

CONCISE ELEVENTH EDITION

Strategies *for* Successful Writing

A Rhetoric and Reader

JAMES A. REINKING

ROBERT VON DER OSTEN

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Brief Contents

Rhetoric	1		
Chapter 1	Writing: A First Look	2	
Chapter 2	Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading	21	
Chapter 3	Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration	37	
Chapter 4	Revising and Editing Your Paper: Courageous Transformations	59	
Chapter 5	Paragraphs	84	
Chapter 6	Effective Sentences	106	
Chapter 7	Achieving Effective Style and Tone Through Word Choice	119	
Chapter 8	Narration: Relating Events	143	
Chapter 9	Description: Presenting Impressions	161	
Chapter 10	Process Analysis: Explaining How	177	
Chapter 11	Illustration: Making Yourself Clear	193	
Chapter 12	Classification: Grouping into Categories	206	
Chapter 13	Comparison: Showing Relationships	222	
Chapter 14	Cause and Effect: Explaining Why	236	
Chapter 15	Definition: Establishing Boundaries	251	
Chapter 16	Argument: Convincing Others	268	
Chapter 17	The Essay Examination	309	
Chapter 18	Writing About Literature, Movies, and Television Shows	317	
Reader		339	

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A Rhetoric and Reader

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CONCISE ELEVENTH EDITION

Strategies for Successful Writing

A Rhetoric and Reader

James A. Reinking

Robert von der Osten

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Printer/Binder: R. R. Donnelley/Crawfordsville
Cover Printer: Lehigh-Phoenix Color/Hagerstown

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Reinking, James A.

Strategies for successful writing : a rhetoric and reader : concise edition / James A. Reinking,
Robert Von Der Osten.—Eleventh Edition.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-13-411951-9—ISBN 0-13-411951-7

1. English language—Rhetoric—Handbooks, manuals, etc.
2. English language—Grammar—Handbooks, manuals, etc.
3. Report writing—Handbooks, manuals, etc.
4. College readers. I. Von der Osten, Robert. II. Title.

PE1408.R426 2016b

808'.042—dc23

2015035528

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10—DOC—19 18 17 16

Student Edition ISBN-13: 978-0-13-411951-9
Student Edition ISBN-10: 0-13-411951-7

PEARSON

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A la Carte ISBN-13: 978-0-13-412027-0
A la Carte ISBN-10: 0-13-412027-2

Contents

Preface xvii
To the Student xxv

Rhetoric 1

Chapter 1 Writing: A First Look 2

The Purposes of Writing 3
“Turn Down Your iPod Volume (or Go Deaf)”
by Marianne Halavage 4
The Audience for Your Writing 5
The Qualities of Good Writing 9
Writing and Critical Thinking 10
Writing in a Multimedia World 12
Writing and Ethics 16

Chapter 2 Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading 21

Orienting Your Reading 21
Strategies for Reading and Rereading 22
Mastering Reading Problems 25
Reading to Critique: Reading Critically 26
Reading as a Writer 28
“The Appeal of the Androgynous Man”
by Amy Gross 30

Writing a Summary 32
Writing a Critique 34

Chapter 3 Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration 37

Understanding the Assignment 38
Zeroing in on a Topic 39
Gathering Information 45
Thinking Critically about Your Topic 47
Organizing the Information 48
Developing a Thesis Statement 51
Writing the First Draft 54

Chapter 4 Revising and Editing Your Paper: Courageous Transformations 59

Preparing to Revise 60
Considering the Whole Essay 60
Thinking Critically about Your Draft 63
Strengthening Paragraphs and Sentences 69
Writing the Introduction, Conclusion,
and Title 72
Peer Evaluation of Drafts 73
Collaborative Writing 80
Maintaining and Reviewing a Portfolio 81

Chapter 5 Paragraphs 84

Unity 85

The Topic Sentence 86

Adequate Development 90

Organization 92

Coherence 94

Paragraphs with Special Functions:
Introductions, Transitions, and
Conclusions 98

Chapter 6 Effective Sentences 106

Avoiding Unnecessary Wordiness 107

Varying Sentence Complexity and Length 107

Word Order in Independent Clauses 110

Positioning of Movable Modifiers 112

Using Parallelism 114

Choosing the Right Verb Voice 115

Chapter 7 Achieving Effective Style and Tone Through Word Choice 119

Selecting the Right Words 119

Achieving the Desired Rhetorical Effect 126

Special Stylistic Techniques: Figurative
Language and Irony 133

Eliminating Flawed Diction 136

Chapter 8 Narration: Relating Events 143

The Purpose of a Narrative 144

Action, Conflict, and Point of View 145

Key Events 147

Dialogue 148

Thinking Critically About Narratives 149

Ethical Issues 150

Writing a Narrative 150

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY OF NARRATION:

“Joy Through the Tears” by Brittany Coggin 153

Critical Synthesis with Sources: Narration 158

Chapter 9 Description: Presenting Impressions 161

The Purpose of Description 162

Sensory and Dominant Impressions 163

Vantage Point 165

Selection and Arrangement of Details 166

Thinking Critically About Descriptions 168

Ethical Issues 168

Writing a Description 168

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY OF DESCRIPTION:

“My Serenity” by Rachel Harvey 171

Critical Synthesis with Sources:
Description 174

Chapter 10 Process Analysis: Explaining How 177

The Purpose of Process Analysis 178

Kinds of Process Analysis Papers 179

Writing Process Analysis in Electronic
Communications 181

Thinking Critically About Process 181

Ethical Issues 182

Writing a Process Analysis for Readers
Who Will Perform the Process 182

Writing a Process Analysis for Readers
Who Will Not Perform the Process 185

Revising the Process Analysis 187

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY OF PROCESS ANALYSIS:

“Basic Songwriting Techniques” by Hannah Hill 187

Critical Synthesis with Sources: Process
Analysis 190

Chapter 11 Illustration: Making Yourself Clear 193

- The Purpose of Illustration 194
- Selecting Appropriate Examples 195
- Number of Examples 195
- Organizing the Examples 196
- Thinking Critically About Illustrations 197
- Ethical Issues 197
- Writing an Illustration 197

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY OF ILLUSTRATION:

- “If It Is Worth Doing. . . .” by Janice Carlton 200
- Critical Synthesis with Sources:
Illustration 203

Chapter 12 Classification: Grouping into Categories 206

- The Purpose of Classification 207
- Selecting Categories 208
- Number of Categories 210
- Developing Categories 210
- Thinking Critically About Classification 211
- Ethical Issues 211
- Writing a Classification 212

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY FOR CLASSIFICATION:

- “Types of Video Games for Children” by
Kyra Glass 214
- Critical Synthesis with Sources:
Classification 219

Chapter 13 Comparison: Showing Relationships 222

- The Purpose of Comparison 223
- Selecting Items for Comparison 223
- Developing a Comparison 224
- Organizing a Comparison 225

- Using Analogy 226
- Thinking Critically About Comparisons
and Analogies 227
- Ethical Issues 228
- Writing a Comparison 228

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY OF COMPARISON:

- “Differences between Korean and English”
by Sunho Lee 231
- Critical Synthesis with Sources:
Comparison 233

Chapter 14 Cause and Effect: Explaining Why 236

- The Purpose of Cause and Effect 237
- Patterns in Causal Analysis 237
- Reasoning Errors in Causal Analysis 240
- Thinking Critically About Cause
and Effect 241
- Ethical Issues 242
- Writing a Causal Analysis 242

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY OF CAUSE AND EFFECT:

- “Why Students Drop Out of College”
by Diann Fisher 245
- Critical Synthesis with Sources: Cause and
Effect 248

Chapter 15 Definition: Establishing Boundaries 251

- The Purpose of Definition 252
- Types of Definitions 253
- Pitfalls in Preparing Essential Definitions 254
- Extended Definitions 255
- Thinking Critically About Definitions 257
- Ethical Issues 257
- Writing an Extended Definition 258

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY OF DEFINITION:

- “Vigilante Justice” by Heather Hornbrook 261
- Critical Synthesis with Sources: Definition 265

Chapter 16 Argument:
Convincing Others 268

- The Purpose of Argument 269
- Framing the Argument 270
- The Rational Appeal 271
- Reasoning Strategies 275
- The Emotional Appeal 281
- Making Arguments with Visuals 283
- The Ethical Appeal 283
- Other Types of Arguments: Rogerian and Exploratory Arguments 284
- Ferreting Out Fallacies 285
- Thinking Critically About Arguments 289
- Ethical Issues 290
- Writing an Argument 291

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY OF ARGUMENT:

- “Bottled Troubled Water” by Scott Lemanski 300
- Critical Synthesis with Sources: Argument 306

Chapter 17 The Essay
Examination 309

- Studying for the Examination 309
- Types of Test Questions 310
- Preparing to Write 310
- Writing the Examination Answer 311

Chapter 18 Writing About
Literature, Movies, and Television
Shows 317

- The Elements of Creative Works 318
- Plot 318
- Setting 320
- Character 322

- Point of View 325
- Symbols 328
- Theme 329
- Other Literary Devices: Memes, Ambiguity, Juxtaposition, and Irony 331
- Ethical Issues 333
- The Writing Process: Writing About Literature, Movies, and Television 333
- Writing a Review, Explication, or Literary Analysis 333

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAY ON LITERATURE:

- “The Refrigerator: A Symbol Between Worlds in ‘Aunt Parnetta’s Electric Blisters’” by Erin Mueller 336

Reader 339

Rhetorical Table of Contents

Narration

- “The Perfect Picture” by James Alexander Thom 340
- “Aunt Parnetta’s Electric Blisters” by Diane Glancy 342
- “Sound and Fury” by Dan Greenburg 347

Description

- “When the Full Moon Shines Its Magic over Monument Valley” by John V. Young 350
- “Seaside Safari” by Kessler Burnett 352
- “Back to the Future” by John Phillip Santos 355

Process Analysis

- “Ground-Source-Heat-Pumps: Mother Earth Will Wrap You in Warmth” by Perfect Home HVAC Design.com 364

- "Let's Get Vertical!" by Beth Wald 367
- "What Is the Creative Process?" by Tanner Christensen 370

Illustration

- "Accidental Discoveries" by Lexi Krock 374
- "If You're Happy and You Know It, Must I Know, Too?" by Judith Newman 379
- "The Revolution in the Living Room" by Catherine Steiner Adair 382

Classification

- "A Tale of Four Learners" by Bernice McCarthy 386
- "Different Types of Distance Learning: The Four General Categories for Online Programs" by Campus Explorer 392
- "What Kind of Procrastinator Are You?" by Alina Vrabie 395

Comparison

- "Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts" by Bruce Catton 398
- "Invasion of the Bodybuilders" by Chris Lee 401
- "Are Video Games Now More Sophisticated than Cinema?" by Jane Graham 403

Cause and Effect

- "For Cops, Citizen Videos Bring Increased Scrutiny. Are Incidents Caught on Tape Hindering Officers?" by Kevin Johnson 408
- "Why We Keep Stuff: If You Want to Understand People, Take a Look at What They Hang on To" by Caroline Knapp 413
- "Beautiful Brains" by David Dobbs 415

Definition

- "The Blended Economy" by Marc Zwelling 424

- "Krumping" by Marti Bercau 426
- "The Power of No" by Judith Sills 428

Argument

- "Going Nuclear" by Patrick Moore 436
- "Ten Reasons Why New Nuclear Was a Mistake—Even Before Fukushima" by Alexis Rowell 439
- "Why Keystone Pipeline Is a Bad Idea for Texas" by Chris Wilson 444
- "Keystone Pipeline Foes Should Face Reality" by Christopher R. Knittel 446
- "When Teachers Talk Out of School" by Jonathan Zimmerman 449
- "Protecting Free Speech for Teachers in a Social Media World" by Todd Pettigrew 452

Thematic Table of Contents

Life's Changes

- "The Perfect Picture" by James Alexander Thom 340
- "Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters" by Diane Glancy 342
- "Back to the Future" by John Phillip Santos 355
- "The Revolution in the Living Room" by Catherine Steiner Adair 382
- "Why We Keep Stuff" by Caroline Knapp 413
- "Beautiful Brains" by David Dobbs 415

Who We Are

- "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man" by Amy Gross 30
- "Sound and Fury" by Dan Greenburg 347
- "Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters" by Diane Glancy 342
- "Back to the Future" by John Phillip Santos 355
- "What is the Creative Process?" by Tanner Christensen 370
- "The Revolution in the Living Room" by Catherine Steiner Adair 382
- "A Tale of Four Learners" by Bernice McCarthy 386
- "What Kind of Procrastinator are You?" by Alina Vrabie 395

- "Invasion of the Bodybuilders" by Chris Lee 401
"Why We Keep Stuff" by Caroline Knapp 413
"Beautiful Brains" by David Dobbs 415
"The Power of No" by Judith Sills 428

Our Relationship to Nature

- "Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters" by Diane Glancy 342
"When the Full Moon Shines Its Magic over Monument Valley" by John V. Young 350
"Back to the Future" by John Phillip Santos 355
"Ground-Source-Heat-Pumps: Mother Earth Will Wrap You in Warmth" by Perfect Home HVAC Design.Com 364
"Let's Get Vertical!" by Beth Wald 367
"Going Nuclear" by Patrick Moore 436
"Ten Reasons Why New Nuclear Was a Mistake—Even Before Fukushima" by Alexis Rowell 439
"Why Keystone Pipeline is a Bad Idea for Texas" by Chris Wilson 444
"Keystone Pipeline Foes Should Face Reality" by Christopher R. Knittel 446

Education and Learning

- "The Perfect Picture" by James Alexander Thom 340
"Sound and Fury" by Dan Greenburg 347
"Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters" by Diane Glancy 342
"What Is the Creative Process?" by Tanner Christensen 370
"A Tale of Four Learners" by Bernice McCarthy 386
"Different Types of Distance Learning: The Four General Categories for Online Programs" by Campus Explorer 392
"What Kind of Procrastinator are You?" by Alina Vrabie 395
"Beautiful Brains" by David Dobbs 415
"When Teachers Talk out of School" by Jonathan Zimmerman 449
"Protecting Free Speech for Teachers in a Social Media World" by Todd Pettigrew 452

Popular Culture and the Arts

- "The Perfect Picture" by James Alexander Thom 340

- "What Is the Creative Process?" by Tanner Christensen 370
"If You're Happy and You Know It, Must I Know, Too?" by Judith Newman 379
"The Revolution in the Living Room" by Catherine Steiner Adair 382
"Different Types of Distance Learning: The Four General Categories for Online Programs" by Campus Explorer 392
"Invasion of the Bodybuilders" by Chris Lee 401
"Are Video Games Now More Sophisticated than Cinema?" by Jane Graham 403
"For Cops, Citizen Videos Bring Increased Scrutiny" by Kevin Johnson 408
"The Blended Economy" by Marc Zwelling 424
"Krumping" by Marti Bercaw 426
"When Teachers Talk out of School" by Jonathan Zimmerman 449
"Protecting Free Speech for Teachers in a Social Media World" by Todd Pettigrew 452

Science and Technology

- "Mother Earth Will Wrap You in Warmth" by Perfect Home HVAC Design.com 364
"Accidental Discoveries" by Lexi Krock 374
"The Revolution in the Living Room" by Catherine Steiner Adair 382
"Different Types of Distance Learning: The Four General Categories for Online Programs" by Campus Explorer 392
"Are Video Games Now More Sophisticated Than Cinema?" by Jane Graham 403
"For Cops, Citizen Videos Bring Increased Scrutiny" by Kevin Johnson 408
"Going Nuclear" by Patrick Moore 436
"Ten Reasons Why New Nuclear Was a Mistake—Even Before Fukushima" by Alexis Rowell 439
"When Teachers Talk out of School" by Jonathan Zimmerman 449
"Protecting Free Speech for Teachers in a Social Media World" by Todd Pettigrew 452
"Why Keystone Pipeline Is a Bad Idea for Texas" by Chris Wilson 444
"Keystone Pipeline Foes Should Face Reality" by Christopher R. Knittel 446

Diversity in Our Lives

- "Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters"** by Diane Glancy 342
- "Back to the Future"** by John Phillip Santos 355
- "A Tale of Four Learners"** by Bernice McCarthy 386
- "What Kind of Procrastinator Are You?"** by Alina Vrabie 395
- "Invasion of the Bodybuilders"** by Chris Lee 401
- "Krumping"** by Marti Bercaw 426
- "Beautiful Brains"** by David Dobbs 415

Language Use and Abuse

- "Sound and Fury"** by Dan Greenburg 347
- "Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters"** by Diane Glancy 342
- "If You're Happy and You Know It, Must I Know, Too?"** by Judith Newman 379

- "The Blended Economy"** by Marc Zwelling 424
- "The Power of No"** by Judith Sills 428
- "When Teachers Talk out of School"** by Jonathan Zimmerman 449
- "Protecting Free Speech for Teachers in a Social Media World"** by Todd Pettigrew 452

Struggling with Ethical Issues

- "The Perfect Picture"** by James Alexander Thom 340
- "The Power of No"** by Judith Sills 428
- "For Cops, Citizen Videos Bring Increased Scrutiny"** by Kevin Johnson 408
- "When Teachers Talk Out of School"** by Jonathan Zimmerman 449
- "Protecting Free Speech for Teachers in a Social Media World"** by Todd Pettigrew 452

Credits 455

Index 459

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Preface

The Concise eleventh edition of *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric and Reader* is a comprehensive textbook that offers ample material for a full-year composition course. Instructors teaching a one-term course can make selections from Chapters 1 to 18, from whatever types of specialized writing suit the needs of their students, and from appropriate essays in the Reader.

Because we strongly believe that an effective composition textbook should address the student directly, we have aimed for a style that is conversational yet clear and concise. We believe that our style invites students into the book, lessens their apprehensions about writing, and provides a model for their own prose. This style complements our strong student-based approach to writing, and together they help create a text that genuinely meets students' needs.

Changes in the Eleventh Edition

The enthusiastic response to the ten previous editions both by teachers and students has been very gratifying. The eleventh edition retains the many popular features of the previous editions and incorporates a number of improvements suggested by users and reviewers that should considerably enhance the utility of the text. Among the changes the following are noteworthy.

- **Critical thinking** is now a centerpiece of the text. Chapter 1 introduces students to critical thinking and how to use this text to develop their critical-thinking skills. Chapter 2 stresses critical thinking in reading; Chapters 3 and 4 identify the role of critical thinking in the writing process. Critical-thinking questions also appear throughout the Reader. Sharpened **Critical Synthesis** sections appear at the end of each modes-based chapter (Chapters 8–16), helping students integrate source material regardless of which type of rhetorical strategy they are using. The section includes guidelines for prewriting, evaluating sources, planning, and drafting a source-based paper for each of the writing strategies. Each modes-based chapter also includes a section on thinking critically about the mode.

- **Chapter 16 on Argument** has been reorganized to be easier to follow. It features a strengthened section on emotional appeal, enhanced coverage of thinking critically, and prominently located material on visual rhetoric.
- The **Reader** has been enhanced. Nearly half of the professional selections in the Reader have been replaced with essays from a variety of media in a range of styles on current topics, social media, immigration, citizen videos of police activity, education, and more. A new preface has been added to enhance student access to the Reader. Each modes-based section of the reader now has one selection identified as using multiple strategies with an explanation of how and why those strategies are used.
- **The multimedia approach** has been extended through the entire text, providing opportunities for students to write about many forms of media and to write for different media.
- **The Writing About Literature chapter** has been revised to include writing about film and television, updated critical approaches, a new section on writing explications, and a new student sample essay.
- The emphasis on **visual rhetoric** has been strengthened. Additional revisions have been made to make the text more visually accessible and to model the best practices of visual rhetoric. **Multimedia Writing Assignments** in the rhetoric ask students to write about texts and visuals found in different types of media.
- In an effort to **keep the text streamlined and affordable**, the separate chapter on writing with multiple strategies and the section of the reader on the same topic have been integrated into the reader.

Classic Pedagogy

In addition to the new features discussed above, the eleventh edition continues the tried-and-true pedagogy of previous editions.

- Color highlighting of key passages in sample texts identifies different writing strategies in action.
- Graphic organizers in the form of flowcharts provide guidelines for developing essays.
- Sample Student Essays are annotated to draw students' attention to writers' strategies.
- Learning objectives frame each chapter's content to guide both instructors and students to the goals of the chapter.
- The text provides short, relevant, and engaging samples of the principles being discussed.
- Connected Discourse exercises remain a hallmark of the handbook, but many have been revised so that the topics of the exercises are more current.

The Rhetoric

The Rhetoric consists of 18 chapters, grouped into four parts. The first part includes four chapters. Chapter 1 introduces students to the purposes of writing; the need for audience awareness, which includes a discussion of

discourse communities; and the qualities of good writing. Chapter 2 offers suggestions for effective and critical reading and thinking. Chapter 3 looks at planning and drafting stages. Chapter 4 takes students through the various revision stages, starting with a systematic procedure for revising the whole essay and then moving to pointers for revising its component parts. Sets of checklists pose key questions for students to consider. Chapters 3 and 4 are unified by an unfolding case history that includes the first draft of a student paper, the initial revision marked with changes, and the final version. Notes in the margin highlight key features of the finished paper. Students can relate the sequence of events to their own projects as they work through the various stages. Both chapters offer suggestions for using word-processing programs, and Chapter 4 explains peer evaluation of drafts, collaborative writing, and maintaining and reviewing a portfolio.

In the second part, we shift from full-length essays to the elements that make them up. Chapter 5 first discusses paragraph unity; it then takes up the topic sentence, adequate development, organization, coherence, and finally introductory, transitional, and concluding paragraphs. Throughout this chapter, as elsewhere, carefully selected examples and exercises form an integral part of the instruction.

Chapter 6 focuses on strategies for creating effective sentences. Such strategies as coordinating and subordinating ideas and using parallelism help students to increase the versatility of their writing. The concluding section offers practical advice on crafting and arranging sentences so that they work together harmoniously. Some instructors may wish to discuss the chapters on paragraphs and sentences in connection with revision.

Chapter 7, designed to help students improve their writing style, deals with words and their effects. We distinguish between abstract and concrete words as well as between specific and general terms, and we also discuss the dictionary and thesaurus. Levels of diction—formal, informal, and technical—and how to use them are explained, as are tone, various types of figurative language, and irony. The chapter concludes by pointing out how to recognize and avoid wordiness, euphemisms, clichés, mixed metaphors, and sexist language.

The nine chapters in the third part (Chapters 8–16) feature the various strategies, or modes, used to develop papers. These strategies, which follow a general progression from less to more complex, are presented as natural ways of thinking, as problem-solving strategies, and therefore as effective ways of organizing writing. One chapter is devoted to each strategy. Each chapter includes (among other relevant topics) a section on thinking critically about the mode, considering the ethics of writing in that mode, and critical synthesis of sources.

The discussion in each chapter follows a similar approach: first explaining the key elements of the strategy; next pointing out typical classroom and on-the-job applications to show students its practicality; and then providing specific planning, drafting, and revising guidelines. Practical heuristic questions are also posed. A complete student essay, accompanied by questions, follows the discussion section. These essays represent realistic, achievable goals and spur student confidence, while the questions reinforce the general principles of good writing and underscore the points we make in our discussions. Twenty carefully chosen writing suggestions follow the questions in most chapters. All chapters conclude

with a section entitled “Critical Synthesis with Sources” These sections explain and illustrate how students can advance their writing purpose by synthesizing material from various sources. Synthesis, of course, helps students develop and hone their critical reading and thinking skills. Furthermore, *Teaching Composition with Strategies for Successful Writing* includes suggestions for using the Reader essays and writing strategies to build assignments around themes.

The fourth and final part of the Rhetoric concentrates on two specialized types of college and on-the-job writing. Chapter 17 offers practical advice on studying for exams, assessing test questions, and writing essay answers. To facilitate student comprehension, we analyze both good and poor answers to the same exam question and provide an exercise that requires students to perform similar analyses. Chapter 18 has been expanded to focus on writing about literature, film, and television. The chapter focuses on plot, point of view, character, setting, symbols, irony, theme, and other elements that students will most likely be asked to write about. For each element, we first present basic features and then offer writing guidelines. Diverse examples illustrate these elements. The chapter distinguishes writing an explication, a review, and a literary analysis. The chapter ends with sections that detail the development of a student paper and explain how to include the views of others when writing about literature.

The Reader

The Reader, sequenced to follow the order of the strategies presented in the Rhetoric, expands the utility of the text by providing a collection of 30 carefully selected professional models that illustrate the various writing strategies and display a wide variety of style, tone, and subject matter and from a wide range of sources. These essays, together with the nine student models that accompany the various strategy chapters, should make a separate reader unnecessary.

Supplementing the chapter on reading strategies, the Reader comes with reading suggestions for each strategy that detail how to read the essays of a given type, how to read essays critically, and how to read the essays as a writer.

Each essay clearly illustrates the designated pattern, each has been thoroughly class-tested for student interest, and each provides a springboard for a stimulating discussion. In making our selections we have aimed for balance and variety:

1. Some are popular classics by acknowledged prose masters; some, anthologized for the first time, are by fresh, new writers.
2. Some are straightforward and simple, some challenging and complex.
3. Some adopt a humorous, lighthearted approach; some a serious, thoughtful one.
4. Some take a liberal stance, some a conservative one; and some address ethnic, gender, and cultural diversity.
5. A few are rather lengthy; most are relatively brief.

The first essay in each strategy section is annotated in the margin to show which features of the strategy are included. These annotations not only facilitate student understanding but also help link the Rhetoric and Reader into an organic

whole. A brief biographical note about the author precedes each selection, and stimulating questions designed to enhance student understanding of structure and strategy follow it. In addition, a segment entitled “Toward Key Insights” poses one or more broad-based questions prompted by the essay’s content. Answering these questions, either in discussion or writing, should help students gain a deeper understanding of important issues. Finally, we include a writing assignment suggested by the essay’s topic. The final selection for each strategy identifies the ways in which multiple strategies are employed in the essay.

Supplements

MyWritingLab

MyWritingLab is an online homework, tutorial, and assessment program that provides engaging experiences for teaching and learning. Flexible and easily customizable, *MyWritingLab* helps improve students’ writing through context-based learning. Whether through self-study or instructor-led learning, *MyWritingLab* supports and complements course work

Writing at the Center. With the new composing space and Review Plan, *MyWritingLab* unites instructor comments and feedback on student writing with targeted remediation via rich multimedia activities, allowing students to learn from and through their own writing.

Writing Help for Varying Skill Levels. For students who enter the course underprepared, *MyWritingLab* identifies those who lack prerequisite skills for composition-level topics, and provides personalized remediation.

Proven Results. No matter how *MyWritingLab* is used, instructors have access to powerful gradebook reports, which provide visual analytics that give insight to course performance at the student, section, or even program level.

A Deeper Connection Between Print and Media. The *MyWritingLab* logo (**MyWritingLab**) is used throughout the book to indicate exercises and writing activities that can be completed and submitted through *MyWritingLab* (appropriate results flow directly to the Instructor Gradebook).

Additional Prompts to Support Accelerated Learners. The major writing assignments in each chapter are supplemented by two prewriting prompts and the readings throughout the book are complemented by prereading prompts to support learners who can benefit from extra help.

Teaching Composition with *Strategies for Successful Writing*

The Teaching Composition with *Strategies for Successful Writing*, Eleventh Edition (ISBN 0134119398), supplement offers various suggestions for preparing for and teaching first-year composition, constructing a syllabus, teaching critical thinking, crafting assignments, conducting a conference, using

multimedia in the classroom, and grading both holistically and with rubrics. Also provided are a sample syllabus for a sequence of two 15-week semesters, numerous guidelines for responding to student writing, and a detailed set of grading standards. This new edition has added for each chapter teaching strategies, classroom activities, suggested readings, alternate exercises, and answers to the chapter exercises.

Online Resources for Instructors and Students

eTextbooks

Students can subscribe to *Strategies for Successful Writing*. The format of the eText allows students to search the text, bookmark passages, save their own notes, and print reading assignments that incorporate lecture notes.

Acknowledgments

Like all textbook writers, we are indebted to many people. Our colleagues at Ferris State University and elsewhere, too numerous to mention, have assisted us in several ways: critiquing the manuscript; testing approaches, essays, and exercises in their classrooms; and suggesting writing models for the text.

We would like to thank all those faculty members who forwarded student work to be considered for the 9th and 10th editions and that have been continued in the 11th. These essays are powerful evidence of the effective teaching of all of the contributors and their tremendous impact on student lives: David Burlingame, Heald College; Sandra Cusak, Heald College & Reedley College; Ruth Dalton, Montgomery College; Linda Gary, Tyler Junior College; Vicki Holmes, University of Nevada Las Vegas; Theresa Mlinarcik, Macomb Community College; Emily Moorer, Hinds Community College; Carol Osborne, Coastal Carolina University; Roseann Shansky, Ferris State University; Efstathia Siegel, Montgomery College; and Geraldine Yap, Cosumnes River College.

In addition, we thank our reviewers, whose many suggestions have greatly improved our text: Linda Brender, Macomb Community College; Amber Brooks, Georgia Perimeter College; Joann Bruckwicki, Tyler Junior College; Jim Brueggeman, Western Technical College; Kimberley Carter, Virginia College; Tammy L. Cherry, Florida State College at Jacksonville; Scott Contor, Oakland Community College; Edwin Cummings, Bryant and Stratton College; Sonia Delgado-Tall, Kennedy-King College; Lisa Eutsey, Diné College; Tammy M. Forbes, Patrick Henry Community College; Anthony Gancarski, Virginia College; Suzanne Martens, Grand Rapids Community College; Arch Mayfield, Wayland Baptist University; Robin McGinnis, Daymar College Bowling Green; Summerlin Page, Central Carolina Community College; Sarah Peters, Collin College; Philip Poulter, Texas State Technical College; Jim Richey, Tyler Junior College; Nancy M. Risch, Caldwell Community College; Kevin Sanders, University of Arkansas–Pine Bluff; Andrea Serna, National American University; Marianne Trale, Community College of Allegheny County; and Josh Woods, Kaskaskia College.

Special thanks are also due to the outstanding team at Pearson, whose editorial expertise, genial guidance, and promotional efforts have been vital to this project: Phil Miller, former President of Humanities and Social Sciences Division, who first saw the potential in our approach; Joe Opiela, Vice President and Editor-in-Chief for English; Steven Rigolosi, Development Editor; Anne Shure, Program Manager; Shannon Kobran, Project Manager; and Ali Arnold, whose marketing expertise will help our book find its way.

Special thanks goes to Kyra Hunting and Elyse Glass, who have provided the personal support that has made both the work of teaching as well as the editing of this book possible.

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To the Student

No matter what career you choose, your ability to communicate clearly and effectively will directly affect your success. In the classroom, your instructor will often evaluate your mastery of a subject by the papers and examinations you write. Prospective employers will make judgments about your qualifications and decide whether to offer you an interview on the basis of your job application letter and résumé. On the job, you will be expected to write clear, accurate reports, memorandums, and letters.

There is nothing mysterious about successful writing. It does not require a special talent, nor does it depend on inspiration. It is simply a skill, and like any other skill, it involves procedures that can be learned. Once you understand them and the more you practice, the easier writing becomes.

Strategies for Successful Writing will help you become a successful writer. And after you graduate it can serve as a useful on-the-job reference. The first, third, and fourth chapters explore the fundamentals of writing and the general steps in planning, drafting, and revising papers. Chapter 2 will help you read more effectively for college and show you how to read like a writer. The next three chapters zero in on paragraphs, sentences, and writing style. The next nine explain the basic writing strategies you can use for most writing projects. The final six turn to specialized writing—essay examinations, papers about literature, library research papers, and papers based on your own original research results. The book concludes with a Reader and, if you are using the complete version of the text, a Handbook.

From time to time you have probably had the unpleasant experience of using textbooks that seemed to be written for instructors rather than students. In preparing this book, we have tried never to forget that you are buying, reading, and using it. As a result, we have written the text with your needs in mind. The book uses simple, everyday language and presents directions in an easy-to-follow format. The chapters on writing strategies provide examples of student essays that supplement the professional essays in the Reader. These student examples represent realistic, achievable goals. When you compare them to the professional examples, you'll see that students can indeed do excellent work. We are confident that by learning to apply the principles in this text, you will write well too.

Here's wishing you success!

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Rhetoric

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- 1.1** Establish the purpose for your writing.
- 1.2** Determine the audience for your writing.
- 1.3** Identify the qualities of good writing.
- 1.4** Employ techniques to think critically about your writing.
- 1.5** Apply writing techniques for multimedia.
- 1.6** Write ethically and avoid plagiarism.

Why write? Aren't texting, e-mail, voice mail, and cellular phones dooming ordinary writing? Not long ago, some people thought and said so, but events haven't supported those predictions. In fact, much electronic media, such as blogging and tweeting, have increased the amount of writing people do. Although devices such as cell phones have made some writing unnecessary, the written word still flourishes both on campus and in the world of work.

Writing offers very real advantages to both writers and readers:

- It gives writers time to reflect on and research what they want to communicate and then lets them shape and reshape the material to their satisfaction.
- It makes communication more precise and effective.
- It provides a permanent record of thoughts, actions, and decisions.
- It saves the reader's time; we absorb information more swiftly when we read it than when we hear it.

What kind of writing will people expect you to do?

- At college you may be asked to write lab reports, project proposals, research papers, essay exams, or marketing plans.
- Job hunting requires application letters.
- On the job, you might describe the advantages of new computer equipment, report on a conference you attend, explain a new procedure, suggest a new security system, or present a marketing plan.
- Personally, you may need to defend a medical reimbursement, request a refund for a faulty product, or find a solution to a personal problem.

Here is the raw truth: the ability to write will help you earn better grades, land the job you want, and advance in your career. Writing will help you create the future you want in a competitive world.

When we write, it is often in response to a situation that shapes the purpose and audience of our writing. We rarely write in isolation, but instead write to others who have an interest in our message.

The Purposes of Writing

Whenever you write, some clear purpose should guide your efforts. If you don't know why you're writing, neither will your reader. Fulfilling an assignment doesn't qualify as a real writing purpose. Faced with a close deadline for a research paper or report, you may tell yourself, "I'm doing this because I have to." An authentic purpose requires you to answer this question: What do I want this piece of writing to do for both my reader and me?

Purpose, as you might expect, grows out of the writing situation. You explore the consequences of the greenhouse effect in a report for your science instructor. You write an editorial for the college newspaper to air your frustration over inadequate campus parking. You propose that your organization replace an outdated piece of equipment with a state-of-the-art model.

Following are four common *general writing purposes*, two or more of which often join forces in a single piece:

To Inform We all have our areas of expertise and often share that information with each other. A student in computer science could post a blog on a class instructional site on how to create a Web page. A medical researcher shares her research in her publications with other doctors and other research professionals.

To Persuade You probably have strong views on many issues, and these feelings may sometimes impel you to try swaying your reader. In a letter to the editor, you might attack a proposal to establish a nearby chemical waste dump. Or, alarmed by a sharp jump in state unemployment, you might write to your state senator and argue for a new job-training program.

To Express Yourself When you text a friend, you choose words and phrases to show off who you are. By your topic, word choice, example, or turn of phrase, you display a bit of yourself whether in e-mails, journals, poetry, essays, or fiction.

To Entertain Some writing merely entertains; some writing couples entertainment with a more serious purpose. A lighthearted approach can help your reader absorb dull or difficult material.

1.1

Establish the purpose for your writing.

More Specific Purposes

Besides having one or more *general purposes*, each writing project has its own *specific purpose*. Consider the difference in the papers you could write about solar homes. You might explain how readers could build one, argue that readers should buy one, express the advantages of solar homes to urge Congress to enact a tax credit for them, or satirize the solar home craze so that readers might reevaluate their plans to buy one.

Having a specific purpose assists you at every stage of the writing process. It helps you define your audience; select the details, language, and approach that best suit their needs; and avoid going off in directions that won't interest them. The following example from the Internet has a clear and specific purpose.

Turn Down Your iPod Volume (or Go Deaf)

Marianne Halavage

1 I have had a Walkman, CD Walkman or iPod surgically attached to my ears
via headphones since about the age of about five (anatomically strange. But
true).

2 So chances are that I'm a case in point for the recent LA Times article. It says
that one in every five teens has at least a slight hearing loss. Many experts think
the culprit is the use of headphones to listen to portable music.

3 LA Times said:

Most teens think they are invulnerable and for most of them, the hearing loss is not readily perceptible so they are not aware of the damage. But the bottom line is, "Once there, the damage is irreversible," said Dr. Gary C. Curhan of Brigham and Women's Hospital.

4 Irreversible, you HEAR him. Gone. NEVER to return.

5 The idea of losing my hearing, even a little bit, terrifies me. Struggling to
hear my music: my first love, my passion and my therapist; unable to hear my
family and friends. I don't even want to think about it.

6 But for my hearing's sake in the future, I will. I'm 28, long out of teenie-
dom, so no doubt some damage has been done. But I will, from now on, keep
the volume on my iPod at an ear-friendly level, as the experts advise:

"The message is, we've got to stop what we are doing," said Dr. Tommie Robinson Jr., president of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Assn. "We have to step back and say: OK, turn down the volume on iPods and earbuds and MP3 players. Wear ear protection at rock concerts or when you are exposed to loud noises for long periods of time," like when using a lawn mower.

7 Um, not so sure that many teens will take to wearing ear protection at con-
certs. They'd probably rather lose their hearing than have their pals laugh at
them for looking a bit naff in it.

8 But, no ear protection now, hearing aid later...

9 Suddenly ear protection never sounded so good.

To grab her reader in a busy Internet environment, Marianne Halavage announces her purpose boldly in her title. The remainder of the paragraphs provide, alternately, statements by authority arguing that listening to loud music is likely to result in hearing loss with her own personal reaction where she identifies with her audience. The last two single-sentence paragraphs provide the reader with a stark choice and reaffirm the essay's purpose.

Now examine this paragraph, which does *not* have a specific purpose:

Imagine people so glued to their computers that they forget to eat or sleep and even miss work. It is like a strange version of a zombie movie. What could have eaten their brains? Video games can be addictive as players struggle to get to the next level. Still, this negative effect is exaggerated. But there are a number of qualities that make a video game player want to keep coming back to the game and any good game designer needs to know those qualities.

Is the paper for game addicts to get them to quit, a humorous analogy, or a serious recommendation to game designers? Once the writer decides on a purpose, the paragraph can be focused.

The stereotype of gamers is that they are so glued to their computers that they forget to eat, sleep, or work. While this is a gross exaggeration, game designers do want their players to be hooked on their games. There are in fact a number of qualities that make video players want to keep returning to a favorite game, and any good game designer needs to know those qualities.

The Audience for Your Writing

Everything you write is aimed at some audience—a person or group you want to reach. The ultimate purpose of all writing is to have an effect on a reader (even if that reader is you), and therefore purpose and audience are closely linked. You would write differently about your college experience to a young relative, your best friend, your parents, your advisor, or a future employer.

- School is fun and I am learning a lot—to a young relative to reassure
- I went to the greatest party—to your best friend to entertain
- I am working hard—to your parents to persuade them to send extra support
- I have learned many things that will help me contribute to your company—to an employer to persuade him or her to consider you for a job

It is important to recognize that writing, even texting, is very different from face-to-face conversations.

1.2

Determine the audience for your writing.

Face-to-Face

You can observe body language and vary what you are saying in response.

You can respond to immediate questions.

There is little record of what you say.

Writing

You don't get to see how people are responding.

It would be hard for people to get questions to you.

Readers can reread your text.

Once written work has left your hands, it's on its own. You can't call it back to clear up a misunderstanding or adjust your tone. What this means is that as a writer, you need to be able to anticipate your readers' needs and responses.

Establishing rapport with your audience is easy when you're writing for your friends or someone else you know a great deal about. You can then judge the likely response to what you say. Often, though, you'll be writing for people you know only casually or not at all: employers, customers, fellow citizens, and the like. In such situations, you'll need to assess your audience before starting to write and/or later in the writing process.

A good way to size up your readers is to develop an audience profile. This profile will emerge gradually as you answer the following questions:

1. What are the educational level, age, social class, and economic status of the audience I want to reach?
2. Why will this audience read my writing? To gain information? Learn my views on a controversial issue? Enjoy my creative flair? Be entertained?
3. What attitudes, needs, and expectations do they have?
4. How are they likely to respond to what I say? Can I expect them to be neutral? Opposed? Friendly?
5. How much do they know about my topic? (Your answer here will help you gauge whether you're saying too little or too much.)
6. What kind of language will communicate with them most effectively? (See "Selecting the Best Level of Diction" in Chapter 7.)

College writing assignments sometimes ask you to envision a reader who is intelligent but lacking specialized knowledge, receptive but unwilling to put up with boring or trite material. Or perhaps you'll be assigned, or choose, to write for a certain age group or readers with particular interests. At other times, you'll be asked to write for a specialized audience—one with some expertise in your topic. This difference will affect what you say to each audience and how you say it.

The Effect of Audience on Your Writing

Let's see how audience can shape a paper. Suppose you are explaining how to take a certain type of X-ray.

If your audience is a group of lay readers who have never had an X-ray, you might

- Avoid technical language.
- Compare an X-ray to a photograph.
- Explain the basic process, including the positioning of patient and equipment.
- Comment on the safety and reliability of the procedure.
- Indicate how much time it would take.

If, however, you were writing for radiology students, you might

- Consistently use the technical language appropriate for this audience.
- Emphasize exposure factors, film size, and required view.
- Provide a detailed explanation of the procedure, including how to position patients for different kinds of X-rays.
- Address your readers as colleagues who want precise information.

Audience shapes all types of writing in a similar fashion, even your personal writing. Assume you've recently become engaged, and to share your news you write two e-mails: one to your minister or rabbi and the other to your best friend back home. You can imagine the differences in details, language, and general tone of each e-mail. Further, think how inappropriate it would be if you accidentally sent the e-mail intended for one to the other. Without doubt, different readers call for different approaches.

Discourse Communities

Professionals often write as members of specific communities. For example, biologists with similar interests often exchange information about their research. The members of a community share goals, values, concerns, background information, and expectations, and this fact in turn affects how they write. Because such writing is closely tied to the interests of the community, professional articles often start with a section linking their content to previous research projects and articles. Often custom dictates what information must be included, the pattern of organization, and the style the paper should follow. Throughout college, you will discover that part of learning to write is becoming familiar with the values and customs of different discourse communities. To do this, you'll need to read carefully in your major field, acquainting yourself with its current issues and concerns and learning how to write about them. As you start reading in any professional area, ask yourself these questions:

1. What are the major concerns and questions in this field?
2. What seems to be common knowledge?
3. To what works do writers regularly refer?
4. How do those in the field go about answering questions?
5. What methods do they follow?
6. Which kinds of knowledge are acceptable? Which are not?
7. What values seem to guide the field?

8. What kinds of information must writers include in papers?
9. How are different writing projects organized?
10. What conventions do writers follow?

We all, of course, belong to many different communities. Furthermore, a community can involve competing groups, conflicting values, differing kinds of writing projects, and varying approaches to writing. But as part of your growth as a writer and professional, you'll need to understand the goals and rules of any community you enter.

Writing Assignment

Interview faculty in a career area or field you hope to enter. Ask them the ten questions above and write a short paper or a blog summarizing the results of your interview.

EXERCISE *The following two excerpts deal with the same subject—nanotechnology—but each explanation is geared to a different audience. Read the passages carefully; then answer the following questions:*

1. **What audience does each author address? How do you know?**
2. **Identify ways in which each author appeals to a specific audience.**

- A. Nanotechnology is the creation of functional materials, devices and systems through control of matter on the nanometer length scale (1–100 nanometers) and exploitation of novel phenomena and properties (physical, chemical, biological, mechanical, electrical ...) at that length scale. For comparison, 10 nanometers is 1,000 times smaller than the diameter of a human hair. A scientific and technical revolution has just begun based upon the ability to systematically organize and manipulate matter at nanoscale. Payoff is anticipated within the next 10–15 years.

CNT Center for Nanotechnology

- B. Today's manufacturing methods are very crude at the molecular level. Casting, grinding milling and even lithography move atoms in great thundering statistical herds.

It's like trying to make things out of LEGO blocks with boxing gloves on your hands. Yes, you can push the LEGO blocks into great heaps and pile them up, but you can't really snap them together the way you'd like.

In the future, nanotechnology (more specifically, *molecular nanotechnology* or MNT) will let us take off the boxing gloves. We'll be able to snap together the fundamental building blocks of nature easily, inexpensively, and in most of the ways permitted by the laws of nature. This will let us continue the revolution in computer hardware to its ultimate limits: molecular computers made from molecular logic gates connected by molecular wires. This new pollution free manufacturing technology will also let us inexpensively fabricate a cornucopia of new products that are remarkably light, strong, smart, and durable.

Dr. Ralph Merkle, *Nanotechnology*

Just as you would not dial a telephone number at random and then expect to carry on a meaningful conversation, so you should not expect to communicate effectively without a specific audience in mind.

One other note: As you shape your paper, it is important that the writing please you as well as your audience—that is, satisfy your sense of what good writing is and what the writing task requires. You are, after all, your own first reader.

The Qualities of Good Writing

Good writing is essential if you want your ideas to be taken seriously. Just as you would have trouble listening to someone with his shirt on backward and wearing two different kinds of shoes, most readers dismiss out of hand writing that is disorganized, poorly worded, or marred by errors in grammar and spelling. In a world where most people are drowning under an information overload, few have the time or inclination to hunt through bad writing to search for quality ideas. Employers discard job seekers with poorly worded cover letters; badly written proposals are rejected; and few bother to read poorly written articles.

Three qualities—fresh thinking, a sense of style including the use of correct grammar and punctuations, and effective organization—help to ensure that a piece of prose will meet your reader’s expectations.

Fresh Thinking You don’t have to astound your readers with something never before discussed in print. Unique ideas and information are rare. You can, however, freshen your writing by exploring personal insights and perceptions. Think about the role of general education. One student who works on cars for fun might consider the way education functions as a toolbox, while another student who is interested in change might consider the way students are transformed by education. Keep the expression of your ideas credible, however; far-fetched notions spawn skepticism.

Sense of Style Readers don’t expect you to display the stylistic flair of Maya Angelou. Indeed, such writing would impair the neutral tone needed in certain kinds of writing, such as technical reports and legal documents. Readers do, however, expect you to write in a clear style. And if you strengthen it with vivid, forceful words, readers will absorb your points with even greater interest. Readers also expect you to use standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The chapters ahead show you how to use language in ways that project your views and personality. Chapters 6 and 7, in particular, will help you develop a sense of style, as will the many readings throughout the book.

Effective Organization All writing should be organized so it is easy to follow. A paper should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, that is, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction sparks interest and acquaints the

1.3

Identify the qualities of good writing.