**Why Glee Ain’t What It Used to Be**

1. Among the elements that Gilbert looks for, but does not find, in the new season of *Glee* are character development (both within and across episodes), genuine emotional engagement, and subtlety.
2. Responses will vary. Affirmative responses will likely mention acceptance, fun, camaraderie, diversity, etc.
3. Gilbert’s motivation was probably to show that he is taking all factors into consideration, that he is making a deep and thorough evaluation, and that he is fair.
4. He mentions the program name many times throughout the review, so that saying in the final sentence that the show is deficient in “glee” in its denotative meaning of “joy” sums up his argument for its decline.

GERALD GRAFF

**Hidden Intellectualism**

1. Responses will vary on the question of how well evidence is presented. Graff’s presentation of both supporting and opposing views is generalized and abstract; no specific author or source is cited other than Elvis Presley and Ned Laff, quoted in ¶8 and ¶16, respectively. Because Graff is arguing against conventional wisdom and prevailing ideas of the time, he refers to them only in a general way, knowing that his audience will recognize them.
2. Responses will vary greatly. Students are likely to mention that they have never been encouraged to take the themes of everyday life very seriously.
3. The likeliest (and preferred) response to the question of the identity of “we” is that it refers to Graff and his fellow academics/professors; other possibilities may be argued. Evidence includes the information in the headnote, the title of the book from which this excerpt is taken, and the fact that Graff is talking consistently about schools, classes, and other academic contexts. The preferred responses to the questions about the reasons for his use of the “we” and its likely effect on the intended audience are that it seeks to create common ground between Graff and his readers and will likely succeed in doing so. Students’
own responses to “we” will vary, with some finding it inviting and inclusive and others inappropriate.

4. Responses will vary; valid arguments can be made with either choice. A likely affirmative response may conjecture that a student who learns to take an academic approach to anything will want to apply that approach to everything (or nearly everything) and hence he or she might be drawn to seek out traditional academic material. A likely negative response might point out that the world of sports, fashion, or music is sufficient unto itself, and a deepened interest in such a world does not imply deepened interest in anything else.

5. Essay

JOHN GRAVOIS

*The Agnostic Cartographer*

1. Responses will vary; the preferred response is that the information is trustworthy despite the absence of bibliographic information. Gravois is clearly knowledgeable, presents numerous specific examples, treats Google even-handedly by pointing out both good and bad aspects of its policy, and contextualizes the issues involved. The information appears to be verifiable.

2. Gravois would likely say that the dual name of the river at the U.S.-Mexico boundary is not problematic and that Google’s policy for disputed names of bodies of water is a practical solution for a situation in which there is no acknowledged international “umpire.” Responses to the questions asking students for their opinions will vary; legitimate arguments can be made on both sides of each question.

3. *Washington Monthly’s* audience likely has a higher proportion of mid- to high-level government officials than a similar national magazine or one in a different metropolitan area. Some of these officials are presumably involved in foreign policy and thus have some interest in the issues and potential conflicts that Gravois mentions. Responses about who Gravois’s “we” is and whether students are included in it will vary and will likely depend on the extent to which individual students perceive themselves as invested in and responsible for world-shaping.

4. It is unlikely that students (who have not studied geography at the college level) would have encountered the term. Those familiar with the prefix *neo-* would be likely to understand it as a neologism and to say it means “new geography.” Responses about the sufficiency of Gravois’s information will vary and will turn on familiarity with the process of forming neologisms.

5. Essay
PENELOPE GREEN

*The Year Without Toilet Paper*

1. Examples of the balance include ¶3, “A visitor avoided the bathroom”; ¶4, Green indicates that she has ridden the elevator while pointing out that the No Impact family does not; and ¶17, “while a visitor thought about.” Except for the references to her own presence (in the third person, “a visitor”), she reports the acts she witnesses and statements she hears with precise journalistic detachment. The parenthetical comments sprinkled throughout, such as the one in ¶21, contribute to the precision and balance. Responses will vary as to Green’s success.

2. Responses will vary greatly.

3. Sensory details include ¶2, “sour odor” (smell); ¶2, “silhouette greatly amplified by her organic cotton diapers” (sight); ¶16, “fermenting stinkily in his cupboard” (smell); ¶17, “vinegar has a satisfying bite” (taste); and ¶23, “air-conditioned movie theater” (touch). Assessments of details’ contributions to the article will vary.

4. Responses will vary. Among the principal advantageous differences likely to be pointed out are the family’s urban location (easier access to food and other resources), short commuting distances, sufficient income to have a cleaning lady weekly, and family and other support nearby. Likely to be mentioned as elements that may have made the experiment harder are the urban location (more difficult to grow food) and living and working on high floors of buildings.

5. Essay

BELL HOOKS

*Touching the Earth*

1. Hooks is exhorting her readers, particularly her black readers, to renew their relation to the earth in order to heal and recover themselves. Among the concrete steps she mentions is growing plants, especially for food, which can be accomplished in small spaces and even inside of apartments. She also suggests that readers can “pause to listen to birds sing, find a tree and watch it” (¶10).

2. Responses will vary.

3. Although the quotation from Berry is not explicit, “profitable diseases and dependencies” (¶11) could refer to such conditions as hypertension, which has a very high incidence among African Americans and is conventionally controlled with drugs that must be taken daily for the rest of a person’s life. Hence, such conditions are “profitable” for pharmaceutical companies, pharmacies, and doctors, among others. A number of other chronic illnesses—asthma, for example—are also associated with high stress and the unhealthy conditions in urban communities that Hooks describes and feels could be alleviated in the ways she suggests.
4. Responses will vary, but a preferred response is that yes, the path described by Hooks could be a healing one for any group, especially one that is concentrated in an urbanized environment.

5. Essay

ALEX HORTON

On Getting By

1. Possibilities include the following: he maintains an audience-centered voice, as in “Here is what you can expect” (¶4); he classifies and categorizes the experiences, for example, the frequently asked questions in order of frequency; and he maintains a somewhat detached attitude toward his own experiences, reporting them more as witness than as participant, as in ¶6, where he recounts the stereotypes that have been applied to him once his veteran status has been disclosed.

2. Responses will vary, but students should show evidence of self-reflection in their responses to the questions that address each of them personally.

3. Instances of humor include suggesting that reading Twilight is a life-altering experience (¶4); the question about camel spiders (¶4), which is likely tongue in cheek; and describing the questioning of a classmate who called the countries where there is active military engagement “one of those places they send people” (¶5). Responses as to whether humor makes the article more interesting or authoritative will vary; the preferred response is yes, because it shows that he is not taking himself or his experience too seriously and that he takes care to connect with his audience.

4. He means that the military wartime experience lends itself to developing friendships of deep trust, intimacy, and intensity and that those friends who survive will likely maintain their connections with one another for the rest of their lives. The brevity emphasizes the certainty of the statement; no further explanation or justification is warranted. It’s obvious (to them).

5. Essay

DAVID L. HOYT

My Brief Wondrous Career as a Soccer Dad

1. Responses will vary, differences will likely have to do with each student’s age and parenthood status.

2. Examples include ¶3 and ¶6 or any parts of them. Responses will vary about how those ideas might be expressed differently, and possibilities abound. To the extent that the essential message is taken to be that parenthood is a challenge
and a parent’s will should not always prevail, the message would not change. If the essential message is interpreted to be that child rearing is not terribly conducive to a scientific approach, then yes, it would change.

3. Responses will vary, but the likelihood is that he might not do anything differently since he is simply presenting a father’s point of view. He might include more contextualizing details about himself and Spot for an audience that would not already know them.

4. Responses will vary; the likeliest possibility of the point is that parents have to be open to learning from their children, stated pretty explicitly in ¶14–15.

5. Essay

ROGER LATHBURY

_ Betraying Salinger_

1. Responses may vary, but a preferred response is that Lathbury’s point is that a simple, innocent mistake can have disastrous consequences that one must simply bear. The timing is not a coincidence; he could not have told that story in the same, or any other, way while Salinger was still alive without compounding the original error of bringing unwanted attention to Salinger.

2. He was likely compelled by ego, to some extent, to brag about having met and corresponded with Salinger, but he was likely more motivated by a desire to admit his mistake, to get it off his chest. Although he knew that many people would be interested in the story, his respect for Salinger had prevented him from telling it. But Salinger’s death freed him to do so in a magazine whose readers likely include many people in the publishing industry, to whom his story would be particularly interesting.

3. Lathbury creates tension with his minimalist, straightforward narrative style, and he includes a few tantalizing details, such as Salinger’s agent suggesting in her letter that Lathbury sit down before reading on (¶4), Lathbury’s admissions that he was “shaking with astonishment” (¶9), and Salinger’s “disconcerting” request that Lathbury call him “Jerry” (¶13).

4. Responses will vary; legitimate arguments can be made for any of the options.

5. Essay

JONAH LEHRER

_ We, Robots_

1. Responses will vary, but the preferred response is that Lehrer’s assessment is fair and his reasons are well supported. He is critical ("her ethnographic portraits would have benefited from a more probing investigation of such
TEACHING THE READINGS

questions," ¶9), but not unfairly so. He makes it clear that the situation is fluid and changes rapidly, and also that it is complicated and difficult ("There is no easy reply to these critiques," ¶8), with many legitimate positions possible on the issues Turkle raises.

2. Responses will vary. Likely responses include gains of less time required, of concrete and durable records of transactions, and of less interruption of/intrusion on ongoing activities; losses of clarity, of negotiated interaction, and of opportunities for intimacy, and a more concrete connection with other people. In some cases, texts are more economical; in others, calls are more economical.

3. The strategy of comparing the books serves to demonstrate the fluidity and rapid changeability of technological developments and of our relationships with each new development. Some may argue that the comparison is a way to discredit Turkle by suggesting that her opinions are fickle, but that argument is narrow and insupportable.

4. Responses will vary, and legitimate arguments could be made on both sides, but there may be more evidence to support one for a "good" review. Lehrer says that the new book is written with Turkle's "typical eloquence" (¶2) and is "fascinating" (¶11), and he's careful to note that its flaw of being "one-sided" (¶11) is one shared by all of us ("We are so eager to take sides," ¶11).

5. Essay

MICHAEL LEWIS

Home Game

p. 841

1. Possibilities include "his fellow Orcs" (¶8), "[t]he little monster skulks" (¶9), "me floating like a crocodile" (¶32), and "as indignant as a serial killer who got put away on a speeding ticket" (¶33).

2. Responses will vary; evidence that may indicate a male narrator include the phrase about a boy "being torn . . . a new asshole by his mother" (¶33), which may be considered to be gender marked, and the narrator's holding back and letting the drama unfold while staying relatively calm about the daughter's use of profanity, reactions that may be associated more with a father than with a mother.

3. No additional context was necessary; the critical elements of the story—vacation hotel pool, separate baby pool, ages and sexes of the children—were given.

4. Responses will vary. A likely possibility is to report doing the same as Lewis and then speaking to the child later in a spirit of explanation rather than punishment.

5. Essay
EMILY MARTIN

*The Egg and the Sperm*

1. As Martin states in footnote 2, “The textbooks I consulted are the main ones used in classes for undergraduate premedical students or medical students (or those held on reserve in the library for these classes) during the past few years at Johns Hopkins University.” As to whether the cited evidence sufficiently demonstrates Martin’s point, the preferred response is that it is more than sufficient, since it is abundant and consistently shows the same slanted approach.

2. Responses will vary as to how well Martin’s summary of traditional teaching on the topic matches what students remember learning. As for whether students had ever questioned this teaching or now think it should be questioned, the likeliest response on the first issue is no; the preferred response on the second issue is yes, because Martin has amply demonstrated that there is a lot of cultural bias, specifically sexism, in the ways that the fertilization process is described.

3. Martin was writing for an academic audience of scholars and students in anthropology, gender studies, and cultural studies. For a general adult audience, she would not have needed to be so meticulous and precise about each of her sources; she could have summarized and generalized more. Also, for a general audience, she might have wanted to insert a little more drama or humor and probably do more scaffolding of points. For a high school audience, she could have been even more general and written a little more simply.

4. Martin’s argument is that the traditional descriptions of egg and sperm echo traditional gender stereotypes of women as passive and weak and of men as active, strong, and dynamic. While acknowledging that a more “cybernetic” approach is not without its own pitfalls, Martin proposes “substituting more egalitarian, interactive metaphors to describe the activities of egg and sperm” (¶36), ones that involve “feedback loops, flexible adaptation to change, coordination of the parts within a whole, evolution over time, and changing response to the environment” (¶31).

5. Martin describes how, in the nineteenth century, Malthus’s ideas about society and Darwin’s about nature were tidy counterpoints to one another, allowing Darwin’s ideas about natural selection and survival of the fittest to be applied in the social realm to “justify the social order of the time” (¶33). In the same way, social stereotypes of gender are the lens through which gender-related biological phenomena are observed and described.

6. Essay
HANNAH MILLER

American Pie

1. Responses as to the trustworthiness of Miller’s information will vary; the preferred response is that it seems trustworthy. Miller presents her information in an authoritative tone and a straightforward fashion, seemingly just to interest readers and not to support an argument or theory. Publication in American Heritage lends credibility to the information, which could presumably be independently verified if one were inclined to do so. Some may suggest that Miller should have presented sources for at least some of her information.

2. Responses will vary; the greatest likelihood is that pizza is associated with a good time.

3. Responses will vary; for a food-oriented publication, the chronology of pizza’s rise and the marketing/business angle might not have been so important. Miller might have focused more on trends in ingredients or preparation methods (cheese varieties and blends, hand-thrown vs. stretched dough, wood-burning vs. conventional ovens, etc.). She might also have focused more on recipes that readers could make in their own kitchens rather than on commercially prepared pizzas.

4. Miller claims two factors for the midwestern birthplace: an abundant supply of cheese and a lack of preconceived ideas. Midwesterners had “neither allegiance nor aversion to the traditional pie” (¶10).

5. Essay

MONSANTO

Why Does Monsanto Sue Farmers Who Save Seeds?

1. Responses may vary; the preferred interpretation is that Monsanto’s intent is to shut down and defuse more than to participate in an ongoing discussion. Monsanto gives no serious attention to other views.

2. Responses will vary; the preferred response is that yes, we should know more about the sources of our food. A variety of reasons could be offered, including concerns about healthfulness, political and economic issues, sustainability and other ecological issues, and so on.

3. Monsanto wishes to argue that farmers are generally on its side and that Monsanto isn’t just sending outsider spies throughout the countryside to interfere with local concerns. Solidarity among farmers (or the perception of such solidarity) is not in Monsanto’s interest, and it wants to present the situation as something other than farmers versus Monsanto.

4. Barlett and Steele’s account is definitely more comprehensive. Responses to the question about credibility will vary; the likelihood is that the Barlett and
Steele account will be considered more credible because it is more detailed and does not take an argumentative tone; Monsanto’s account may be perceived as unsatisfyingly brief, defensive, and argumentative.

5. Essay

THE ONION

Nation Shudders at Large Block of Uninterrupted Text

1. Responses will vary, but the preferred response is that the information is presented in a very journalistic manner and seems reliable. Sources are named (albeit invented), quotations are properly made, and the tone is very factual.

2. Responses will vary; the greatest likelihood is that the report does resonate and that reading attention span has changed over time. The very youngest students may not report much change, since they’ve grown up with the conditions that the Onion describes.

3. Journalistic features include a spare and straightforward style with quotations from named interviewees (“Boston resident Charlyne Thomson,” ¶4) and precise details that lend credibility (“3:16 pm,” ¶ 5; “450 percent rise,” ¶6).

4. The broader argument, basically, is that media try to attract readers and viewers by prioritizing celebrity “news” in large and prominent quantities. Responses will vary as to the legitimacy of the argument.

5. Essay

PEW RESEARCH TEAM

Who Moves? Who Stays Put? Where’s Home?

1. Responses will vary, but the preferred response is that the report satisfies the requirement quite well. Any part of the report could provide evidence of an informative tone; the writing is straightforward and practically devoid of affective or descriptive detail; many statements are supported by statistics.

2. Responses will vary.

3. The report never explicitly defines the term; the nearest it comes is in the opening sentence, “Home is a place in the heart as well as a place on the map.” It may be inferred that “heart home” is the place that is dearest to one’s heart. Responses about whether the concept is clear will vary, but many may find the definition inadequate since it is not explicit.

4. Pew says the reasons are that young people tend to move more than older people and that “it takes time to feel completely comfortable in a new community” (¶17). Other possible reasons include the likelihood that many
TEACHING THE READINGS

Interviewees in that age group are living in a college community that they don’t consider “home” or have moved to a new community for career reasons. Responses based on personal experiences will vary.

5. Essay

STEVEN PINKER

Mind over Mass Media

p. 893

1. Responses will vary. Those who claim he is not fair may point to his glib tone (“cognitive neuroscientists roll their eyes,” ¶4) or suggest that he is setting up straw man arguments (“conjugating Latin does not make you more logical,” ¶7). Those who find his treatment of opposing positions fair will likely agree with his assessment that opposition to new technologies is simply “moral panic” (¶1).

2. Responses will vary, but those who see easier access as the key change will likely see that as weakening Pinker’s case.

3. The preferred response is that yes, Pinker was writing for an audience already inclined to agree with him. The touches of humor have a “knowing wink” quality to them. His references to historical events and trends are written with a presumption of a shared prior knowledge that strongly implies shared attitudes as well and, going one step further, shared opinions.

4. The title of the essay references the proverbial phrase mind over matter; that is, that thought and determination can prevail over physical urges and sensations. The part of the essay that most directly addresses the title and may have inspired it is in ¶9: “The solution is not to bemoan technology but to develop strategies of self-control, as we do with every other temptation in life.” In any case, the title reinforces Pinker’s point that the workings of our brains are not determined by the particular kinds of media that inform them.

5. Essay

MICHAEL POLLAN

What’s Eating America

p. 897

1. Responses will vary. Those who find the background information adequate may refer to the explanation of nitrogen and nitrogen “fixing”; those who find it insufficient may point to the same explanation, saying that it should have been more detailed or thorough.

2. Responses will vary. Students in corn-producing regions may report not being surprised by the ubiquity of corn and its derivatives in the American diet and their own diets; all others likely will be surprised.

3. Responses will vary, although a preferred response is that vocabulary like edifice, hyperbole, and Faustian bargain assumes a well-educated readership.
Reader demographics from the *Smithsonian* website bear the assumption out (May 2012):

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readers</td>
<td>6,939,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male/Female</td>
<td>48% / 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 35–64</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attended college+</td>
<td>78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional/Managerial</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Own home</td>
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4. Synthetic nitrogen is causing grave damage to the earth and its ecosystems and diminishing biodiversity at all levels; although traditional, diversified agriculture is more labor intensive, it is ultimately a safer, saner means of food production.

5. Essay

**MIKE ROSE**

*Blue-Collar Brilliance*

1. Rose’s subject is the scope and definition of what we call “intelligence.” His research seeks to understand “the cognitive demands of a range of blue-collar and service jobs, from waitressing and hair styling to plumbing and welding” (¶15).

2. Responses will vary; the greatest likelihood is that students will be surprised by what Rose has said.

3. Rose might have wanted to establish his familiarity with and respect for blue-collar work right from the beginning. The preferred response to the questions about effectiveness is that this rhetorical strategy is effective because narrative can be a very powerful tool and examples bring a topic to life.

4. The overarching argument is stated fairly explicitly in the final two paragraphs: that recognition of diverse intelligences can make work and workplaces more productive and meaningful; further, society as a whole benefits from greater respect shown to all of its members.

5. Essay

**GEORGE RUSSELL**

*What Would Happen If You Threw a Revolution and Everyone Showed Up?*

1. Responses will vary; there are legitimate arguments to be made in both the affirmative and negative. Affirmative responses will likely mention Russell’s
concession that two of the middle chapters were “interesting and useful” (¶11), while negative responses may mention Shirky’s nonscholarly prose is appropriate because Shirky is writing for a general audience, not an academic one.

2. Responses will vary.

3. Responses will vary according to the specific periodical chosen. In nearly all cases, it would be appropriate to suggest that Russell tone his argument down a little to avoid sounding quite so stridently critical.

4. Responses will vary.

5. Essay

ERIC SCHLOSSER

Why McDonald's Fries Taste So Good

1. Responses will vary; the preferred response is that the evidence does all tie in to the subject of McDonald's fries and that the analysis is cohesive. All of the evidence combines to demonstrate how our senses of taste are both trained and tricked by the assortment of chemicals that have been painstakingly developed for that very purpose.

2. Responses will vary; likely responses are that appetite for fast foods has been affected but that buying and eating habits will not be much affected because people like their habits, routines, and favorite foods.

3. Schlosser’s tone is straightforward, informative, and comfortable. The language is not inflammatory or sensational. The information about the additive carmine, for example, could have been exploited for sensationalism, but it was not, either by the descriptive language used or by the placement of the information in the article. Schlosser provides abundant evidence showing how complicated the issues involved in food chemicals are and that there are no simple ways to evaluate them.

4. Schlosser’s purpose in this excerpt is to increase readers’ consciousness about the ingredients of fast foods and other processed food items. There is no explicit advocacy in the article of any particular stance or course of action; for that reason, we may interpret that the purpose is simply informative. In addition to McDonald’s fries, a good summary would also discuss chemical additives and the blurring of the distinction between “natural” and “artificial” additives.

5. Essay

BRENT STAPLES

Why Colleges Shower Their Students with A's

1. Responses will vary; plausible arguments can be made for both affirmative and negative responses, although the preferred response is affirmative. Staples
1. Responses will vary; the likeliest response is that she has identified the dilemmas. Other points that may be mentioned include texting in movie theaters, texting in classes, texting and driving, etc.

2. Responses will vary.

3. Responses to the question about the effect of Truss' tone will vary. A preferred response is that her tone does enhance her authority because it is clear that she is a texter who writes with insider knowledge, and she uses a tone appropriate to the medium. Her ethos is that of a skillful and respectful user of language, a detail-oriented writer who privileges traditional language-use conventions over technology-driven conveniences.

4. Her arguments are consistent because she makes clear that the praise is for the technology itself while the criticism is for some of the practices of its use. Summaries will vary, but all should include Truss' appreciation for the technology of texting, acknowledgment of frequent use of texting, personal insistence on transferring traditional conventions of writing to her own texting, and discussion of dilemmas of texting etiquette.

5. Essay
KEVIN VAN ORD

The Sims Medieval

1. Responses will vary, but a preferred response is that VanOrd does satisfy the requirement. He directly addresses the specific motivations, satisfactions, and dissatisfactions of the game from a gamer’s point of view: the second-person writing serves to put the reader into the game. Examples may come from virtually any paragraph.

2. Responses will vary; there are legitimate points to be made on either side. In the affirmative, such a game would bring the era to life in ways that no textbook ever could, and playing could give a student a sense of the experience of life in that era. On the negative side, such a game might easily create mistaken impressions of the range of choices available to medieval people.

3. Responses will vary; the preferred response is that VanOrd’s tone is authoritative and credible because he demonstrates his extensive knowledge about the entire Sims series and has clearly given Sims Medieval a thorough and open-minded tryout. Students who are highly experienced gamers may be able to point out flaws that other readers would not.

4. Indentured servitude was a system of fixed-term contracts between employers and laborers practiced in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. During the terms of their contract, laborers were compensated only with food, shelter, and clothing; they were essentially the property of the employer and had no personal liberty about their time or activities. VanOrd likely chose to use the term to emphasize that Sims Medieval players can perform only limited and specified actions; they have little creative discretion about what they do.

5. Essay

ALISSA WILKINSON

The Social Network

1. Responses will vary; the preferred response is that her degree of involvement does enhance her assessment because it gives her a familiarity with the zeitgeist and the likely mindset of the principal participants in ways that persons more distant from the action could not hope to achieve.

2. Responses will vary; the greatest likelihood is that students who can remember a pre-Facebook world will be able to imagine its demise more easily than those who have grown up with it. Most will notice that the current velocity of technological change and development increases the likelihood that anything around today will not be around (or will be substantially different) in 2040.

3. Responses will vary. Signposts include the clear, explicit use of first-person pronouns for the personal narrative and the use of explicit noun phrases...
rather than pronouns where there is any possibility of doubt. In \( \S \)12–14, where Wilkinson describes millennials in the third person, some students may report not being sure whether she is including herself.

4. Responses will vary widely; demographic characteristics of race, class, ethnicity, nationality, etc., may enter into students’ assessments.

5. Essay
Planning a Writing Course
WHENEVER WE TEACH, designing the course we’re about to teach presents challenges. If you’re a new teaching assistant, you’ve been given a general outline of the writing course you’re to teach, along with some intensive training. When you’ve never taught before, though, organizing the weeks that stretch ahead is daunting, even with the help you’ve been given. If you’re a newly hired adjunct instructor, you may already have experience in the classroom, but you need to adapt what you’ve done before to the requirements of a new writing program. If you’re a seasoned faculty member, you’ve taught many writing courses, but perhaps not recently, and not with this text or this course outline. No matter where you fit in these scenarios, you can use some help in designing your course. This chapter offers advice on planning a writing course that suits your preferences and your students’ needs.

Thinking about Course Design

A writing course is akin to a set of boxes within boxes: the largest, outermost box is the complete course from start to finish. Within that box are instructional units that typically begin with the introduction of a writing assignment and end with its completion. Each unit is made up of sequences of assignments that move the class and the assigned writing along. And each class period includes various activities that move students through the sequence of assignments. Considering your course on each of these levels enables you to plan every period of every week of the term so that each class period’s work builds on what went before and prepares for what comes next. Having a plan gives you something to diverge from and improve on without losing your way or being reduced to wondering, “What do I do on Monday?” Here’s how to devise such a plan.

The course as a whole. Determine the writing program’s goals for the course: What does the program or department or university want students to achieve by completing this course? Sometimes these goals are clearly spelled out, but you may need to ask the writing program administrators, the department chair, or faculty who regularly teach the course what the institution’s expectations are. If the goals of the course are left to you, consult the WPA Outcomes Statement available online...
at http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html/. That statement defines outcomes that soundly designed first-year writing courses should include, according to the Council of Writing Program Administrators, a national organization of writing program directors and specialists in composition and rhetoric.

Use the goals for your course to guide your planning. For example, if a goal is to “develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proofreading,” then you need to include those activities in your course plan. If a goal is to “respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations,” then your plan should include opportunities for students to write in various genres for various reasons. If a goal is to “control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling,” then including instruction in those surface features should be part of your overall plan. Once you’ve established your goals for the course itself, you can meet those goals by dividing the course into units.

Units. Designing a writing course is akin to other complex tasks best broken down into smaller parts that can be dealt with more easily, rather than trying to think of the whole at once. A writing course usually consists of a number of units within which students learn to do a certain genre of writing, such as a narrative, an argument, an analysis, or a researched report. As you teach each unit, you lead students through a sequence of assignments that help students through writing processes from finding a topic, thinking about and researching it, and drafting and revising to polishing a final draft and assessing their work. The number of units you create depends on how many pieces of writing you want students to finish and how much time you want to spend on each of those pieces. For example, a typical first-term, first-year writing course might consist of three or four 3-week units, each of them focusing on a single genre.

An alternative model would take a rhetorical approach designed to help students develop an understanding of the major rhetorical considerations—genre, audience, purpose, stance, context, and medium/design—as they develop their writing processes. This approach reinforces the idea that writing (especially beyond the classroom) has more to do with intentionally choosing from a variety of strategies (and sometimes combining them) to meet the needs of particular audiences and situations. During each unit, students would identify and address the needs and constraints of particular rhetorical situations.

### Sample Unit-based Schedules

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<tr>
<th>14-Week Semester</th>
<th>10-Week Quarter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 1–2: Introduce principles of rhetoric and argument</td>
<td>Weeks 1–2: Introduce principles of rhetoric and argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 3–4: Writing a narrative</td>
<td>Weeks 3–4: Writing a narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 5–7: Taking a position</td>
<td>Weeks 5–7: Taking a position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 8–10: Analyzing an ad</td>
<td>Weeks 8–10: Analyzing an ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 11–14: Research-based report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The length of a unit is highly flexible. Some instructors may teach five- or six-week units to allow students to delve deeply into a subject and write lengthy, extensively researched essays; others may design two-week-long units to give students a flavor for certain genres and to make time for others. The length of each unit is finally like the length of a good essay: as long as it has to be to get the job done.

**Assignment sequences.** Within a unit, the sequence of specific assignments creates the momentum that gets students writing and keeps them progressing from beginning to end. This sequencing involves several variables: how many days your class meets each week, which days you meet, how long your class sessions are, and what you can expect students to do in class and between classes. Let’s deal with each one separately:

*How many days each week does your course meet, and on which days?* Your course schedule—Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for fifty minutes each day; Tuesdays and Thursdays for seventy-five minutes; Monday nights for three hours—determines the rhythm of your assignments: what you ask students to do, how much you ask them to do, how much work you do in class, and how much work you ask students to do independently. For example, if your course meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays, you will probably ask students to do much more work outside class over the long period between Thursday and Tuesday than between Tuesday and Thursday; if your course meets Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, you’ll probably assign more balanced amounts of independent work. Here are a couple of examples, one from a Tuesday-Thursday course and one from a Monday-Wednesday-Friday course. In each, students are beginning to write a narrative essay. The left-hand column shows the day of the week, the middle column describes the activities to be completed during class, and the right-hand column shows the students’ assignments for the following class.

**Sample Assignment Sequence: Tuesday-Thursday Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>In-Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignment for the Next Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Introduce narrative assignment; begin generating activities.</td>
<td>Read essays in Ch. 8; write 1-page responses to each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>Share responses and discuss essays; go over characteristic features; start developing possible topics through freewriting, looping; introduce the rhetorical situation.</td>
<td>Read “Choose a topic,” p. 122; choose a topic; read and answer questions in “Consider your rhetorical situation,” pp. 122–24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Topic conferences: be prepared to describe your topic and the rhetorical situation as you see it.</td>
<td>Do activities in “If you are writing a personal narrative” or research for “If your narrative is not a personal one,” pp. 124–25.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Charting your assignment sequences can help you see how each class relates to those preceding and following it and how each assignment helps students make progress, using what they learned in class to do something that prepares them for the activities of the next class.

### How long are your class periods? Within the term, unit, and weekly schedule, you need to develop a rhythm for your class periods, too. A fifty-minute period has a very different feel to it than a seventy-five or ninety-minute period. Chapter 14, “Managing Class Activities,” in this Guide provides more detailed advice on structuring your class meetings, but in general, in an effective class period you will accomplish the following:

- Review what the class has done so far.
- Clarify the relationship of students’ previous work and current tasks.
- Introduce activities or help students with upcoming tasks.
- Prepare students to do the next assignment.

## Putting the parts together. Here is a set of guidelines for planning a course by considering the course as a whole, the units that make it up, the assignment sequences that students will follow, and the class activities that will help them progress.

1. Determine the goals of your course and what you must do to achieve them.
2. Decide on the number of units and what each will achieve.
3. Estimate how many weeks—or how many class days—the class will need to achieve each unit’s goal; make sure your units don’t exceed the number of class periods in the term. Note that some tasks take more time and instruction than others.
4. Consider how much preparation students will need in order to write a draft. For example, students might draft a narrative after a day or two of generating ideas and material, but they might need several weeks to write a report. Consider also what they will need to do—what assignments you will give them—before they write a draft, during drafting, and afterward. Consider too how many drafts you want them to write and what sort of response you can give them along the way. (See Chapter 23, “Responding to Student Writing.”)

5. Plot out the unit on a calendar or chart, playing with the placement of the due dates for each student assignment. Think about how much time each assignment will take and how that fits into the time students have between class meetings.

6. Now start filling in the details. What, exactly, will you expect students to have done before each class meeting? What will you do during each class meeting? Chapter 14, “Managing Class Activities,” offers detailed advice on using your time with your students effectively. What will the assignment for the next class meeting be? Chapter 13, “Designing Writing Assignments”; Chapter 17, “Using Writing Activities in Class”; and Chapter 18, “Using Readings to Teach Writing,” can help you create appropriate tasks for students to complete on their own. For each unit, consider creating a plan in the form of a table that provides you and your students with that information.

Below is an example for a course using *Everyone’s an Author*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals for Today</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1: Introduce students to each other, to rhetoric, and to daily writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>1. Sharing personal info to begin building community.</td>
<td>Read: <em>EoA</em> Introduction, “Is Everyone an Author?” The chapter articulates several questions about what it means to be “an author.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beginning to understand how to select details to fit specific audience and purpose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Exploring and understanding the structure of this class.</td>
<td>Writer’s Notebook: 1. A short response to the question “Is everyone an author?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Examining writing processes/preferences.</td>
<td>2. A short list of questions about the book and how we’ll use it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Compose a short personal bio, in class, on large index card/single sheet of paper. Then select several details you feel comfortable sharing with the class. Put those on the smaller index card. Pair up; swap cards; introduce each other; then introduce your partner to the class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Goals for Today

#### Thu
- Examining our ideas of what it means to be an author, a researcher, a student—especially in a writing class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals for Today</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Thu** | 1. “What is an author?”  
  • Read aloud your response to Tuesday’s assigned writing.  
  • Discuss what being an author entails.  
  • Revise your response based on our discussion. | **Assignment**  
  - Read: *EaA* pp. 1–23  
  - **Writer’s Notebook:** Write out your definition of rhetoric—of “thinking and acting rhetorically”—and then examine and explain that definition. |
| | 2. Discuss processes involved in writing. | |

### Week 2: Exploring rhetoric and argument

#### Tue
- Measuring your understanding of the reading and assessing the collaboration in your group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2: Exploring rhetoric and argument</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Tue** | Quiz on readings to date.  
  *EaA* p. 17, in-class writing.  
  Share responses.  
  *EaA* “Think About” p. 23.  
  Share responses. In groups of 4 (based on responses), come up with a plan for doing an analysis of the rhetorical situations. | **Assignment**  
  - Read: *EaA* Ch. 4  
  - **Writer’s Notebook:** Write a page reflecting on your group meeting today: What did or didn’t “match up” with the description of effective collaboration in Ch. 4? |

#### Thu
- Establishing individual guidelines/benchmarks for writing skills.

| **Thu** | In-class diagnostic essay and reflective statement. | **Assignment**  
  - Read: *EaA* Ch. 8, pp. 101–7  
  - **Writer’s Notebook:** Respond to prompts on pp. 104 & 107. |

### Being Prepared and Flexible

Creating a plan for your course can relieve much of the stress of teaching, especially the first time you teach a course. Just don’t let it become a straitjacket that confines, rather than enables. Students may need more or less time on a task than you’ve scheduled; you may find that providing students with the instruction they need takes more or less time than you had thought, and events beyond your control, such as the weather or electrical power interruptions, may force you to change your plans. Maintaining flexibility to meet students’ needs and to anticipate the unforeseeable is just as important as knowing what you’ll do each day. You can incorporate flexibility into your plan in several ways. You can build a couple of open class periods into your schedule at the end of a unit, so if you need more time you can use those periods without squeezing the next unit’s schedule. Or you can create detailed unit plans one at a time, giving students the overall unit topic and main deadlines
but waiting until you’ve gone through much of one unit before filling in the details of the next. As you gain confidence in your teaching abilities and get to know your students, you’ll find balancing planning with flexibility will become easier.

Useful Readings

In most classes you took in college, the instructor gave you a syllabus that provided an outline of the course. As an instructor, you may be required to provide a copy of the syllabus for your own course to your department office to be kept on file. A course syllabus is more than information for students; it is both a promise to those students that the course will be conducted in a certain way and a record of how the course was conducted. The audience for your syllabus includes students, faculty, and administrators, so taking care to create a complete, clear syllabus is well worth your time. This chapter offers advice on how to construct a good syllabus for a writing course.

Contents of a Good Syllabus

A good syllabus anticipates and answers students’ questions:

- How does this course fit into the curriculum? Why must I or should I take it?
- What is the content or subject matter of the course?
- What teaching style or methods of instruction will be used? Will the course be primarily a workshop course? lectures? discussion? online? a combination?
- What are the prerequisites? What knowledge or ability does the instructor assume I already have?
- What are the requirements? How much work is there?
- How will my work be evaluated? Will there be a portfolio, tests, quizzes, written assignments, projects, presentations? How many?
- When are assignments due? How will I need to use my time to get the work done?
- What books and materials must I have? What must I purchase? What will be available through the library, online, in class, or as handouts?
• What are the rules for the course, for attendance, submitting work, and participating in class?
• How can I contact the instructor, and when can I do so?

Building a Course Syllabus

A typical syllabus for a writing course contains much of the following information but is unlikely to include all of it. Even if you don’t want to put an item in your syllabus, you may find that thinking about your policy on that issue can help you anticipate students’ questions or behavior.

Basic Course Information
• Course title, section number, call number, and number of credits
• Room and time(s) where the class meets
• Semester or quarter and year
• Prerequisites: other courses, placement scores, or test scores

Your Personal Information
• Your name and title
• Your office location, with directions if it’s hard to find
• Your office hours, email address, office phone number, and website URL, if you have one
• Your home phone number and times when students may call, if you wish
• How you’d like students to address you (as Mr. or Ms. ______, as Professor or Dr. ______, or with your first name)

Textbooks and Other Materials
• Each textbook’s title, edition, author, publisher, and date of publication; ISBN number; clear identification of required and recommended texts; URL of textbook website
• Additional materials to be assigned and where they may be found (in the library’s reserve room or on your website, for example)
• How to access and use the learning management system for the course, if any
• Where students may get help with accessing electronic materials (online reserve materials or materials in your learning management system, for example)
• Other required materials or fees (such as lab, printing, or photocopying fees, flash drive, two-pocket folders)
PLANNING A WRITING COURSE

Course Description
- Can repeat your school's catalog description, or you may write one (or both)
- Typically includes the major themes, topics, knowledge, and skills to be addressed in the course

Course Objectives
- Cognitive: what students should understand
- Affective: what students should appreciate
- Behavioral: what students should be able to do

Course Requirements
- Summary of assignments and due dates
- Reading assignments
- Number and type of papers and other assignments such as oral presentations or group projects
- Attendance requirements
- Class participation requirements (in-class, electronic, or both)
- Your expectations of the amount of time and work students should anticipate

Course Calendar
- Reading assignments with due dates
- Deadlines for drafts and other projects
- Dates of tests, special events, final exam, and course evaluations
- Deadlines for dropping or withdrawing from the course

Grading Policies and Procedures
- The course grading system (A–F, pluses and minuses, points, percentages, etc.)
- Percentage or amount each course requirement counts toward final grade (make sure percentages add up to 100%)
- Rubrics for evaluating papers
- Use of quizzes, surprise or scheduled, and whether or not they can be made up
- Penalties for late work (for example, “All assignments must be submitted at the beginning of the class on their due date in order to receive credit”)
- Extra-credit policy, if any
• Policy on incomplete grades (for example, “No incomplete grades will be given except in extreme circumstances”)
• Policy on incomplete portfolios (for example, “Incomplete portfolios will receive an F”)
• Policy on making up work (for example, “No work may be made up unless you have talked with me. It is your responsibility to initiate this meeting. Penalties for turning in work late may still apply”)

Academic Honesty Policy
• Your academic honesty policy must correspond with your department’s or university’s policy. Check with your chair to see if there’s a prescribed version to include.

Other Useful Information
• Campus resources such as a writing center, study skills center, technology help desk, or counseling center
• Space for 2–3 classmates’ names, telephone numbers, and email addresses

Some Tips to Help Students Do Well
• Most learning takes place out of class. The time students are expected to work outside class is usually two hours for every class hour.
• Read each reading assignment several times. Once is seldom enough.
• Come to class; sit in the front of the room.
• Ask questions and participate.
• Go to the writing center.
• Study with peers.

Course Rules
• Recording class discussions
• Eating food in classrooms
• Using electronic devices in class
• Other class decorum issues

As you can see, a course syllabus may be quite elaborate—or it may be fairly brief. Look at syllabuses for other courses like the one you’re teaching to see what instructors at your school customarily include in their syllabuses (or syllabi, or course plans—a term that varies from school to school).
A Sample Syllabus

Here is a sample syllabus for a fifteen-week writing course, annotated with commentary.

Hofstra University
Department of Writing Studies and Composition
Fall 2012

Writing Studies and Composition 001-33
Professor Carole Clark Papper
engccp@hofstra.edu

CRN 93404
Tue/Thu Breslin Hall 0019
12:45–2:10
Office hours: W 10:00–11:00
& 2:00–3:00
& by appointment

Writing Studies and Composition 001

Course Description (from the Hofstra Bulletin)

An introduction to expository writing at the college level, with an emphasis on analysis and argument. Assignments in reading and writing are coordinated. In-class exercises including workshops and oral presentations.

Expository writing is written communication that explains, describes, defines, or informs using fact and example as support. Exposition is the most commonly practiced type of writing; you find it in letters to friends, instructions on how to use a new iPhone, the reviews of the latest movies and video games, and descriptions of products advertised. You see it in manuals, pamphlets, articles in magazines and newspapers, blogs, and you have written it in school papers, reports, and research assignments. You may not have named it, but you have known it.

In this class, we will work at expanding that knowing by doing. Good writing doesn’t just happen; there is no magic pen or keyboard, no secret tricks that enable writers to produce clear, engaging prose. Good writing requires sustained effort.

Goals

After successfully completing Writing Studies and Composition 001, students will be able to

• Compose clear, grammatical sentences
• Use various sentence forms effectively to achieve rhetorical goals
• Plan and develop an essay based on a focused thesis sentence
• Respond to writing assignments using appropriate style, structure, and voice
• Summarize, analyze, and respond to a variety of texts in support of a coherent argument
• Summarize, quote, and respond to reliable texts to support and develop claims
• Conduct research using the variety of information sources available to them
• Use the resources of the Axinn Library effectively
• Demonstrate the ability to evaluate the relevance and utility of different sources
Creating a Syllabus

- Integrate sources effectively and ethically in support of an argument
- Document sources correctly
- Apply editing, proofreading, and revising strategies effectively

Required Text

Suggested

Additional
Additional reading selections will be provided by the instructor.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria—1,000 points
Diagnostic in-class essay (Thu Week 1) P/F
Attendance and participation 150 pts.
Writer’s Notebook 200 pts.
Writing Project #1: Narrative 150 pts.
Writing Project #2: Position 150 pts.
Writing Project #3: Analysis 150 pts.
Writing Project #4: Research-based essay 200 pts.

Required Work
Writing: The four Writing Projects will include invention work, drafting, and revision in response to feedback from both peers and professor. Some will incorporate research; some will involve visual elements and/or oral presentation to the class.

Reading Assignments: Because reading carefully and critically is essential to success both in college and as a writer, we will work on those skills as well, using the readings as noted on the Course Calendar. You are expected to have read and annotated any assigned reading before class, so that you can engage actively in discussion. (The annotated bit means mark it up and have some questions/observations about it to share with the rest of us.)

Policies
Attendance and Participation: Regular attendance is mandatory, required, nonnegotiable. This isn’t a lecture class where you can “get the notes” from someone else. Learning in a writing class is always collaborative and socially constructed; thus active, engaged participation is required. In order to participate, you must be here, be awake, and be focused on the class. If you miss a class, you need to contact another student in the class for notes and assignments. However, missing a class does not mean you are excused from the assignment. There is no make-up work for missed
class assignments, so if you know you’ll be absent, arrange to turn in any assigned work in advance.

My attendance policy is pretty straightforward: you have three absences, no questions asked; no excuses needed. If you miss four class meetings, you will be advised to drop the course. Should you stay, you will lose 15 points from your overall participation grade (see above). For the fifth missed class (and for each additional missed class after that), you will lose an additional 30 points of your participation grade.

Also note that being late 3 times equals an absence.

In the event of an emergency (serious illness or family responsibilities that require a long absence), you should contact me as soon as possible (NOT after disappearing for several weeks).

If you already know that you will miss a week or more of class, you should drop this class now.

Late Assignments

I don’t accept late writing projects. There is one exception to this policy: if you let me know before the assignment is due, and there is just cause, I will extend the deadline. However, you must contact me before the assignment is due, either by email, a phone message, or in person. Asking for an extension during the class when an assignment is due is not acceptable.

For projects that are handed in late, I will deduct one letter grade from that project. You can see that this will seriously impact your overall grade.

Participation

Participation means active and engaged, intelligent and consistent involvement in each class. You must read each assignment carefully and critically and complete each assignment thoroughly. If you come to class unprepared—haven’t done the reading, haven’t prepared the required materials to participate—then you’ll be excused from the room and your grade for that day/those assignments will be zero.

This policy also pertains to individual conferences with the instructor—come to your conference prepared to discuss the assignment for that conference.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

As a student at Hofstra University, you have joined the academic community, a community that “assumes that work of any kind—whether a research paper, a critical essay, a homework assignment, a test or quiz, a computer program, or a creative assignment in any medium—is done, entirely and without assistance, by and only for the individual(s) whose name(s) it bears. If joint projects are assigned, then the work is expected to be wholly the work of those whose names it bears. If the work contains facts, ideas, opinions,
discoveries, words, statistics, illustrations, or other elements in any media form (including electronic) that are beyond the assumption of being common knowledge, these must be fully and appropriately acknowledged, following a prescribed format for doing so. They may be acknowledged through footnotes, endnotes, citations, or whatever other means of accreditation is acceptable according to the format prescribed in that particular field of study."

Students bear the ultimate responsibility for implementing the principles of academic honesty. Students must understand that it is not enough to identify the source of quoted material; it is also necessary to indicate when one is paraphrasing (restating in other words) material found in a source. Thus, the use of others’ ideas as well as their words needs to be acknowledged. (from the Hofstra University Bulletin, http://bulletin.hofstra.edu/content.php?catoid=53&navoid=3087)

Universities take plagiarism very seriously; at Hofstra, plagiarism is considered a serious honor violation and may result in a failing grade or expulsion from the university. For details, see the "Procedure for Handling Violations of Academic Honesty by Undergraduate Students at Hofstra University," http://www.hofstra.edu/PDF/Senate_FPS_11g.pdf.

NOTE: If you have any questions about what is or is not plagiarism, please ask me.

Disabilities Policy

If you believe you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, qualified individuals with disabilities will not be discriminated against in any programs or services available at Hofstra University. Individuals with disabilities are entitled to accommodations designed to facilitate full access to all programs and services. SSD is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will provide students with documented disabilities accommodation letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact SSD as soon as possible. All students are responsible for providing accommodation letters to each instructor and for discussing with him or her the specific accommodations needed and how they can be best implemented in each course.

For more information on services provided by the university and for submission of documentation, please contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities, 212 Memorial Hall, 516-463-7075.

A Useful Reading

Designing Writing Assignments

**When you hear faculty complain** that the writing their students submit to them is horrible, the fault often lies not so much with the ability of the students but with the quality of the assignment. Vague, incomplete, poorly constructed assignments elicit—guess what?—vague, incomplete, poorly constructed student writing. On the other hand, carefully constructed assignments can aid students as they write, guiding them to well-written texts. That’s why it’s important to craft your writing assignments carefully: you get what you ask for.

**Developing Assignment Sequences**

When you plan assignments, think in terms of sequences that move students through a series of activities toward the goal of a finished piece of writing. Reading, working in groups, generating ideas and text, drafting, getting response, revising, editing and proofreading, and evaluating—each of these activities helps students write better texts. You may well think initially of a course as made up of a few assignments—a narrative, a textual analysis, a report, and an argument—but each of these products results from a carefully plotted sequence of in-class and out-of-class assignments, each of which contributes to the quality of that final product.

**Using Everyone’s an Author**

*Everyone’s an Author* is designed to help you develop clear and effective assignments. Each of the genre chapters (Chapter 7, ARGUING A POSITION; Chapter 8, WRITING A NARRATIVE; Chapter 9, WRITING ANALYTICALLY; Chapter 10, REPORTING INFORMATION; and Chapter 11, WRITING A REVIEW) presents a sequence that leads students from an everyday example through the ways that genre appears Across Academic Fields, Across Media, Across Cultures and Communities, and Across Genres. The chapter then identifies the characteristic features of the genre and offers examples of each, including an annotated reading, so students can see how these features function within a piece of writing. The next section is a road map that guides them from choosing (and
researching, if necessary) a topic to forming a thesis, drafting, self-evaluating their work, getting feedback from readers, and revising. If you’re new to teaching, you may find those chapters to be useful models of successful assignment sequences. If you’d like to design your own sequences, the activities in those chapters can provide a framework for creating assignments using various parts of Everyone’s an Author. At its most basic, creating a sequence of assignments involves these steps:

1. Introduce the assignment using representative examples and readings.
2. Identify the characteristic features of the genre (as defined in the genre chapters 7–11 and the Research section, Chapters 19 and 20).
3. Provide help in choosing a topic (presented in the road maps for each of the genre chapters and in Chapter 3, WRITING PROCESSES).
4. Have students consider the rhetorical situation (Chapters 1–3, with advice in each genre chapter as well).
5. Ask students to generate ideas and text (with activities in each genre chapter) and do appropriate research (Chapters 15–18).
6. Have students organize their material, plan their text, and use appropriate writing strategies following the road maps.
7. Ask students to assess their drafts, get a response and revise, and edit and proofread using the roadmaps.

Of course, each of these steps may be expanded or contracted to suit the assignment and the needs of your students. For example, you may give students only a few days to generate ideas and text and organize a memoir, on the assumption that they are familiar with narratives and have the necessary information in their memories. By contrast, students writing a researched essay arguing a position may need several weeks to generate ideas and find sources before they attempt a draft.

Making Your Expectations Clear

A good writing assignment gives students all the information they need to complete it. As Erika Lindemann notes in A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers, providing clear information about the rhetorical situation of the text you expect them to produce will help students understand both what you want and what they should do. The elements of the rhetorical situation that you should address include the following (adapted from Lindemann 212):

- Students’ interest in the topic and what they understand about it
- Purpose of the text—what it should try to accomplish
- Intended audience for the text
- Genre in which students should write, including its characteristic features
- Stance students should adopt
- Criteria such as format and deadlines
All of the genre chapters provide questions for each element in the rhetorical situation as well as a list of each genre's characteristic features. Here's an example of a good writing assignment:

Take a stand on an issue that affects your life as a student, a worker, or a citizen. Your argument should include a thesis declaring your explicit position, a response to what others have said, appropriate background information, a clear indication of why the topic matters, good reasons and evidence supporting your position, attention to more than one point of view, an authoritative tone, and an appeal to readers' values. Your purpose is to convince your readers that your position is reasonable—though you may attempt to persuade them to consider a certain position or to do something. You are writing to an informed, intelligent audience, so your stance should be thoughtful, balanced, and reasonable. Your essay should be 4–6 pages long. You must submit a topic proposal on 5 February, have a draft for peer review on 12 February, and submit a complete draft by 19 February.

This assignment provides students with considerable freedom to choose a topic of interest to them while giving them a clear indication of the rhetorical situation in which they must write, including important due dates and procedural information.

Assigning Topics or Giving Choices

Whether you assign specific topics or let students choose their own depends on numerous factors. If you want students to work together as a class on a project, you may assign a topic or a cluster of related topics on which individual students or groups of students might work. When asking students to evaluate a film, for example, you might provide a list of suitable movies and ask groups of students to choose one. If you're using the assignment to teach specific skills, you might assign everyone the same task so they can discuss its intricacies and compare their attempts, a useful tactic for teaching summarizing and paraphrasing, for example. Some instructors ask students to work from a limited set of source materials to write a researched essay on a controversial topic chosen by the instructor in order to teach them how to use sources appropriately. When you assign a topic, you gain control over significant aspects of your course. However, you run the risk that your students may not find the topic as engaging or as interesting as you do. Even if your writing program offers courses identified by their theme, students more often sign up for courses by time of day and availability than by course topic. Also you lose variety in your student drafts, something to consider when it comes time to read and respond to twenty or twenty-five drafts—or more.

If you allow students to choose their own topics, you must help each of those two dozen students solve unique writing problems; however, you gain the opportunity to read and discuss many subjects you might never have otherwise
Designing Writing Assignments

encountered. More importantly, you offer students the opportunity to explore topics in which they have an interest, resulting in more engagement in the work of your class and better writing. In general, don’t leave assignments completely open. Stipulate a genre within which students must write, help students narrow or broaden topics to fit the constraints of their abilities and the course, and veto topics that are unmanageable or difficult to write well on. Consider an assignment to be like a game: establish the rules and set the boundaries of the playing field, and then let your students be as creative as they can within those rules and boundaries.

Helping Students Interpret Your Assignments

No matter how elaborately instructors define assignments, students need to interpret them in order to begin. Part of that interpretation involves making a judgment about the ease or difficulty of accomplishing the tasks. One student may understand an assignment as requiring several hours of library research, the creation of a detailed outline, and a schedule that will permit the writing of several drafts. Another student in the same class, interpreting the same assignment, will assume that it can be knocked off with an hour’s research on the web and a single, quickly written draft. One, if not both, of these students may be misinterpreting your expectations, so it’s important to clarify them. Breaking a large assignment into a sequence of activities, each with a due date and a product to be submitted, is helpful; so is a suggested timetable. Consider, too, showing good examples of the amount and quality of work you expect. You don’t want your conscientious students spending hours on an assignment you consider a brief learning tool, and you want to prod your less conscientious students to adopt suitable work habits.

Doing the Assignment Yourself

Whenever possible, do assignments yourself before you give them to your students. You will accomplish two important things: (1) you can find out whether the assignment works—if it’s doable or leads to unanticipated difficulties—before students are led into a swamp; and (2) you develop an example that you can show them and discuss, not necessarily as an expert but as a fellow writer who sometimes struggles with an assignment. Students rarely see the writing of their teachers and even less often see that writing with its dead ends, revisions, and rough edges, and they find the process fascinating. Show students your own writing, and you’ll not only show them how they might approach assignments, you’ll gain credibility in their eyes as someone who does what you ask your students to do.
Useful Readings


Conducting Class
YOU MAY REMEMBER MOST VIVIDLY your upper-division courses, which were probably a mix of lecture and discussion. As a new teacher of writing, however, you're faced with a different situation, a course in which the subject is writing, and the goal is primarily the improvement of students' writing. How can you fill 150–200 minutes of class time a week on writing? This chapter offers some advice on structuring your class time in ways that will engage students and help them improve their writing.

Structuring Classes

The primary model of college teaching is the lecture that fills the entire class period, no matter how long. Various observers have noted, though, that students' attention begins wandering after about twenty minutes, suggesting that varying class activities will maintain students' interest and improve their learning better than doing any one activity for the whole class period. Your class will likely run more smoothly and be more interesting to you and your students if you follow a predictable overall pattern during class but vary the activities within the pattern. One pattern that works well includes these tasks:

- Review what the class has done so far.
- Clarify the relationship of students' previous work and current tasks.
- Introduce activities or offer information to help students with current and upcoming tasks.
- Prepare students to do the next assignment in the unit.

Each of these tasks may require one or more activities and take up more or less time, depending on your purposes and your students' needs. For advice on coordinating your class activities with your assignment sequences and overall course goals, see Chapter 11, “Designing a Writing Course.”
Here are some activities that successful writing teachers use to achieve their purposes in class.

**Workshops and conferences.** Writing workshops and student conferences are the primary activities in most writing courses, often being the predominant use of class time. See Chapter 15 in this Guide, “Conducting Class Workshops,” for detailed advice on setting up and running workshops in class. As preparation for workshops, you can ask students to read Chapter 4, THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION, and Chapter 34, JOINING A WRITING GROUP, in Everyone's an Author. Both offer students tips for success in group work as well as activities for working collaboratively and assignments for reflection.

Although students working together can accomplish much, sometimes you need to discuss each student’s writing individually. Chapter 16 in this Guide offers detailed advice on scheduling and holding conferences.

**Mini-lessons, presentations, and lectures.** Mini-lessons are brief, 5–10-minute lessons on a specific topic. They may include information students need to know, such as the importance of the rhetorical situation; procedures for class activities, such as how to respond to others’ drafts or how to collaborate successfully; lessons in specific writing strategies or processes, such as options for generating ideas and text, editing, or narrating; lessons on topics that may give students trouble, such as citing websites; or lessons on specific aspects of writing, such as using semicolons. Mini-lessons are successful because they are clearly focused and brief. Many instructors start class periods with mini-lessons that focus students’ attention on the day’s work or answer a question that came up in a previous class. You might end some days with a mini-lesson that explains an aspect of the students’ assignment or intersperse mini-lessons throughout a class period as you move from activity to activity.

Presentations using PowerPoint, Prezi, audio, or video often accompany mini-lessons or may comprise longer segments of a class period. For example, you may show a brief video clip to introduce a writing or research assignment. As always, though, such a presentation should have a clear pedagogical purpose. Although students like to be entertained, they understand that what goes on in class should relate to their purpose for being there. So make the connection between a presentation and their writing explicit, both orally and through follow-up activities that ask students to analyze or use the presentation in some way. For advice on creating effective media presentations, see Chapter 30, DESIGNING WHAT YOU WRITE, in Everyone’s an Author.

Lectures may be useful for transmitting content, but they are usually ineffective for writing classes. You may find an occasional lecture useful, but if you do, treat it as a carefully crafted, focused explanation of a specific topic appropriate to the assignment students are engaged in developing. To aid students’ understanding, accompany your lecture with visual presentations of the material.
Discussions. Discussions can be useful for helping students develop and articulate their thinking on issues related to their writing and reading. After asking students to read several narratives, for example, you might ask them to discuss the way each writer expresses the significance of the events portrayed in the narratives and which ways are most effective. Or you might ask students to describe a situation in their lives where they evaluated a movie or a song and then compare that evaluation to a formal, written evaluation of a movie or a song. Having a good discussion involves getting students to participate, moving the discussion forward toward your goals, and dealing with emotional or interpersonal issues as they arise. Here are some tips for conducting whole-class discussions.

Getting students to participate. Students are often hesitant to participate in discussions. They may be unsure of the reaction their comments will elicit from you or from their classmates. They may feel unprepared. They may not know where to begin. When you start a discussion, consider these tactics to help students become comfortable and more likely to respond:

- **Consider the seating arrangement.** Having students face one another, in a circle or some other arrangement, creates a better dynamic for discussion than sitting in rows. It’s also harder for students to hide.
- **Begin with writing.** Ask students to write for five minutes on the topic you wish them to discuss. Then ask some or all students to share what they’ve written. This simple technique gives students a chance to think about the topic and rehearse what to say; it relieves pressure and permits thought.
- **Start with a common experience.** If students can relate the topic to something in their own lives, they’re likely to have something to say: for example, a life event that everyone has likely gone through or knows about such as the loss of a pet or a family member. A shared event or presentation might take place in class: a brief video, a common reading, even a staged skit.
- **Pose a problem.** You might present a scenario or point out a contradiction between two ideas or positions and ask students to explore ways of dealing with it. Your challenge here is to keep the possible options for dealing with the situation open as long as possible so students don’t latch on to the first solution and settle for it, effectively ending the discussion.
- **Start with a group activity.** Some students, indeed some classes, find discussing topics in small groups easier than talking as a class. If so, begin discussions by asking students to write briefly; to share their writing with three to five classmates in a group; and then to solve a problem, reach a consensus, or otherwise carry the discussion forward. Have the groups report to the class, using their reports to start the whole-class discussion. This activity can be done quickly: for example, in workshops on writing across the curriculum, Toby Fulwiler asks participants to write for five minutes, share in groups for five minutes, and then report. The discipline of a brief time limit keeps everyone on task.
CONDUCTING CLASS

• **Conduct discussions online.** Holding a discussion in a computer classroom through the computers may seem odd, especially as you hear students engaged in discussion only by the clicking of fingers on the keyboard. However, some students who would never contribute to a spoken discussion will reveal strong voices in online discussions. And some students that simply won’t talk to one another will write to one another.

**Moving the discussion forward.** Once you have a discussion going, here are some tips for keeping it going:

• **Plan for possibilities, but don’t assume you can predict the shape of the discussion.** To prepare, know the subject as well as you can and identify your goal in having the discussion. Then, as students talk, you can interject responses and questions to nudge the discussion in the direction you want it to head. Avoid creating a script or flowchart for the discussion, however, or your plan is likely to be useless within five minutes.

• **Use silence as a tool.** Too often, when teachers ask a question, they don’t wait long enough: the silence makes them uneasy, and they either call on someone or answer the question themselves. Don’t. The silence following a question may make you uneasy, but it makes students uneasy, too, and sooner or later one of them will say something to break the tension. Allowing a period of silence following a question also shows respect for students’ need to think before speaking.

• **Use writing and groups to refocus students’ attention or jumpstart a dying discussion.** If a discussion heads in a direction you don’t want—it peters out, dissolves into irrelevancies, or becomes argumentative, emotional, or personal—reset it by having students do a brief writing, share it in groups, and then come together again as a class. Small index cards are useful tools for this sort of writing, as their size makes them less intimidating; you can ask students to write on two topics, one on each side, and you can collect and read them aloud yourself or have students read their own.

• **Make sure everyone participates or has the opportunity.** You may have a couple of students who monopolize the discussion. If that happens, you may need to deal with the problem. For example, you might take the monopolizers aside, thank them for their strong contributions, and ask if they would allow others to participate more, to help their classmates gain the skills they already have. Chronic nonparticipants should be drawn out, again privately. Tell them you value their opinions and contributions and want them to share with the class. Asking students to write, and then asking all students to read what they’ve written, allows everyone to participate, too. Also consider offering students a couple of “free pass” opportunities; if called on, they can cash in one of their free passes if they aren’t ready to respond.

**Dealing with emotional or interpersonal issues.** Sometimes students become agitated, angry, or upset during a discussion. This display of emotion can be a positive
sign that students are engaged in the topic, but it can also make you (and them) feel uncomfortable or threatened. If you feel that you are losing control of a discussion or that students are becoming too argumentative, you can ask the class to stop and write briefly on the contended topic, giving everyone a chance to gather their thoughts. Then ask the class to articulate the arguments on both sides, perhaps listing them on the board and asking the class to look for areas of common ground. Refer to authoritative sources to resolve disputes that have a basis in fact or turn the dispute into a writing assignment, which can lead to a follow-up discussion during the next class period or be posted on an online discussion board. In a particularly contentious situation, you may need to spell out rules—perhaps creating them with the class—for acceptable behavior during discussions, for example, “No personal attacks,” or “Before you attack someone’s position, you must restate it in your own words.” Your goal should be to create a class atmosphere in which students feel safe in expressing their opinions.

Using Class Time Effectively

**Taking attendance.** Most instructors maintain an attendance policy, stated in their syllabus. You may take attendance orally, checking off each student as you read his or her name. This method is useful at the beginning of the term, when you’re trying to learn everyone’s name, but it can be time-consuming unless you combine it with another activity, such as a workshop “status-of-the-class” check (see Chapter 15 of this Guide, “Conducting Class Workshops”) or a brief written response to a reading. You might also take attendance silently, noting who’s present during workshop or group activities. Some instructors ask students to sign an attendance sheet at the start of every class, making the point that if their name isn’t on the attendance sheet, they’ll be considered absent. This method puts the responsibility for taking attendance on the students, rather than on the instructor, and produces a paper trail of student attendance—or lack of it. A variation relies on simply collecting something from each student every day—a draft, a piece of in-class writing, a report of group work that all group members sign—and using it as evidence of attendance. The virtue of the daily assignment is the emphasis not merely on attending but on doing the work of the class.

Stating class goals and objectives, on the board or on a PowerPoint slide, establishes expectations for both you and your students; sets a consistent tone for the class; and ensures that everyone is on the same page. Spend a few moments reviewing them orally to get the class rolling.

**Structuring class time.** Most of the time, instructors feel that class periods aren’t long enough, no matter the number of minutes in each one. Here are some suggestions for using your class time wisely:

- Take attendance as part of another activity, as described above.
- Begin each class promptly with a brief writing activity. If you do this every day, students will get to class and out of their coats in time to do the
activity, rather than straggling in and getting themselves arranged while you try to start class.

- Maintain a schedule for each class that includes an estimate of the time each activity will begin and end. Even if you can’t keep to this plan—students are engaged in a good discussion or workshop, they have more questions than you anticipated, a piece of technology you’re using stops working—you can adjust the schedule by shortening an activity, moving it to the next class period, eliminating it, or turning it into an out-of-class activity.

- Have some activities on hand that you can insert if, for some reason, you have time on your hands that you didn’t anticipate. A couple of mini-lessons, an engaging group exercise, even an essay or a couple of children’s picture books relating to the assignment that you might read to them can help you fill extra time with a worthwhile activity. Although dismissing class early will seem like a treat, most students, especially those who are working to pay their own way, will object if classes are abbreviated with any regularity. Experienced instructors are good sources of backup plans and activities, and they are usually happy to share, so don’t hesitate to ask.

- Hand back papers while students are working in groups. As you circulate, returning their materials, you can monitor the groups’ work.

- End each class with a writing activity. If you do this every day, students will be less likely to start packing in anticipation of the end of the class period.

Motivating Students

Some students want to do well and consistently come to class prepared, having read and written what you’ve assigned. Other students are less inclined to work without prodding, motivated more by their sense of how their peers will see them than by their desire to please you or to earn a good grade. You can help those students by creating class activities that ask them to perform for other students. A traditional approach is to ask questions and call on students at random for the answers, but that method is hard on shy students and isn’t often appropriate to a writing class. A better way is to build in occasions for students to present their work to the rest of class. Ask students to read parts of their drafts aloud within small groups and to the class. Require that groups report their work to the class, alternating the role of speaker. Have students read in-class writing to start, refocus, or conclude a discussion. Here are some alternate methods for encouraging student performance: go around the room, asking each student to read or respond; ask for volunteers; call on a few individuals at random; require postings on an online discussion board. The key is to use class activities that demand everyone’s participation and don’t allow students to become unengaged, invisible, or silent.
Observing Other Classes

While reading about and discussing how to design class meetings is useful, the best way to come to an understanding of how classes work is to experience them. Ideally, you should sit in on several veteran instructors’ classes in order to watch them as they teach. Observe how they structure their time, establish rhythms, move the class from place to place, and deal with surprises or unanticipated issues. Some tips on visiting include the following:

- **Ask permission first.** Some instructors are hesitant to let other instructors observe their classes, or they may want you to visit when certain activities are planned.

- **Arrive on time, even a bit early.** You want to disrupt the class as little as possible, and already being seated when students arrive is one way to do that.

- **Ask the instructor where you should sit.** Remember that you’re a guest, and, more than that, your mere presence changes the dynamics of the entire class, at least at first. Once the students get used to you, they’ll ignore you, but during the first ten minutes or so, they’ll be aware that you’re there.

- **Take your cues from the instructor.** Some instructors will introduce you to the class and explain why you’re there; others won’t. Some instructors will want you to participate as much as you’d like, sitting in on groups, speaking up during discussions, and contributing during lessons; others will want you to sit quietly and apart from the class to minimize the effects of your presence.

- **Take notes—lots of notes.** Take notes on whatever you see and hear—eavesdrop on students’ conversations to one another or in groups, look over students’ shoulders (if you can) to see what they’re writing, describe what the instructor is doing when he or she’s moving around the room or sitting at the desk in front. If you vow to yourself that you’ll take notes more or less continuously, you’ll force yourself to pay attention to the class so you’ll have material to write about later. Jot down the time in the left-hand margin every few minutes, so you’ll know what happened at what time. Divide your notes into three columns: one for the time, one for the notes you take as you observe, and one for additional observations, comments, and responses that you add later.

- **Focus on students as well as the instructor.** In a workshop class there’s a lot of activity going on, whether or not the instructor is talking: students are working in groups or individually, and the instructor is conferring with individuals, modeling desired behavior, or preparing for the next set of class activities. Remember that a classroom is a rich milieu filled with twenty or twenty-five people engaged in a common enterprise: things are happening, even when the room is silent and everyone is working quietly at their desks or computers.
CONDUCTING CLASS

• Expand on your notes as soon as you can after the class meeting ends. Add additional details and your reactions while you still remember them.

• Offer to share your observations with the instructors whose classes you observe. Most will welcome the opportunity to see their classes through the eyes of another instructor.

A Sample Observation

Chris Massey, a first-year graduate teaching assistant at Wright State University, wrote this report of his observation of a class taught by Catherine Crowley, an instructor in the English department. He notes the time periodically to help him remember the pacing of the class, and he intersperses his reflections (in italics) with his report of his observations.

I sat in on two classes taught by Catherine Crowley, an instructor at Wright State University. The two classes met on Wednesday and the following Monday during the 6th and 7th weeks of the 10-week fall quarter, as students finished writing an analysis of a text and began working on a profile. Each class period lasted 65 minutes and took place in a classroom equipped with networked computers for each student. Students have access to Microsoft Office applications as well as the internet and courseware that includes Desire2Learn.

Wednesday, October 13

1:30 p.m. Professor Crowley returns papers and passes around the attendance sheet. While the students review their graded papers, Professor Crowley reviews the lesson from Monday and connects Monday’s activities to the students’ objectives for today. Here, she accomplishes two tasks at once—she gets “housekeeping issues” out of the way while, at the same time, bridging the gap between Monday’s lesson and today’s lesson. I like the way she accomplishes this task: effortlessly. The students are not even aware of the teaching taking place. Upon successfully transitioning from Monday’s assignments to those scheduled for today, Professor Crowley asks the students if they are ready to submit their rhetorical analyses as final drafts. As you might expect, the entire class responds with a resounding “no.” She then agrees with the students and tells them that they can have the weekend to polish their papers. I hope I have this same connection with my students. I also need to realize that the goal is to get a set of well-written papers. Who cares about the deadline? I hope I have enough foresight to make changes to due dates when necessary. She then gives the class the plan for the day: She will visit each student and discuss topics for the upcoming paper, the profile. While she is visiting with each student individually, the rest of the class is to begin researching the topics for the profile paper using the internet. While talking, she begins passing out the assignment; she has posted it to D2L and has printed them each a copy. I wonder if I should use hard copies for my students. I always put the assignments on D2L, but I never give them a handout. I do this to keep from wasting so much paper, but I wonder if it helps to reinforce the assignment if the
students have a paper copy to refer to later on. Moving from the next scheduled assignment, she asks her students to recall specifically what they observed on Monday: “Stephen, what did we do Monday?” Stephen answers that they went outside and observed activities in the quad. At this point, she links their individual responses (“rustling leaves” and “the hot chick with the pink book bag”) to the assignment: observing behaviors and places. Here, the questions serve to reinforce the assignment from Monday and allow the students to link both assignments. It serves as a review of sorts. . . . I need to remember to do this. I tend to move too quickly. Take the time and review prior assignments.

1:36 p.m. At this point, Professor Crowley mentions that students who use Apple computers need to review their font choices before submitting assignments to websites. She gives this information because the sheet she passes out is from her computer, a Mac. This information is not related to the assignment, but it serves to link Professor Crowley to her students; they see her as one of them. She becomes human. I thought this was nice of her—students appreciate any information their instructor gives them that helps them out in the real world. Next, she tells the students that, “We need to make a plan, man.” Here, she relates the observation in the quad to the assignment: to come up with topics for the profile paper. She calls on individual students to relate their observations to their topics—Ryan wants to observe the Dayton Mall, and she warns that malls can be generic; Pam wants to observe a football game from her old high school; and Jessica wants to observe a homecoming. Professor Crowley gives constructive criticism here—some topics are good, others too general. Going around the room serves to make the assignment real—the students get to hear each other’s ideas, and it cements the profile topics in their minds. I sometimes back away from having my students share their ideas publicly, but I see now it can work to the students’ advantage.

1:43 p.m. At this point, Professor Crowley gives the students pointers for getting started on their plans. She tells them to take notes on a piece of paper, type it, etc. She then writes on the board: “What is your topic? How will you take your observation notes (laptop, pictures, video, etc.)? Remember to include the date, time, and specific place. Who do you plan to interview (may not know yet)? How will you make your interview (live, contact)? Write down possible questions. Create a survey?” This allowed her students to have a starting point (they took notes and made their own lists) to think about what they wanted to do. She then asks her class, “How will you find published sources about your topics?” She responds to their answers and advises them to look on the internet for possible sources. She also reminds them to identify and document their sources.

1:51 p.m. Here, a student—Katie—asks a question: “When researching soccer, do I research soccer in general or soccer about my high school?” Professor Crowley responds and compliments her student on a good question. She tells her entire class the question and responds that they should research specific topics, not general ones. She even responds to one student by telling him to ask his grandparents about his topic. She has a good connection with her students. . . . They respect her and value her opinion. Professor Crowley then logs on to the main computer console and pulls a website up:
CONDUCTING CLASS

St. Anne’s Hill, a website for the community where she lives. She informs her students that many websites are themselves profiles. She shows them the community homepage and the information located on the website, such as the demographics. She reminds her students that you can put opinions in a profile and she clues in the class that their main job now is to get information—concentrate on detail, detail, detail. I like the way Professor Crowley demonstrates how to utilize a website—I would have never thought of this. Good idea. Sometimes the simple ideas are the best.

1:55 p.m. She reminds them that their text analyses are due Monday. She tells them they have plenty to do this weekend. She tells them to use their fellow students as sounding boards: use each other to come up with ideas and comment on each other’s.

1:56 p.m. Professor Crowley begins individual conferences with students; other students are working on gathering information—she encourages them to talk to each other, to utilize the class time. I really like the idea that she encourages her students to talk to each other. It seems so simple, yet I have never used this. Good mix between individual time and group time. This approach allows Professor Crowley to spend time with each student while, at the same time, allowing students to work on their papers. Some students are typing answers to questions. Others are searching the internet and discussing ideas with their peers. One student asks, “Is first person OK?” She repeats the question to the class and answers yes to the class. She reminds the sports people that they don’t want just a play-by-play account; they need to interview players, cheerleaders, whatever will make the account realistic. She reminds them to zero in on the hometown event. Professor Crowley maintains excellent control of the room even when talking to students individually. I noticed several students who wandered from the assignment, but they only did so momentarily.

2:16 p.m. Professor Crowley continues to consult with individual students. She asks the class: “Is everybody working on something here?” Again, nice control of the room—this one statement reels in those students who are not working on the assignment. She responds to one student’s question about chat rooms, that you can use quotes from these sources. She also responds to a student who asks her about D2L and tells her to ask at the help desk. She reminds her students that they are going into this assignment as reporters and need to be as objective as possible.

2:27 p.m. Professor Crowley reminds the students that there is no class on Friday and tells them that she wants their topic choices. Dismisses class.

Useful Readings


WORKSHOPS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE in most writing courses. In fact, workshops are often the predominant use of class time. Most simply, a workshop includes any activity in which students write or respond to others’ writing, providing them the opportunity to give and receive focused response to their writing in order to revise it. When students confer with their instructor, they also receive focused response leading to revision.

Getting Started

You may offer workshop time as a regular feature of your course, so that during a workshop your students are engaged in various activities at once: generating ideas and text, drafting, conferring, evaluating, revising, editing, or proofreading. You may want to structure workshop times to focus on a single set of activities, such as editing final drafts before submitting them, or on collaborative activities, such as analyzing a text in groups. However you use workshops in your course, here are some guidelines to help them run smoothly.

Define workshop tasks clearly. Students should know what you expect them to do during workshop time and what to produce by the end. You may begin the workshop with a brief lesson outlining the tasks and the reasons for doing them as well as provide structure for the activities, as appropriate. If students are writing during class, clearly define what writing activities are acceptable and how they should carry them out. If you expect a certain product (a draft, a worksheet, a report to the class by a group), provide clear instructions.

Establish rules of behavior. At a minimum, you should expect students to come to workshops ready to do the assigned tasks. If you want students to follow specific rules (when responding to one another’s drafts in groups, for example, or when editing one another’s essays), state them clearly and enforce them.

Hold students accountable for their workshop time. If students are working independently, you might take a few minutes to conduct a quick “status-of-the-class”
CONDUCTING CLASS

check by asking students to state what they will be working on during the workshop. As they do, jot down their intended focus. Then you can use the notes to determine who might need help and who should work with another student—in other words, individualize your workshop instruction. Many instructors create simple forms that allow them to record students’ workshop intentions quickly. Here’s an example.

Sample Workshop Intentions Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's Name</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connor, Siobhan</td>
<td>Work on draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henton, Michael</td>
<td>Peer conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, Devi</td>
<td>Revise draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Editing conference, work on draft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can require each group to present a report to the class on its achievements, or ask each group to produce something in writing—a worksheet or an informal report—that each group member signs.

**Allow for some chitchat.** Students forming groups often need to establish a social connection before they can get down to work. To do that, they may talk informally together for a few minutes first. Also, if the group discussion becomes more serious than group members can handle, they may cool off by diverting the discussion away from the topic at hand. If they don’t return to the main topic, you may need to nudge them or give them a follow-up task.

**Circulate and monitor.** Workshops work best when students are given tasks that they complete independently, using you as a resource when necessary. Give them space to do that by staying at your desk for a few minutes after getting them started. Then circulate around the room, pausing to answer questions or listen to groups as they work. Students will ask questions if you’re in their vicinity, and you can glance over shoulders and initiate impromptu conferences as students work. Your presence may also keep students or groups on task, at least while you’re in the area. If your classroom layout permits it, sit at a student desk in the middle of the room. You’ll be able to hear all the groups as they work without seeming overly intrusive.

**Model writers’ behavior.** Just as students benefit from seeing your writing, they benefit from seeing you write and share your work. You might spend classroom workshop time working on a draft of something you’re writing—a piece you’re
Conducting Class Workshops

Asking students to write, a professional essay, a personal piece—and at some point share it with them, perhaps showing your revisions and describing your own process. Ask students to respond to your draft, using the same techniques you want them to use when responding to one another’s writing. Your students can be perceptive readers, especially in helping you explain concepts clearly.

Conduct conferences or small-group mini-lessons. You may schedule individual conferences during workshop time, speaking softly to students at your desk while the rest of the class works independently. If several students are having a similar writing problem, you might use workshop time to work with that group while the students who don’t share their problem work on their own.

Selecting a Workshop Format

Here are some common formats for writing workshops.

Independent workshops. In these workshops, students work on their own writing assignments, so in a class of twenty-five students, ten may be writing drafts, eight may be revising, five may be doing research on computers, and two may be editing a final draft. Have students declare their intentions through a status-of-the-class check; circulate and be flexible, nudging students when they finish one task to begin another. For example, a student who finishes a draft may need to get you or a peer to respond to it and then begin revising. A few minutes before the end of a workshop class period, it’s useful to stop students and ask them, either orally or informally in writing, to review what they did and what they plan to do next.

Whole-class response workshops. In these workshops, the entire class discusses one or two students’ drafts. Establish rules: the writer provides a draft a couple of days ahead of time, either bringing copies for everyone or posting it online, where the other students must read the draft before coming to class. In class, the writer reads the draft aloud while the class follows along and the writer provides background by describing the rhetorical situation and the stage of writing (rough draft, revision, or final draft). Classmates respond to the draft, offering suggestions and guidance, orally or in writing or both. Students should be reminded of their need to balance honesty and tactfulness.

Group-response workshops. Students work in groups of three or four in these workshops, responding to one another’s drafts. In one method, students take turns. The writer reads his or her draft aloud, while the other group members listen, taking no notes. When the writer finishes, the others write a brief response. The writer reads the draft again, and this time the others take notes on what they liked, what they didn’t like, and what they had questions about. When the writer finishes, each group member describes his or her response while the writer takes notes. The writer does not engage in conversation or debate with the others, since they are
simply reporting their reactions to the draft. The writer then decides how to revise based on the various responses. Here are some variations:

- Students trade drafts and read them silently before responding as described above. If left to themselves, some groups will decide to follow this procedure to avoid reading aloud. Encouraging reading aloud helps students hear both their own voice and potential trouble spots in their writing, but if you encounter a group of students who are very reluctant to read aloud, consider offering this silent option.

- Students read their drafts aloud to a group, which listens but does not respond, except with applause (which may consist of finger-snapping, to keep the noise level down). Especially early in a term, students may need to get used to the idea of sharing before they can work up the courage to give or get response.

- Students respond to one another’s drafts based on specific criteria, such as the characteristic features of genres defined in Everyone’s an Author. In this sort of workshop, have individual students or groups fill out a worksheet that outlines the criteria to ensure that students address everything you want them to.

**Focused-activity workshops.** The instructor defines a particular task for individual students or groups of students to complete. These tasks might include asking students to work individually on any of the processes of writing as part of their work on their own drafts; to analyze their own drafts or the drafts of classmates, answering specific questions about the writing; to collaborate to complete a writing task; or to choose one group member’s essay for oral publication to the entire class.

**Online groups.** In online courses, groups may still work together in discussion forums within learning management systems or through email. They can respond to one another’s drafts using such tools as Word’s Comment and Track Changes features and by highlighting parts of one another’s essays.

**Useful Readings**


INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES WITH STUDENTS to discuss their writing are time-consuming but can be very effective. If your school has a writing center, you can also refer students to work with the tutors there, but in fifteen or twenty minutes, you can establish a personal relationship with a student and offer focused, detailed advice to help the student write and revise. While you may have specific goals for some conferences (for example, you may hold conferences solely to help students settle on a topic for an essay), you can use conferences for a number of purposes:

- Provide one-on-one help.
- Listen and respond respectfully to students’ writing, working with the text they have—or discussing the text they don’t have.
- Offer whatever help students need, such as generating ideas and text, organizing a draft, working on various writing strategies, or exploring research options.
- Help students understand their own writing processes and identify areas for further work.
- Answer students’ questions.

Whatever you do, avoid taking over the draft or telling the student what to write. Most of the time, instructors and tutors make no marks on students’ drafts, leaving that job to the students themselves. The best conferences consist of conversations between two writers who are trying to improve one writer’s work. You should remind students that it’s up to them to interpret and enact, modify, or reject the advice they’ve been given. Here are some common questions instructors ask about conferences.

How often should you schedule conferences? The simple answer is, as often as possible; working one-on-one with students allows you to tailor your instruction to each student’s needs, making conference teaching “the most effective—and the most practical—method of teaching composition,” as Donald M. Murray says in “Conference Teaching: The Individual Response.” In that essay, Murray outlines
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approaches for turning an entire course into a series of conferences. Before you structure your course that way, however, you need to know your school’s policy on canceling class periods for conferences, and you need to gain experience in conference teaching. Although it’s rewarding, it’s also challenging, because you need to think on your feet, which can leave you mentally exhausted at the end of a day of conferences. Typically, instructors schedule one mandatory conference for each major assignment, usually two or three per term.

How long should a conference take? Conferences can vary from five minutes for a very focused conference on a limited topic to a half-hour or more. If you’re teaching writing for the first time, schedule twenty-minute conferences the first time, and see how they feel. Then adjust the length for subsequent conferences.

How should you schedule conferences? If you’re holding twenty-minute conferences for twenty-five students, your conferencing time totals eight hours and twenty minutes. You should schedule four conferences in a row, followed by a twenty-minute break, to allow for conferences that run long (some will) and to give you time to use the bathroom, eat, and recharge. So you’ll need a day and a half or so, with most conferences taking place on a day you cancel class. Setting a timer can help you keep to your schedule—both you and your student will wrap up your conversation once the bell rings.

What if students can’t meet during the times you’ve scheduled? If attending a conference is a course requirement, you have the obligation to make the requirement possible to complete. You may have to negotiate with some students for a special time or, if a meeting isn’t possible, a telephone or online conversation.

How can you hold conferences without spending so much time on them? You can schedule briefer conferences of ten to fifteen minutes each. When you’re crunched for time, you will need to be more focused, but most instructors find that it’s possible to get all the work done. Another option is to hold small-group conferences, scheduling three or four students for one thirty-minute conference—in essence, establishing a workshop of which you’re a member. If your class periods are lengthy, you can set aside the last fifteen to twenty minutes for conferences, meeting with three or four students each day.

At what point in a sequence of assignments should you schedule conferences? The glib answer is, anytime you want. Students will benefit, no matter when they have a conference with you.

What should students bring with them to a conference? Depending on the nature of the conference, in general it’s useful to ask students to bring something in writing: a thesis statement, a rough draft, an introductory paragraph, a set of questions. That writing gives both of you something concrete to work with. Since few students will have had conferences before, it’s a good idea to let them know what to expect, as teaching assistant Ozlem Wierzbicki did: “I gave them a mini-lesson
Working One-on-One with Students

on one-on-one conferences, which made a big difference in terms of their expectations for the conference. This mini-lesson was basically an outline explaining to them how the conferences would be conducted.

Should you read students’ drafts ahead of time? Inexperienced instructors who haven’t read many student essays may feel more confident in their ability to give good advice if they collect drafts and read them ahead of time. Most instructors, though, find that they can answer students’ questions or deal with the conference’s main issue after quickly skimming the essay at the start of the conference—or after having students point out the parts of the essay that concern them. Also, the time spent reading first and then conferring can double the time you spend with each student.

What if students come unprepared? Some instructors turn away students who come to a conference without a thesis statement or a draft. If students come unprepared, then it might mean they’re genuinely stuck: they can’t think of anything to write, they’re blocked, or they have personal problems that prevent them from doing the work. Work with what they have, helping them get caught up so they can progress toward success in the course.

How do you start a conference? What do you say? Invite students to sit and make them comfortable with a few words of welcome. As Murray points out, you may not need to say anything, or you may begin the conference with a question like “Well? What questions do you have?” For students who don’t know what to say, ask some general questions like these:

• What’s the strongest part of your draft? What makes it good?
• What’s your purpose for writing?
• Who’s your audience?
• What gave you the most trouble as you wrote?
• Where do you think you need more information?

If students come without a draft, these questions won’t work, of course. Then you need to shift gears with questions to generate ideas for topics:

• What interests you?
• What do you do for fun or relaxation?
• What makes you mad?
• What puzzled you in the reading we did? What made you uncomfortable?
• If you could write about ______________, what would you write? (This “fill-in-the-blank” approach is surprisingly effective, and is useful in many situations.)

How can you use Everyone’s an Author effectively as you confer with students? Because the book is organized for easy reference, you can quickly find the advice
you need at the time you need it. When you hold a conference, you might keep the book open to the Glossary/Index. As you work with students, you—or, better, your students—can go quickly to the advice needed. In the process, you’ll be teaching them how to use the textbook as a reference tool.

**What should students do while you’re reading their drafts?** You might give students something interesting to read while they wait. You can also ask them to bring two copies of the draft and read it while you do, so it’s fresh in their minds when you start discussing it. Here’s what teaching assistant Holly Gilbert discovered:

I had the students bring two copies of their draft to conferences with them. I found it to be extremely helpful because we both were not trying to flip through the same document at the same time. While I read through each draft, I had the students find specific points in their drafts that they wanted to talk about and star them; some even jotted down little notes in the margins to explain to me what they think works and what doesn’t and why they think it does or does not. I really found this to be helpful. It helped those students who even after writing a self-assessment had no idea what to discuss in the conference. The students who took the time to reread their drafts and star specific parts really got into discussing how they wanted to make their draft better and where they wanted to go from this point. Instead of staring at me and fearing what I was going to say about their drafts, they had something to do that kept them engaged and refreshed their memory about certain aspects of their drafts that they may want to discuss in conferencing. Our conferences started to have the tone of a conversation (as Murray would say).

**How should the conference end?** Each student should leave the conference with a clear sense of what to do next. It’s a good idea to ask students to state their plans in writing before leaving the conference, as the act of composing it together forces both of you to be specific and clear. You might ask if they have questions about any other aspects of the class or about their progress in the course.

**How should you handle students who don’t show up?** You want students to take the conference seriously, so you might consider a missed conference as equal to two absences. As teaching assistant Chuck Holmes notes, there’s also a personal dimension when students don’t come to conferences:

The most powerful response I had to any of my first conferences was the way it felt when students didn’t show up. I was pretty indignant about that. The vast majority of the students did attend the conferences and I think we all got something worthwhile out of it, so I have made myself a promise that I won’t say anything in the next class about how it made me feel, being stood up that way. As a matter of fact, now that I think about it, being stood up is exactly what it felt like.

**How can you use your campus writing center to the best advantage?** First, make sure your students know the writing center exists and encourage them to seek help there with their writing, whether they’re seeking a topic or polishing a final
draft. Include writing center information on your syllabus and on each assignment handout. You might contact the center’s director to ask for brochures or other material describing the center’s services to give your students. Some writing centers will send tutors to classes to describe their services to students. You could give students a bit of credit toward their grade for attending a tutoring session. Send a copy of your course syllabus and assignment descriptions to the writing center, and make sure they have copies of the textbook you’re using available for tutors. The more tutors know about your course and expectations, the more they can help your students. You may be able to require some students to get help at the writing center, but check with the center’s director first since some centers have limited scheduling ability. If you’re using Everyone’s an Author, have the students read Chapter 33, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE WRITING CENTER, before they schedule an appointment. Also check to see if your campus center has an explanation of what to expect on its homepage.

Useful Readings

WRITING IS A FORM OF LEARNING. As we write, we generate thoughts we wouldn’t have had if we hadn’t put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. In our own writing as well as our students’, we can see that thinking improves as drafts evolve. Because writing helps us generate ideas and clarify our thinking, the act of writing is a useful tool for teaching. This chapter explores some ways you can use writing to both enhance your teaching and improve students’ learning.

Freewrites

Freewriting is a tool used by many to generate ideas and text. By writing without stopping for a specified amount of time, authors frequently discover that they articulate complex ideas and sentences of unanticipated power that can then be more fully developed. Having students freewrite on index cards often reduces their anxiety, because, after all, anyone can fill up a small card. Here are three times when you can use brief, informal freewrites as pedagogical tools:

At the beginning of class. Ask students to write questions they have about the assignment that’s due or reactions to a reading. You can use their answers to start a discussion or to begin the class with a brief question-and-answer session, or you can collect the cards and skim them later to find out how well students understood the assignment—or if they did it. If students write on index cards, you can give them two assignments, one on each side. For example, “What’s one question you have about this assignment?” and “What’s one thing you liked about the reading for today?” Alternately, set aside the first ten minutes of every class for writing. Expect students to spend ten minutes writing whatever they want, an activity that settles them down and warms them up for the day’s activities. Starting the class with a writing activity is a good way to let students know that they need to arrive on time and be prepared, and it gives you a way to take attendance: if students turn in the writing, they’re present and on time.
At the end of class. Ask students to sum up the day’s activities or what they learned during class. Ask them to relate the day’s discussion to their reading, to ask questions about the assignment, or to predict what they’ll do with their drafts after working on them in class. These end-of-class freewrites help students synthesize course material and think about how to apply it to their own writing. They also forestall students’ tendency to start packing up several minutes before the end of class and let them know that you’ve planned their class time carefully.

During class. Brief writing activities can be valuable during class, too. When you finish one class activity, have students reflect on it before moving on to the next. If a discussion bogs down or becomes heated, ask students to stop and write briefly on the topic to get everyone on track (and give you a few minutes to regroup!). These brief freewrites may take as little as two minutes—just enough to give students a chance to think on paper.

Here’s how teaching assistant Andrea Nay uses brief writing assignments on index cards:

Every single class period, students must write on a topic I assign for the first 3–4 minutes of class. Some assignments are designed to be funny and simply serve as a means to capture attendance. Others are in keeping with the day’s lessons. In advance preparation for Wednesday’s mini-lesson on sentence breaks, for example, I had the students take the first few minutes of class Monday to write the longest grammatically correct sentence they could concoct on the front or back of an index card. The “winner” got a prize on Wednesday, and I used that sentence as a good example to illustrate the proper use of coordinating conjunctions.

Letters

Everyone knows how to write a letter. The form is simple, the stance and tone natural. As such, letters are a great way to communicate with your students. In The Letter Book: Ideas for Teaching College English, Sue Dinitz and Toby Fulwiler suggest that you require each student to write you a letter of at least 250 words—one page—each week. You might specify a topic, but I’ve found that simply requiring the letter and leaving the contents up to the students produce wonderful results. You might ask students to send you an email letter or give you a hard copy, or let them choose the medium they feel most comfortable with. Then read the letters quickly, highlighting or copying interesting passages or good questions. Respond with a “Dear Class” letter in which you use the passages you’ve chosen as the basis for your own remarks, sharing interesting thoughts they’ve expressed, answering questions, and exploring ideas with them. Give students credit for their letters.

You’ll find that these letters have several good effects. Students will be doing more writing, always a good thing. They’ll be writing to a real audience—you—on topics of importance to them. As a result, you’ll learn much more about their interests, backgrounds, emotional states, and circumstances than you would otherwise. You’ll be able to tailor your instruction to meet their needs and answer their
questions promptly. And through your exchanges of letters, you’ll get to know one another far better than students and instructors normally do. In colleges and universities, where young people may be living away from home for the first time, this personal connection between students and faculty can be crucially important to the students’ success, not only in your class but also in making it through their first year. Besides, learning about your students’ lives and thoughts is at turns touching, interesting, sad, and funny—but thoroughly rewarding.

Consider, too, asking students to write letters to one another, perhaps providing a copy for you. After several rounds of letters to and from you and each other, discuss the effects of varying audiences on the letters’ form, content, and stance.

Online Discussion Lists

You can use online discussion lists to engage students in conversations about any topics you might otherwise use class time to discuss or to extend discussion that begins in class. You can post a specific topic or question for students to discuss, or you could also ask students to create discussion topics. It’s best to require students to post responses; otherwise, participation will likely be spotty. Most colleges and universities offer you the ability to set up a group consisting of members of your course through a website portal, email, or online courseware. For more advice on online discussions, see Chapters 19 and 20, “Teaching in a Technology-Enriched Classroom” and “Teaching Writing Online,” in this Guide.

Journals/Blogs

Journals—also known as daybooks, logs, or personal notebooks—and their online manifestation, blogs, have been popular with high school and college English teachers for many years because they give students practice in writing and thinking on paper or online without the pressure of crafting polished prose. Some instructors focus their journal assignments on practice, simply requiring a certain amount of writing, such as a page or a post each day or five pages/posts each week. More often, though, students are given more direction, so that their journal writing contributes to the overall goals of the course. The sorts of assignments you might ask students to complete in a journal include the following, adapted from a list of characteristics described by Toby Fulwiler in The Journal Book (2–3):

- **Questioning.** Students can explore questions about their assignments, their research material, or class activities. They can also work out conflicts between what they’ve previously thought or learned and new information.

- **Responding.** Students can play with ideas or react to aspects of the course, giving them a chance to work out their thinking and giving you a window into their difficulties.

- **Consolidating and connecting.** Students can explore the ways that the various course activities and assignments interrelate, or how your course relates to their writing in other courses.
Using Writing Activities in Class

- **Analyzing.** Students might reflect on their own processes of writing, explaining how their activities helped (or didn’t help) them write an assignment. Periodically, they might also analyze the course itself: what’s been helpful so far, how the course differs from or matches their expectations, and what might be done differently to help them learn better.

- **Playing.** Students might use journal entries to play around in a safe environment: to write parodies or poems, draw cartoons, or explore hypothetical situations that they or you create.

- **Conversing.** Dialectical journals (also discussed in Chapter 18 of this Guide, “Using Readings to Teach Writing”) give students an opportunity to reflect on their own earlier journal entries. The technique is simple: students write journal entries on one side of a notebook page, leaving the other side blank, or they fold a page in two and write only to the left of the fold. Later, they read their entries and, on the other page or right-hand side of the page, they comment on those earlier entries. If students keep class notes, you might ask that they follow the same procedure.

**Tips for assigning and evaluating journals.** If you ask students to use a three-ring binder for their journals, they can use the same binder for all course materials and you can collect only the entries you want, rather than having to lug two dozen spiral notebooks around. Make sure students date each entry and begin each entry on a new page. Alternately, set up a system that allows students to post their entries online. Designate a minimum word length for entries; often, writers’ best insights appear near the end of an entry. To manage your workload, consider collecting the journals from half the class each week, so you’ll see each student’s journal every two weeks.

When you evaluate journals, remember that they are places for students to play, experiment, and explore. You should respond to their content as a reader. To evaluate the journals, you might give credit based on quantity; for example, journals with lots of writing earn high grades, and journals that meet the minimum requirements get a C. Or combine quantity with quality: doing the minimum earns a C, and higher grades depend on such qualities as elaboration, thoughtfulness, and playfulness.

**Blogs.** Blogs may be used as online journals. Blogs, which at their simplest are personal websites built upon a template, are easy to create and allow writers to include photos, documents, videos, and links to other websites as they explore ideas. One significant difference between a traditional journal and a blog, of course, is audience; instead of an audience of the writer and the instructor, the blogger’s writing is posted on the web, where it can be accessed by classmates and people all over the world. As a result, students may avoid certain topics that they might write about in a more private journal.
CONDUCTING CLASS

Useful Readings


LIKE WRITING, READING IS NOT A NATURAL ACT; it’s a learned activity. Because there are many genres in writing, readers attend to these genres in different ways. Reading, then, is not a single act but multiple practices that vary with the purpose, context, and kind of text. As the first readers of their own work, writers need to anticipate other readers’ needs, concerns, and levels of knowledge about a topic. Writers must predict readers’ expectations for the genre and relationship to the writer. In other words, writers need to learn to read as well as write rhetorically: they need a strategy for reading a text for its purpose, audience context, expected conventions, and style. Using Everyone’s an Author’s sample readings in the genres you’re teaching offers you an important opportunity to show students how to read a variety of genres rhetorically. This chapter offers strategies for assigning readings and using them in the classroom.

Writing teachers assign readings for many reasons. As Wayne Booth so powerfully observes, embedded in readings of all kinds are worldviews and values:

To teach reading (or viewing or listening) that is both engaged and actively critical is central because it is in stories, in narratives large and small rather than in coded commandments, that students absorb lessons on how to confront ethical complexity. . . . It is in stories that we learn to think about the ‘virtual’ cases that echo the cases we will meet when we return to the more disorderly, ‘actual’ world. (48)

To become critical citizens and consumers, students need to learn how to make sense of ethical complexities and to understand multiple perspectives. Readings you assign can support this critical thinking at the same time they demonstrate the key features of a genre, explore a topic or an issue, and initiate research in an area of interest for the class. Most importantly readings teach students how to read other writers rhetorically so they can read their own writing rhetorically.

Regardless of your purposes for incorporating readings into your writing class, make your reasons clear so students will understand how the readings relate to their own writing. The suggestions here are by no means exhaustive but are meant as examples that may spark additional ideas.
CONDUCTING CLASS

Preparing Students to Read

Let students know why you have assigned the readings, either by including your purposes in the assignment or by giving a brief lecture or mini-lesson before they begin the reading. You might save the last five minutes of class to prepare students for the following class’s reading assignment by giving them a focus or a series of study questions. You can also prepare them for any unfamiliar vocabulary by playing a version of Balderdash: you say and spell one or more of the words you suspect will be unfamiliar, then have students write impromptu definitions. They pass the definitions to you or a chosen speaker in the class to read aloud. Students then vote on the most likely definition. The writer of the definition chosen gets a point, and all those who defined it correctly get a point. Points can be accumulated throughout the semester in this manner. Here are some other ways to use readings effectively.

Models. Readings can serve as good examples of the genres being studied but only if students are taught how to look at them as models. In ancient Greece, Isocrates offered a caution against placing models in front of students and expecting them to know how to compose a similar piece, offering the analogy that it’s like placing a row of shoes in front of novice cobblers and expecting them to understand how to make a shoe. How would the would-be cobblers know what raw materials were needed and where to get them? How to prepare those materials even if they could locate them? How to fashion the shoe? In writing as well, students need to be taught how to look at models.

It’s worth spending class time early in the term going over at least one essay in depth to demonstrate how to read it for its rhetorical features. Students can then continue this process on their own, guided by questions or perhaps by keeping a reading journal. You might ask students to write out their understanding of the essay’s rhetorical situation:

**Genre:** What is the genre? Is it a report? an argument? an analysis? something else? What are the key features of this genre, and where are they found in this essay?

**Audience:** Who is the intended audience? Are you a member of that group? If not, did you need to look up unfamiliar terms or concepts or run into assumptions you don’t necessarily share?

**Purpose:** What is the writer’s purpose? To entertain? To inform? To persuade readers to think something or take some action?

**Stance:** Who is the writer, and what is his or her stance? Critical? Curious? Opinionated? Objective? Passionate? Indifferent? Something else?

**Context:** What else has been said or written about this topic, and how does this essay fit into that larger conversation? What constraints—of time, audience, or the print or online venue where the essay was published, for example—was the writer working under? How much independence did the writer have? How much editing or fact-checking did the essay undergo?
Medium/Design: What is the medium, and how does it affect the way you read? If it’s a print text, do you know anything about the publisher? If it’s on the web, who sponsors the site, and when was it last updated? Are there any design elements—such as headings, summaries, color, or boxes—that highlight key parts of the text?

Collecting their responses and reviewing them in class will help students take the readings and their responses to them seriously and will also help to show how reading is an integral part of writing.

Reader’s logs. You can ask students to keep a reader’s log or journal where they record their impressions of assigned readings, focusing on their reactions to the lines of argument or the writer’s position or the rhetorical stance of the readings. You can provide specific questions tied to each reading or provide a template of questions that students apply to all readings. If you ask students to bring their logs to class, their entries can be a starting point for discussing the readings. You can also ask students to reflect on their entries either during class or outside of class following discussions in class. At the end of the term, you might ask students to review all of their entries and write a reflection on that review.

Summarizing and outlining. You can ask students to summarize or create outlines of readings. These activities force students to read carefully and attend to the structure as well as the content of the text. They also allow you to see how well the students understand the reading, and offer a starting point for discussions of the reading.

Double-entry notebooks. Ann Berthoff developed the concept of a double-entry reading notebook. As she explains,

> What makes this notebook different from most, perhaps, is the notion of the double entry: on the right side reading notes, direct quotations, observational notes, fragments, lists, images—verbal and visual—are recorded; on the other (facing side), notes about those notes, summaries, formulations, aphorisms, editorial suggestions, revisions, comment on comment are written. (“Is Reading Still Possible?” 48)

With a double-entry notebook, the opposing pages are seen in dialogue with one another. According to Berthoff, this kind of reading notebook helps students develop critical reading and writing skills because they are conducting a “continuing audit of meaning” (I. A. Richards, qtd. in Berthoff, “A Curious Triangle” 42). Questions and observations that appear in these notebooks can launch vibrant classroom discussions.

Discussions. Discussions of readings can take place either face-to-face in class or in a synchronous or asynchronous online forum. The goal of these discussions should be to help writers advance their own writing. Unlike literature classes where the readings serve as the focus for literary analysis, in writing classes...
discussions of the readings ought to be tied directly to the aspects of writing with which your students are grappling. If, for example, you're teaching a unit on how to write a profile, you might have students analyze readings in this genre for rhetorical moves that would be useful for their own writing. Students might read the annotated model in Chapter 10 of Everyone's an Author or a profile they find in a magazine or newspaper. Does the writer begin with an anecdote? What kind of information does the writer provide about the subject (person, place, or thing) profiled? How did the author get the information she or he uses in the profile? How does the author end the profile? Also, to help students prepare for discussions, you might ask them to freewrite any questions, concerns, or observations they have about the assigned reading. This task jogs their memories and provides a framework for discussion.

**Small-group discussions and activities.** Small-group activities help students practice collaborative work and are central to active learning. Variations on games students know can produce lively discussions. For instance, students can play a form of Jeopardy where they form groups and devise answers to questions relevant to the readings. They then challenge other groups by stating their answers and asking the other groups to form an appropriate question. Another strategy is to have student groups identify the rhetorical or content points they feel everyone should attend to. The small groups then share their recommendations with the whole class. Finally, students can be asked to select readings for the class and then lead the discussions either by themselves or in groups.

**Quizzes and essay exams.** Some teachers assign quizzes as a way to make sure that students are doing the readings. You may also want to help your students learn how to write essay responses to exam questions under pressure. Let students know that they will be taking periodic quizzes on the readings as a way to help them become strong quiz takers throughout their educations.

An alternative and perhaps better approach is to use quizzes to help students learn how to write quiz and exam answers. Have students design a final exam on the readings and write a rationale for their exam. Students find that they have to understand a whole lot in order to write good essay exam questions.

There are lots of valid reasons for incorporating reading into the writing classroom, and there are many creative ways for doing so. Still, a note of caution is in order: because they often have a strong background as readers, some new writing teachers are tempted to spend too much time on the readings instead of the writing that should be the primary focus of the course. Keep your goal in mind: use readings to help your students improve their writing.

**Useful Readings**


Teaching in a Technology-Enriched Classroom

Today, classrooms come in all manner of configurations, but one constant is that students are conversant with and expect to see technology. They’ll likely be carrying smartphones and perhaps laptops or tablets. This chapter will offer advice on teaching writing in a classroom equipped with computers for you and your students. In addition, check out the activities and advice in Chapter 20 of this Guide, “Teaching Writing Online.”

Getting Started

The availability of technology always implies an imperative that we use it. When you teach in a technology-rich classroom, you may feel pressure to use whatever is in the room, every day. Resist that pressure. Instead, use the equipment and software as you feel comfortable and as they support writing instruction. Especially if you’re teaching for the first time, you have a lot to get used to; there’s no need to increase your anxiety by struggling to master the principles and practices of effective teaching as well as hardware, software, and a learning management system (LMS). You can always increase your use of technology as the term progresses, or use a few, simple tools one term and add a few more tools to your repertoire each term. It’s more important that you use a technological tool effectively than use every tool that’s available.

Using the Available Tools

The configuration of electronically enhanced classrooms varies from school to school. The following tools are commonly available for your use, but before the term begins, go to the classroom where you’ll be teaching and find out exactly what’s available and how each piece of equipment works as well as how to get technical support.

Networked computers for each student. When your students arrive in class, they sit in front of a computer at a workstation or get out their laptops. Typically, they’ll
need to log in to your university’s computer network just as you do, with a username and password. While most students master this procedure easily, there are always a few students—usually ones new to the university—whose passwords don’t work or who don’t remember them. Find out how to assist these students, usually through your school’s help desk, so they can gain access as quickly as possible. Beware the temptation to become so embroiled in helping one student that you lose significant class time; you can always suggest that students look on their neighbor’s screen or do the day’s work with paper and pencil during class, and find the answers to their computer problems after class.

Once students are logged in, you can immediately give them tasks on the computer such as creating a writing sample, sending you an email (to which they can attach a writing sample, if you ask for one), finding your course syllabus if you posted it online, or registering for the LMS you’ll be using. Provide complete, step-by-step instructions on the board, projected onscreen, or on a handout and be prepared to circulate, offering help and making sure students’ screens show the desired destination.

When you want to engage in a face-to-face discussion, lecture, or some other activity, some students will keep working at the computer. The presence of the computers forces instructors to find ways to divert students’ attention away from the machines and toward the instructor or one another. Have students move their chairs toward the front of the room, if possible, or ask students to close their laptops, turn off their monitors, or place a sheet of paper over the keyboard.

Another difference that you may need to take into account is the noise of the computers. Most computers contain one or two small fans to dissipate heat, and the low hum generated by twenty-five computers running at once can add up to a level of noise that makes hearing speech across the room difficult. If you can’t hear students, they probably can’t hear you, either, so you all may need to project your voices more than usual. Students may need to stand up when they speak so they’ll be seen and heard.

A printer is usually available, either in the classroom or in a central location nearby. If students have to pay for printed copies, they may prefer to use their own printers, so it’s a good idea to reserve in-class printing for special occasions or leave it up to students whether or not to print in the classroom.

**Instructor’s station.** Familiarize yourself with the instructor’s station: how to log on to the computer, how to raise and lower the projection screen, how to turn on the projector and show or hide the image being projected, how the other available features work. Your school’s computer services office may offer sessions to teach faculty how to use this equipment; if so, you’ll find it time well spent. If not, you may be able to enlist the aid of a help desk employee or an experienced teaching assistant or faculty member.

Your room will probably also be equipped with a whiteboard, rather than a chalkboard (to eliminate chalk dust, which can harm computers), so find out what kind of markers you should use—usually, water-based and erasable—and take several with you. These markers dry out quickly, so having your own supply is a good idea, and if you want several students to write on the board at once, you’ll know
you have enough for everyone. If the room has electronic whiteboards, you’ll need special markers and training to use them. Your room may not contain such items as an overhead projector or document camera, television monitor, or DVD player (unless it is built into the computer in the instructor’s station). Find out how to request such equipment well before you need to use it.

**Internet access.** If your students have internet access on their classroom computers, you might have them search for examples to support class discussion topics, for example, or compare various news sources to get a sense of how authors appeal to specific audiences. Using sites like *Inkwriter*, students can compose progressive, interactive short stories or reports. *Google Docs* enables both group work and instructor assessment by making it easy to compose, share, and revise collaboratively. The internet has fundamentally changed the way we access information—and the way we create and share knowledge. Use the tools students are most comfortable with, including social media sites like *Twitter* and *Tumblr*, to expand their understanding of the rhetorical power inherent in communication that reaches beyond their immediate environs.

**Library resources.** Academic libraries offer several resources—through the catalog, hundreds of databases and online scholarly journals, and librarians available to answer research questions. Students can do substantial library research in class while you circulate to offer help and instruction in the research avenues available through the library. At some schools, research librarians will visit your classes to introduce the library’s resources and help your students start searching for information on their topics—a service worth taking advantage of.

**Learning management systems.** Learning management systems, sometimes called *courseware*, are sophisticated web-accessed software systems used at many universities. These programs allow you to post course materials, including readings, lessons, photographs, and your syllabus; to create links to websites, such as your school’s library and writing center and other sites you want students to have easy access to; and to create discussion boards where students can post responses to questions you pose or topics you specify and then follow threads of postings, responding to one another. They also include course management features, such as the ability to email all students at once as well as individuals or groups; to sort students into collaborative groups, either randomly or by your choice; to create assignment dropboxes and folders into which students post assignments; and to track students’ attendance and grades. Many programs are available through a university-purchased license, so your choice may be limited to the program supported by your school. As with other aspects of a computer classroom, you may find the easiest introduction to be a workshop presented by your school’s computer services department.
Making Choices about Technology

You can use courseware to effectively reduce or eliminate paper in your classroom as you make assignments, collect drafts and comment on them, and even have students compile portfolios of their work, all online—but you don’t have to. You can select the features of the courseware that you feel comfortable using and ignore the rest. If you like the idea that students have access to the course syllabus and all the assignments whenever they have access to a computer, post those materials online. If you prefer to read students’ drafts on paper, ask students to present you with printed copies. If you’d like students to send you drafts as email attachments instead of posting assignments on the LMS, that’s okay, too. It’s better to teach effectively using technology to enhance your teaching and students’ learning than to struggle with technology with which you aren’t familiar or that you aren’t convinced improves students’ writing or learning. See Chapter 20 of this Guide, “Teaching Writing Online,” for activities adaptable to the computer classroom.

Useful Readings


The Sloan Consortium’s Overview of Going the Distance, a 2011 survey of online learning, reveals that the “number of students taking at least one online course has now surpassed 6 million. Now nearly one-third of all students in higher education are taking at least one online course.” With enrollments increasing this quickly, there is a need for more faculty who can effectively and efficiently teach online classes. Thus, whether you are a TA teaching for the first time, an adjunct faculty member, or a full-time faculty member who has considerable teaching experience, you are likely to be given the opportunity to teach in a virtual learning environment. This chapter aims to help you successfully meet that challenge.

Online teachers, like online students, can connect anytime day or night on any computer that has an internet connection. You can avoid the hassles of driving to campus, finding a parking place, and designing and maintaining a schedule that requires your physical presence at a certain time or place. However, you also share in the frustrations of the online learning environment. Computers crash, programs fail, support isn’t always available, and it’s often difficult to create and maintain a community that supports and fosters successful learning. Further, all of the challenges of teaching in a face-to-face classroom are present in the online classroom as well. You still have to motivate students who don’t know why they need to learn to write, communicate standards and concepts to students who are new to the academic community and unfamiliar with its methods and requirements, and figure out ways to help each student improve his or her ability to successfully conduct research and write essays in an academic environment. So, how do you do that?

Preparing to Teach Online

Fortunately, most colleges have a department devoted to distance learning. The first step after you’ve been assigned a course is to contact the department and inquire about the format and expectations. For courses already set up in a virtual environment, the instructor’s role is to simply maintain the course, answer email about it, and grade the assignments. In many cases, instructional designers have worked collaboratively with content experts (faculty members) to design a course...
that is user-friendly and provides pedagogically sound methods for teaching
online, and so the most important role of the instructor is to provide timely and
accurate feedback.

Before the term begins, be sure to look over all the lessons required of stu-
dents and to contact your liaison with questions or concerns about the course.
Although you can teach online without course management software (course-
ware), many teachers and students prefer access to reliable, user-friendly course-
ware and both training and technical support from the university. If you are being
asked to teach online by administrators, the courseware and technical support
most likely are already in place. Your job is to find out what is available to you and
to ascertain the technical capabilities of your students.

In order to develop the best course design, you need to gather some informa-
tion about the students and the institution where you are teaching. Find out the
following:

- Does your institution already provide courses online? If so, which courses?
- Who teaches them?
- Which learning management system do they use? (Blackboard is the most
  common, although some universities create their own or use freeware like
  Moodle or Sakai.) Once you know what’s available, work with an IT person
  or a more experienced colleague to learn how to maximize the capability
  of your system.
- How are the courses put together? Who sets up a course? Does a course
  need to be approved before it is offered? If so, by whom? Who populates
  the courses with students?
- How long does developing an online course usually take from start to
  finish?
- Who coordinates the development, delivery, and support?

Once you find out the answers to these questions, visit with some of the faculty
already teaching online. Firsthand information from them will be some of the
most valuable information you can collect. Contact any support organizations
available to you. Many colleges provide workshops and help you set up your course
and keep it running smoothly. If your university does not offer faculty support in
this area, contact the company that provides the learning management system.
They can often answer questions and provide materials to make your transition to
online teaching easier and more effective. Give yourself ample time for testing the
materials before you begin the term.

After you look into instructor support services, check into the support pro-
vided for students. Does your school have a help desk for students? What informa-
tion is available concerning the technical literacy of students at your school or the
students who will be targeted to take your class? Is there an orientation for stu-
dents who are taking online courses? Do they have computers at home? Or will
they be visiting a library or campus to complete their work? All of these factors
will affect how you set up and manage the course.
Developing an Online Course

Planning the course. If a predesigned common course (often called the master course) is not available for your particular course, then you will need to consider the best steps for designing your own. As with preparing to teach in a face-to-face classroom, begin by determining your goals and objectives. (See Chapter 11 of this Guide, “Designing a Writing Course.”) Then determine the assignments and assessment tools for helping students meet those objectives.

There are many resources available online for helping you design online activities. One particularly helpful website is MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching), a free open-resource center that is designed primarily for faculty and students in higher education and offers links to online learning materials that have been peer reviewed and are accessible via smartphones and tablets, both iOS and Android. Instructors who have submitted their activities and learning aids to the site have agreed that anyone who would like to use them is welcome to do so without obtaining permission.

Determining assignments and assessments offers the greatest challenge to teaching online. You won’t be able to simply transfer your syllabus, assignments, instructions, and lectures word for word to an online format. Instead, you’ll need to identify new approaches and new techniques that take into account the limitations and opportunities of learning online. You might begin with a list of four or five techniques, strategies, or specific abilities that you would like your students to achieve by the end of the term. Here is a sample list of outcomes for a course on research and academic writing:

• Students will be able to formulate research questions that really matter to them.
• Students will know where to go to get credible research materials for an academic paper.
• Students will know how to evaluate research resources to determine their reliability, authority, currency, and relevancy.
• Students will be able to summarize, synthesize, and demonstrate an understanding of the information they have read from scholarly, credible sources.
• Students will be able to write and document research essays that demonstrate higher-level thinking skills and knowledge of one of the documentation methods used in academia (such as MLA or APA).

Generally, it’s a good idea to work through the objectives individually, brainstorming about the learning activities, assignments, and assessments that will help students reach each goal, but often as you begin to work through the objectives in this way, you’ll discover that many assignments and learning activities can fulfill multiple objectives. For instance, for the class outcomes mentioned above, an inquiry-based learning project utilizing topics selected by each individual student seemed the best approach for accomplishing the goals. Allowing students to
choose their own topics engaged students in the process, and step-by-step instructions on how to complete the project gave students confidence in the online environment as they worked toward meeting the objectives for the course.

**Presenting Materials and Activities Online**

Most activities and assignments for teaching online will fall into one of the following general categories:

**Instructor presentations.** Online instructors have many of the same options as instructors teaching in traditional classrooms when it comes to presentation methods. Faculty can give online lectures, present online simulations, and conduct online demonstrations with PowerPoint, Prezi, and other multimedia software. PowerPoint is the most commonly used presentation method; however, Prezi is becoming more and more popular. For both of these presentation methods, slides are easy to create and post. Moreover, the slides can be accompanied by audio files that contain instructor explanations of course materials. Most universities have multimedia labs that can help with the development of virtual presentations, but keep in mind two guiding principles. First, online learners do best with small chunks of information rather than huge blocks of text. Slides should provide a simple outline of the information students are to learn. For more detailed information, it is best to direct students to texts they can read offline. Second, because presentation software can take a long time to load, provide links to websites that offer the same information with faster load times or design a one-page summary sheet for students to review. If you are working in Microsoft Word, you can save the file as HTML and upload it into the courseware. It will open within the course frames, making it easy for students to read, and will load more quickly than a PowerPoint show. Another option is web pages on a web server or uploaded into courseware. Web development software is increasingly user-friendly, and web pages don’t depend on specific software for display. The site for developing Prezi automatically saves your presentation in a format that can be accessed online. And don’t be afraid to make short videos that can also be uploaded to the class site or even to YouTube or Vimeo.

**Simulations and demonstrations.** Simulations and demonstrations can best be provided on websites. If you give students a link to information instead of actual files, loading times will be exponentially quicker and frustration levels much lower. One of the best resources for online simulations and demonstrations can be found at MERLOT.

**Discussions.** Discussions are one of the best ways for students to demonstrate understanding of course material, and discussion tools are included with all of the learning management software packages. Research has shown that counting discussion postings as part of the grade for an online course is an excellent way to encourage student engagement in your class (Hannafin, Land, and Oliver).
Interactive discussions demonstrate students’ understanding of particular readings, allow them to summarize and synthesize information from various sources, and, if students post drafts in the discussion area, provide opportunities for peer review. Two basic types of discussion formats are available in most course management software packages: the chat room, which is synchronous—meaning students meet at a designated time—or the discussion board, which is asynchronous—meaning students can log on and post anytime that is convenient for them. In online learning environments, asynchronous discussions are often more successful than synchronous ones because students taking a class online often have schedules that prevent time-constrained meetings. That said, synchronous discussions (chat rooms) can be valuable for office hours. You can designate times that students can find you in a chat room; students can log on and ask questions that require some back and forth discussion. Chat rooms can also be valuable for student group projects, as they are most effective when used by four or five people at a time rather than large classes.

**Group work.** All types of group activities, from peer review to cooperative learning projects, are possible in the online environment. However, for group projects to be successful, pacing and organization are crucial. Consider the following as you design the group work for your course:

- Incorporate nongraded activities that allow students to get to know each other and develop working relationships before you require them to submit work that will be graded. Include activities that will allow them to become familiar with the technical skills needed to share and post information.
- Consider how, when, and where students will meet and how you will evaluate individual contributions alongside group contributions. Make all of this information available to students from the beginning of the project.
- Provide group members with as many ways of communicating as possible. Set them up with a chat room, a discussion area, a place to share files, email contact information, and, if possible, phone numbers. If *all* students are on campus, you may encourage face-to-face meetings; if not, do not do so because students who are off campus will feel slighted.
- Determine ahead of time how groups will be formed. It is not a good idea to allow groups to evolve organically, nor is it a good idea to determine groups arbitrarily. Groups formed around common interests are the most successful online—as they are offline.
- Clear and well-articulated guidelines for group work are imperative if the group assignments are to be successful. Also, clear assessment criteria must be given before the work is under way. Providing rubrics for online group work and discussion postings is an excellent way to help students successfully meet learning objectives.
Research. Much of learning to write in college involves learning how to effectively and efficiently conduct research. Fortunately, much of the research needed for first-year composition courses (in fact, for most university courses) can be effectively completed online. University libraries are at the forefront of developing online research tools and access to those tools. Many libraries provide online tutorials on how to find and evaluate sources that can be used for research projects, and often the tutorials are geared toward online students.

Assessing Online Classes

Every well-designed course—whether online or face-to-face—includes well-designed assessment measures. In fact, since the feeling of isolation is one of the biggest challenges for online learners, students have cited immediate and ongoing feedback as one of the most essential characteristics of a successful online course. Chapter 27 in this Guide offers several options for responding to students’ writing, many of which can be adapted for online courses, as can the advice in Chapter 30 on grading.

Ensuring Academic Honesty

Although concerns have been raised about how to effectively detect plagiarism when teaching an online course, in first-year writing courses many of those concerns can be assuaged with assignments that require students to submit multiple drafts that you review or by group projects. For more information on teaching to avoid plagiarism, see Chapter 17 in this Guide.

Designing a Syllabus

The next step after determining the design and structure of the online course is to create a syllabus. Generally speaking, the syllabus for an online course includes the same elements as the syllabus for a face-to-face course: course information, course requirements, grading, and scheduling, as well as information on how to contact the instructor for individual concerns or problems. However, in an online course, the syllabus needs to include more information than in a face-to-face course. Make sure that the syllabus is readily accessible so that students can easily find the information they need to get started.

In face-to-face courses, students obtain additional information about course policies by asking questions as they come up, but in an online course, you must anticipate some questions. Be sure your syllabus specifies the exact nature of the course: the hours a week devoted to class (typically nine for a three-credit hour class), type and frequency of student participation, and availability and response time for the instructor (online equivalent of office hours). Class participation is
another aspect of the online course that will require additional information for
students. You may require that students log on a certain number of times each
week or that they make a specific number and type of postings each week. Just
make sure they know what you will be looking for to determine adequate
participation.

Provide students with adequate and detailed information about policies and
procedures for using the online tools. Step-by-step written instructions for turn-
ing in assignments, completing tests and quizzes, participating in discussions, and
contacting you or other individuals who can provide technical support when
needed are crucial to a successful online learning environment. Slideshows, screen
shots, and short movies can illustrate some of the processes and can be linked to or
referenced in your syllabus.

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Creating and Sustaining a Teaching Persona
Scott Geisel

If you’ve never taught before, or if you find yourself in new teaching situations, you’re probably going to have a period of adjustment. Getting used to your new territory won’t happen overnight. No one is going to hand you a script with every line of dialogue you’ll deliver, provide you with a wardrobe and makeup, explain your character’s motivation, or coach you when to emote and when to be stoic. Getting comfortable with yourself as a teacher is a much more fluid process than that.

You might think of your new teaching context less like a play and more like the first time you went to a movie with a date and held his or her hand in the dark. You want to hold hands, and it feels nice, but there are worries: Do I hold the hand the whole time? What if my palm starts to sweat, or I have an itch? What if my date starts to sweat? What if my arm goes numb and I feel like I’m going to pass out?

Don’t worry—you’ll deal with the things that come up as you’re getting used to teaching, just like everyone adjusts to new circumstances.

Teaching as a Writer

You’re in a writing classroom because you’re a writer. You know how to write, and you’ve done it successfully. Your experience as a writer should inspire both you and your students. As someone who’s been where they are, you can serve as an example. Writing along with students can be a powerful teaching tool and can help remind you why you’re there and what you have to offer your students: a passion for writing and an ability to show how to work through the challenges and difficulties they’ll encounter in your class and as college writers. The ability to write is your strength and can help you find your comfort zone. Don’t be afraid to use it.

Teaching as an Expert

Start by reminding yourself who you are not: you are not another student in the class. Your students shouldn’t expect you to act like one of them, and you shouldn’t suggest that’s what you’re trying to do. Think about it this way: you’ve got a lot of jobs that your students don’t. Among other things, you have to prepare materials
that are current, useful, engaging, and productive for each class day; manage the pacing of daily activities and the course overall; keep students on task and move students productively both in and out of class; and pay attention and be prepared to adjust when students’ needs don’t fit as well as you’d like with what you’ve planned. Your students will look to you to model activities, answer questions, explain concepts, and keep control of the classroom.

At various times, you’ll feel that you’re acting as a writer, scholar, mentor, coach, friend, authority figure, organizer, manager, mediator, grader, and more. You can be the voice of good news and positive feedback to students, as well as the reality check they don’t want to hear. And your responsibility as grader can often feel like it’s in conflict with your other roles. Your teaching persona may be all encouragement while the course is getting under way, but if you’re unprepared or haven’t prepared your students, there can often be a change in the feel of the classroom when you hand back that first set of graded papers.

Tell your students your expectations up front. Let them know that you’ll grade their work fairly and accurately when the time comes, but that grades aren’t personal. You can help to clarify this new role by developing a set of grading criteria, soliciting additional input and revision of those items from students, and applying the criteria to a sample piece of writing to demonstrate how your grading process will work. You’ll be giving your students the opportunity to begin to interpret the comments you’ll put on their papers. Make sure to include characteristics of good writing in general as well as qualities specific to a particular assignment. Prioritize so students know the greatest impediments to achieving the goals of an assignment and don’t spend the majority of their time worrying about less important features like headings and margins. When students are aware of your expectations and know how you’re going to grade their papers, you’ll feel more confident in that role. Once you’ve squarely faced the reality of the balancing act that teaching can sometimes be, you’ll be on your way to feeling comfortable and to making your students feel comfortable with your teaching style, too.

Balancing Your Roles

At the same time you’re juggling various roles in your classroom, you’ll have a whole other life outside of the classroom and your responsibilities as a teacher. Your students will, too. Their lives are their own, and yours is your own, but there are bound to be points of intersection and common experience that come up in the activities and discussions and writing that you share. How you handle those intersections will depend mostly on you, but keep in mind that you’ll want to maintain the ability to keep control of the course while still trying to show you’re a real person. A key here is relevance. The class you’re teaching is about your students much more than it is about you. Act honestly in the relationship you want to have and can afford to have with your students, but don’t lose track of your responsibilities. You don’t need to withhold personal information or remain distant and untouchable, but you also shouldn’t deliberately work in or reveal details about your personal life without some reason for doing so.
At the same time, don't be afraid to think like a student—like your students. What questions might you have or would you want to know if you had to complete the assignment you've just given? What is its value and goals, and what would be your motivation to work hard and try to do well? What's likely to be difficult, and where would you start? What processes might you use to get everything done? Then remember that your students will have a range of experience, skills, and confidence about college writing. They won't all respond the same to everything you ask them to do, and some are likely to find more value in a particular activity than others.

**Dressing Like a Teacher**

Dress codes in an academic environment are often arbitrary, self-imposed, or even nonexistent. Look around you—what are other people wearing, and why do you think they dress that way? And do they look comfortable? If the people you're noticing have been teaching long enough, their appearance and demeanor probably reflect themselves as teachers, and that's what you'll be projecting, too, once you find your comfort level. It can be tempting to wear a new power suit, a jacket and tie, or even jeans and an old button-down to project an image, and sometimes when you're starting out, dressing nicely may help you establish authority in the classroom (or at least feel like you are).

Consider, too, a balance between fashion and appropriateness. Short skirts or oversized baggy shorts may distract students from reading and writing tasks in class. Many teachers are comfortable in a similar wardrobe day after day, others dress in a variety of ways to suit their mood, the weather, and what's happening at any given time in the course. It's useful to look around at what other English teachers and people in different departments are wearing, too. Your colleagues may not feel compelled to wear a tie every day, but faculty in the business college may put on a jacket to teach. You might want a rack of ties or skirts you can choose from on days you teach and a drawer of jeans for when you'll be on campus but not in the classroom. And then you'll probably want to start mixing it up. The point is that you should feel relaxed in the way you present yourself to your students, and comfortable that they accept you in a way that you're happy with.

**Having Fun**

Teaching can be serious business, but if you're not enjoying yourself, too, then why are you here? And if you're not enjoying yourself, how must your students feel? Doing some things for fun (especially if they have some inherent value or relate to what's happening in your course) can set everyone more at ease and help create a comfortable, positive learning environment.

I like to throw things like little chocolate bars or a soft, rubbery ball that we can toss up over the lights and off the walls to each other during a discussion without hurting anyone or anything. Getting students to smile once in a while eases the tension in the classroom and helps them relax and open up. I've seen
students perform skits in class with more energy and fun than I could have imagined. Ask students to perform a draft of a paper or to draw their thesis as a cartoon. Assign groups to attend and review a film or play or restaurant. And serving popcorn while you show a movie in class can make the whole experience more worthwhile.

But don’t force fun. Starting class every day with a joke that you think is funny will probably be about as enjoyable for students as you can imagine it would be for you if one of your teachers did that. You don’t have to be funny; you just want to get to the point where you feel relaxed. Being prepared and knowing what you want to accomplish and what you want your students to accomplish on any given day will help you find opportunities to relax. Even a smile or a willingness to indulge a minor diversion into an amusing side trip during class can go a long way to making it a more enjoyable experience for everyone.

Gaining Confidence

When you first start teaching, some plans will work better than others, and some activities you may do once and vow never to repeat. If you have a backup plan, or several, you may feel more confident for those days when technology fails you or students just don’t respond as you’d hoped. If you’d like to do more than there is time for in the term, have some of those other activities ready as alternatives: a field trip to practice observation and the power of details, an activity with magnetic poetry to explore new boundaries with language, a writing day when students simply work on their assignments with you there to answer questions and offer input, an editing sample for students to work on and present in class, a provocative reading, or a workshop day when students can work on their own, in groups, or with you. Knowing you’ve got options can help you to feel confident and take charge of your classroom in the ways you want to.

Outside pressures can also influence your attitude in the classroom: a restless night of sleep, the stress of other responsibilities, your love life (or lack thereof), or a dead car battery on a cold January morning. You’ll know you’re getting somewhere when you appreciate the good days and don’t dwell on the bad—just keep moving forward. And remember that gaining confidence is a key to becoming comfortable with yourself as a teacher. You’re here because you’ve got something valuable to offer your students.

A Useful Reading

Balancing Graduate Studies with Writing Instruction
Melissa Faulkner and Melissa Toomey

Most of us speak and behave differently in a gym than in a church or a neighborhood pub. We’ve had ample time, an entire lifetime, to learn the social norms of familiar places, and we recognize that there’s an already established social hierarchy where we know our role. In a church, for example, we know that the priest or pastor stands at the front, behind the pulpit, and we sit in a pew facing the front. It would be highly unusual for a member of the congregation to walk straight to the front and take over the pulpit. Yet, as new graduate teaching assistants, that’s what we feel we’re doing.

Most of us have about seventeen years of experience learning how to be a student, from kindergarten through undergraduate school. On the first day of kindergarten we didn’t know to raise our hands before we spoke. Through observation, practice, and reminders from the teacher, we learned to do so. High school teachers prepared us for college by saying, “When you get to college…” and the expectations gradually became clear.

The transition to graduate school, however, is usually abrupt, and the transition from student to teacher feels even more sudden. Most graduate programs provide some type of teacher preparation in the form of a crash course, but rarely do graduate teaching assistants feel prepared to deal with their dual roles as both teacher and student. As graduate teaching assistants ourselves, first in an M.A. program and now as Ph.D. students at another institution, we offer advice on how to wear both hats, that of student and teacher, simultaneously. We hope to ease your mind, to assure you that nearly all graduate teaching assistants feel the same apprehension and fear you are feeling, and to encourage you. You have the experience and the knowledge—all you need now is the confidence.

Teaching First-Year Composition

Before you ever step into the classroom, you can prepare yourself for teaching writing. Meet people. Introduce yourself to the other teachers in your program, the professors in your department, and—perhaps one of the most important groups of people to know—the office staff, who usually will help you make copies and assist you with scheduling questions, technological issues, and other logistical concerns.
As you prepare to enter your classroom, think about how you want to physically represent yourself to students. Dress nicely. Business casual is often appropriate. Dressing in slacks or a skirt and a nice top or a jacket and khakis can set you apart from your students and create a professional tone from the start, as well as make you feel more confident when you walk in on the first day. Consider how you and the students will address each other. Also, take a bottle of water, both to quench your thirst and to have something to hold in your hand. See Chapter 21 in this Guide, “Creating and Sustaining a Teaching Persona,” for more ideas.

Once your class gets going, don’t feel that you can’t vary your routines. In fact, you should try different pedagogical approaches in order to keep the students and yourself interested and refreshed. Don’t hesitate to ask students for their views on new activities. In doing a midterm assessment one semester, Melissa Toomey discovered that students wanted more collaborative work where they talked in groups, went back to their seats and freewrote about the peer workshop, and then discussed the results as a class. In trying their proposed technique, Melissa found that students were energized by the new use of class time. Reflecting on this activity, students commented that they like for teachers to “move things around so we don’t get bored,” and several others stated they were “surprised and happy [the teacher] even took their ideas into consideration.” Giving students a voice in designing your course can keep them personally invested in what they do.

Cultivating Good Habits as Teacher and Student

Developing sensible practices as both a writing teacher and a graduate student is vital to your success in both roles. In order to manage your busy schedule, it’s useful to create systematic records of what you are teaching and reading. Here are some tips for keeping records.

Be organized. Try constructing a basic or detailed lesson plan for each class that you can place into a binder or folder. Include key points you want to address in class, and write down any information you will want students to note. As soon as possible after you teach, reflect in writing on what you taught and on your students’ reactions: How successful were the class activities? Why did they succeed—or why not? How should you change them next time? Completing such a metacognitive activity helps you organize and track your personal experiences as a new teacher, gives you a chance to think about your students’ reactions and needs, and helps you improve your teaching in later courses.

Keep your work for each class you’re teaching and taking in a separate folder or binder so you can locate information both during the term and later, when you want to use a handout from your fall section of English 101 or cite from an article that you can find easily in your folder marked “English 700: Research Methods—Spring 20XX.”
Manage your time wisely. Staying ahead of your students in the coursework is crucial. When you’ve gained some experience teaching, you’ll be able to plan several class periods ahead of time, but the first time through, you’re likely to be figuring out what to do as you teach. If possible, keep at least two classes ahead in your lesson plans to reduce your stress level and allow you to alert students about challenges they may face as they do what you assign.

If you walk into class without students’ homework or class assignments ready, you quickly can lose credibility, so make copies of handouts or put information on reserve several days before you’ll use or assign them. Unanticipated problems—broken copiers or scanners, delays in the library—often arise, and you want to avoid scrambling for an alternative to your planned lessons. You can then review the readings, copied handouts, and lesson plans just before your class.

It’s equally important to manage your time wisely as a graduate student. Schedule time to write. We write in our planners (another good way to stay organized) that from nine to five on Mondays we will do nothing else but write. Schedule specific times to read, research, and revise. The more papers you write, the better you can estimate how long the process takes you. Melissa Toomey always allots herself five days to get through the initial researching, note taking, and drafting process for a paper. Melissa Faulkner gives herself the same amount of time but writes into her schedule that, for example, she will do the research note taking while at her son Brandon’s basketball game and finish it up at her daughter Chelsea’s cheerleading practice. Because it is important for her to spend time with her family, she made the decision to talk and laugh with her kids on the way to and from practices and games, but while she’s at practices, she’ll do schoolwork—when she isn’t cheering.

You may often feel overwhelmed when you think about dealing with your students, your own work as a student, and your family. Do whatever it takes for you to maintain your balance and sanity. Melissa Toomey only recently decided that she should take an entire day off each week from doing any schoolwork whatsoever. She believes she has made herself a better student; knowing she has a day off coming up soon, she works extremely hard to get there, and after that day off, she feels revived and rejuvenated. If you can’t schedule a regular day off, consider a private holiday. When Rich Bullock was in grad school, he and his wife periodically declared “Januarius McGahan Day,” and took the day off in honor of the liberator of Bulgaria.

Read actively. Being a busy student and teacher, you need to find ways to read that will help you understand material and remember it long after you have read it. Generating good reading notes is crucial to initial readings of texts and gives you a way to review the information later. Ask other students in your program to show you how they take notes, and after viewing as many examples as possible, find a system that will work for you, given your learning style. Some students write summaries of text in the margins as they read, some create double-entry notebooks, while others create a form on which they record basic information about each text they read. Such a form might include the following:
• Summarize the chapter read.
• What two questions do I have?
• What three terms should I remember based on the content of the chapter, and what are their definitions?

Whatever strategy you use, it’s important to remember that you are building a system that you can consciously change and renegotiate as your learning habits and skills are modified.

Help students manage their time. The syllabus is a key element in any classroom, especially in a writing classroom where assignments are due regularly, so use the syllabus to your advantage by spelling out assignments and rules in detail, making it a place where students can go for quick and concise answers to many of their questions. Students also appreciate having a detailed document to lead them in the right direction when they are experiencing difficulties. Sequences and deadlines help students manage their time. Outlining assignments on the syllabus before the course starts will also save you valuable time because you will have already planned the fundamental parts of your course. Chapter 12 in this Guide provides detailed advice on what to include in your syllabus. Go over the syllabus with your students, ideally on the first day of class, and discuss exactly what you mean by each item and your purposes for creating such a structure. Leave room for updates, and perhaps even include students in the decision process when making changes.

Although you may change some of your assignments as the term progresses, follow through with whatever policy you have stated. Inconsistency can foster student irresponsibility and reduce your credibility. For example, Melissa Toomey’s syllabus states that she does not accept assignments by email. Yet students have sent her their work with notes attached stating that their printer is out of ink or that they forgot to give the assignment in class. Accepting papers after saying she wouldn’t do so would undermine her authority as an instructor, and her other policies could also be called into question.

Succeeding as a Graduate Student

Here are some concerns we’ve encountered, with some advice for dealing with them.

Relating to faculty. As a graduate student, your relationships with faculty are different than they were when you were an undergraduate. Your professors may ask you to call them by their first names. They will probably begin to ask you how things are going. Don’t be shocked if they offer suggestions or even offer to help. Take advantage of it! Your professors know the pressures you face and want you not only to survive but to succeed, because your success reflects their own. If you’ve been admitted into a graduate program, faculty assume you have what it
takes to succeed and are interested in helping you do so. In addition, the reputa-
tions of universities are formed in part by the quality of the graduate students they
produce. Faculty members want to be associated with institutions with excellent
reputations. Therefore, they have a vested interest in your success.

Relating to your fellow grad students. Grad school does not have to be competi-
tive. Next to faculty, your fellow graduate students can be your greatest resources
and your best sources of support. You have all proven your academic ability by
being accepted into your graduate program, so you don’t need to compete to see
who can be the best of the best. Form alliances, share useful sources, and help one
another. Write together. We teach collaboration in the classroom, so why not prac-
tice what we teach? This very chapter is the result of an ongoing collaboration
between peers. As grad students, first at the same M.A. institution and now with
the same Ph.D. program, we have written together, workshopped drafts together,
presented papers together at conferences, and even cotaught together. Although
this sort of partnership is not the norm, it’s important to find or build your own
support system. Even hanging around the teaching assistants’ offices or grabbing
a beer after class has real benefits: you can build friendships that might lead to col-
laboration, now and later when you’re working in your chosen field, and the act of
discussing your course content and your teaching with other graduate students
will deepen and enrich your understanding of both.

Publishing. We don’t intend to downplay the importance of building your creden-
tials, and we recommend you not feel overly pressured to publish and present
at conferences. However, attending conferences even without presenting is an
invaluable learning experience. You get to learn about exciting new research and
ideas as well as meet people who are important in your field—and they get to meet
you. If possible, attend several conferences to learn their routines before you
attempt to be a presenter. Seek advice from experienced presenters on how to
write a proposal. Investigate which conferences are most respected and well
known in your area of interest, whether it is creative writing, literature, TESOL, or
composition and rhetoric. Be aware, though, that presenting papers not only adds
stress to your already tired psyche and busy schedule but also can get expensive.
Even with a student discount, some conferences can cost hundreds of dollars in
registration fees, food, and lodging. Some institutions offer financial resources for
graduate students’ professional development, so be sure to inquire about assis-
tance at your institution.

While publishing is an honor and a desirable goal, concentrate first on writ-
ing successful seminar papers; focus on completing your degree. Do not be afraid,
however, to submit your work to appropriate journals for publication, especially
work that may grow into something larger like an M.A. thesis or Ph.D. disserta-
tion. These submissions can help you develop an area of expertise or specialization
and can help to link your name with a very specific topic. Even if your work is
rejected, the comments of referees can help you understand what publishable
work in your field should contain and may improve your writing just as your
comments help students improve their writing. While publication is certainly not impossible for grad students (plenty of us have done it), it is also not mandatory.

**Useful Readings**


YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER A COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASS, maybe for the first time. You might be nervous. Good, you should be: I don’t think we can do anything well without worrying at least a little. We need a bit of adrenalin to get us going, to keep us going. But we don’t want to panic. One reason new teachers worry is that they’re adopting a new role, teacher rather than student, and don’t know how to act: Should I try to act “professorial,” whatever that means? Should I try to be formal, laid-back, distant, a confidant? How do I interact with my students, who so recently—or not so recently—were my peers? Here are a few ideas and suggestions that might help you relax a bit and be yourself—and as a consequence, become a better and more effective teacher.

Being Honest

Be as honest with your students as you can be. Tell them the truth about yourself and the subject at hand. This approach does not mean telling your students everything you feel, think, believe, or desire, nor does it mean telling them your life story. You should, however, try to be open. Often we are so close-minded, so closed off from one another, and why not? As Brenda Ueland says in If You Want to Write: A Book about Independence and Spirit, we’re well advised to be careful who we trust and open up to. But in your classroom, you have great power and authority. You can afford to take risks, you can dare to reveal yourself, because it is your turf. If you want to connect with your students, if you want them to trust you, if you want them to do the things you direct them to do, then take some chances to let the real you appear. Be silly if there’s a silly moment in class. Be complimentary when you feel like it. Be wisecracking if that’s your bent, but if it is your bent, be sure to make clear to your students that you’re joking. When making wisecracks, let them know you’re playing and trying to be funny. Let students know if and how and when they can be wisecrackers, and that they can crack wise about you.

Are you scared? Are you lost some of the time? Admit it. Tell your students you’re new, that this is your first class, your first year teaching, that you’re just learning. They’ll appreciate your honesty, and most of them will be relieved because they already know it (or intuit it) and feel embarrassed and uncomfortable
when you’re embarrassed and uncomfortable. So if you own up and express your concern, they’ll understand while being flattered to have been trusted. Then you can both relax. If you allow it, students will help you, especially if you tell them you believe they can teach you a thing or two—and that you’re open to learning from them. When they do teach you something (and they will), let them know, thank them, and then use that learning in front of them, giving them credit as you do. When your students witness this sort of openness and humility, this sort of graciousness and self-assurance, they’ll relax and try harder to do all the work you ask them to do.

Doing the Work

I learned as a TA that one of the most effective teaching techniques was to do the homework assignments you give your students. Do the work you ask them to do. Tell them you are doing it, and tell them why. Explain that you want to keep in close touch with just how complicated and difficult many assignments can be; because when you have trouble doing the work, or can’t complete the work in the allotted time, then surely you can understand their challenge—and be sure to give credit to those who are able to do what even you could not.

Early in my TA career, I did every assignment with my students but stopped because it seemed like too much work (which is the whole point—to realize just how much work we’re asking them to do). I started again doing all the assignments I give my students, and students appreciate that the teacher is doing the work, that I know exactly what I’m asking them to do, and that I know how hard it is. And they like the forgiveness: “I couldn’t get mine typed up, so I’m not going to insist that you type yours up.” But mainly they are very impressed, reassured, and wonderfully appreciative of how close I am to the pain and intellectual challenge of the homework I’ve assigned.

Caring

Look for ways to let yourself really care for your students and learn how to be compassionate toward them. There is a tremendous pressure, in my opinion, to belittle and ridicule our students, to make jokes at their expense, and to laugh at their weaknesses and deficits—as if we teachers are so much more wonderful human beings because of our love of reading and writing. If you witness denigrating stories in your offices, lists of students’ mistakes on email, and complaints at faculty meetings, don’t be sucked into this morass. Don’t make fun of your students, put them down, or laugh at them. Don’t get me wrong. I love funny people; I love comedy; I love witty, clever, hilarious people. But there is a big difference between telling funny stories and stories that make the student the butt of the joke.

Try instead to understand how and why your students fell so far behind, and why they don’t read. Check out John Holt’s wonderful essay, “Making Children Hate Reading.” Decide to care about your students and their deficits. Decide to be
good and kind. Offer them condolences, understanding, and second chances. They may have been chastised along the way by a reading or spelling teacher, and it only takes one such teacher to put a child off. Many of my students have told me so.

I appreciate my students and tell them so, especially in the opening days of the term when talking about my university’s many strengths. I say things like “I learn a lot from my students and will probably learn a lot from you all.” I respect my students and show it by paying attention to them, by taking them seriously, and by looking for reasons to praise and honor them as often as I can for their wit, humor, compassion, kindness to me and to others, fine writing, clear, incisive thinking, and willingness to work hard. I compliment them a lot, only saying things I really mean and believe. I tell my students I like them, that I’m glad they’re in my class, and that I’m lucky to have them in my class.

Observing Yourself

Discern how you are most effective in the classroom. Perhaps being open, honest, and willing to reveal your vulnerabilities won’t work for you. Find out what does. Notice the things that really get your students reading and writing, and then do more of those things. A number of my peers bring sweets to their classes, like donuts or little candies. Their students love the treats and then work harder.

Conferencing one-on-one with students (discussed in Chapter 16) is hard work, but you might love it, and students say even ten-minute sessions are valuable. When I discovered how much I enjoyed conferencing, how much my students and I could cover, how much they grew as writers and readers, and how they blossomed as people because of our conferences, I expanded my conferences to thirty minutes per student.

If you discover an approach that works with one class, use it with another. Don’t be afraid to do the same thing over and over again. It’ll be new to your students, and with the repetition, you’ll get better and better at it. If something you find exciting isn’t well received by students, try it again before abandoning it. Sometimes the idea is good, but the term, the students, or your delivery aren’t right—but will be another time.

Setting an Example

If you want to be the very best teacher you can be, then make a conscious decision to grow, both personally and professionally. Dedicate yourself to learning—the best teachers believe in teaching, which means we value learning. Actively learning and having a lot of fun in the process will show in your demeanor, and students will see it. They will be excited by your enthusiasm for learning and will be encouraged to follow your lead. Besides, learning is the richest thing, a lasting pleasure, and the most life-extending thing you can do for yourself. You and your students will benefit more from your classes as you take risks and learn and teach together.
Useful Readings

STUDENTS WHO FEEL COMFORTABLE SHARING their ideas and experiences with their instructors and other students in their classes will learn more and stay in college longer than students who find their learning environment and their interactions on campus awkward and uncomfortable. But creating a classroom in which all students feel included, comfortable, and respected regardless of physical abilities, learning styles, sex, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or religion can be challenging, whether you are a graduate student teaching for the first time or an experienced faculty member who has taught for many years. This chapter aims to help you meet the challenge by introducing four key elements of inclusive design and providing ideas for integrating them into your writing course.

Understanding Four Key Elements of Inclusive Design

Simply put, teaching for inclusion means you teach so that each student's individual learning needs are met. Sometimes called culturally responsive teaching, this approach calls for instruction that honors each student. Inclusive courses, no matter what the subject, contain the following key elements:

1. The instructor demonstrates awareness of his or her own attitudes and biases.
2. Course content reflects various worldviews and perspectives.
3. Assignments are varied to engage students with different learning styles and students with learning disabilities.
4. Materials are accessible for everyone regardless of any physical or cognitive disabilities.

Appraising Your Attitude and Awareness

To create culturally responsive classrooms, begin with an honest appraisal of your own attitudes and biases. Sometimes we think we are encouraging multiple
viewpoints and worldviews, but unless we have examined our own beliefs in light of the dominant culture within which we live and work, we may be unconsciously replicating and encouraging the same frames of reference we are trying to avoid.

To begin to discover your own biases, ask yourself, “What values do I hold that are consistent with those of the dominant culture?” Sociologist Robin M. Williams (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg 11–12) has identified themes that generally reflect the basic values and beliefs held by the dominant culture in the United States. These themes are presented here as questions you might ask yourself to begin examining your own attitudes. Although these questions provide polarized viewpoints, they are not meant to suggest that the only possible responses are “either-or” responses. They are meant instead to provide a springboard from which multiple perspectives and interpretations are possible. As you answer the questions, think about other perspectives that may be equally valid in other cultures or situations, and assess to what degree you allow for these alternative worldviews and approaches to learning in your classrooms. The first two questions include some analysis. Use these examples to help you create your own analysis of the other questions.

• **How do you define success?** In the United States, there is an emphasis on “pulling one’s self up by the bootstraps,” or the rags-to-riches success story characterized by large financial gains achieved by working hard or by being “rescued” by a well-to-do relative. An alternative viewpoint might be that the highest human value is generosity, and that “conspicuous consumption represents greed and self-interest.” Also, the rags-to-riches story overlooks the influence of privilege and ignores the social, political, and economic factors that favor certain groups in succeeding in this way.

• **What do you believe about work?** In the United States, we generally believe that working hard is a virtue; however, that belief devalues the importance of taking time for others and for contemplation and leisure. We often fail to recognize the value of other types of discipline besides the discipline of the workplace.

• **What are your humanitarian mores?** Do you believe people should come together to help the “underdog,” or do you believe that people “get what they deserve”?

• **What is your moral orientation?** Do you believe in a definite right or wrong? Should right and wrong be defined in the context of particular cultures? Or, do you believe that “right” and “wrong” are subjective judgments meant to protect the more privileged members of society?

• **Which is more valuable, efficiency and practicality or the quality of the process?** Is it more important to make decisions and act on them or to make sure the opinions of everyone affected by such decisions are heard before a course of action is settled on?

• **What is your view of economic growth and “progress”?** Do you believe that the development of industry, roads, buildings, houses, shopping centers,
and the like equals betterment for humankind, or do you believe that honoring the natural world and the inherent cycles is a better way to live?

• **What constitutes “the good life”?** Do you see the good life as the attainment of things that can make you more comfortable, or do you believe the good life is about sharing and giving, even if it involves personal sacrifice?

• **Who controls the government?** Do you believe that every person has a voice in the political destiny of the country or that only those who hold power and its privileges influence politics?

• **Is freedom an absolute good?** Do you believe in freedom at any cost, or do you believe that limiting your own freedom may be a way to show respect for someone else’s freedom?

• **What is more important, the individual or the group?** Do you honor being true to yourself, or do you believe the group should take precedence over the individual?

When you look at your cultural values through the various perspectives suggested by these questions from Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, you develop a better understanding of how your worldview can subtly but profoundly change the experience your students have in your classroom. For example, simply asking, “Where are you going on spring break?” may unnecessarily make some students uncomfortable. Students who travel on spring break are usually supported by their parents or guardians, giving them the freedom and financial means to make a spring break trip. Many students at the community college where I teach use their spring break to catch up on much-needed sleep or other projects outside of school—or to work extra hours at a job. Taking a trip someplace exotic is not within their means. Instead of asking where they are going on spring break, which assumes that everyone is going someplace, a better question might be “What are you doing over the break?” That question assumes nothing except that they are getting a break, a pretty safe assumption.

Although this variation might seem like a small thing, awareness of these kinds of implied values can have a huge impact on first-generation students and students from underrepresented groups who often get through college only if they are lucky enough to find people who are willing to help them interpret, analyze, and maneuver through a system characterized by elitism, process, rules, and complicated traditions. By uncovering your own biases and beliefs, you become more sensitive to your students’ biases and beliefs, allowing you to create a classroom environment that is more comfortable for more students.

### Revisiting Course Content and Materials

Once you understand how your own values and beliefs shape your teaching, you will be better able to evaluate the content you present and the materials you use in the course. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg suggest first thinking about the course within its discipline. For instance, ask yourself what values are embedded in your discipline that may confuse or disturb some students. How can you encourage
students to express alternative perspectives? For example, in writing classes, the focus on teaching traditional genres over alternative forms or genres reveals values embedded not only in the field of writing studies but also in the entire institution of higher education. The ongoing debate about what authors and works should be included in the English literary canon is just one example of how embedded values shape education.

Another example is the debate over the teaching of a standard form of English and the acceptance of African American Vernacular English and other dialects in spoken language in the classroom. Students must understand and learn to write with the conventions accepted in the professional world, but it is also important that students understand that issues of diversity are inherent in any use of language. One way to honor various dialects and teach students about the discourse communities within their own sphere is to design some assignments that do not require “standard” forms of English. For instance, if you include a literature component in your composition class, you might ask students to write from the viewpoint of a character speaking in a particular dialect in a manner that would be comfortable to that character. You could ask students to write versions of their research or argument essays for various audiences, including younger siblings or friends. When you ask students to generate ideas and text that won’t lead to a polished final draft, make it clear that you’ll accept their writing in rough draft form, which may be influenced by various spoken dialects.

While it’s important to allow students to understand and explore various ways of speaking and writing, it’s also important to be aware of the various challenges that students face based on their ethnic backgrounds, the area of the country in which they grew up, and their preparation for academic work. If you can identify the challenges facing specific groups of students and learn to work with them beginning where they are—without judgment—you’ll be more successful in creating classrooms where students feel comfortable to express themselves.

You should also review your examples. Are the examples that you use to illustrate key points both meaningful and sensitive to the students? Do the examples demonstrate that you value multiple perspectives and ways of viewing the world? One way to incorporate a variety of viewpoints is to first offer your own example and then ask students to supply theirs. Also, consider the models of writing and reading that you assign as part of the course. Do they include materials written by persons of differing backgrounds and ethnic groups? Do they offer various worldviews? Do they address underrepresented groups in ways that do not trivialize or marginalize those groups?

**Understanding Learning Styles**

In addition to engaging a diverse student population by providing content that reflects multiple perspectives and experiences, you can also motivate students by designing assignments that appeal to various interests and learning styles. Students learn best when teaching addresses their preferred style. The writing assignments listed below provide additional ideas for designing course work that appeals
to each of the four types of learners identified by David Kolb, an organizational researcher (in Sharp, Harb, and Terry).

- **Diversers** learn through interaction and discussion. Freewriting, peer reviews, personal reactions, and opinion papers appeal to this type of learner.
- **Assimilators** learn by observing and reflecting. They like to consult the experts but then discover new ways to tie the old ideas together. They like reading assignments, writing summaries, creating maps and trees, and they actually enjoy listening to well-organized lectures.
- **Convergers** prefer to take things apart and put them back together again. They learn by doing. The key to engaging convergers is to be sure they know why they are doing what they are doing. They like case studies, simulations, and assignments that involve keeping track of problem-solving protocols.
- **Accommodators** learn best through self-discovery. They are risk takers who resent having to follow too many rules. They would enjoy assignments that involve teaching concepts to other students, solving “what if” formulas, and formulating problems.

One of my favorite assignments is for students to post their research projects on blogs they have created themselves. Using blogs for both group and individual projects is an easy way to publish students’ work, and blogs also provide an opportunity for students to gain computer literacy skills while participating in an activity that they consider trendy and fun. In addition, the blog assignment has a component that resonates with each of the learning types described by Kolb. For **divergers**, who like interaction and discussion, the blog provides instant access to both. **Assimilators**, who prefer consulting with experts as opposed to consulting with each other, can invite experts to post as part of their project or can cite experts from research. **Convergers**, who like to solve problems, can use the blog assignment as a problem to solve, and **accommodators**, who like to teach to other students, have a perfect venue for doing so. By mixing the types of writing assignments in your courses and providing students with several options for completing their assignments, you will enhance learning in your course and give students tools to succeed in their writing tasks in other classes as well. In addition, assignments such as these encourage authentic assessment: they ask students to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills, the best approach to embracing a diverse student body.

**Understanding Learning Disabilities**

Complicating the issue of learning styles are students who come to us with diagnosed or undiagnosed learning disabilities. Keeping these students engaged requires going beyond respecting their worldviews, cultural backgrounds, and preferred learning styles. In order for students with learning disabilities to feel
respected and comfortable in the classroom, they need to feel that they are able to successfully complete the tasks and assignments. Here are three instructional interventions that consistently help students with learning disabilities (and other students as well) to improve their writing abilities, and thus feel more relaxed and valued in the classroom.

1. Teach writing as a recursive practice. Show students that even the most accomplished writers do not create a successful draft on the first try, and require multiple drafts and editing sessions before they are satisfied with the written product.

2. Explicitly teach critical steps in the writing process and accompany each step with a series of prompts or questions to guide students through the writing task. For instance, in the planning stage, students might be asked to answer a series of questions such as “Who am I writing for?” “Why am I writing?” “What do I know?” “How can I group my ideas?” and “How will I organize my ideas?”

3. Provide frequent feedback based on the information explicitly taught. One way to do this is to give students rubrics that outline the strategies and components that you have identified as most important in their drafts. Students can use the rubrics as guides, and then you can use them to assess their success with the writing task.

Providing Accessibility

In order to meet the needs of all students, course materials need to be available to all students regardless of any physical or cognitive disability. Most campuses have an office of disability services that can help you critique your course materials with student accessibility in mind, but the five techniques listed below will help you get started:

- Provide equivalent print text versions of all materials that are presented as spoken or electronic components of the course.
- If you are using presentation slides, do not rely on color alone to convey information; also use text and shape. Choose high-contrast colors for text and background and test the presentation by changing it to black and white to be sure it can be easily viewed. Make handouts of the slides on request. (More advice on using media inclusively may be found in Chapter 8 of this Guide.)
- Provide alternative versions of any material presented in class when students request it. For example, provide outlines of class activities and topics, or allow students to record lectures.
- Encourage students to let you know if they have any kind of disability and then work with students throughout the term to ensure that they are getting the support they need. Most universities have a disabilities office to
support students and teachers; many require documentation for granting accommodations.

No matter which group of students you are working with, inclusive teaching means that you let students know ahead of time what criteria you will be using to evaluate their work. Part of teaching for inclusion is to make sure all students have clear and meaningful information for the course. Creating courses where all students feel respected and comfortable can be a challenge, but the rewards go far beyond the classroom. Students will be more engaged and motivated to learn as well as more likely to stay in college and succeed as writers and scholars. As a bonus, inclusive classrooms help to create a more just, equitable, and compassionate world for all of us.

Useful Readings


As you read through the stack of your students’ first compositions, you may encounter some writing that stands out from the rest, but you can’t quite put your finger on what’s wrong. You can see that the writing doesn’t flow; however, when you stop to decode, you aren’t sure how to explain what you see happening on the page in front of you. You may see usages like the following:

- “Living in the cities is wonderful but it depends on how is your living standard.”
- “For myself, the people who are college graduates it is better for them to live in the cities, because they will be able to handle that life of urban areas, because they will be getting enough salary to pay the bills and everyday expenses.”
- “Teenagers and early twenty people always prefer living in crowded cities or where they can find some action.”
- “There are lots of differences between living in cities and living in rural areas, and the most important different is the kind of people you see in each place.”
- “My father always give me idea about what should I do.”
- “There is not many roads and not many the gas station.”
- “I am eighteen years old man.”
- “So you can have a fun.”
- “I came to the United States so many years but I still can not speak, write English well. Because I always stay at home, don’t go outside, and we speak Chinese in my home. Many times I don’t know how to speak English. So that shut my mouth.”

You might encounter these usages randomly, in a single sentence, in one paragraph, or throughout a paper. If you do, you may well have a second-language writer in your class.

Writing in a second language is a challenging and complex process. Not only are second-language writers attempting to internalize the stages of the writing
process but they also must contend with second-language-processing issues. In some cases, this student should be placed in a class specifically designed for second-language writing. However, the student may well belong in your class, whether through placement, promotion, or lack of alternatives. This chapter briefly describes some characteristics of second-language writers and their writing and offers practical advice on how to help your second-language writers succeed.

Understanding Second-Language Writers

There are no “typical” second-language writers. These writers defy generalization due to their different cultures, religions, ethnicities, languages, economics, and development. In your class, you may find an eighteen-year-old with no college experience, a visiting professor doing postdoctoral research, or a student born in the United States who speaks English with peers and in school but speaks another language at home. These students do, however, have some common issues with writing.

Characteristics of second-language writers. Second-language writers differ from their native English-speaking counterparts in two important ways. Most significantly, they use rhetorical strategies from their first languages, often producing writing that seems redundant or repeating the same argument in slightly different ways in subsequent paragraphs. Second, while the stages in the writing process are the same, second-language writers approach each stage differently. Most noticeably, second-language writers are likely to have some or all of the following traits:

• Focus mainly on what to write rather than how to write
• Worry about vocabulary, constantly referring to a dictionary
• Compose slower and less fluently than native English speakers
• Don’t proofread as much or as well as native English speakers
• Concentrate on errors at the sentence level to improve writing
• Make frequent errors, particularly with word usage
• May be unaware of expectations of readers in the United States
• May have little or no experience with or tolerance for peer review
• May have little or no experience with teachers’ responses and response styles in the United States
• May be surprised by revision requirements

Common writing problems. Second-language writing may at first appear to be a jumble of errors, but close inspection reveals identifiable problem areas:

• Choice of word or word forms
• Article, pronoun, and preposition usage
Verb tense, construction, number, and subject-verb agreement
Sentence word order
Countable and uncountable nouns and quantifiers
Sentence boundaries: fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences

Plagiarism. Even with awareness-building activities, plagiarism remains a problem for many students whose primary language isn’t English. The second-language writer often grows up with a different perspective regarding ownership of text. Additionally, the second-language writer may lack adequate vocabulary to paraphrase original textual sources. Because of this lack of language proficiency, second-language writers may fear that they cannot express their ideas effectively in written English; instead, they tend to use what they have read without citing the source. Sometimes, as a last resort, a desperate second-language writer may ask someone else to write an entire paper.

Helping Second-Language Writers

Given what we know about second-language writers—who they are, what they need, and what they do—you can accommodate some of their unique needs, not as intimidating a task as it may seem. If your university offers courses for multilingual students (often called “English as a second language,” or ESL, courses), the specialists teaching those classes can help you plan writing activities. Writing centers and student skills centers can supplement your teaching. Your main focus should be on grammar errors and flawed rhetorical structure, since these represent the most troublesome issues inherent in second-language writing.

Grammar. You shouldn’t be an editor, nor are you expected to be an expert in second-language grammar issues. Instead, encourage your second-language writers to take charge of their own learning. Helping them to analyze their errors and to understand why they make them will promote independent learning. Students can keep grammar logs to provide a structure for error analysis. Logs can be a simple table divided into three columns: error, correction, and the grammatical rule that applies to the error. Students record in their logs errors that you highlight in their drafts, by either using electronic tools in a word processor or highlighting by hand. Marking drafts electronically allows the writers to paste errors directly into their log. Although this procedure adds extra work for them, second-language writers do need to keep track of their errors. This process will help them take a major part of the responsibility for analyzing errors and eventually move to self-monitoring, where students independently discover and correct their errors.

You can also devote some conference time to grammatical concerns. However, you should require that students arrive prepared, bringing their draft with highlighted errors and their completed grammar logs. In addition, students can work with second-language writing specialists in university writing centers. Or, you can send them to online grammar resources to work independently on their
specific errors. By completing grammar exercises and taking quizzes, writers test their understanding and their ability to apply grammatical rules.

Response. Second-language writers welcome feedback; in fact, they expect it. Sometimes they want to be told how to fix their problems. Strategies that work well with native English speakers often fail with second-language writers. For example, second-language writers fail to discover errors when reading their texts aloud; instead, they will benefit more from frequent conferences and more individualized attention. In general, second-language writers are helped by response

- in the middle stages of the writing process;
- on all elements of their writing—content, rhetorical structure, grammar, and mechanics;
- in clear and specific language; and
- on grammatical errors that interfere with comprehension.

Being Flexible

Working with second-language writers may at first seem a daunting task. But don’t forget that good teaching for your native English-speaking writers is also good for second-language writers. Yes, second-language writers may need more of everything, but you’ll find them grateful for everything you do for them. You’ll need to remain flexible, as each student will be unique, with different needs and abilities. One of the most important things you can do is to listen to them; they’ll tell you what they need. Their writing will also tell you. As you get to know your second-language writers, you’ll appreciate all the ways they enrich the classroom, providing outside perspectives along with linguistic and cultural diversity.

Useful Readings


MULTIMODAL WRITING is writing that uses more than one mode of expression, including some combination of words, images, audio, video, links, and so on. It’s sometimes called multimedia writing. Much written communication today incorporates words, images, sounds, and links; our students now need to see that they can do the same thing in their writing, including their academic writing—and learn how to do it appropriately. If you are interested in exploring this kind of writing with your students, you could create a whole unit specifically focusing on it. You could also expand one of the genre assignments covered in this book to be multimodal.

Determining What Your Students Know about Working with Digital Media

Multimodal writing calls for students to work with digital media, so you’ll want to find out how much your students know. The tricky part here is that it’s likely that some in the class know next to nothing about working with digital media, while others are quite fluent. For the latter, a little guidance as to the specifics of audience, purpose, and assignment requirements may be all that is needed. For the former, some hands-on, even step-by-step “here’s how to do it” instruction will be vital. The good news is that as the teacher, you don’t need to be adept at all digital skills. You need to know some basics and where to send students for specific help—perhaps to computing services or a digital learning lab on campus, perhaps to their peers. (Caution here: if you’re going to encourage peer support, try to arrange collaborative working groups with both skills and personalities in mind—avoid putting a student with a tendency to dominate in a group of tech-neophytes, for example. When you set up groups, try to balance proficiency and need, introversion and extroversion, as well as gender.)

Most campuses offer computer support programs for faculty, where experienced staff will help you learn as much as you think you need. And in most classes, there will be students who already do a lot of multimodal composing—engaging them to help their peers is a great way of making the entire enterprise collaborative. During the first week of every class, I ask students about their
experience with and interest in using digital media, and I always include questions about their knowledge of word-processing basics. (A compete tech survey is available at wwnorton.com/college/english/write/everyonesanauthor/templates_worksheets.asp.) Yes, some do not know how to use basic functions to design verbal documents—and this in itself offers a great introduction to the role of design as a rhetorical device.

• What kind of computer will you be using for this class? Desktop? Laptop? iPad? Do you have your own, or will you be using the ones in the school labs? Is it a Mac or a PC? Which operating system runs your computer (e.g., Windows 7, Vista, OSX)?

• How comfortable are you with basic operations, such as start-up/shutdown, loading software, creating folders and directories, saving, printing? Do you have any trouble entering text, using copy/paste, or undoing typing? Do you know how to find Help or Support?

• What software is loaded onto your device? What word processing program will you be using? Does your computer have video- or audio-editing software (e.g., iMovie or Windows Movie Maker)? If so, which version?

• How well do you know your word processing program? Do you use tools like grammar or spell-check? Do you know how to track changes or insert comments? Are you experienced with formatting a document to change fonts, adjust line spacing, set margins and tabs, insert headers or footers, create lists and tables? Do you know how to set up notes and works cited or reference lists?

• Are you comfortable using the internet? Can you attach files to emails? Do you know how to narrow results on a search site? Do you know how to download files? Have you ever created a web page?

• Do you have a digital camera? Does it also record video?

• Do you have a way to store and transport media files, such as a flash drive or portable hard drive?

Adding Multimodal Elements to Writing Assignments

Probably the easiest way to get started teaching multimodal composition is to have students incorporate visual elements into something they’ve written. You could ask them to add photographs to a narrative, for example. Or they could create audio arguments by using a digital recorder and following NPR’s This I Believe format (thisibeileve.org). Most students are adept at using social media and at using their phones to snap pictures—but you’ll need to encourage them to do so with purpose. For example, a position paper on a campus issue could be enhanced by creating a slideshow of campus shots illustrating the issue. The student could read the written essay aloud while showing the slides—or create an audio file and integrate it into the slideshow. Students who are analyzing visual images (as in
Melissa Rubin’s on pp. 176–81 of Everyone’s an Author) could extend their analysis by recording other students responding to a few key questions about the ad or image they are analyzing.

Before working with multimodal texts, students need to learn to think differently about “composition,” to imagine it not just as putting words together on a page but as making something that informs or persuades or engages someone through a medium (or media) other than print. Student authors need to know that they are capable of effectively composing with more than words typed onto a keyboard. They need to feel confident in their ability to create meaning in these unexpected ways.

It’s critical to ask students to reflect on what adding audio or visual elements accomplishes: How do these elements alter the essay? How did the students approach it? What did they find difficult? What, if anything, did it enable them to communicate that they couldn’t do with words alone? Why?

**Some introductory exercises.** Students need to be encouraged to take ownership of their own learning, but to do so in an environment where they feel empowered to play with unfamiliar skills. Provide that by encouraging them to experiment in stages. Begin by having the class observe something—such as the YouTube video of the gorilla and basketball experiment (youtube.com/watch?v=G698U2Mvo) or a staged interruption of your class, in which someone barges in with unexpected questions, for example—and then question students about what they saw and what drew their attention. What did they notice (or miss), and why? Doing this gets them thinking about how we attend to the visual. You might also distribute pictures (photographs or postcards work best here) and ask each student to study the image he or she’s been given and then explain to the class what seems to be going on in the picture, what might be the “story” here. After everyone has explained his or her image, ask them how they came to the conclusions they drew and what evidence in the picture itself led to those conclusions.

Ask them to write a brief reaction to these exercises in seeing and interpreting, and then discuss the relevance of the exercises to the assignment of incorporating visuals into a text. The idea here is to begin thinking about the impact of how what we see or hear can affect us in different ways than what we read.

Then you might try assigning a short narrative essay following regular essay conventions. Once they have written it and revised it successfully, ask them to tell the same story without using any words. They can compose in any other medium, just not the written word. What does this assignment accomplish? It forces them to translate their preferred and comfortable usual way of doing something into a new and—at least initially—perhaps not-so-comfortable form. But somewhere in the process, the task becomes less daunting and difficult. And once they share their “compositions” and explain their processes to each other, they’ll see composition with fresh perspective.

Now they’re ready to play.
Why Not Just Words?

Students need to realize that whatever mode or media they use—visuals, videos, audio, and so on—it needs to suit their purpose. Their choices should convey something specific, something that would not be as well expressed in another way. It’s critical to match the mode to the desired effect. For example:

- Natural sound to establish setting
- Music to create or enhance mood
- Video to depict movement
- Spoken words to add veracity

Natural sound to establish setting. Describing the sounds of a city—New York or Chicago or Los Angeles—can be done with words, but a recording of those sounds can add depth to an essay on urban life because it will capture multiple elements at once: screeching brakes, honking horns, the whine of machinery, the subterranean thunder of a train in the subway, the shouts of street vendors, people talking in a variety of languages at varying volume. Conversely, for an essay set in the calm of a country meadow, broken only by the occasional birdcall, how much more effective it can be to let your audience hear what you hear.

Music to create or enhance mood. Think about your favorite films or TV shows and how important music is to creating a mood, emphasizing some aspect of a character or giving us a sense of where the action is going. Good sound engineers will tell you the score shouldn’t intrude, but they’ll also admit that a scene can be completely altered by changing the background music. Just think about how iconic some scores have become; without seeing the screen, we only need to hear the first few notes to know a Harry Potter film is about to play.

Video to depict movement. Sportswriters can be brilliant at describing action, but even the best written description cannot compete with actually seeing the game. And while the best film and theater critics can almost make you “see” the action they’re describing, watching the actual film or play provides a much richer experience than static words on a page can.

Spoken words to add veracity. Authors can always quote what others say, but adding audio files can let those others speak for themselves—and can convey something a written quotation cannot. The idiosyncrasies of our speech—the patterns, intonations, and accents—mark us in unique ways that cannot be conveyed as effectively in a transcript. Listen, for example, to a seven-year-old boy’s list of thirty things he believes from NPR’s This I Believe: npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyid=99478226. How much more poignant is the list when we hear it in the child’s voice than if an adult had read it? What does the boy’s voice add? If
you assign your students to compose an oral history, they can transcribe the interviews they do, but if they record the interviews, they can provide an audience with a more intimate experience of the subject.

Guiding Students through the Process of Multimodal Writing

Students know how to compose a traditional written essay, or at least have a sense of many of the things they’ll need to do: they choose or are given a topic; consider their purpose, audience, and other aspects of their rhetorical situation; brainstorm, make lists, or generate material in other ways; plan their approach and organization; and then type the words onto a screen or write them on a piece of paper. They might use the available technology to manipulate those words—cut and paste them to shape and reshape the message, add boldface or italics to headings or key points, use grammar- and spell-check—and then save the document to upload or email it to a classmate or teacher for feedback before revising. In a multimodal essay, students begin from the same place. They are still creating a text, and just as in a paper text, they’ll want to select the elements that will most effectively achieve their purposes as authors.

Choosing a topic that matters—to author and audience. It’s always important to match the assignment goals to the authors’ interests and abilities, but in multimodal composing it’s critical. The assignment shouldn’t expect students to include all the available multimodal options, only those that will be most effective for their individual rhetorical situation. Assigned topics and requirements for use of media and modes of expression need to be broad enough that students can find solid ground on which to build their personal take on the topic—to feel comfortable with what they’re saying and how they want to say it. As with any writing, students need to consider their rhetorical situation:

- **What genre are you using, and why?** Does it allow for (or call for) you to present information visually—or to link to data or other perspectives? Does the genre have any organizational requirements that would affect where you place links or visuals? Do these elements reflect the proper tone for your genre?
- **Who is your audience?** For whom are you composing this? How will they affect the choices you make about media or modes of expression? What might they already know about your topic? What will you need to include or emphasize to ensure they understand?
- **What is your purpose?** What do you want your audience to take away from this piece?
- **Consider your stance**—why did this topic engage you, and what’s your attitude toward it? And how do you want your audience to perceive you as you present this topic to them?
• What larger context do you need to think about as you compose? When and where will you create the composition? And when and where will it be “read”? Consider also the cultural elements at play, both those of the audience and your own. Cultural understandings—or misunderstandings—influence the impact of your message.

• What medium and which modes of expression—words, images (which kinds?), audio (which kinds?), links, presentation slides—will work best for your purpose and audience? You want the modes you select to be the most effective for the message you want to convey and the audience you have targeted.

Exploring the topic and generating ideas and text. Have students begin by assessing what they already know about their topics and determining what they need to discover. Gathering as much information as possible before starting to compose enables them to make good decisions about how best to present their arguments. Which would be more effective: still images presented in a dramatic setting or a short video? Would an audio clip add immediacy and authenticity?

Thinking hard about which media or modes will be best suited to the specific rhetorical situation. Is there a strong visual aspect to the topic? Is it necessary to demonstrate movement through time? How important are actual sounds and voices to the purpose? Is there a need for textual explanation? Using questions like these will help student authors frame their compositions most effectively.

Selecting and organizing material. Selecting and organizing nonverbal material to support the claims being made will depend, in part, on the genre. For example, a narrative organized chronologically could use a sequence of photos over the time involved to good effect. An argument against bullying in schools might want to incorporate one of the videos from the National Bullying Prevention Site at pacer.org/bullying/video/. If the assignment is to review or critique a work of art, including images of both the work itself and others by the same artist or of the same type will bring the essay to life.

Keeping track of all the steps. Students will need to think about all the steps specific to multimodal writing: planning, recording, downloading/uploading, editing, and publishing. Having them each create a project log will help them keep track of progress.

Some Cautions for Teachers

• If at all possible, before you make assignments that require using multiple modes or media, you should do the assignment yourself; this enables you to anticipate and address difficulties that may arise.
• Working in multiple modes and media can take much longer than expected. One way to help students manage their time is by having them lay out a rough storyboard and a timeline, working backward from the assignment due date. Be sure to help them include all the steps and stages of development. Then stay on top of each student’s or each group’s progress—perhaps by requiring them to keep a project log—and be prepared to intervene if necessary.

• If students are combining video, still images, and audio files, they need to make sure the elements function smoothly together. Edit sound before adding it to the video.

• Also, warn students to back up everything—to devise a clear (and simple) system for naming and dating drafts and elements of the essay and to save the video, audio, and verbal text at each step. Pay attention to how the student constructs each element separately.

Responding to and Evaluating Student Projects

Whether you’re responding to an essay that’s all words, a podcast, or a spoken presentation with slides, the basic principles are the same. Our approach to assessment needs to be grounded in our assignments—students need clear and detailed assignments in which our criteria for assessing their work are laid out in advance. So we need to know exactly why we are asking them to do something and precisely what we want them to derive from the experience. Laying all this out in advance enables the evaluative process to become part of the learning process.

The guidelines we give should specify the genre, identify the target audience and purpose (or require students to do so), state clearly our expectations for the finished product (including parameters for length and acceptable types of material that may be included), and give specific objectives for the assignment, which should in turn address one or more of the course objectives. Providing students a rubric for evaluation when you give them the assignment (such as the one below) turns the assessment process into part of the learning process.

Evaluation Rubric

For each of the following items, indicate your comfort level by checking the box under the appropriate number from 5 (maximum) to 1 (minimum).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Planning</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project proposal is clear and specific.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storyboard/timeline is detailed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress log is accurate and thorough.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments—what worked well, what needs to be improved:</td>
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</table>

(continued)
Other Things to Consider

Be sure to find out in advance what technology and tech support for multimodal writing are available on campus for your students. At some schools, individual departments make equipment available for students (audio and video recorders, still cameras, computers equipped with software for making and editing movies), while other schools have a central location for such equipment. And still other schools have nothing generally available, so students must provide for themselves. Ascertain what support is available in the classroom where you will be teaching: Is there a projector? screen? wi-fi? internet access? Are there enough outlets for multiple students to connect their laptops? What sort of support is available from IT or computing services for students who want to learn software?

Don’t forget to teach or remind students about the basics, like Google Docs, blogs, and wikis for collaborative work; Flickr, PhotoBucket, and Picasa for photo sharing (and Instagram for smartphone photos); and PowerPoint, Keynote, and Prezi for slide presentation. If your students want to create and publish videos, have them use Vimeo rather than YouTube; it is secure, offering password protection and thus
restricted access (an important consideration for potential intellectual property issues). There are also a lot of tutorials available online for using presentation software and making films and videos.

**Identify what software and what versions of it are available to your students,** either on campus-based computers or their own, and what experience they have using it.

**Useful Readings**

Harding, Matt. "Dancing to Connect to a Global Tribe." *This I Believe.* NPR, 29 Mar. 2009. Web. 3 Jan. 2013. Matt Harding created a video of himself dancing "terribly," as he says, in a variety of places around the world. He posted it on his website, it went viral, and millions watched and responded. The NPR staff then invited him to create an essay for their *This I Believe* program. Here's a link to a page where you can click on links to the video and to Harding's audio of the essay and read the essay text: npr.org/2009/03/29/102423050/dancing-to-connect-to-a-global-tribe. Pay attention to how Harding constructs each separately.

Responding to Writing
YOU WANT TO GIVE YOUR STUDENTS as much help as you can because you want them to succeed in your class—but you also need to get your own work done and, you hope, cook an occasional meal and get some sleep. Ways to respond helpfully to students’ work and still manage your own time are the subject of this chapter.

Responding and Grading

First, remember that responding and grading are two different activities. When you respond to students’ writing, your goal is to help them improve their writing of the draft at hand and in future writing; for that reason, you should respond in greatest detail to drafts that will be revised. Grading, on the other hand, ranks the writing’s overall quality in relation to standards you or your writing program has set. You’ll find advice on grading in Chapter 30 of this Guide, “Grading Student Writing.” Once a grade has been assigned to a piece of writing, students are likely to see the writing as finished. At that point, detailed responses are more often an attempt to justify the grade and function primarily as an autopsy. Here is advice on responding usefully and efficiently to students’ writing.

Developing Criteria for Response

Since most students have been taking English in school for many years, they may have some definite ideas about what makes good writing. However, their ideas may not match one another’s ideas or your criteria. So a good first step in preparing to respond to students’ writing—and a good way to help them understand what you want—is to describe, as clearly as possible, the criteria you’ll use when you respond to their writing. Here are a couple of ways to do that.
Use rubrics and checklists. Checklists and rubrics or scoring guides are excellent tools for responding to students’ work in progress. They spell out as clearly as possible your expectations and provide detailed responses to as few or as many characteristics as you want students to be responsible for. Students can use them to evaluate their own and one another’s work. And they control your response by reminding you what to look for as you read students’ work. A sample checklist for an essay that argues a position appears below. To respond, you would simply place a check mark along the continuum from “very well” to “poorly or not at all.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguing a Position: Response Criteria</th>
<th>Author:</th>
<th>Assessor:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Assignment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay presents an argument.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Required drafts and other related assignments are present.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Rhetorical Situation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay fulfills the requirements of its genre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay addresses the needs of the intended audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay accomplishes its purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay’s stance is reasonable and fair with an appropriate tone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay considers the larger context.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay is presented in a medium appropriate to its purpose and audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay’s design is appropriate and effective (readable, clear).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Argument</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The position is stated explicitly in a thesis statement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The position is appropriately qualified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay responds to what others have said about the topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate background information is provided.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A clear indication of why the topic matters is given.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons are clearly stated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons are adequately supported.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting evidence is accurate, current, appropriate, and sufficient.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterarguments are addressed, acknowledged, refuted.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Draft</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The draft is clearly organized.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The argument is presented logically throughout.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The tone is authoritative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The writer appeals to readers’ values.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transitions help readers move from idea to idea.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Source Material</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The essay includes adequate and appropriate source material.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sources are introduced and identified appropriately.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Summaries and paraphrases are accurate and avoid plagiarism.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Works Cited section is correctly formatted (MLA).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In General</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentences are consistently correctly phrased and punctuated.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The language is precise, and the wording exact and accurate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling are correct.</td>
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</table>
You could substitute “well,” “acceptable,” “poor,” “not at all,” “early,” “middle,” or “late”—whatever method of response you choose. Having an even number of response levels prevents grouping checks or credits in the middle. Why not use numbers or letters? For one thing, students will expect you to tally them up to create a precise grade for the whole rubric, increasing your workload. For another, the criteria on the rubric are not equal in value and, in fact, may change in value from draft to draft. For example, you may not want to weight “mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling” as much as “adequate and appropriate source material,” but if the mechanics are flawed enough that the writer’s credibility comes into question, those problems will likely outweigh other criteria. And absence of a grade reinforces the idea that this checklist is a response to a work in progress.

Develop evaluation criteria collaboratively. Students understand and accept evaluation criteria more readily when they participate in developing them. You’ll find, too, that students know and can articulate standards very well; they know what makes for good writing, even if they have trouble achieving it. (Here’s a useful analogy: you may know what qualities characterize a good tennis backhand, guitar lick, or pastel drawing technique but still be unable to do it.) Here’s a way to work with your class over one or two class periods to develop a checklist of evaluation criteria collaboratively:

1. Ask students to jot down a list of the criteria on which the type of writing they’re currently working on should be judged.
2. Place them in groups of three to six students. Each group’s task is to share their individual lists and come up with a single list on which they can agree.
3. Ask one member of each group to write the group’s list on the board, which you have divided into sections for each group’s list plus one in the middle that you’ve reserved.
4. Once all groups’ lists are on the board, ask the class to find common criteria. If, for instance, every group’s list contains “focused topic,” write that term on a class list in the middle section. As students find common criteria, they’ll note that groups use various terms to describe some criteria. Discuss possible differences in the terms and help the class decide on a single term that everyone agrees will be used to mean one criterion. This discussion will help students understand the criteria and develop a common language for discussing their work.
5. After the groups’ lists are merged into a single class list, you may find that criteria important to you are missing. Now is the time to add them, explaining what they mean and why they’re important.

This procedure results in a class-specific set of criteria on which you can base checklists and rubrics that you and the students will follow in responding to and evaluating their work. You may want to extend the exercise by comparing the
class criteria with generally accepted criteria from your school’s writing program documents, your textbooks, and other sources. For example, share with students three or four checklists or rubrics that define criteria for the kind of writing you’re working on. (The WPA Outcomes Statement, reprinted in Chapter 2 of this Guide, is a good starting point.) As out-of-class work or in groups, have students compare their class criteria with these other criteria and then discuss the comparisons: What does their criteria contain that ours doesn’t? What do they include that we don’t? Should we consider adding these other criteria or changing our criteria to match theirs more closely?

Responding to Drafts

Don’t. Many writing teachers think that if students write something, they need to respond in detail. That’s not true. If a student writes in a journal or does in-class writing as part of class work, a check or date stamp to acknowledge that it’s done may be all that’s needed. Much other informal writing may only require a brief comment on some part of the content—“Really? That’s interesting,” “I didn’t know that,” or “Is this always the case?”—to show that you’ve read it.

Ask students to respond first. Ask them to keep track of their writing process as they compose from the earliest invention strategies through the final draft. If you ask students to turn in a self-assessment of their writing, you can then respond to their assessment, which is often exactly right or even excessively harsh. Engaging in a written dialogue with students over the merits of their drafts in which you can affirm their evaluation rather than having to point out problems yourself can be very positive—and even better is pointing out strengths they may have overlooked.

Respond as a reader. Respond to students’ writing as an interested reader, and you’ll provide them with a lot of useful information on which to base revisions. Respond to content with reactions (“Really?” or “Wow!”), personal responses (“That happened to me once, too,” or “I’d like to know more about this”), questions (“How do you know this?” or “Do others have the same opinion?”), and suggestions (“What if you . . . ?” or “Consider moving this to . . .”).

Highlight strengths as well as weaknesses. Research suggests that we learn best when criticism is balanced with praise—when our strengths as well as our errors are pointed out. Frequently, however, praise for what students do well in writing has been far outweighed by “correction” of their errors. Look for ways to respond positively and show that you’re taking their writing seriously, itself a positive gesture. Note interesting ideas, well-organized paragraphs, graceful turns of phrase, and striking words and images.
Look for patterns. Many students’ errors result not from ignorance but from their attempt to create order by inventing rules that are consistent but wrong. If a student consistently links two closely related sentences with a comma, for example, that student needs lessons in editing for comma splices in the context of showing how one sentence follows logically from the previous one. Unlike random errors, which suggest a lack of editing skills, patterns of error can be identified, after which you can help students learn the correct rules. You can show students such patterns in several ways. Once you identify two or three patterns, you can mark only those patterns by underlining the problem, circling it, or putting a notation in the margin next to the line on which the error appears. You might draw lines connecting each instance of a pattern to show that the same problem occurs several times. If you’re commenting with a word-processing feature, you might highlight each instance of a pattern in a certain color: yellow for comma splices, green for a certain type of misspelling, and so on. Or you can mark one example and ask the student to locate others as a way to recognize and eventually edit that error.

Limit your responses. If you’re having a tennis lesson and the coach criticizes your stance, your grip, your swing, your serve, your racket, and your clothing all at once, you’re more likely to walk off the court in frustration than to improve your game. The same is true with writing, so concentrate on a small number of issues on any given draft and ignore the rest—for now. If you’re reading an early draft, pointing out errors in sentences that may well be changed or deleted as students revise is wasted energy. As a rule of thumb, comment on issues in students’ drafts according to a hierarchy, dealing with the biggest issues first.

- Focus. Does the student have a workable topic? Is it appropriately narrowed or focused?
- Development. Does the draft say enough? Does it cover the topic in appropriate depth?
- Organization. Does the draft have a clear beginning, middle, and end? Are the paragraphs in the best order? Are the paragraphs themselves organized appropriately?
- Coherence. Can the reader follow the logic throughout the draft? Does the writer include transitions and other signposts to help the reader?
- Sentences. Does each sentence contribute to the whole? Is each sentence correct? Is there appropriate variety in sentence construction?
- Phrasing and tone. Are phrases idiomatic? Is the tone consistent? Appropriate?
- Editing, proofreading, and design. Are mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling correct? Is the design appropriate for the genre and the audience’s expectations?
As you read the draft, try to identify strengths, the areas most in need of improvement, and strategies to suggest to the student for revising.

**Recognize the stages in the writing process.** One way to encourage students to see their assignments in terms of work accomplished and work yet to be done is to respond at stages in the process. Edwina L. Helton and Jeff Sommers have described a useful method: E-M-L, or early, middle, and late. A draft marked early is early in the process: it may lack a clear thesis; it may be unfocused and underdeveloped. A middle draft likely has a clear direction but needs significant work on development and clarification. A late draft may be almost finished, needing only editing and proofreading.

**Use minimal marking.** Students, like the rest of us, often know more than their writing shows; they make mistakes that they know are mistakes but simply don’t see as they put together a draft. To place the responsibility for finding and fixing errors on the students, consider this method, first described by Richard Haswell: note errors in grammar, spelling, mechanics, and usage by a check mark in the margin next to the line on which the error appears. Students then must check that line to identify and fix the errors. Problems that remain after they’ve gone through the draft are probably problems they need assistance with in conference, through lessons in class, or in a visit to the writing center. The check marks in the margin of the final draft of the student essay in this chapter (pp. 61–63) show minimal marking at work: in the third line, the student omits the final –s from the verb *consists*, so a check mark is placed in the margin next to that line to alert the student to the presence of an error.

**Respond to errors in context.** Many of us are good at seeing errors; in fact, marking formal errors is the easiest part of responding to writing. Although there’s no question that errors in a piece of writing can seriously undermine its effectiveness and its writer’s credibility, a resolute focus on error leads student writers to the conclusion that what they have to say doesn’t matter as long as they write error-free prose. Let students know that errors are like bee stings: a few are an annoyance, but too many can be fatal. It’s not useful to create a rigid policy on errors, such as “Three errors and your paper automatically fails.” Your role is to teach, not punish, and if student work has errors, it’s likely that the student didn’t know they were there; otherwise, he or she would have corrected them. You can teach students how to edit and proofread, what to look for, and where to get additional help, whether from computer spelling and grammar checkers, handbooks, classmates, or the school’s writing center.

To respond to error productively, remember that correctness is one of a constellation of goals. Here are some questions to help you think about errors:

- Which errors are most serious? Problems involving sentence structure and boundaries, such as sentence fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences, are usually seen as more serious than misspellings or nonstandard verb forms.
• Do the errors interfere with the reader’s ability to understand the text? If so, the writer needs to know.

• Do the errors affect the writer’s credibility? Rightly or wrongly, readers often judge the writer’s intelligence by the correctness of his or her prose.

• Do the errors form patterns? A pattern of errors can be corrected through instruction; random errors are most likely the result of poor proofreading.

Making Specific Comments

When you respond to students’ drafts, you should consider these questions: What response will help the writer at this stage of the writing? What does the writer need to know—and what does the writer not need to know—right now? How should this response be given? Your response will vary, depending on your knowledge of the student and the student’s needs, the timing of the draft (rough, revised, or final), and the text of the draft. For example, consider the following responses to two drafts of a student’s argument essay on the dangers of the Atkins and other low-carbohydrate diets. Here’s the student’s first draft; the comments were made using Microsoft Word’s Comment function.

This draft has several problems, ranging from its lack of a clear thesis to problems with sentence structure and wording. Since it’s a rough draft, however, your goal

Atkins Diet, Good or Bad?

first draft

[With the general population in the United States being obese and constantly more and more people becoming obese,] many consider the Atkins diet. This diet is simply [low to no carbohydrates and a great intake of protein.] This diet has been around for many years, but is currently getting more publicity and many people are starting to consider it. [The main focus now is, is the diet really healthy for ones body?]

[The Atkins diet is broken up into stages. The first stage is where the weigh becomes off the fastest because it is predominately water fat, but [after this stage] is when the weight loss slows. Constantly eating protein everyday is not merely the healthiest way to remove those unwanted pounds. There are many health risk involved with this diet.

Studies reported that weight loss was associated with the length of time being on the diet and not the reduced intake of carbohydrates]
RESPONDING TO WRITING

(PCRM pg7). Low carbohydrate diets induce a chemical known as ketosis which is an abnormal state that occurs in starvation. In the long run, this chemical can affect one's body physically, having calcium loss, a high risk of osteoporosis, and a high risk of forming kidney stones. Your body can also be in high risk of problems dealing with bones, the cardiac system, and the liver. Food containing a high count for protein usually lack important healthy ingredients such as fibers which results in problems with the body.

Many people don't look at the risk factors for this diet, but their focus is primarily on, Am I going to lose weight, how fast, and is it easy? The Atkins diet fits these three questions and that's why many people decide to go on it. This diet is said to burn your fat for energy. This attracts the so-called “busy” people fast. Those always on the go can lose pounds fast because they need the energy and their fat is their supplier. Research found this diet to be top-notch over almost any other diet. Low fat diets, Weight watchers, and many others were compared to the Atkins diet and more results were viewed in favor of Atkin. More pounds were shed and blood pressure, glucose, and other body problems in question were all in normal range.

I guess depending on the person Atkins might be for you, but for those concerned with their body in the future may take more consideration into what diets they partake in.

Work [Cited]


in responding should be to give advice to help the student revise it. You may have a checklist or rubric for the assignment that moves from more global issues (focus, development, and organization) to more local (coherence, sentence structure, mechanics, and editing and proofreading). Generally, when you respond to early drafts, emphasize global issues first. Marking errors in sentence construction, wording, mechanics, and spelling is inappropriate because at this point your response will advise the student to rewrite much or all of the essay, eliminating the material you've marked. Here's how this student's instructor responded in a summary comment:

I think this topic is really interesting; I tried the Atkins diet once and couldn't stand how I felt after just one day! Your information is troubling; it sounds as if you don't think Atkins is a good diet. Try to make your position clearer in a thesis statement.

Comment: Wow! This sounds serious! I like this specific information.

Comment: This seems to contradict the first part of your paper. How can it be harmful and yet the best?

Comment: You'll need more sources than this one, and your sources will need to be documented accurately. See Chs. 16 (Finding Sources), 18 (Evaluating Sources), and 24 (MLA Style) in EAA for help.
Then organize your ideas so you can discuss one at a time, completely. You need more information in the essay: What is the Atkins diet and how does it work? What are the benefits in the short term? What are the worst effects in the long term? Look in more sources for answers to these questions.

The student then revised the draft twice, eventually submitting the following final version in her midterm portfolio for a grade. In this situation, your response can be more comprehensive, covering all the requirements for the essay, however, if you allow students to revise throughout the term, you can still urge improvement, as this instructor does, both in the comments and through minimal marking of errors.

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**Atkins Diet, Good or Bad?**

With the general population in the United States being obese and constantly more and more people becoming obese, many consider the Atkins diet. This diet consist of little to no carbohydrates and a high intake of protein. This diet has been around for many years, but is currently getting more publicity and many people are starting to consider it. The main focus now is, whether or not the diet is really healthy for ones body? In my opinion [this diet is too risky and unhealthy to partake in just to lose a few pounds.]

The Atkins diet has [four stages:] the induction phase, ongoing weight loss, pre-maintenance, and lifetime maintenance. The induction stage last for approximately two weeks. This switches your body into ketosis [where] your metabolism begins to burn fat for energy. In this stage you are consuming protein and vegetables. [Ongoing weight loss] is where more vegetables, nuts and berries are included in your diet. This is where you are changing the ratio of carbohydrates to protein and fats ("The Science Behind Atkins"). Stepping into the pre-maintenance stage is the crucial change. This is where you begin to change your eating habits to something you will stick to for the rest of your life. During this stage your weight loss will slow. The last stage is where you are controlling your intake of carbohydrates and focusing on the future. This stage refers to your permanent eating habits. [The Atkins diet is broken up into stages.] The first stage is where the weight comes off the fastest because it is predominately water fat, but after this stage is when the weight loss slows. What makes the fat come off so fast the first stage of this diet is because eating fewer grams of carbohydrate results in fewer spikes in blood sugar, resulting in less insulin output. Insulin makes the body retain sodium, which makes your body retain water. When you are
not producing as much insulin, the cycle slows and the effect is like taking a diuretic which is a drug that increases the output of urine. After a few days, that’s when you will also begin to lose body fat.

Young men and people who have a lot of weight to lose are more likely to lose weight more rapidly at the start of the Atkins program ("FAQ"). Supposedly many health benefits are to come out of this diet.

It is suppose to lead you into a way where you can control your eating habits and stay slim for the rest of your life, maximize your carbohydrate intake and staying within three to five pounds of your ideal weight, prevent you from getting caught up in those foods that cause severe weight gain, help you to make healthy food choices, reduce risk factors for various disorders including diabetes, and give you a sense of accomplishment. However, these health benefits are not clearly what you are going to get out of this diet in the long run. Constantly consuming protein for several weeks is not nearly the healthiest way to remove those unwanted pounds. There are many health risk involved with this diet. Studies reported that weight loss was associated with the length of time on the diet and not the reduced intake of carbohydrates ("Health Advisory"). Low carbohydrate diets induce a process known as ketosis which is an abnormal state that occurs in starvation. The increase of this and uric acid can lead to severe headaches. It also has said that people on this diet have bad breath odors, maybe causing halitosis. Many experience weakness, drowsy and having a lack of energy. Others have also experienced the case of hair loss. Food containing a high count for protein usually lack important healthy ingredients such as fibers which results in constipation and chronic bowel disease.

This diet doesn’t even fit the guidelines for the American Heart Association. These guidelines include: eating fruits, grains, drinking milk, limiting food high in saturated fats, eating less than 6 grams of salt, exercise, and drinking no more than one alcoholic drink a day for a woman and two for a man ("Diet and Lifestyle"). In the long run this ketosis can effect ones body physically leading to having calcium loss, a high risk of osteoporosis, and a high risk of forming kidney stones. Your body can also be in high risk of problems dealing with bones and the liver. The cardiac system can be effected also because of the high counts of animal fat consumed on this diet. Animal fat leads to cardiac disease and/or high cholesterol. Many case studies show many people to have dealt with high cholesterol even though this diet is said not to have any effects of an increase in cholesterol.
of cholesterol. Many people don’t look at the risk factors for this diet, but their focus is primarily on, Am I going to lose weight, how fast, and is it easy? The Atkins diet fits these three questions and that’s why many people decide to go on it. This diet is said to burn your fat for energy. This attracts the so called ‘busy’ people fast, those always on the go can lose pounds quicker because they need the energy and their fat is their supplier. Research found this diet to be one of the top sellers right now. Low fat diets, [Weight Watchers, and many others were compared to the Atkins diet and more results were viewed in favor of the Atkins diet. More pounds were shed and blood pressure, glucose, and other body problems in question were all in normal range. Unfortunately it is still putting your body in a higher risk of health problems in the future (“The Science Behind Atkins”).

Many studies done came to the conclusion that the Atkins diet is good for a short period of time, but not a lifelong thing. I feel short or long, you will still be in a higher risk for health problems either now or in your future. Some how this diet will effect your body, by not just having you lose weight. It has proven to help lose more weight in a six month period, but after about one year ⅓ of the weight is regained (diets nutrition). Though this diet may work in ones favor for a few months it still has its share of serious disadvantages. I guess depending on the person Atkins might be for you, but [for those concerned with their body in the future may take more consideration into what diets they partake in.] I see it as the only healthy way to lose weight is to change ones eating habits and exercise. Not only are you losing weight, but it’s healthy for the body and you don’t have to worry about what future side effects may occur due to your early years of dieting.

Works Cited


This draft shows many improvements over the first draft, but it still has problems with organization, wording, editing and proofreading, and accurate documentation of sources. The instructor said as much in the summary comment:

You’ve improved this essay considerably. You take a clear position on the Atkins diet and provide a lot more information on it—just what it needed! I like the way you describe the four stages of the diet and how you rebut the Atkins claims. It still needs work on organization, however: you discuss three different topics in two different places in the essay, so the essay seems to repeat itself. For example, discuss the benefits of Atkins all at once, and discuss the aspects of each stage as you introduce it. Your reliance on only three sources, from the web, is worrisome, too—getting additional support in some academic sources and getting help from a reference librarian would strengthen your argument. Also, look through each sentence to make sure it works grammatically, and proofread carefully—spell-checkers won’t pick up on “effect” when you mean “affect,” for example.

Marking Student Writing

Respond in pencil. If you’re responding to printed drafts, pencil is less intimidating to students than ink, red or otherwise. Also, if you make a comment that you want to reconsider, comments in pencil can be erased without making a mess of the student’s draft.

Comment electronically. Another way to write comments that you can revise or reconsider is to comment electronically on drafts students submit electronically. Some learning management systems offer the ability to insert comments wherever you want, simply by mouse-clicking on a word in the document. Microsoft Word’s Reviewing toolbar offers a Comment feature that works the same way—and some versions allow you to record a voice comment. These tools offer the advantage of legibility, since you don’t have to worry whether students can read your handwriting.

Respond on a separate sheet. Marginal comments offer the benefit of being visually tied to the text to which they are responding, and patterns can be marked easily. If you need to say more than a few words or a phrase, however, the margins can become crowded and your comments hard to read. For that reason, consider making up response sheets that you can attach to each draft. On the sheet, you can print any rubric or checklist you’re using, or you can simply provide space for comments. If you provide the students with a rubric, use the same one to assess their writing. When you want to comment on a student’s work, simply place a number near the passage on which you want to comment. Number and write your response on the attached sheet. As an alternative, compose a response as a letter to the student; if you use your word processor, you can save a copy of your feedback.
Use correction symbols or abbreviations sparingly. Handbooks traditionally provide a list of correction or revision symbols that instructors may use to save time. Unfortunately, students seldom know what those symbols mean, and too often they are too vague to be helpful. (AWK, for example, usually means, “There’s something wrong with this sentence, but I can’t tell you what it is.” X, for “obvious error,” suggests that the error is obvious to you, but if it had been obvious to the student, he or she probably wouldn’t have made it.) If you use such symbols, use only a limited number and explain to students what they mean. The slight increase in time spent identifying the problem in plain English benefits students’ understanding.

Useful Readings

TAKE A GOOD LOOK at the snapshot on your driver’s license. How well does it capture your looks? When you read a draft of a student’s writing, you see a snapshot of their writing at a particular time, in response to a particular prompt or assignment. And, like any snapshot, it’s not clear how well that draft represents the student’s overall writing ability. For that reason, many writing teachers ask students to create and submit portfolios of their work during a course. Portfolios allow instructors to examine several samples of students’ writing for patterns, trends, strengths, and weaknesses—and, depending on what the portfolio includes, to see the students’ processes as they researched, drafted, and revised the texts in the portfolio. Portfolios also provide students the opportunity to create written reflections on and evaluations of their own work to help them see what they’ve accomplished and what they need to work on in the future. This chapter offers advice on creating a writing course that will foster the creation of writing portfolios along with tips on managing student portfolios.

Self-Assessing Writing Portfolios

Many writing teachers who require portfolios see the students’ written assessment of the contents as the most important element—it moves students toward independence through the ability to assess their work themselves, instead of relying on teachers. This reflective self-assessment may be written in the form of an informal letter or a formal essay asking students to use the materials in the portfolio as the evidence on which they base thoughtful examination of their writing and their work in the class. Chapter 32 of Everyone’s an Author offers guidelines on assembling a writing portfolio, including what to include, how to reflect on one’s writing, and how to organize both print and electronic portfolios. Bonnie Sunstein’s essay “Be Reflective, Be Reflexive, and Beware: Innocent Forgery for Inauthentic Assessment” (cited below) offers additional guidelines and questions for students as they self-assess.

If you ask students to include all drafts and revisions as well as in-class work and research materials, you can evaluate how diligently they worked; usually that diligence will result in good final products. Some students will use their
Teaching with Writing Portfolios

Students may use self-assessments to argue that their grade should be based on their effort, rather than on the writing they produce. Also, some students will use the self-assessment to try to flatter you. Emphasize the goal of focusing their attention on their writing and observable class performance, not on evaluating the course or instructor.

Assigning Writing Portfolios

What should go into a portfolio of writing? In its barest form, a portfolio is simply a paper or online folder in which students keep their writing. If you assign, collect, and grade individual assignments and then ask students to submit them again in such a portfolio, they can write an assessment of the contents before submitting it at term’s end. More often, however, instructors ask for a portfolio of students’ work once or twice during a term and evaluate the contents as a whole, looking for patterns and trends that persist over several pieces of writing. However you design your portfolio requirements, explain them to students clearly, preferably on the first day of class, because they’ll need to know what writings to keep in order to have a complete portfolio. Here are some suggestions for what portfolios might include.

Polished, final drafts of assigned essays. You may ask for every assigned essay or offer students a choice among their assignments, since every writer drafts some texts that don’t work out. Or, you might require some and make others optional. For example, if students work on a narrative, a text analysis, and an evaluation, they must include in their portfolio the analysis plus either the narrative or the evaluation. To prevent students from assuming they don’t need to write the essays they will exclude from their portfolios, you might insist that at least one complete draft of those omitted essays be included. Their self-assessment can then address the reasons why they were abandoned.

All drafts of assigned essays. Drafts are useful for seeing the progress students make from first to finished draft and for jogging your memory if you’ve seen an earlier draft. Ask that students label and date each draft and, in print portfolios, place them in order from finished on top to first on the bottom.

Cited source material. It’s easy to check the accuracy of summaries, paraphrases, quotations, and citations if photocopies of the sources are in the portfolio. Again, ask students to label each source; consider asking students to highlight or underline the passages in each source that they used in their own essays. Even if you require electronic portfolios, having labeled and annotated copies of sources used will save you time as you evaluate students’ research and use of source material.

Student assessment of the contents. Some instructors ask for an informal letter that discusses the strengths of the contents and the writer’s plans for improvement in the future. Others assign a lengthy self-assessment essay that includes quotations from and references to the essays the student is assessing, treating this essay as an additional sample of the student’s writing or the equivalent of a final exam.
**Other materials.** Other course-related writing, such as collaborative work or in-class writing and tests, may be included. Also, some instructors allow students to include other writing—essays from other courses, fiction or poetry, work-related writing—that shows aspects of their writing ability.

The portfolio itself can be a simple two-pocket folder. Ask students to place pieces to be graded in one pocket and drafts and other materials in the other, to simplify your reading. Insist that they write their names on the outside of the folders again to make recordkeeping easier. If, of course, you allow or require students to create online portfolios, their work must be organized through links or other means, depending on the software and online resources available to them. What's important is that their work be organized so that you don't have to wade through it to find what you need to respond appropriately. Also, organizing their selections helps students review their own evolution as writers.

**Organizing Electronic Portfolios**

If you ask students to submit their work in electronic portfolios, you need to create ways for students to organize their essays and files. Learning management systems such as *Desire2Learn* allow you to create specific assignments to which students post their drafts, so you may set up portfolio assignments like "Position essay portfolio draft," "Evaluation portfolio draft," and "Self-assessment." If you're relying on email, you might require students to attach their final drafts to a single message. If students create online portfolios on websites or blogs, you need only visit each site to read their work—though you may need to respond to their writing in an email, since commenting within the body of the text may not be possible online.

**Reading Portfolios**

The guidelines presented in Chapter 23 of this Guide, "Responding to Student Writing," apply to portfolios of writing, too. A significant difference is that instead of or in addition to evaluating individual pieces of writing, you may evaluate students' overall performance for your course as well as their self-assessment. Here, for example, is a list of the qualities writing program faculty at Wright State University look for in portfolios in a course focused on argumentative writing.

**Content**

- Defines the issue and its context
- Enters a debate (engages the issue, not just a literature review or detached analysis of the argument: “One might argue . . .”)
- Shows awareness of the audience and needs of that audience
- Is focused (appropriately chosen and limited topic)
- Is developed (uses sources but doesn’t create a collage of quotations or paraphrases; creates and sustains a line of reasoning; covers topic appropriately; explains thoroughly and clearly)
Teaching with Writing Portfolios

- Is convincing or reasonable
- Presents differing arguments
- Bonus: displays passion in arguing

Evidence
- Is present
- Relates to point
- Is properly cited and documented
- Shows synthesis of ideas with multiple citations

Form
- Coherence and cohesion (at the essay and sentence level: transitions, signal phrases, repeated words, and integrated quotations)
- Thesis statement or equivalent
- Satisfying conclusion
- Control over sentence construction
- Subject and verb agreement
- Mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling (don’t distract or cause credibility problems)

Assessment
- Critical assessment of own work, supported by evidence from portfolio

You might combine criteria common to each individual essay’s rubric to develop a single rubric for the portfolio as a whole, separating out those criteria that apply only to a single assignment. You might also combine the rubrics for each individual essay with a rubric for the self-assessment or reflection, such as the one below.

Self-Assessment Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>0</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyzes work habits from invention to polished work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyzes strengths and weaknesses of each item in portfolio</td>
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<td>Analyzes strengths and weaknesses of overall writing ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discusses how writing has changed over time</td>
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<td>Analyzes performance in this class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offers evidence from portfolio papers to support assertions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoids argument from effort or undue flattery as persuasive techniques</td>
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Delaying Grades

If you design your course to include portfolios, you may assign grades much less often than if you grade each assigned essay separately. As a result, some students will express anxiety over not receiving frequent grades, as they did in high school or other classes. To allay their fears, make this offer: "Anytime you want to know your grade as it stands at this point in the course, schedule a conference with me. Bring your portfolio with the work you’ve done so far, and I’ll go over it with you and tell you what your grade would be if I had to give you one at that time." Interestingly, almost no students will take you up on your offer. Although they are disoriented at first by the lack of grades, students quickly realize that they are now free to concentrate on their writing, which they can work to improve over a much longer time span than they’re used to. Portfolios encourage multiple revisions precisely because students have not received grades, which they consider the mark of a finished assignment.

At the same time, students do need some indication of their standing in your course before the very end, and some may need a grade in order to understand your grading standards. To give students an indication of how you’ll be grading their work, consider putting a grade on a draft early in the course. Give it a low value, and grade it using the rubric you’ll use when assessing their work at the end of the term—the grades will likely be far lower than your students expect, and you can then explain the advantages of multiple revisions and delayed grading.

Later in the term, you can give students a progress report by asking them to submit a midterm portfolio that contains the work done through the first half of the term, along with their self-assessment of that work. They’ll get practice in compiling, organizing, and assessing a body of their work as well as an indication of their grades so far. To maintain an incentive for continued revision, you might consider weighting the portfolio grades unevenly. For example, make the midterm portfolio worth 20 percent of the final grade, while the final course portfolio (which might contain some or all of the contents of the midterm portfolio in addition to the work done in the second half of the course) is worth 50 percent. You might offer students an additional incentive to continue working hard (or start working harder!) by offering them a choice: if they wish, they may drop their midterm portfolio grade and add its weight to the final portfolio. In the example above, the final portfolio would then be worth 70 percent of their final grade.

Useful Readings


Conway, Glenda. “Portfolio Cover Letters, Students’ Self-Presentation, and Teachers’ Ethics.” New Directions in Portfolio Assessment: Reflective Practice, Critical Theory, and Large-Scale Scoring. Ed. Laurel Black, Donald A. Daiker, Jeffrey


Managing the Paper Load

C onsider the situation described by Chris Massey, a TA: “My students are constantly writing, and that means I am constantly reading what they are writing. Even though I am not marking every piece of writing they submit to me, I am reading each piece and responding to their writing in some fashion. My students are writing and writing well; the only downside is that I am spending a great deal of my time reading.” The problem Chris describes, responding adequately to students’ writing while not overburdening the instructor, is common among writing teachers. Fortunately, there are ways to teach writing that can make responding and grading manageable, including the techniques described in Chapter 27 of this Guide on responding to students’ writing. Here are some more suggestions.

Don’t read everything. Just because you assign it doesn’t require you to read it, let alone respond to it. Some things you read carefully (drafts); some things you skim and, maybe, respond with underlinings, stars, exclamation points, and question marks (letters, some in-class writing); and some things you simply put a check on or stamp, record if they did it, and move on (much daily work). The more writing you assign, the more you need to beware of overextending yourself.

Read all the drafts first. We evaluate things by comparing them with others, and student drafts are no different. To get an overall sense of how your students did on an assignment, read quickly through all the drafts you collect, perhaps sorting them as you read into three groups: strong, middling, and weak. This process helps you see the criteria by which you’ll read each draft in concrete terms and gives you choices of what to read: some instructors like to read strong drafts first to establish what’s possible, while others like to save some of the best for last.

Set a schedule. As a new instructor, you’re likely to spend thirty minutes reading and responding to each draft of an essay; in a class of twenty-five students, that totals twelve and a half hours. Establish a schedule for responding and keep to it. If you collect drafts late in the week and keep them over the weekend, spread out your responding sessions over three or four days. Include time for breaks to rejuvenate yourself, because reading and responding is taxing work. Use a timer set at thirty-minute intervals to keep yourself disciplined. If you’re teaching more than
one course at a time, consider establishing a regular, daily schedule: every afternoon from 3 to 5 p.m., you read student writing.

**Use rubrics.** If you clearly articulate the requirements of an assignment, you can create a chart-style rubric that lists them in the form of a table. The rubric helps you maintain discipline over your reading, forcing you to pay attention to the features of each student’s writing in similar ways. It also provides a clear, descriptive response for students to use as they revise or contemplate their grades. Make copies and do most of your responding on the rubric sheet, placing a check mark at the appropriate place on the right-hand side. Other comments may be written below the table. An example using statements of desired criteria is printed in Chapter 27 of this Guide. Below is another example that phrases criteria as questions. If you provide space between each question for comments, you can provide a summary response as well as commentary.

**Argument Draft Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Assessor</th>
<th>Circle one:</th>
<th>First draft</th>
<th>Rewritten draft</th>
<th>Further revision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Answer each question on a scale of 1–5 (5 = very well, yes indeed; 1 = no, not at all)

Comment below the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the thesis clear and appropriately qualified?</td>
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<td>2. Are the reasons plausible? Do they make sense?</td>
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<td>3. Does the writer provide enough appropriate support for the reasons?</td>
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<td>4. Can you follow the steps in the argument’s reasoning? (If not, identify where you lose track.)</td>
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<td>5. How well does the argument deal with potential objections or counterarguments?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Is source material documented carefully, with in-text citations and works cited?</td>
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<td>7. Does the writer use signal phrases to introduce information from sources?</td>
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RESPONDING TO WRITING

Have students evaluate their drafts. Before students give you their drafts, have them write a self-assessment, pointing out strong elements, parts that need to be improved, and questions they have. You might also have them fill out the same rubric you’ll use when you respond. When you respond to their drafts, you can then respond to their assessments, continuing a conversation they’ve already begun. You’ll be surprised at how much easier it is to write comments.

Avoid overresponding. If you identify a few strengths, problems, and patterns and use minimal marking, you’ll avoid the trap of making too many marginal and in-text comments that take time and energy (and overwhelm many students). Also, avoid a too-long end comment; some instructors’ comments end up longer than the student’s draft. Work toward a single paragraph that offers a couple of positive comments, a couple of suggestions or goals for the next draft, and a helpful strategy or two—and then stop.

Don’t worry about originality. Several students’ drafts will have similar problems, so responding with the same comment can save you time—and they’re unlikely to compare their comments’ prose style.

Stagger due dates. If you’re teaching more than one section of a course or more than one course at a time, create course plans with due dates that don’t coincide. Making one syllabus for multiple sections may save time up front, but you might have fifty drafts or portfolios to respond to during one weekend, a task that will not be to your or your students’ best advantage.

Keep good records. Be sure to keep records of your students’ work as you read so you don’t have to go through the stack one more time to record grades or other marks. Many instructors use a “received—date” stamp to show that assignments, especially those that don’t require much attention, have been received. Some learning management systems automatically date-stamp assignments as students post them. If the papers are stamped, they earn full credit when present in the student’s portfolio. If papers are present but not stamped, they get half credit (for doing the work but turning it in after the due date). And, if the papers are not present at all, they get zero credit.

Useful Readings


IF YOU’VE DEVELOPED GOOD ASSIGNMENTS and responded to drafts of students’ writing, grading will be less onerous. If you clarify expectations up front, students will know what you want and will usually have a fairly good idea of how well they performed. Still, grading is often difficult work for experienced and inexperienced instructors alike, so the following advice can help you as you face a stack of essays or portfolios to grade.

Developing a Method

Preview your students’ work. Avoid the temptation to jump in and start reading with an eye to grade. First, reread your assignment to remind yourself what you asked for, and then read quickly through the whole stack (if you’re new to teaching) or a random sample (if you’ve given the same assignment before) to give yourself a sense of how students did. You may find it helpful to create three stacks as you skim: strong, middling, and weak. Simply dividing students’ work into those three piles helps you internalize your criteria and how those criteria translate into various letter or number grades.

Use rubrics. Rubrics help you maintain your focus on the criteria for evaluating students’ work. Even if the rubrics are fairly general, they also provide a vocabulary to help students understand why they earned the grades they did. See Chapter 27, “Responding to Student Writing,” and Chapter 29, “Managing the Paper Load,” for sample rubrics and advice on creating your own.

Write a final comment. Whether or not you use a rubric, it’s helpful for students when you sum up the strengths and problems in an essay or portfolio as a guide for their future writing and as an explanation for the grade. A good final comment offers an overall assessment of the work, discusses how well it meets the demands of the assignment, and briefly outlines the work’s strengths and weaknesses. The final comment should be an occasion for you to discuss the writer’s work honestly and respectfully. At the same time, it shouldn’t be overly long or detailed—about 100 words is usually sufficient.
Use the full range of grades. After working with a group of students for ten or fifteen weeks and getting to know them and their work, we all have difficulty assessing that work fairly. Most often, we give higher grades than an objective grader who doesn't know the students. You should resist the temptation to give most students grades of B and a few grades of A or C, reserving the D or F for students who didn’t do the work or disappeared but didn’t drop the course. Why? Because your credibility and your writing program’s credibility in the university will suffer if students leave your course having earned a high grade and then do poorly in a subsequent writing course. Conversely, if your writing program includes a sequence of courses, you could end up with students whose grades in the first course mask their lack of preparedness to do the work of the second—and that’s no favor to the students. The hardest part of grading is giving students (especially students who have worked hard) the low grades that they have earned and that reflect your and your school’s expectations. It’s advisable to discuss grading criteria with other writing instructors, to get help in understanding and applying the writing program’s and university’s criteria to your own students’ work.

At the same time, don’t expect the grades in your classes to form a bell curve. Writing classes are relatively small, so the group of students you have in any one class may consist of many strong writers, many weak ones, or a mix, depending on how courses are scheduled, whether or not students register by major, or even time of day. You may well have a class in which more than half the students earn Bs and As—and in your next course, the reverse may be true. Remember, though, that few instructors consistently attract only the best writers, so monitor your grades over several courses to see how they average out.

Ask for second opinions. All writing teachers encounter student work that they have trouble grading. No matter what the reason, ask another instructor what grade they would give to a troublesome portfolio or essay. Your conversation about the merits of the work and the reasons for your grades will not only help you grade that student’s work fairly; it will help you understand your own grading better. If you share grading with several other instructors, you’ll also develop a clearer sense of the standards held for student work at your institution and worry less about whether you’re grading too high or too low.

Don’t grade every revision. Once expectations have been established, offer the option to revise for a higher grade, but don’t fall into the trap of regrading every draft a student submits. Some students will change exactly what you point out, with the expectation that if they follow your instructions, they will earn a higher grade. A few will resubmit several times, assuming that enough incremental changes will turn a C paper into an A paper. As the grader, you, too, will feel pressure to add points or raise a grade on a draft that a student submits repeatedly. It is better to offer a deadline for resubmitting work for reconsideration of the grade along with an offer to help students improve their drafts at any time before that deadline—but refuse to put grades on each successive draft.
Don't assume that grades motivate. As you teach, you'll find that some students are motivated only by a grade and will ask, "What do I have to do to get an A in this course?" Many of us who pursue advanced degrees and teach in college were motivated as undergraduates by the desire to excel, not just by earning high grades but also by working hard to learn. This isn't always the case for students. As you teach, you'll encounter students who are happy to earn Cs, even if they could do better, and occasionally you'll run across students who are trying, for one reason or another, to flunk out. These various students create a rich mix that you may find alternately frustrating and delightful, and you'll need to find various ways of reaching them; grades alone won't do it.

Keeping Records

It's important to keep students' grades organized so that you can calculate their final grades without difficulty. One way to lose credibility as a teacher is to lose students' work or fail to record their grades accurately, and for good reason: students' grades are their record of having done the work of a course. Here are some ways to keep track of students' work and grades.

Note cards. Many instructors ask students to list information on index cards on the first day of class. Those same cards can then be used to jot notes about the students' work: goals framed in conferences, ongoing progress in drafts, and various other assessments that might not lend themselves to a letter grade or number of points.

Three-ring binders. If you ask students to sign an attendance sheet, using three-hole-punched paper that you can slip into a three-ring binder simplifies maintaining attendance records. In fact, you can organize your entire course—syllabus, assignment sheets, daily class plans, handouts, and student records—in a single binder that you can bring to class and keep with you as a ready reference for whatever questions students might have about the course.

Gradebooks, online gradebooks, and spreadsheet programs. To keep track of students' grades and attendance, you should have a means of identifying each assignment and noting students' performance—a system that won't take too much time. The traditional gradebook offers a grid, but its spaces tend to be very small and uniform, forcing you to abbreviate assignment titles and, at the same time, providing far more spaces for grades than you're likely to need. Online gradebooks provided with some learning management systems can be flexible and useful, tallying up grades automatically. A third alternative that can meet your specific needs is a spreadsheet program like Excel. Not only can you create a customized grade sheet that you can program to figure grades automatically, you can create a color-coding scheme for such things as attendance and daily work assignments: if a student was present, you simply color the appropriate square, so that absences are visually obvious. Here's a simple example, showing one month's class attendance.
 Returning Students’ Work

The final step in responding to and grading students’ work is returning it to them. Here are a few hints on doing that effectively.

**During the term.** Strive to return students’ work as quickly as you can; within a week or ten days is reasonable. If you bring a stack of essays or portfolios to class, resist the pressure to hand them back at the beginning; wait until the end, when you can briefly discuss the class’s overall performance after completing the day’s agenda. When you return the work, let students know that you’ll be available for conferences, but not right after class. Give them time to review the paper and your comments before you meet. Also, asking students who wish to dispute their grades to write out a response rather than present an oral argument will help defuse emotions that might get in the way of a fruitful discussion.

**At the end of the course.** Most writing instructors schedule the due date of final portfolios or essays during final exam week. As a result, students often cannot pick them up until the following term or until the next fall term. If your school has no policy on keeping or returning student work, the easiest way to deal with these
Grading Student Writing

Useful Readings


