

REBECCA MOORE HOWARD
Syracuse University

SECOND EDITION

WRITING MATTERS

A **HANDBOOK** FOR WRITING AND RESEARCH





WRITING MATTERS: A HANDBOOK FOR WRITING AND RESEARCH, SECOND EDITION

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Writing Matters is dedicated
to the memory of my sister, Sandy

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Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for taking the time to consider *Writing Matters!* I started this project as a way of giving back to the composition community and helping students with their development as writers. Working on this handbook has also been a source of my own development: My life and teaching have been immeasurably enriched by the students and instructors I have met during my travels to discuss *Writing Matters* and my responsibilities-focused approach to writing.

While developing on the second edition of *Writing Matters*, I have also been working on the Citation Project, a nationwide study of the researched writing of 174 students for their composition classes. Some of the results of that research are available on the Citation Project website: citationproject.net. There you will see a variety of signs that students may not be reading their sources carefully and completely and that their research projects suffer accordingly. This edition includes newly developed materials that teach concrete skills, such as marking where the source material ends and the writer's own voice begins. On a larger scale, these materials encourage students to invest themselves in their writing.

In *Writing Matters*, I draw on three decades' worth of teaching, writing, and research—as well as on my recent travels—to focus sustained attention on **writers' responsibilities to other writers, to their readers, to their topics, and most especially, to themselves**. The result is a teaching and learning framework that unites research, rhetoric, documentation, grammar, and style into a cohesive whole, helping students to find consistency in rules that might otherwise confound them. Students experience responsible writing not only by citing the work of other writers accurately but also by treating those writers' ideas fairly. They practice responsible writing by providing reliable information about a topic at a depth that does the topic justice. Most importantly, they embrace responsible writing by taking their writing seriously and approaching writing assignments as opportunities to learn about new topics and to expand their scope as writers.

Students are more likely to write well when they think of themselves as writers rather than as error-makers. By explaining rules in the context of responsibility, I address composition students respectfully as mature and capable fellow participants in the research and writing process.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Moore Howard



Rebecca Moore Howard is Professor of Writing and Rhetoric at Syracuse University. Her recent work on the Citation Project is part of a collaborative endeavor to study how students really use resources.

Change the Conversation . . .

Writing Matters offers instructors and students a four-part framework that focuses the rules and conventions of writing through a lens of responsibility, ultimately empowering students to own their ideas and to view their writing as consequential.

Writing Matters helps students see the conventions of writing as a network of **responsibilities . . .**

to other writers by treating information fairly and accurately, and crafting writing that is fresh and original

to the audience by writing clearly, and providing readers with the information and interpretation they need to make sense of a topic

to the topic by exploring a topic thoroughly and creatively, assessing sources carefully, and providing reliable information at a depth that does the topic justice

to themselves by taking writing seriously, and approaching the process as an opportunity to learn about a topic and to expand research and writing skills

Make It Your Own!



WRITING MATTERS eBook

The **CONNECT COMPOSITION PLUS 2.0** eBook provides *Writing Matters* content in a digital format that is accessible from within Connect and Blackboard. In support of the engaged learning experience, students can link directly to activities and assignments within **CONNECT** from the eBook. Students can have all the resources from *Writing Matters* right on their desktops!

Personal Learning Plan (PLP)

Through an intuitive, adaptive diagnostic that assesses proficiencies in five core areas of grammar and mechanics, students generate a personalized learning plan tailored to address their needs within the timeframe students determine they want to study. The personalized program includes contextualized grammar and writing lessons, videos, animations, and interactive exercises and provides immediate feedback on students' work and progress. Based on metacognitive learning theories, the **PERSONAL LEARNING PLAN** continually adapts with each interaction, while built-in time management tools keep students on track to ensure they achieve their course goals. The Personal Learning Plan is designed to improve student writing, allow classroom instruction to focus on critical writing processes, and support the goals of writing programs and individual instructors with reports that present data related to progress, achievement, and students who may be at risk.



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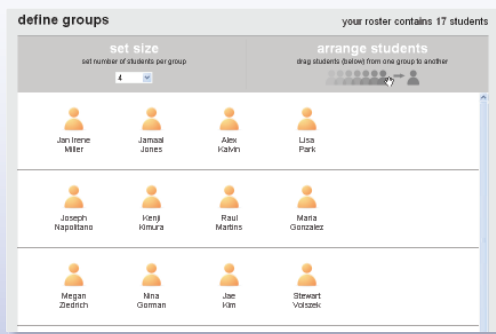
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- blog assignments
- discussion board assignments
- writing assignments with accurate formatting

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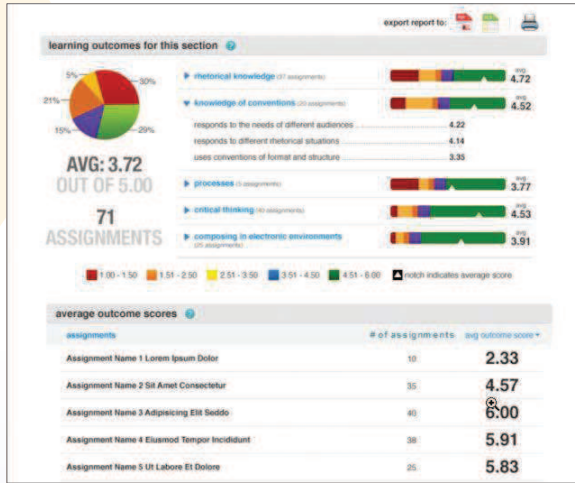
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Make it your own!



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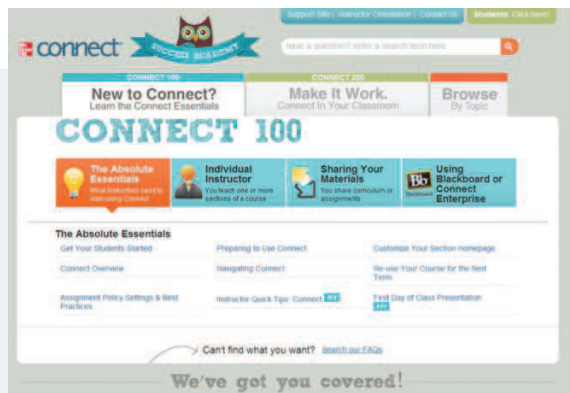
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Components of *Writing Matters*

Writing Matters includes an array of resources for instructors and students. Under the leadership of Rebecca Moore Howard, experienced instructors created supplements that help instructors and students fulfill their course responsibilities.

Instruction Matters

Instruction Matters includes teaching tips and learning outcomes. It connects each instructor and student resource to the core material and makes the exercises relevant to instructors and students.

Assessment Matters

Assessment Matters offers more than a thousand test items.

Practice Matters offers three sets of grammar and ESL activities and exercises to practice writing well.

Exercises for ESL Students

Exercises for Students

Grammar Exercises for Students

Presentation Matters

This PowerPoint deck is designed to give new teachers confidence in the classroom and can be used as a teaching tool by all instructors. The PowerPoint slides emphasize key ideas from *Writing Matters* and help students take useful notes. Instructors can alter the slides to meet their own needs.

Acknowledgments

The creation and evolution of *Writing Matters* has been an exciting and humbling experience. I began in the belief that I knew what I was doing, but I quickly realized that I had embarked upon a path not only of sharing what I know but also of learning what I should know. *Writing Matters* lists a single author, Rebecca Moore Howard, but that author is actually the central figure in a collaboration of hundreds of students, teachers, and editors.

I thank the instructors who have provided invaluable insights and suggestions as reviewers and members of the board of advisors. Talking with instructors at all sorts of institutions and learning from them about the teaching of writing has been an unparalleled experience. As a result of this project, I have many new colleagues, people who care deeply about teaching writing and who are experts at doing so. I also thank the many students who have shared their thoughts with us through class tests and design reviews. I particularly thank the students who have shared their writing with me and allowed me to publish some of it in this book. *Writing Matters* has been improved greatly by their contributions.



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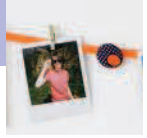
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Writing Matters

Planning, Drafting,
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1

Writing Responsibly in the Information Age

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- b. Writer's responsibilities: to audience, topic, other writers, self, 3

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In 2004, the National Commission on Writing published a report called “Writing: A Ticket to Work . . . Or a Ticket Out,” surveying 120 of the largest corporations in America. Among the results: American corporations expect their salaried employees to be able to write clearly, correctly, and logically. Eighty percent of finance, insurance, and real estate employers take writing skills into consideration when hiring salaried employees. For these employers, good writing is a “threshold skill.” To get a good job, to

keep that job, or to get promoted, you must write clearly, logically, and accurately; for the appropriate audience; and with the necessary level of support and documentation. As you write projects for your college courses, you are, in effect, standing before the elevator to your own future. You decide whether the elevator will take you up.

But writing well is more than a ticket to a good job. Whether drafting business e-mails or making PowerPoint presentations, texting friends or commenting on a Facebook page, posting a tweet or even composing a paper for a college course, we write to develop and evaluate beliefs and ideas, to move others, to express ourselves, and to explore possibilities. For all these reasons and more, writing matters!

1a Writing Today

Long before Johannes Gutenberg introduced the printing press, in the fifteenth century, a *page* was seen as a sheet of paper covered with text, and *literacy* meant the ability to read and write a text, whether written on the page or carved in stone. But as the Internet revolution changes our understanding of what a page is, it also expands our concept of literacy (Figure 1.1). Today, a page can be a sheet of paper, but it can also be a screen in a website or an e-mail message on a

FIGURE 1.1 The media revolution In the fifteenth century, few could read (or had access to) the Gutenberg Bible. Today, readers can view its pages on their phones, but to do so they must be multiliterate: Not only must they be able to read and write, but they must also know how to access multiple media online.

Droid; it can include not only words, but also images and sound files, links to other web pages, and Flash animations. The ability to understand, interpret, and use these new kinds of pages—by contributing to a class wiki or making an online presentation, for example—requires not just print literacy but multiple literacies (visual literacy, digital literacy, information literacy).

Like most people reading this book, you are probably already multiliterate: You “code shift,” switching from medium to medium easily because the “literacies” required for each medium are not entirely separate. Whether penning a thank-you note, searching a library database, reading an advertisement, composing a college paper, or texting your best friend, you analyze and interpret, adjusting your message in response to your purpose, audience, context, and medium: When texting a friend you may ignore the conventions of punctuation and capitalization, for example, but you would not do so when writing a résumé.

This handbook focuses on print literacy because it remains central to communication; yet *Writing Matters* also addresses digital, visual, oral, and information literacies because they have become impossible to separate from one another and from traditional print literacy. As a reader, you must be able not only to decipher written language but also to interpret visuals—drawing meaning from advertisements, for example, and subjecting them to the scrutiny of a careful shopper. As a writer, you may incorporate graphics into papers in economics and psychology; contribute to class blogs or Twitter discussions; search online databases and electronic library catalogs; or create presentations using Prezi and Jing. As both a reader and a writer, you will be expected to manage all the information you receive and transmit. Being multiliterate *means* being information literate.

1b The Writer's Responsibilities

With opportunities to express and even create yourself in words come responsibilities to your readers, to the topics you address, to the other writers from whom you borrow and to whom you respond, and perhaps especially to yourself as a writer with ideas and ideals to express.



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1. Your responsibilities to your audience

Audience members make a commitment to you by spending their time reading your work. To make your readers feel that this commitment was worthwhile, you can do the following:

- Choose a topic that your audience will find interesting and about which you have something you want to say.
- Make a claim that will help your audience follow your thoughts.
- Support your claim with thoughtful, logical, even creative evidence drawn from sources that you have evaluated carefully for relevance and reliability.
- Write clearly so that your audience (even if that audience is your composition teacher) does not have to struggle to understand. To write clearly, build a logical structure, use transitional techniques to guide readers, and correct errors of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Write appropriately by using a tone and vocabulary that are right for your topic, audience, context, and genre.
- Write engagingly by varying sentence structures and word choices, avoiding wordiness, and using repetition only for special effect.

2. Your responsibilities to your topic

Examples of writers who did not take seriously their responsibility to their topic are everywhere. Here are three:

- A six-year-old child who won tickets to a Hannah Montana concert with an essay about her father's Iraq War death; her father had *not* been killed in Iraq. She lost those tickets.
- Jayson Blair, a *New York Times* reporter who concocted stories without leaving his apartment; he was forced to resign.
- The president of Raytheon Company, who plagiarized large sections of his book *Swanson's Unwritten Rules of Management* from a book published in 1944; he was fined a million dollars by the company's shareholders.

You treat your topic responsibly when you explore it thoroughly and creatively, rely on trustworthy sources, and offer supporting evidence that is accurate, relevant, and reliable. You show respect for your topic when you provide

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enough evidence to persuade readers of your claims and when you acknowledge viewpoints that do not support your position. In a college writing project, not fulfilling your responsibilities to your topic might lead to a bad grade. In the workplace, it could have great financial, even life-and-death, consequences: The Merck pharmaceutical company, for example, was accused of suppressing evidence that its drug Vioxx could cause heart attacks and strokes. As a result, Merck faced a host of lawsuits, trials, and out-of-court settlements.

3. Your responsibilities to other writers

You have important responsibilities to other writers whose work you may be using.

Acknowledge your sources Writing circulates easily today, and vast quantities of it are available online, readily accessible through search engines such as Bing and Google and databases such as JSTOR. It may seem natural, then, simply to copy the information you need from a source and paste it into your own text, as you might if you were collecting information about a disease you were facing or a concert you hoped to attend. But when you provide readers with information, ideas, language, or images that others have collected or created, you also have a responsibility to *acknowledge* those sources. Such acknowledgment gives credit to those who contributed to your thinking, and it allows your readers to read your sources for themselves. Acknowledging your sources also protects you from charges of plagiarism, and it builds your authority and credibility as a writer by establishing that you have reviewed key sources on a topic and taken other writers' views into consideration.

To acknowledge sources in academic writing, you must do *all three* of the following:

1. When quoting, copy accurately and use quotation marks or block indentation to signal the beginning and end of the copied passage; when paraphrasing or summarizing, put the ideas fully into your own words and sentences.
2. Include an in-text citation to the source, whether you are quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing.

Writing Responsibly

Your Responsibilities as a Writer

When you write, you have four areas of responsibility:

1. To your audience
2. To your topic
3. To other writers
4. To yourself

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Writing Responsibly around the World Concepts of plagiarism vary from one culture or context to another. Where one may see cooperation, another may see plagiarism. Even if borrowing ideas and language without acknowledgment is a familiar custom for you, writers in the United States (especially in academic contexts) must explicitly acknowledge all ideas and information borrowed from another source.

3. Document the source, providing enough information for your readers to locate the source and to identify the type of source you used. This documentation usually appears in a bibliography (often called a list of works cited or a reference list) at the end of college research projects.

Obtain copyright clearance While plagiarism is concerned with acknowledging sources of ideas or language, copyright focuses on the right to compensation for the use of writers’ words and ideas in a public context. When writers use a substantial portion of another writer’s text, they must not only acknowledge the source but may also need to obtain the original author’s permission, often in exchange for a fee.

As a student, your use of sources is covered under the *fair use* provision of copyright law, which allows you to include copyrighted material without permission when you are doing your college assignments. What counts as fair use cannot be expressed in percentages or checklists. The Center for Social Media at American University offers a “Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Media Literacy Education” that you can find online. It explains that if you copy someone else’s text or music files and avoid paying for it, you are violating copyright. But if you are using parts of a text or a song for educational purposes, and if you are not interfering with the copyright owner’s ability to profit from the material, you are making fair use of it and do not need the copyright owner’s

Quick**Reference** **Your College’s Plagiarism Policy**

Most colleges publish their plagiarism policies in their student handbook, which is often available online. **Find your plagiarism policy** by searching the student handbook’s table of contents or index. Or search your college’s website, using key terms such as *plagiarism*, *cheating policy*, *academic honesty*, or *academic integrity*. Before writing a research project, **read your school’s plagiarism policy** carefully. If you are unsure what the policy means, talk with your adviser or instructor. In addition to the general policy for your college, **read your course syllabi** carefully to see what specific guidelines your instructors may provide there.

permission. Because plagiarism and copyright are separate issues, though, you must always acknowledge your source, even when no permission is needed.

Copyright protections also apply to you as a writer: Anything you write is protected by US copyright law—even your college assignments.

Treat other writers fairly Your responsibility to other writers does not end with the need to acknowledge your use of their ideas or language. You must also represent *accurately* and *fairly* what your sources say: Quoting selectively to distort meaning or taking a comment out of context is irresponsible. So is treating other writers with scorn.

It is perfectly acceptable to criticize the ideas of others. In fact, examining ideas under the bright light of careful scrutiny is central to higher education. But treating the people who developed the ideas with derision is not. Avoid *ad hominem* (or personal) attacks, and focus your attention on other writers' ideas and their expression of them.

4. Your responsibilities to yourself

You have a responsibility to yourself as a writer. Writers represent themselves on paper and screen through the words and images (and even sounds) they create and borrow, so submitting a project as your own that someone else has written is a form of impersonation—it does not represent you. Make sure that the writing “avatar,” or *persona*, you create is the best representation of yourself it can be. Encourage readers to view you with respect by treating others—not only other writers but also other people and groups—respectfully and without bias. Earn your audience's respect by synthesizing information from sources to produce new and compelling ideas and by using language clearly, correctly, logically, and with flair.

If you graduate from college having learned to be an effective writer, you will have learned something employers value highly. More importantly, though, you will have fulfilled a key responsibility to yourself.

Writing

Responsibly

Taking Yourself Seriously as a Writer

Many students enter writing classes thinking of themselves as “bad writers.” This belief can be a self-fulfilling prophecy—students fail to engage because they already believe they are doomed to fail. Remember that writing is not an inborn talent but a skill to be learned. Instead of thinking of

yourself as a bad writer, think of yourself as a writer-in-progress, someone who has something to say and who is learning how to say it effectively. If you speak or have studied another language, think of yourself as someone who is learning to draw on that experience.

to SELF

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Synthesis, 123–25
Common sentence problems, fold-out preceding part 8, Grammar Matters
Style, 496–572 (part 7, Style Matters)
Grammar, 574–702 (part 8, Grammar Matters)
Punctuation and mechanics, 748–835 (part 10, Detail Matters)

EXERCISE 1.1 Assessing the writer's responsibilities

Read “Plagiarism Cheats Students,” written by Salt Lake Community College student Jeff Gurney for his college newspaper, *The Globe*. To what extent do you agree with Gurney’s argument? What reservations do you have about it? What other writers’ responsibilities might a revision of the article take into account?

Student Model Newspaper Article

Plagiarism Cheats Students

By JEFF GURNEY

In the world of higher education, your growth as a student comes with a heavy price. Many hours are spent reading, researching and writing for required reports in most of your classes. This means staying up many nights until almost dawn and drinking a lot of coffee.

Or at least this is how it should be. Unfortunately, an amazing number of students are getting into buying ready-made reports. There are many places that you can go online and pick the type of paper you want. For a fee they will send you the paper and all you have to do is change a few sentences. Once that part is done all you need to do is turn it in.

This is the way some students have made it through college. Then the professors got smart and noticed that there were a lot of papers that sounded pretty much the same or had just about the same content.

Along come services like Turnitin.com where the professor tells you to first send the report online, and for a fee, usually paid for by the school, your paper is compared to many different papers and texts that are in a massive database. The service can tell in percentages how much content in your paper was gleaned from other sources.

This service also provides [instructors] with the results of the scan and tells them what your scores are in each of several categories.

Over the past few years there have been several writers working for very prominent media services that have been caught plagiarizing, and surprisingly they were using quite a bit of other people’s stuff. The most amazing thing about this misuse is that they worked for trusted publications and broke that trust for money.

In a recent study reported by Mark Edmundson in the *New York Times* (September 9, 2003, p. A29), 38 percent of American college students admitted to committing “cut and paste” plagiarism. This percentage is up 10 percent from 2000.

These numbers pose a question. What is the reason we go to college? Are you attending SLCC merely to get a better job, or to learn something in the process for that job? An unknown author once said, “If it were easy then everybody would have done it.” This is the ideal that those that started higher education probably had in mind. It is much more valuable, that diploma in hand, when you earn it yourself.

2

Planning Your Project

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- c. Generating ideas, topics, 20
- d. Narrowing, broadening a topic, 25
- e. Collaboration, 26

Student Models

Freewrite, 21; **Brainstorm**, 22, 26; **Journalists' Questions**, 24



Just as an architect creates a blueprint to show how to fit together the concrete footings, steel beams, and electrical wiring of a building, so, too, does a writer create a plan that takes into account the

project's purpose, audience, context, and genre. Just as an architect must choose the right materials and devise plans to complete the project on budget and on schedule, a writer must select an engaging topic, devise ideas that will resonate with the reader, fulfill the terms of the assignment, and do it all on time.

2a Analyzing Your Writing Situation

The first step in planning a writing project is analyzing the *writing situation*:

- What is your **purpose**? What do you hope to accomplish with the text?
- Who is your **audience**? Who will be reading the text you produce and why?
- What **topics** will interest them?
- What **tone** is appropriate to your purpose and audience?
- What are the **context** (academic, business, personal) and **genre** (or type) of writing you will produce (research report, résumé, Facebook status update)? How will your context and genre affect the way you write this project?