



# WRITING TODAY

FOURTH EDITION

**RICHARD  
JOHNSON-SHEEHAN &  
CHARLES PAINE**



### Processes

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing
- Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas
- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to give and act on productive feedback to works in progress
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities
- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work

### Knowledge of Conventions

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising
- Understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary
- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions
- Learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts
- Explore the concepts of intellectual property (such as fair use and copyright) that motivate documentation conventions
- Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work

**PART 1 Getting Started** shows how to use your analysis of the rhetorical situation and an understanding of genre to guide you through the writing process, while reading critically and reflecting on your writing.

**PART 2 Using Genres to Express Ideas** is structured so that each chapter mirrors the writing process, beginning with an overview of the genre and moving through the writing process, from invention to organizing and drafting, choosing the appropriate style and design, and strategically revising.

**PART 3 Developing a Writing Process** provides an abundance of traditional and technology-enhanced strategies to choose from as you work through the stages of the writing process, from inventing ideas, to drafting and revising, to reflecting on your work.

**PART 4 Strategies for Shaping Ideas** explains how to work collaboratively with your peers and give them helpful feedback on their work.

**PART 6 Getting Your Ideas Out There** helps you use electronic and other media to make your writing accessible to the readers you want to reach.

Every chapter addresses opportunities and strategies for communicating with a variety of media and genres.

**PART 1 Getting Started** gives you a practical and theoretical grounding in the conventions and audience expectations of various genres.

**PART 2 Using Genres to Express Ideas** helps you master the conventions for ten common genres and a variety of related genres and microgenres.

**PART 3 Developing a Writing Process** offers both time-tested and innovative strategies for inventing, drafting, designing, and revising your work to meet the needs of your audience.

**PART 4 Strategies for Shaping Ideas** helps you write effective introductions and conclusions and develop meaningful paragraphs that use rhetorical strategies appropriate to the genre.

**PART 5 Doing Research** offers visual tutorials explaining how to responsibly and accurately incorporate and cite sources.

**PART 7 Anthology of Readings** provides 26 readings that invite you to examine how writers negotiate the conventions of ten major genres.

**PART 8 Handbook** serves as your accessible guide to grammar, punctuation, and other linguistic features of standard American English.

# Writing Today

Fourth Edition

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# Preface

This new edition of *Writing Today* marks an important turning point in this highly successful series, and it's a turn we are very excited about. *Writing Today* has long been a leader in teaching students the genres and rhetorical strategies that will help them succeed in their advanced college courses, their careers, and their civic lives. Since the first edition, this book has featured practical writing skills that are founded on solid theoretical, historical, and empirical principles of rhetoric. With each new edition, we have also kept pace with the evolving cultural and technological trends that affect all of our lives. At our core, we still firmly believe the following three principles that we used in writing the first edition:

1. Students want to master writing skills that will help them be successful in college, their careers, and their civic lives.
2. Students want to learn from a guide that presents information clearly, simply, visually, and in a way that is easy to access.
3. Writing instructors prefer teaching tools that are practical, flexible, and theoretically sound, allowing them to adapt these tools' content to their own teaching practices and style.

So, what's the big turning point? In this fourth edition, we have elevated *reflection* as a pillar of the writing experience. Reflection has always been a feature of *Writing Today*, but we have now made it one of the central concepts of the book. This change is most evident in a new Chapter 5, "Reflecting Critically, Starting Your Portfolio," which helps students step back from the writing process and reflect critically on their own work. As we write in Chapter 5,

*Reflecting on your writing will help you become a stronger and more versatile person, not just a better writer. Reflection helps you to step back and take a breath, allowing you recognize what you already do well and figure out what you can do better. It allows you adapt your writing skills to both the*

*everyday and unpredictable situations that you will encounter in college and your career. Being reflective helps you to see the big picture, sort it all out, and get to the bottom of things.*

In other words, reflection isn't simply about helping students write better. It helps them figure out *why* they made specific rhetorical decisions. Reflection is a process that helps a writer become a better person—intellectually stronger, more aware, more versatile, and more resilient. Reflection helps students transition beyond the concrete patterns they may have learned in high school, allowing them to transfer their existing rhetorical abilities into more advanced "real-world" practices and situations.

In nearly every chapter, *Writing Today*, 4e, incorporates reflection as a central component of generating ideas, organizing them into familiar patterns, expressing those ideas clearly and persuasively, and using design to make documents accessible and attractive. We have centralized reflection as a component of the writing process from prewriting a rough draft to proofreading the final version. We want students to learn how to write well but also to gain a deep understanding of their motives, their values, and why they and others express themselves in specific ways. Critical reflection helps them understand their strengths as writers, so they can become more versatile and independent.

That said, the core concepts of *Writing Today* are still all here. *Writing Today* teaches *genres* of writing (memoirs, analyses, reports, proposals, etc.) and *strategies* for writing (narration, comparison, argumentation, etc.) as well as *processes* for writing (planning, drafting, revising, etc.). This approach helps students understand that genres are not rigid templates but are rather a set of versatile tools that guide every aspect of the writing process. *Writing Today* helps students to develop *genre awareness* and *genre know-how* so they can get things done with words and images.

By design, *Writing Today* is an easy-to-use book that fits the way today's students read and learn. Students respond best to an interactive writing style, so our instruction is brief and to the point. Key terms are immediately defined and reinforced. Sections and paragraphs are kept short to make them accessible. Important points are clearly labeled and supported by helpful visuals. We emphasize practical application and keep the academic explanations to a minimum, even though *Writing Today* is thoroughly grounded in contemporary theories of rhetoric and writing.

We also maximize flexibility for instructors. Our own experiences as writing teachers and writing program administrators tell us that instructors can be successful in a variety of different ways. The best books on college writing provide multiple pathways that work for a diverse group of instructors, allowing them to be creative and innovative. With *Writing Today*, instructors can choose the order in which they teach the chapters and combine them into units that fit their course designs.

Our approach is informed by our own classroom experience and by much of the research done in the field of writing studies over the last twenty years. The approach is also supported by findings emerging from our research with the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (a collaboration between the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Council of Writing Program Administrators). Surveys conducted since 2008 by the CSWC of hundreds of thousands of students at over 200 different schools found that when faculty assigned challenging and diverse writing assignments, students reported deeper learning, increased practical competence, and greater personal and social gains.

## What's New in the Fourth Edition

**Critical Reflection as a Pillar of Writing.** Almost all chapters in the book introduce reflection as an important component of the writing process. Students are encouraged to step back and look at their work critically, while reflecting on how their writing embodies their own motives, values, and cultures.

**New Chapter on Critical Reflection.** A new Chapter 5, "Reflecting Critically, Starting Your Portfolio" offers strategies that will help students "look backward" to prior experiences, "look inward" at their choices, and "look forward" to how they will reach future goals.

**New Engaging Design.** Instructors who have used *Writing Today* before will immediately notice the new design, which is more open, brighter, colorful, and accessible. The new design works well with both the print and online versions of *Writing Today*, and students will appreciate a design that "pops."

**Enhanced Coverage of Citing Sources.** In Chapter 27 and elsewhere, we pay even more attention to properly citing sources and avoiding plagiarism. The Internet, as we all know, is creating new challenges with the citation of sources. We are always looking for ways to incorporate new methods and new technologies to help students manage and cite their sources properly while avoiding plagiarism.

**Additional Focus on Assessment.** The importance of assessment at the university level continues to grow as stakeholders ask universities to prove that they are "adding value." The terminology of assessment is built into the fabric of *Writing Today* in a seamless way, so instructors and students can respond successfully to assessment rubrics and evaluation tools.

**New Microgenres.** Instructors have been sending us ideas for new microgenres to add to *Writing Today*. (We cannot include them all, but keep sending them.) Here are some new microgenres in this edition: The "portrait" in Chapter 7, the "slam" in Chapter 8, and the "online comment" in Chapter 11.

**New Microgenre Examples.** We have replaced just about all the microgenre examples with new examples that students will enjoy reading, discussing, and modeling.

**New Engaging, Effective Readings.** Over 25 new readings cover topics such as racial equality, video games, the Second Amendment, fast food, depression, and more to keep class discussion lively and suggest a range of topics students might consider for their own writing.

## Features of This Book

**Interactive Writing Style.** Instruction is brief and to the point. Key concepts are immediately defined and reinforced. Paragraphs are short and introduced by heads that preview content. This interactive style helps students skim, ask questions, and access information when they are ready for it—putting them in control of their learning.

**At-A-Glance.** Each chapter in Part 2 opens with a diagram that shows one or two common ways to organize a genre’s key elements, giving an immediate and visual orientation to the genre. Students learn to adapt this organization to suit their rhetorical situation as they read the chapter.

**End-of-Chapter Activities.** Exercises conclude every chapter in the book to help students understand and practice concepts and strategies.

- **Talk About This** questions prompt classroom discussion.
- **Try This Out** exercises suggest informal writing activities students can complete in class or as homework.
- **Explore This** lets students find their own microgenres and explore how they are used in public spaces.
- **Write This** prompts facilitate longer, formal writing assignments.

**One Student’s Work.** A student-written example in each chapter in Part 2 shows the kinds of issues students might explore in a specific genre of writing as well as the angles they might take. Annotations highlight the writer’s key rhetorical decisions so the reading can be used either for discussion or as a model.

**Quick Start Guide.** This practical review includes action steps and appears in each chapter to get students writing quickly. Students spend less time reading about writing and more time working on their own compositions. They can also use the Quick Start Guide as a preview to gain familiarity with a genre before reading the chapter.

**Microgenre.** A microgenre applies features of major genres to narrow rhetorical situations. For

example, in Chapter 13, students apply features of a proposal to a pitch; in Chapter 6, those of a memoir to a literacy narrative. Each Microgenre in Part 2 includes a description, an example, and a writing activity, encouraging students to experiment and play by stretching genre conventions.

**Readings and Prompts.** Six readings—two in each project chapter and four in each anthology chapter—offer models of each genre. Question sets after each reading encourage critical engagement.

- **A Closer Look** questions facilitate analytical reading.
- **Ideas for Writing** questions prompt responses, analyses, and different genres of writing.
- **A Multimodal Approach.** Today’s writers compose electronic texts, work with visual and audio tools, insert graphics, and collaborate with others online. Each chapter includes strategies for working in a multimodal environment. Multimodal assignments appear in “Write This” activities. Chapters in Part 6 offer guidance on creating and posting compositions in online environments.

## How This Book Is Organized

*Writing Today* features brief chapters and plainly labeled sections, creating obvious access points that help students find what they need when they need it.

### PART 1

#### Getting Started

Purposefully brief, the first four chapters are designed to get students up and running right away. They introduce the five elements of rhetorical situations (topic, angle, purpose, readers, and context) and explain why and how using genres will help students to write successfully. The fourth chapter teaches strategies for reading critically and thinking analytically. The new Chapter 5 on reflection gives instructors the ability to introduce reflection as part of the writing process early in the course and help students set up their writing portfolios.

### PART 2

#### Using Genres to Express Ideas

These chapters help students master ten commonly assigned kinds of writing that form the foundation

of an adaptable portfolio of skills. Students explore expressive, informative, analytical, persuasive, and argumentative genres that help them respond effectively to a majority of academic and workplace writing situations.

### PART 3

#### Developing a Writing Process

Stand-alone chapters on planning, organization, style, design, and revision offer strategies students can apply to any writing situation. Instructors can assign them alongside the genre chapters.

### PART 4

#### Strategies for Shaping Ideas

Straightforward chapters on drafting introductions and conclusions, developing paragraphs and sections, and incorporating rhetorical strategies (such as narration, classification, and comparison and contrast) provide resources for writing those sections of papers where students often find themselves stuck. A chapter on argument explores appeals and fallacies, and a chapter on collaboration helps students work effectively in groups.

### PART 5

#### Doing Research

The ability to research effectively is critical to students' success in college and in their careers. Students learn to engage in inquiry-driven research, evaluate sources, and work with sources by paraphrasing, quoting, and synthesizing. Up-to-date coverage of MLA and APA styles includes citation examples and model papers.

### PART 6

#### Getting Your Ideas Out There

Today's students have more opportunities to present their work publicly than ever before. Students learn how to use social networking and other Web applications for rhetorical purposes. Students learn best practices for creating a professional portfolio of their work. Basics such as succeeding on essay exams and giving presentations are covered in depth as well.

### PART 7

#### Anthology of Readings

The anthology showcases the ten genres of writing explored in Part 2, organized into six themes:

college and a new life; identity and human nature; culture and entertainment; place and environment; health and safety; and science and technology. These additional readings serve as models, suggest situations in which specific genres are particularly effective, offer material for response, and help students discover their own research topics.

### PART 8

#### Handbook

Designed to be as accessible and usable as possible, the handbook gives students a quick resource for issues of grammar, usage, and punctuation.

## Ways to Fit This Book to Your Teaching Approach

Flexibility is a chief strength of *Writing Today*. The first five chapters form a foundation, but remaining chapters can be taught in any order or combination to suit individual teaching approaches and objectives.

**A Process Approach.** Students want to learn a writing process that suits their own working habits and writing styles. The chapters in Part 2 tailor the writing process with strategies specific to different genres. Part 3, “Developing a Writing Process,” provides additional chapters on prewriting, drafting, designing, revising, and editing that can be assigned with any project.

**A Genre-Based Approach.** Genres are tools writers can use to help them invent ideas and plan, research and draft, design and edit. *Writing Today* covers real-world writing—such as analyses, reviews, reports, and proposals—that help students solve real problems and achieve specific goals.

**A Transfer and Reflection Approach.** The skills and knowledge students learn from *Writing Today* will “transfer” to their advanced courses and their careers. Students will also learn how to “reflect” on the rhetorical choices they make. Chapter 5, “Reflecting Critically, Starting Your Portfolio” offers a foundation for transfer and reflection. Then, throughout *Writing Today*, students are encouraged to consider the numerous, usually unconscious, choices they make as they write.

**A Purposes or Aims-Based Approach.** Instructors who teach an aims approach to writing encourage students to be aware of their audience and purpose as they write to express, inform, analyze, or persuade. This approach works hand-in-hand with a genre-based approach.

**A Strategies or Patterns-Based Approach.** Instructors who teach rhetorical patterns (narrative, description, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, etc.), will find them embedded in this book. Part 4, “Strategies for Shaping Ideas,” shows how strategies work with and within genres to help students organize and shape their ideas.

**An Academic Approach.** Students learn the kinds of writing common in the general education curriculum, such as narratives, rhetorical analyses, literary analyses, reviews, and argument essays. They also learn the foundations of the kinds of writing common in advanced academic classes, such as profiles, commentaries, reports, and proposals.

**An Argument-Based Approach.** *Writing Today* presents a rhetorical approach to writing. Several genres in Part 2, such as rhetorical analyses, commentaries, arguments, and proposals, are purposefully designed to be argument-based; this content is labeled with ARGUMENT in the table of contents. Chapter 23 helps students determine what is arguable and anticipate opposing points of view.

**An Integrated, Multimodal Approach.** Instructors teaching multimodal composition courses know there are few writing guides that teach critical twenty-first-century composing skills and even fewer that offer multimodal assignments. *Writing Today* offers strategies for writers to plan and collaborate online, include visuals in print texts, create visual texts, create media projects, and post compositions to the Web.

**Distance Learning and Online Teaching.** *Writing Today* was designed to be easily adaptable to online and hybrid learning environments. The book’s comprehensiveness and flexibility provide strong scaffolding on which distance learning, online, and hybrid courses can be developed. Its highly accessible design allows students to quickly find the

information they need while learning on their own and composing at their computers.

## Correlation to the Revised (2014) WPA Outcomes Statement

*Writing Today* helps teachers and students address learning outcomes for first-year composition courses identified by the Council of Writing Program Administrators: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and writing; processes; knowledge of conventions; and composing in electronic environments. Both of us have been leaders in this organization, and we believe strongly that these outcomes reflect the kinds of abilities that students should master in these courses. Specific connections between chapters and the WPA Outcomes appear in the Instructor’s Manual.

## REVEL

Revel is an interactive learning environment that deeply engages students and prepares them for class. Media and assessment integrated directly within the authors’ narrative lets students read, explore interactive content, and practice in one continuous learning path. Thanks to the dynamic reading experience in Revel, students come to class prepared to discuss, apply, and learn from instructors and from each other.

**Learn more about Revel**  
[www.pearson.com/revel](http://www.pearson.com/revel)

## Supplements

Make more time for your students with instructor resources that offer effective learning assessments and classroom engagement. Pearson’s partnership with educators does not end with the delivery of course materials; Pearson is there with you on the first day of class and beyond. A dedicated team of local Pearson representatives will work with you to not only choose course materials but also to integrate them into your class and assess their effectiveness. Our goal is your goal—to improve instruction with each semester.

Pearson is pleased to offer the following resources to qualified adopters of *Writing Today*. These supplements are available to instantly



download from Revel or on the Instructor Resource Center (IRC); please visit the IRC at [www.pearson-highered.com/irc](http://www.pearson-highered.com/irc) to register for access.

- **INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCE MANUAL** Create a comprehensive roadmap for teaching classroom, online, or hybrid courses. Designed for new and experienced instructors, the Instructor's Resource Manual includes learning objectives, lecture and discussion suggestions, activities for in or out of class, research activities, participation activities, and suggested readings, series, and films as well as a Revel features section. Available within Revel and on the IRC.
- **POWERPOINT PRESENTATION** Make lectures more enriching for students. The *Power-Point* Presentation includes a full lecture outline and photos and figures from the textbook and Revel edition. Available on the IRC.

## Acknowledgments

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# Chapter 1

# Writing and Genres



In this chapter, you will learn how to—

- 1.1 describe what genres are and how they help writers and readers communicate.
- 1.2 use genres to communicate with readers.
- 1.3 develop a writing process that will help you write efficiently and effectively.
- 1.4 use “genre know-how” to become a versatile writer in college and in the workplace.

Writing gives you the power to get things done with words and images. It allows you to respond successfully to the people and events around you, whether you are trying to strengthen your community, pitch a new idea at work, or just text with your friends.

The emergence of new writing situations—new places for writing, new readers, and new media—means writing today involves more than just getting words and images onto a page or screen. Writers need to handle a wide variety of situations with diverse groups of people and rapidly changing technologies. Learning to navigate among these complex situations is the real challenge of writing in today’s world.

Writing gives you the power to think critically, express your ideas clearly, and persuade others. Today, being able to communicate effectively is vital to your success in college and in your career. In this book, you will learn to use powerful communication tools that will be key to your success.

## What Are Genres?

- 1.1 Describe what genres are and how they help writers and readers communicate.

*Writing Today* uses a *genre-based approach* to writing that is easy to learn and incredibly powerful. Defining the word *genre* is difficult. Sometimes, genres are defined by their structure alone (e.g., “A report has five parts: introduction, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion”). But this understanding of genre is too simplistic. Genres are

not fixed or rigid patterns to be followed mechanically. They are not templates into which we insert sentences and paragraphs.

*Genres are ways of writing and speaking that help people interact, communicate, and work together.* In other words, genres reflect the things people do, and they are always evolving because human activities change over time to suit new social situations and fresh challenges. Genres *do* offer stable but flexible patterns for responding to typical situations. More importantly, though, they reflect how people act, react, and interact in these situations. Genres are meeting places—and *meaning* places. They are places where writers and readers make meaning together.

## Using Genres to Write Successfully

### 1.2 Use genres to communicate with readers.

For writers, genres offer flexible patterns that reflect how people interact with each other. Genres provide strategies for analyzing and interpreting what is happening around you. Once you understand your current situation, you can then use genres to focus your creativity, generate new ideas, and present your ideas to others.

Readers use genres, too. For readers, genres are guideposts for orienting themselves to a text. Genres help readers anticipate what they are likely to find in a document and how they can use the information in it. When you understand what your readers expect, you can make strategic choices about what information you will include and how you will present it (Figure 1.1).

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#### Figure 1.1 College Writing Requires Genre Know-How

Writing matters because it is one way people get things done. College writing will teach you “genre know-how,” the ability to size up writing situations and respond to them appropriately.



### Genres in Movies

How do genres work? To answer this question, let’s talk about how genres work in movies (Figure 1.2). Movie genres include romantic comedies, action flicks, documentaries, murder mysteries, musicals, science fiction and fantasy, horror, thrillers, and others. These genres aren’t formulas that the writers and directors must follow. Instead, they are familiar patterns that audiences will recognize and understand.

Once audience members recognize the genre of a movie, they form specific expectations about what kinds of things they will—and will not—experience. For example, a romantic comedy usually explores the amusing awkwardness and pratfalls of a new relationship. Two people meet and feel an attraction to each other. But then, events beyond their control keep them apart and cause humorous misunderstandings. Eventually, the two star-crossed lovers realize they truly do love each other and find a way at the end of the movie to be together.

## Figure 1.2 Movie Genres

Usually, moviegoers recognize the genre of a movie even before they step into the theater. Movie studios use posters and previews to help audiences know what to expect and how to interpret the movie.



Directors of successful romantic comedies use the boundaries and conventions of this genre to help them work creatively and produce a film that is familiar but also fresh. Genres aid the director’s creativity by providing guidelines about how the movie should be structured, scripted, visually designed, musically scored, and even edited.

The genre of a movie helps the director figure out its content, organization, style, and design. Likewise, knowing the movie’s genre helps the audience figure out what the movie is about and its basic story. Movies that flop often fail to follow a recognizable genre. If the movie doesn’t follow a genre, the audience may not “get it.” Even worse, movies flop when they merely follow a genre in a predictable or formulaic way. Unoriginal movies are painfully predictable and shallow.

Successful directors, like successful writers, first need to understand the genres they are using. Genres help them figure out where to start and how to proceed. They allow both directors and writers to create something fresh and new, while also helping them to organize and control their message in a way that others will recognize and comprehend. Good writers (like good movie directors) are always balancing the familiar and stable with the unique and dynamic.

## Writing with Genres

Here are the most important things to remember about genres:

**GENRES ARE FLEXIBLE.** Genres are as flexible and changeable as the human activities they represent. They aren’t formulas to be followed mechanically. Instead, a genre can be bent or stretched to fit your specific topic, purpose, and readers.

**GENRES ARE ADAPTABLE TO VARIOUS SITUATIONS.** When the readers or context changes, a genre needs to be adjusted to suit the new situation. An argument that worked previously with some readers or in a particular context might not work with different readers or in another context.