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A Writer's Reference

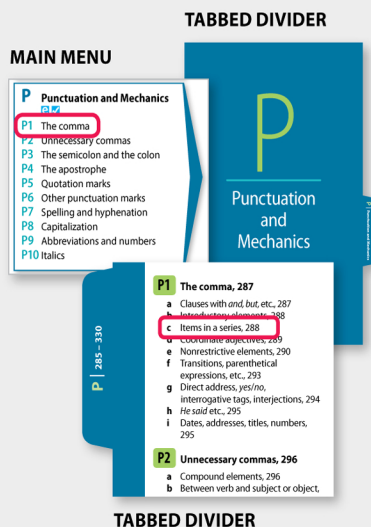
EIGHTH EDITION

Diana Hacker
Nancy Sommers

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Using A Writer's Reference

Main menu and tabs The menu to the right displays the book's contents. Follow the color-coded arrows to the appropriate tabbed divider. The back of each divider includes a detailed menu for the section.



Finding answers to common questions

In this handbook you'll find writing advice you can use for nearly every college writing assignment.

- How can I make my thesis stronger? **C1-c**
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- W4** Appropriate language
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 Icons indicate additional media resources available at hackerhandbooks.com/writersref.

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(Coverage parallels MLA's)

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
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| APA-2 | CMS-2 |
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A Writer's Reference

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A Writer's Reference

EIGHTH EDITION



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Preface for instructors

Dear Colleagues:

As college teachers, we have a far-reaching mission. We prepare students to write for different purposes, for different audiences, and in different genres and media. We show students how to read critically and write effectively, preparing them to join ongoing research conversations as contributors (not just as consumers) of ideas. What we teach is at the very core of students' college experience. For academic success, no skill is more critical than effective writing.

This new edition of *A Writer's Reference* grows out of my thirty years as a writing teacher and from many conversations with college faculty across disciplines. In all these conversations, I hear a similar theme: Writing is the core of a student's success, no matter the field of study. Teachers speak about ambitious assignments to teach students how to think and write clearly and precisely, how to interpret evidence and data, and how to enter research conversations with the requisite skills to manage information and avoid plagiarism. And faculty across disciplines all speak about the need for their students to have a reliable handbook to help them understand the expectations of college writing assignments and succeed as writers.

I wanted the eighth edition to capture the energy and creativity that surround conversations about student writing, wherever they take place, and to provide students with a trusted reference that supports their development as writers. I also wanted the eighth edition to align easily with course goals and program outcomes, so I spent a good deal of time reviewing such documents and talking with faculty about how *A Writer's Reference* can help them meet their goals. We all have high expectations for the writers in our courses; assigning a handbook designed specifically to meet these expectations makes possible both our mission and our students' success.

Paging through *A Writer's Reference*, you'll discover features inspired by my conversations with teachers and students. One such feature is an emphasis on the relationship between reading and writing. Turn to tabbed section A (p. 69) to see new material that helps students read critically and write insightfully, engage with print and multimodal texts, and move beyond summary to analysis. The eighth edition shows students how to read carefully to understand an author's ideas, how to read skeptically to question those ideas, and how to present their own ideas in response.

In developing the eighth edition, I wanted students to have even more tools to support the challenges they face as research writers: turning topics into questions, finding entry points in debates, and evaluating, integrating, and citing sources. In particular, I wanted to help students who are assigned to write an annotated bibliography, a core academic genre. In the eighth edition, students will find five new writing guides, helpful tools that offer step-by-step instruction for completing common college writing assignments, including writing an annotated bibliography.

A goal of the eighth edition was to develop a handbook that saves teachers' time and increases students' learning. I'm happy to say that teaching with *A Writer's Reference* has become easier than ever. The eighth edition is now available with LaunchPad—a system that includes both a print handbook and e-Pages. For the e-Pages, I've written prompts and collaborative activities called “As you write” to help students apply handbook advice to their own drafts and to offer practice with thesis statements, research questions, peer review, and more. The e-Pages also include videos and LearningCurve, game-like adaptive quizzing—all easily assignable. Turn to page xi for more about the media.

As college teachers, we help our students develop as thinkers and writers. I can't imagine work more important than this. Some years ago, a student told me that her first-year writing course encouraged her to become a person with things to say. I love these words and the hope they express that a writing course may have such a sustaining influence on one student's life. I bring certain beliefs to *A Writer's Reference*: that all students will learn to read deeply and write clearly, that they will find in their reading ideas they care about, and that they will write about these ideas with care and depth.



Nancy Sommers

What's new in this edition?

An emphasis on critical reading. Substantially revised material in tabbed section A, “Academic reading, writing, and speaking,” emphasizes reading as the foundation of every college research and writing assignment. The handbook offers students a *reading process*, teaching them to read traditional and multimodal texts, research sources, their own work, and the work of their peers critically and reflectively.

Guidelines for active reading

Previewing a written text

- Who is the author? What are the author's credentials?
- What is the author's purpose: To inform? To persuade? To call to action?
- Who is the expected audience?
- When was the text written? Where was it published?
- What kind of text is it: A book? A report? A scholarly article? A policy memo?

Annotating a written text

- What surprises, puzzles, or intrigues you about the text?
- What question does the text attempt to answer?
- What is the author's thesis, or central claim?
- What type of evidence does the author provide to support the thesis? How persuasive is this evidence?

Conversing with a written text

- What are the strengths and limitations of the text?
- Has the author drawn conclusions that you question? Do you have a different interpretation of the evidence?
- Does the text raise questions that it does not answer?
- Does the author consider opposing viewpoints and treat them fairly?

Asking the “So what?” question

- Why does the author's thesis need to be argued, explained, or explored? What's at stake?
- What has the author overlooked in presenting this thesis?

Help with analyzing multimodal texts and composing in new genres. A new chapter about reading and writing about multimodal texts introduces new genres and practical strategies for analyzing these genres. Throughout the book, writing guides give tips for composing college assignments as podcasts, presentations, Web sites, and other alternatives to the traditional essay. New discussions of genre and sample papers in new genres (literacy narrative and reflective letter) align

the book more closely with the goals of writing programs and the 2014 Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) outcomes.

Paraphrasing sources: strategies for multilingual/ESL writers. New content includes advice about paraphrasing sources effectively. This new section moves students away from the practice of word-by-word substitution and offers strategies for understanding and presenting another writer’s meaning.

Practical writing guides. Five new writing guides help students compose common assignments: argument essays, analytical essays, annotated bibliographies, reflective cover letters, and literacy narratives. The guides clarify the expectations of the genre; provide a step-by-step path as students explore, draft, and revise; and lay a foundation for writing in multiple disciplines.

Writing guide | Analytical essay

An **analysis** of a text allows you to examine the parts of a text to understand *what* it means and *how* it makes its meaning. Your goal is to offer your judgment of the text and to persuade readers to see it through your analytical perspective. A sample analytical essay begins on page 80.

Key features

- A **careful and critical reading** of a text reveals what the text says, how it works, and what it means. In an analytical essay, you pay attention to the details of the text, especially its thesis and evidence.
- A **thesis that offers a clear judgment** of a text anchors your analysis. Your thesis might be the answer to a question you have posed about a text or the resolution of a problem you have identified in the text.
- **Support for the thesis** comes from evidence in the text. You summarize, paraphrase, and quote passages that support the claims you make about the text.
- A **balance of summary and analysis** helps readers who may not be familiar with the text you are analyzing. Summary answers the question of *what* a text says; an analysis looks at *how* a text makes its point.

Thinking ahead: Presenting and publishing

You may have the opportunity to present or publish your analysis in the form of a multimodal text such as a slide show presentation. Consider how adding images or sound might strengthen your analysis or help you to better reach your audience. (See section A2.)

Writing your analytical essay

EXPLORE

Generate ideas for your analysis by brainstorming responses to questions such as the following:

- What is the text about?
- What do you find most interesting, surprising, or puzzling about this text?
- What is the author’s thesis or central idea? Put the author’s thesis to the “So what?” test. (See p. 74.)
- What do your annotations of the text reveal about your response to it?

DRAFT

- Draft a working thesis to focus your analysis. Remember that your thesis is not the same as the author’s thesis. Your thesis presents *your* judgment of the text.
- Draft a plan to organize your paragraphs. Your introductory paragraph will briefly summarize the text and offer your thesis. Your body paragraphs will support your thesis with evidence from the text. Your conclusion will pull together the major points and show the significance of your analysis. (See C1-d.)
- Identify specific words, phrases, and sentences as evidence to support your thesis.

REVISE

- Ask your reviewers to give you specific comments. You can use the following questions to guide their feedback.
- Is the introduction effective and engaging?
 - Is summary balanced with analysis?
 - Does the thesis offer a clear judgment of the text?
 - What objections might other writers pose to your analysis?
 - Is the analysis well organized? Are there clear topic sentences and transitions?
 - Is there sufficient evidence? Is the evidence analyzed?
 - Have you cited words, phrases, or sentences that are summarized or quoted?

Research and documentation advice fit for any college course. Substantially revised sections teach researchers to find an entry point in a debate and develop authority as a researcher. New advice on writing a research proposal gives practical help that's useful across the curriculum. And because some sources are difficult to cite, new how-to boxes address authorship and new types of sources such as course materials and reposted Web content.

R1-f Write a research proposal.


One effective way to manage your research project and focus your thinking is to write a research proposal. A proposal gives you an opportunity to look back—to remind you why you decided to enter a specific research conversation—and to look forward—to predict any difficulties or obstacles that might arise during your project. Your objective is to make a case for the question you plan to explore, the sources you plan to use, and the feasibility of the project, given the time and resources available. As you take stock of your project, you also have the valuable opportunity to receive comments from your instructor and classmates about your proposed research question and search strategy.


The following format will help you organize your proposal.

New guidelines for speaking effectively. A new section, A5, prepares students to remix, or adapt, their writing for delivery to a live audience, with emphasis on writing for the ear instead of for the eye.

Engaging new media: LaunchPad. *A Writer's Reference* is now available with LaunchPad, which includes a full e-Book that's easy to assign—as well as interactive e-Pages. The e-Pages, online at hackerhandbooks.com/writersref, engage students with writing prompts, scorable practice exercises, additional sample papers, and LearningCurve's game-like adaptive quizzes. Easy-to-spot cross-references on the print pages direct students to the e-Pages content in LaunchPad.

hackerhandbooks.com/writersref

 [G5 Sentence fragments > Exercises: G5-3 to G5-7](#)

 [G5 Sentence fragments > LearningCurve: Sentence fragments](#)

- **270 practice exercises** help students build skills and strengthen their editing. The exercises report to a gradebook so you can keep track of progress if you choose.

- **36 “As you write” prompts** encourage students to apply the lessons of the handbook to their own writing. Students complete brief writing assignments about organizing a paper, drafting thesis statements, working with peers, integrating sources, and other writing topics.
- **LearningCurve**, game-like online quizzing for 29 topics, builds confidence with sentence-level skills by adapting to students’ responses and adjusting the difficulty level of the quiz items.
- **Easy access.** If you choose to package LaunchPad with the handbook, students simply use the activation code on the access card when they log in for the first time at hackerhandbooks.com/writersref.

What hasn’t changed?

- The handbook **speaks to everything student writers need**. Even the most popular search engines can’t give students the confidence that comes with a coherent, authoritative reference that covers the topics they need in a writing course. *A Writer’s Reference* supports students as they compose for different purposes and audiences and in a variety of genres and as they collaborate, revise, conduct research, document sources, format their writing, and edit for clarity.
- The handbook is **easy to use and easy to understand**. The explanations in *A Writer’s Reference* are brief, accessible, and illustrated by examples, most by student writers. The book’s many charts, checklists, tabs, menus, and directories are designed to help users find what they need quickly. And the user-friendly index includes both expert (*coherence, ellipsis*) and nonexpert (*flow, dots*) terminology.
- The handbook is **coherent, authoritative, and trustworthy**. Writing-related resources on the Web offer *information*, but they don’t offer *instruction*. With the eighth edition of *A Writer’s Reference*, students have reference content that has been class-tested by literally millions of students and instructors.

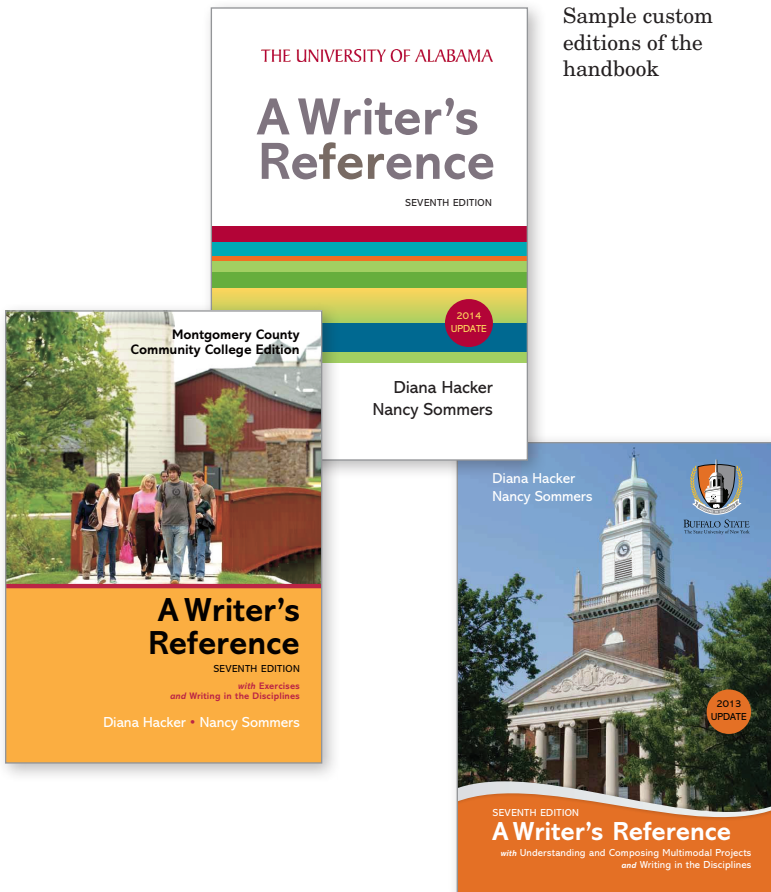
Supplements and media

Visit the catalog page for *A Writer’s Reference* for a complete list of instructor supplements, including *Teaching with Hacker Handbooks*, student supplements, videos, e-books (various formats), and other media: macmillanhighered.com/writersref/catalog.

Custom solutions

Many schools opt for a custom edition of *A Writer's Reference*. Some programs choose to add a section about course outcomes and policies; others choose to customize by adding student writing from the school; still others decide simply to change the cover to reflect a recognizable campus location and the school name. More and more programs are creating custom editions by including publisher-supplied content—additional tabbed sections on writing about literature, writing in the disciplines, multimodal writing, ESL support, and support for online learners. To discuss custom options for your school, contact your sales representative or visit macmillanhighered.com/catalog/other/Custom_Solutions.

Sample custom editions of the handbook



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Students

Including sample student writing in each edition of the handbook makes the resource useful for you and your students. I would like to thank the following students who have let us adapt their papers as models: Ned Bishop, Sophie Harba, Sam Jacobs, Luisa Mirano, Michelle Nguyen, Emilia Sanchez, and Ren Yoshida.

Bedford/St. Martin's

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Nancy Sommers

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Composing and Revising

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Writing is a process of figuring out what you think, not a matter of recording already developed thoughts. Since it's not possible to think about everything all at once, you will find the process more manageable if you handle a piece of writing in stages. You will generally move from planning to drafting to revising, but as your ideas develop, you will find yourself circling back and returning to earlier stages.

C1 Planning

C1-a Assess the writing situation.

Begin by taking a look at your writing situation. Consider your subject, your purpose, your audience, available sources of information, and any assignment requirements such as genre, length, document design, and deadlines (see the checklist on p. 5). It is likely that you will make final decisions about all of these matters later in the writing process—after a first draft, for example—but you will become a more effective writer if you think about as many of them as possible in advance.

Purpose

In many writing situations, part of your challenge will be determining your purpose, or your reason, for writing. The wording of an assignment may suggest its purpose. If no guidelines are given, you may need to ask yourself, “Why am I communicating with my readers?” or “What do I want to accomplish?” College writers most often write for the following purposes:

to inform	to analyze
to explain	to synthesize
to summarize	to propose
to persuade	to call readers to action
to evaluate	to change attitudes

Audience

Analyzing your audience can often help you determine how to accomplish your purpose—how much detail or explanation to provide, what kind of tone and language to use, and what potential objections to address. The choices you make as you write will tell readers who you think they are (novices or experts, for example) and will show respect for your readers' values and perspectives. The checklist on page 5 includes questions that will help you analyze your audience and develop an effective strategy for reaching your readers.

NOTE: When you write e-mail messages to instructors, classmates, or potential employers, respect your reader by using a concise, meaningful subject line; keeping paragraphs brief and focused; proofreading for careless errors; and paying attention to your tone. Don't write something that you wouldn't feel comfortable saying directly to your reader. Finally, avoid forwarding another person's message without permission.

Genre

Pay close attention to the genre, or type of writing assigned. Each genre is a category of writing meant for a specific purpose and audience—an essay in a writing class, a lab report in a biology class, a policy memo in a criminal justice class, or a case study for an education class. Sometimes the genre is yours to choose, and you need to decide if a particular genre—a poster presentation, an audio essay, a Web page, or a podcast, for example—will help you communicate your purpose and reach readers.

Academic English What counts as good writing varies from culture to culture. In some situations, you will need to become familiar with the writing styles—such as direct or indirect, personal or impersonal, plain or embellished—that are valued by the culture or discipline for which you are writing.

C1-b Experiment with ways to explore your subject.

Instead of plunging into a first draft, experiment with one or more techniques for exploring your subject and discovering your purpose: talking and listening, reading and annotating texts, asking questions, brainstorming, clustering, freewriting, keeping a journal, blogging. Whatever technique you turn to, the goal is the same: to generate ideas that will lead you to a question, a problem, or a topic that you want to explore further.

Talking and listening

Because writing is a process of figuring out what you think about a subject, it can be useful to try out your ideas on other people. Conversation can deepen and refine your ideas even before you begin to draft. By talking and listening to others, you can also discover what they find

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[e](#) C1 Planning > As you write: Thinking like a college writer

[e](#) C1 Planning > As you write: Exploring a subject

Checklist for assessing the writing situation**Subject**

- Has the subject been assigned, or are you free to choose your own?
- Why is your subject worth writing about? What questions would you like to explore? How might readers benefit from reading about it?
- Do you need to narrow your subject to a more specific topic (because of length restrictions, for instance)?

Purpose and audience

- Why are you writing: To inform readers? To persuade them? To call them to action? Some combination of these?
- Who are your readers? How well informed are they about the subject?
- Will your readers resist any of your ideas? What possible objections will you need to anticipate and counter?

Genre

- What genre—type of writing—does your assignment require: A report? A proposal? An analysis of data? An essay?
- If the genre is not assigned, what genre is appropriate for your subject, purpose, and audience?
- Does the genre require a specific design format or method of organization?

Sources of information

- Where will your information come from: Reading? Research? Direct observation? Interviews? Questionnaires?
- What type of evidence suits your subject, purpose, audience, and genre?
- What documentation style is required: MLA? APA? CMS (*Chicago*)?

Length and document design

- Do you have length specifications? If not, what length seems appropriate, given your subject, purpose, audience, and genre?
- Is a particular format required? If so, do you have guidelines or examples to consult?
- How might visuals—graphs, tables, images—help you convey information?

Reviewers and deadlines

- Who will be reviewing your draft in progress: Your instructor? A writing tutor? Your classmates?
- What are your deadlines? How much time will you need for the various stages of writing, including proofreading and printing or posting the final draft?

interesting, what they are curious about, and where they disagree with you. If you are planning to develop an argument, you can try it out on listeners with other points of view.

Many writers begin a writing project by debating a point with friends or chatting with an instructor. Others prefer to record themselves talking through their own thoughts. Some writers exchange ideas by sending e-mails or texts or by posting to a blog. You may be encouraged to share ideas with your classmates in an online workshop, where you can begin to refine your thoughts before starting a draft.

Reading and annotating texts

Reading is an important way to deepen your understanding of a topic, learn from the insights and research of others, and expand your perspective. Annotating a text, written or visual, encourages you to read actively—to highlight key concepts, to note possible contradictions in an argument, or to raise questions for further research and investigation.

As you annotate, you record your impressions and begin a conversation with a text and its author. See A1-a for a student's annotations on an assigned article.

Asking questions

When gathering material for a story, journalists routinely ask themselves Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? These questions help journalists get started and ensure that they will not overlook an important fact.

Whenever you are writing about ideas, events, or people, asking questions is one way to get started. One student, whose topic was the negative reaction in 1915 to D. W. Griffith's silent film *The Birth of a Nation*, began exploring her topic with this set of questions:

Who objected to the film?

What were the objections?

When were the protests first voiced?

Where were protests most strongly expressed?

Why did protesters object to the film?

How did protesters make their views known?

If you are writing in a particular discipline, try to find out which questions its scholars typically explore. Look for clues in assigned readings and class discussions to understand how a discipline's questions help you grasp its concerns and conventions.

MORE HELP IN YOUR HANDBOOK

Read critically and take notes before you write.

- ▶ Guidelines for active reading: **A2-a**
- ▶ Taking notes: **R2-c**
- ▶ Analyzing texts: **A1-d**

MORE HELP IN YOUR HANDBOOK

Effective college writers begin by asking questions.

- ▶ Asking questions in academic disciplines: **A6-b**

Reading an assignment

Determining the purpose of the assignment

The wording of an assignment may suggest its purpose. You might be expected to do one of the following in a college writing assignment:

- summarize information from books, lectures, or research (See A1-c.)
- analyze ideas and concepts (See A1-d.)
- take a position and defend it with evidence (See A4.)
- synthesize (combine ideas from) several sources and create an original argument (See MLA-3c and APA-3c.)

Understanding how to answer an assignment's questions

Many assignments will ask you to answer a *how* or *why* question. You cannot answer such questions using only facts; instead, you will need to take a position. For example, the question “*What* are the survival rates for leukemia patients?” can be answered by reporting facts. The question “*Why* are the survival rates for leukemia patients in one state lower than they are in a neighboring state?” must be answered with both a claim and facts.

If a list of questions appears in the assignment, be careful—instructors rarely expect you to answer all of the questions in order. Look instead for topics or themes that will help you ask your own questions.

Recognizing implied questions

When you are asked to *discuss*, *analyze*, *argue*, or *consider*, your instructor will often expect you to answer a *how* or *why* question.

<i>Discuss</i> the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on special education programs.	=	<i>How</i> has the No Child Left Behind Act affected special education programs?
<i>Consider</i> the recent rise of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnoses.	=	<i>Why</i> are diagnoses of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder rising?

Recognizing disciplinary expectations

When you are asked to write in a specific discipline, pay attention to the genre, or type of writing assigned. Each genre has agreed-upon expectations and disciplinary conventions. Look closely at the key terms of the assignment and know what kinds of evidence and citation style your instructor expects you to use. (See A6.)

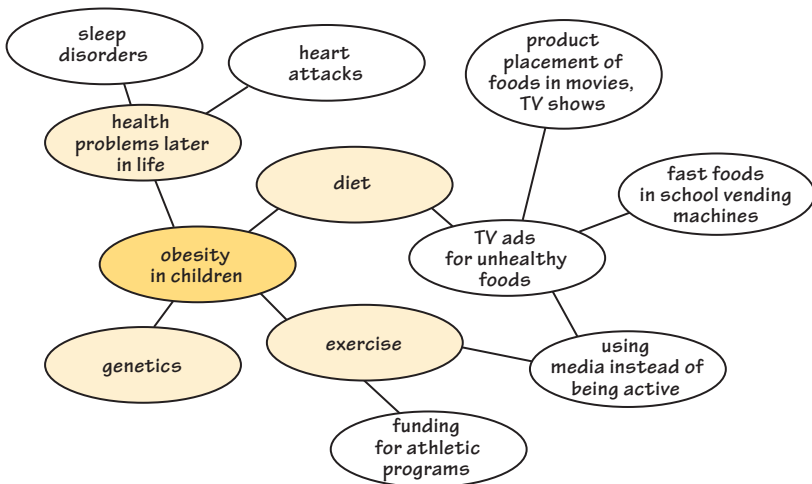
Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a good way to figure out what you know and what questions you have. You begin by listing ideas in the order in which they occur to you. Listing ideas can help a writer narrow a subject and identify a position. An early list is often a source of ideas and a springboard to new ideas. Writers can come back to their brainstorming notes and rearrange them, delete some, or add others.

Clustering

Clustering (sometimes called *mapping*) highlights relationships among ideas. To cluster ideas, write your subject in the center of a sheet of paper, draw a circle around it, and surround the circle with related ideas connected to it with lines. If some of the satellite ideas lead to more specific clusters, write them down as well. The writer of this cluster diagram was exploring ideas for an essay on obesity in children.

CLUSTER DIAGRAM



Freewriting

In its purest form, freewriting is simply nonstop writing. You set aside ten minutes or so and write whatever comes to mind, without pausing to think about word choice, spelling, or even meaning. Freewriting lets you ask questions without feeling you have to answer them. Sometimes a question that comes to mind at this stage will point you in an unexpected and productive direction.

To explore ideas on a particular topic, consider using a technique called *focused freewriting*. Again, you write quickly and freely, but this time you focus on a specific subject and pay attention to the connections among your ideas.

Keeping a journal

A journal is a collection of informal, exploratory, sometimes experimental writing. In a journal, often meant for your eyes only, you can take risks. You might freewrite, pose questions, comment on an interesting

idea from one of your classes, or keep a list of questions that occur to you while reading. You might imagine a conversation between yourself and your readers or stage a debate to understand opposing positions. A journal can also serve as a sourcebook of ideas for future essays.

Blogging

Although a blog is a type of journal, it is a public writing space rather than a private one. In a blog, you might express opinions, make observations, recap events, play with language, or interpret an image. You can explore an idea for a paper by writing posts from different angles. Since most blogs have a commenting feature, you can create a conversation by inviting readers to give you feedback—ask questions, pose counterarguments, or suggest other sources on a topic.

C1-c Draft and revise a working thesis statement.

For many types of writing, you will be able to assert your central idea in a sentence or two. Such a statement, which ordinarily appears in the opening paragraph of your finished essay, is called a *thesis*.

What makes an effective thesis statement?

A successful thesis statement is a central idea that requires supporting evidence; its scope is appropriate for the assigned length of the essay; and it is focused and specific. A thesis is a promise to readers. It is often one or more of the following:

- your answer to a question you have posed
- the resolution for a problem you have identified
- a statement that announces your position on a debatable topic

Drafting a working thesis

As you explore your topic, you will begin to see possible ways to focus your material. At this point, try to settle on a *tentative* central idea, or working thesis statement. The more complex your topic, the more your focus may change. As your ideas develop, you'll need to revisit your working thesis to see if it represents the position you want to take or if it can be supported by the sources of evidence you have accumulated.

You'll find that the process of answering a question you have posed, resolving a problem you have identified, or taking a position on a debatable topic will focus your thinking and lead you to develop a working