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WRITING

Writing involves other people. You respond to and build on other people's statements; you then write for other people to read. As a reader and a writer, you converse with others over the written page. To converse effectively you need to know what is on the other people's minds, how you want to affect other people, and how you plan to achieve that effect. Thus writing well requires that you understand the writing situation, grasp the particular writing problem, and carefully plan your writing strategy.

The Writing Situation

A Writer Is Never Alone

Although a writer may work in private, a writer is never alone. To write is to communicate with other people: we write letters to share our lives with friends. We write business reports to influence managers' decisions. We write essays to convert readers to our vision of the truth. Without other people, we would have little reason to write.

Just as we wish to touch people through our writing, we have been influenced by the writing of others. Will Rogers's famous quip, "All I know is just what I read in the papers," has truth. We learn many things indirectly through the written word, from current and historical events to the collisions of subatomic particles and of multinational corporations. Even when we learn from direct experience, our perceptions and interpretations are influenced by the words of others. And though we may write private notes and diary entries to ourselves to sort out plans, thoughts, or feelings, we are nevertheless reacting to experiences and concepts and situations that come from our relationships with others. Through language we participate in an exchange of ideas and information that draws people's minds together.

The Written Conversation

Your economics professor assigns a five-page paper requiring you to comment on the problems created by the federal deficit. If you know the facts and have a strong opinion, you are able to go to your computer and pound out the assignment. This work represents your opinions, but is it solely a product of your own mind?

To form opinions, you had to gather information on the deficit-probably from newspapers, magazines, and television. Editorials and articles in political magazines may have influenced your current view of the subject. Ideas you heard or read over the years about economics, taxes, and government spending have shaped your economic attitudes. Even your understanding of how the federal government works, how it is financed, and the nature of its role in the economy is based on what you learned from teachers and textbooks in history, government, and economics courses.

As you wrote, you kept in mind the economics professor's lectures and assigned readings on economic concepts and theory. They helped you become more informed and thoughtful, enabling you to present a mature, informed opinion. All semester the professor has been expressing opinions; now it is your turn. The assignment demands that you apply what you have learned to the problem of the federal deficit. You yourself may have specific economic issues to discuss in the paper to get the professor's reaction. At the very least you want your paper to earn the professor's approval for how competently you handle the course material. Above all, as you write you need to keep the professor's academic standards in mind in order to meet them.

When you write, your statements are your own. You choose the words and organize the thoughts to fulfill your own motives and to realize your own intentions. But you choose words that you share with your readers, and you refer to concepts and objects that those readers are likely to recognize. Through being aware of what your readers already know, you can share your original ideas with them more easily. Moreover, you have developed your thoughts, motives, and intentions in response to what you have read and heard and experienced. Your language and conclusions and intentions, even as they are your own, arise out of the many voices around you and then become part of that rich multiplicity of voices.

Others' voices form the social context for your statements, and your statements in turn contribute to the context for someone else's. We know that our words have been heard when other speakers have our words in mind as they reply. Whether people agree with us or disagree, approve or disapprove of what we say, cooperate with our requests or rebel against them, they are responding to what we say. We have made our presence known to them and have influenced them.

The social context of voices that surround us frames each particular writing situation. You sit down to write at one moment in time for particular purposes, which are usually related to the people around you. Your teacher assigns you an essay. A company advertises a job you want. An unusual experience, an encouraging teacher, or a moving poem inspires you to write your own poem.

Think of a conversation. In a spoken conversation it is essential to pay attention to what has just been said and to the person you are addressing. Even when arguing for your original ideas, you are attempting to convince people directly in front of you. To make other people feel you are talking *with* them and not *at* them, you must listen to the facts, ideas, and emotions that they express in order to know what kinds of answers they will understand and accept.

As you react to others in spoken conversation, so you do in written conversation. The more you understand and assimilate what others have said before, the more you understand the context of the "conversation" in which you are participating. If you have a sense of the people to whom you are writing, you can then decide how you wish to affect them and what you should write.

Reading and writing go hand in hand. The better you read, the better you write. In order to develop your own thoughts, you need to be able to gather information from reading; even more, you need to understand the ideas and implications of your reading so that you can respond. You have to read well enough to see what people are really discussing, what the real issues are. You need to understand what has already been written to decide intelligently what you can contribute. Otherwise, you may simply wind up only repeating what others have already written.

This book explains the skills of digging more deeply into your reading and then using that reading to develop your own original statements. The assignments in this book give you practice in gaining control over the knowledge you are acquiring in all your courses and reading; that knowledge can then help you formulate and express your own thoughts. Writing assignments will help you read more deeply and precisely, respond to and think about what you read, and analyze and evaluate it. They will help you develop your own conclusions and ideas based on research. At the end of this course, you should be better able to take part in all the written "conversations" that will come your way in school, in your career, and in other aspects of your life.

Written Versus Spoken Conversation

When you speak, you usually know whom you are talking to. You can see your conversational partners in front of you. Gathered around you are the people who have made previous comments and the people who will hear what you say. Listeners may add some further comments of their own. People may come and go from your conversational group, but these changes are easy to see.

On the other hand, it takes imagination to envision all the people involved in a written conversation. Relevant prior comments may come from any of the authors you may have read on a subject; anyone who picks up pages you have written may receive your message; and relevant later comments may come from totally unexpected sources. The comings and goings of readers and writers in written conversations are not limited to the physical presence of people gathered in one place at the same time. Paper travels through time and space.

You can exert some control over whom you draw into your written conversation. You can choose among texts you have read to define relevant prior comments, quoting one author and ignoring another. Similarly, you can help shape your audience by sending your writing to a particular person or persons or to a publication chosen for its readership. In businesses and organizations the people you choose to receive copies of your correspondence may be as important as what you choose to say in your writing. Leaking a government document to the press can change the entire dynamics of a policy conversation. In spoken conversation you have limited control over whom you will talk with. In written conversation you have many more options and wider-ranging possibilities in determining the conversation's participants.

Despite these opportunities to arrange and rearrange the participants and dynamics of a written conversation, most writing situations suggest a few obvious participants. A written conversation is often small, and its participants are usually easy to identify. A student writing an assigned paper in a philosophy course may be responding to only a few authors she has read as part of the course and to the lectures of the professor; her readers will be that same professor and perhaps a classmate or roommate. A biochemist, although ultimately relying on all those teachers and writers of scientific works who contributed to her training, may base her immediate work on the findings of only a few colleagues, and she may address her highly technical conclusions to only a few specialists. The biochemist may feel the need to address a wider audience only if she discovers something that has broad social implications, like an insight into the growth of cancer cells. And she will need to reevaluate the basic literature of biochemistry only if her findings call into question fundamental principles she has learned earlier.

Consider again that philosophy student, whose case is typical of most students in most disciplines: the range of sources she will have to ponder for much of her education will be limited to the books assigned or recommended by her teachers. A research paper or personal curiosity may lead her to look at other sources, but only near the end of her academic training will she regularly work with less generally familiar material. And only at that late point will the audience for her work move beyond the classroom. Thus the academic context—in which most readers of this book find themselves—readily defines the participants of most written conversations. The writers to whom we are responding are those who contributed the recognized major works of any discipline, and our readers are those who regularly help evaluate student papers—the professor, graduate assistants, and class members.

In addition to the difference in participants, there are further differences between written and spoken conversation. In writing, the words alone must carry the entire message; when you write, you cannot rely on tone of voice, pitch, pauses, facial expressions, or gestures to pick up where words leave off. Nor can you keep an eye on your audience to see if a baffled face, wandering attention, or an angry look suggests you change what you are saying. The reader cannot stop you, ask you questions, raise objections, or demand clarification. Writing must stand intelligible, complete, and convincing in itself. Because your audience is not there to interrupt you as you write, you can think through your ideas fully, and you can find the best way to state them. When speaking, you must reply on the spot with whatever thoughts come immediately to mind. In speaking, in fact, you may be. more concerned with keeping a conversation going in a pleasant way than with logic, consistency, or truth; one topic leads to another with only the loosest connection, and a topic rarely remains stable for long.

Because speech goes by so fast, you may get away with many careless, unconsidered, and even irrelevant comments. You may not always speak to the point-nor do you always care whether you are making a substantive point. In the process of writing, however, you have time to consider, develop, and sharpen every statement. When you get stuck, you can take a long pause, go out for coffee, and then pick up where you left off. If words wander, you can later edit out the

digression. When revising, you can satisfy yourself that the argument is coherent and fully developed, and you can polish the words before any reader sees them. Similarly, when the reader finally does get your writing, that reader can go through it slowly, evaluating everything that is there—or is not there. The conversation committed to paper slows down, grows thoughtful, and becomes more careful.

Getting a Feel for the Conversation

The best way to get a feel for any conversation—oral or written—is to listen in for a while before you make your own comments. In that way you come to know the participants, the issues, the level of the conversation, the typical ways of speaking, and the rules of proof and evidence being used. The more you listen, the more likely you are to have ideas you want to contribute, and the more likely you are to phrase the ideas in ways that will fit the conversation.

Written conversations, like oral conversations, are complex. Your relationships with your readers vary, depending on who those readers are and why you are communicating with them. From previous experience, we frequently have learned something about the people we write to and the best way to write to them; we also often have a fairly clear idea of what we would like readers to think and how we would like them to respond to our writing.

For example, imagine that when riding your bike, you have been involved in a minor accident. A car failed to stop at an intersection; you saw the car and swerved; then the driver started to brake. Nonetheless, after a glancing collision at slow speed, you take a nasty fall to the asphalt. Your injuries are minor—a skinned knee and a twisted ankle—but your bicycle is wrecked. After the accident, you write three letters: one to your mother, one to your best friend back home, and one to the insurance company of the driver who hit you.

Because you have different long-standing relationships with your mother and your friend and because you have some idea of how insurance companies work, you write three rather different letters. In the first letter, you downplay the accident itself (you mention that you fell but not that the car actually hit your bicycle), and you keep the tone light because you don't want to worry your mother unnecessarily. In the second letter, you give your friend all the gory details and perhaps even exaggerate them a bit (the bloody knee, the twisted metal, the sounds of bike and body hitting the ground). The tone of this letter may be humorous or serious, depending on whether your purpose is to tell a funny story or to express how frightening the accident was to you. In the letter to the insurance company, you stress the circumstances of the accident (such as that the driver failed to obey the stop sign and that you have the names and phone numbers of witnesses at the scene). You describe the injuries you sustained and the damage to your bicycle, using objective, perhaps even monetary, terms; the tone is businesslike and matter-of-fact.

Although you may know a certain amount about people you're writing to, every interaction with them teaches you more. The written conversation evolves, especially if you pay close attention to their responses. Does your mother immediately give you a worried call, does she write you a detailed letter about how to deal with insurance companies, or does she tend to avoid the subject? Is your friend sympathetic or teasing in the letter she or he writes back? Does the insurance company indicate a desire to settle quickly, or does it signal that there will be a lot of procedures and paperwork before you can be paid?

Professional writers also pay close attention to their evolving relationships with their readers. In the course of her long and varied life, the anthropologist Margaret Mead communicated with many different groups, from Samoan tribespeople to international political leaders. She advanced knowledge among the specialists of her field, and she shared that knowledge with the general public. Despite her reputation as a major authority, she always considered her writing a process

of interaction that improved the conversation with her readers. Only by remaining in touch with their ideas and needs could she know how best to keep up her end of the conversation. Here she tells how the interchange between herself and the readers of her magazine column motivated her to continue the discussion. Contact with the lives and concerns of real people gave life to Margaret Mead's own writing. The following comments appeared in the preface to a collection of columns she originally wrote for *Redbook,* a popular magazine:

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Margaret Mead, as she described here, wrote to help individual people. To do that she had to interact closely with them to understand their problems and to improve her relationship with them. Just as people must work at personal relationships to make them successful, writers must work at the relationships they establish with their readers.

Informed Writing in School

The writing relationship you probably know best is the one between you and your teachers. The teacher selects material to discuss with you, gives you books to read, and assigns writing for you to do. You in turn write papers for the teacher to read; the teacher returns those papers with corrections, comments, and grades. The comments may then lead you to write differently in the future.

As you learned more and advanced to higher grades, you were able to write more developed papers on more complex subjects. At the same time the attitudes and expectations of the teachers became more demanding. Remember those first times you had to write by yourself in school, perhaps in second grade about a class trip to the zoo or your pet turtle. The teacher probably discussed the topic with you beforehand and then read and praised that youthful literary effort. A sympathetic teacher was encouraging you to express yourself, and proud parents were looking for early signs of ability. Almost any faltering attempt would satisfy that group of readers and lead you into the next stage of the written conversation—more complicated papers.

Now consider the last essay you wrote for one of your college teachers. How much guidance and encouragement were you given beforehand? What level of knowledge and skills was necessary to prepare the assignment? How many books, textbooks, and articles did you have to read, think about, and refer to in order to develop and substantiate your ideas? And with what attitude do you think the teacher read the essay-with willingness to accept any attempt or with a demand for wide knowledge, thoughtfulness, and originality? Although both the second-grade story and the college essay are in the context of the teacher-student relationship, a whole education has occurred between the two.

As your education and interests become more specialized, your writing will increasingly depend on your being informed by the knowledge of your specialized field. Your teachers and fellow students will come to expect that you are basing your statements and judgments on your ever-increasing body of knowledge, on material you have read, learned, evaluated, and built upon.

Informed Writing on the Job

If your career takes you into nonacademic professions and business, your decisions will still depend on wide, informed, reasoned knowledge. You will still have to argue, support, and report

in writing. To be persuasive and command respect, your writing must exhibit quality of thought and effective use of the appropriate knowledge. In order to write memos, letters, and reports, business executives need to know the facts of the situation as well as economic, administrative, and technical background information. In writing legal briefs, lawyers must discuss laws and their interpretation, judicial decisions, administrative rulings, contracts, documents entered into evidence, and the arguments of the opposition. Engineers must prepare reports relying on their technical knowledge and their knowledge of similar designs to present, argue for, and report on the progress of their plans; and they must take into account the voluminous information about each project presented in the reports of other engineers.

Even responsible involvement in community affairs requires that you first become informed. To fight the building of a shopping center behind your house, you may need to read (in addition to the local newspapers) the rulings and reports of the community planning board, the proposal of the developers, the local zoning laws, and reports of construction and environmental engineers. Only then will you be able to write effective petitions letters, pamphlets, and speeches that might have some effect on the issue.

Throughout your life, you will be participating in increasingly informed conversations, .and you will be called upon in many ways to express your informed opinion. As the old adage says, knowledge may be power-but the power will be useful only if you can harness it to serve your own purposes. This book is about learning to control that power.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write two short letters (one hundred to one hundred fifty words each) describing your activities last weekend or your academic performance in one of your courses this term. Address one letter to a close friend in your hometown and the other to a parent. After you have drafted both letters, write a brief paragraph discussing how your relationship with your reader influences each letter’s content, tone, and purpose.

2. Write a short essay (two hundred to two hundred fifty words) comparing your relationship with your readers in two specific pieces of writing that you have done in an academic setting: for example, a description of your family that you wrote in third grade and a research paper on the causes of World War II that you wrote for an eleventh-grade history class. Consider who the readers were, what you knew about them, how you had acquired that information, and what you tried to do in your writing as a result. In other words, how did your relationship with your readers help you decide what information to include and what tone to adopt?

3. Write a brief letter to the registrar of your college requesting that a copy of your official transcripts be sent to a prospective employer, or to the financial aid office with a request for information about grants and loans you may be eligible for. Consider who your reader is, as well as what information and tone are needed, in order to make sure that your request will be acted upon.

The Writing Problem

The Real Problem

Many think that filling the blank page is the main problem of writing. If you think that, you start to solve the problem by looking for a good opening sentence. Perhaps other page fillers will continue flowing. There is a small truth to this, but only a very small truth. Such thinking misses the real problem, which is knowing why you are writing—that is, *knowing what you wish to accomplish with your readers in each particular writing situation.* Once you know the why, the how and the what will follow.

Let us step back for a minute to think about the idea of a problem. On the one hand, a problem can be something gone wrong, as in “There is a problem with my car. It won't run.” Many people think of writing in just that way. “My life will be miserable until I get this paper written, but I don't know what to write. That's my problem.” When you think of a problem as an obstacle or unpleasant condition, all you want to do is get rid of it quickly so life can get back to normal. On the other hand, a problem can be seen not as something wrong, but as something to accomplish. An engineering problem is not something wrong; it is only something to think about and solve. “The problem was to design a car combining low gas consumption and low pollution with adequate power and enough luxury to keep the consumers happy.” Nothing is wrong; life would go on without such a car, but solving the problem would provide us with something good that we would not otherwise have. That is really what writing is all about: making words do something for us that we would like done.

The first type of problem points to a breakdown in the current situation which needs to be repaired, whereas the second is creative, bringing something new into the world. In thinking of the first kind of problem, you do not have to think deeply about what you wish to do—only get things back to normal. Thinking about the second kind of problem, however, requires you to imagine some kind of future situation that will embody your goals. Then you .can decide on the best course of action to reach those goals. *Understanding your problem will suggest a solution, because your well-defined goals will help you choose among the various tools and techniques available.*

Consider, for example, the problem of having no money. Approaching that problem the first way may tempt you simply to rob a bank, because, as the notorious bank robber Willie Sutton said, “That's where the money is.” Although a quick trip with a machine gun to the corner financial institution may temporarily provide cash, the total consequences for your lifestyle may not be what you bargained for.

Analyzing Writing Problems

In analyzing a writing problem, you need to answer the following questions.

1. *What ultimately do you wish to accomplish?* Do you want to sell a product, argue for a theory, or share an experience?
2. *Whom do you intend to address in this piece of writing?* Are you writing to a single distinct person with known expectations, interests, and criteria, such as a teacher who wants to evaluate your knowledge of a subject or a boss who wants specific information to help her make a decision? Are you writing to a larger but definable group united by shared experiences, interests, or institutional arrangements, such as members of your class or all ecological activists? Or are you writing for a more open-ended audience, such as readers of a general-circulation magazine?
3. *What is your relationship to this audience?* Do you already have confidence or must you prove your authority? Are you in a position to lay down the law or are you lucky if anyone even reads your words? Will readers be sympathetic or critical?
4. *What effects do you intend to have on these specific readers, and what actions do you want them to take as a result of reading your writing?* Do you want the teacher to respect your thinking or put an A on the paper? Or both? Do you want your colleague to think about a question or accept your answer? Do you want somebody to vote for your candidate or do you want that somebody to change political philosophies?
5. *What kind of strategy is likely to lead to the desired effect in your particular audience?* In order for the boss to feel that you have helped her make a decision, should you provide statistics, briefly present only your conclusions, or echo her own opinions? On the other hand, if you wish to dissuade her from what you consider an ill-advised policy, what kind of argument or information might be most persuasive?

But thinking of the problem as a constructive task leads you to reason as follows: “What I want is for someone to give me some money. My parents might, except that, since I became an art major, they think I have been wasting my time and their money. So I can't just ask them straight out. I need to make them happier with me, perhaps in a letter. So now it's a writing problem. In this letter I could describe all the useful things I have been learning and how I had to drop my part-time job in order to study more. I guess I have to sound very serious and earnest....” Although you still may be far from putting pen to paper, what will eventually appear in the letter is starting to emerge. Even the style and tone of the letter are dictated by the analysis of the problem. Perhaps the analysis might even suggest some research to make the letter convincing—such as the cost of studio supplies for a commercial art course that might lead to a paying job.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Make a list of specific writing tasks you performed when you applied for a job or for admission to college: for example, filling out applications, writing statements of purpose, requesting letters of recommendation. Choose one of these tasks and, in one or two paragraphs, use the list of problem-defining questions on page 10 to analyze the writing problem to which you were responding. What was your ultimate goal in completing an application? Who did you

think would be reading it? What did each reader know about you? What specific response did you want to evoke? What kind of information did you include, in order to evoke this response? What strategy did you adopt to meet the situation? Would you recommend the same strategy now that you know more about the college or job?

2. Make a list of recent situations, outside school or work, when you have put something in writing: a letter to a friend or family member, a short note to your roommate, a shopping list, a schedule of daily activities, a journal or diary entry. Choose one item from your list and, in one or two paragraphs, use the list of problem-defining questions on page 10 to analyze the writing problem you were responding to.

3. Using questions 2 and 3 of the problem-defining list on page 10, write a brief description (one hundred fifty to two hundred words) of your relationship with the audience for the papers you will be writing in this course.

The Writing Strategy

After you have analyzed the problem, you will have a general strategy for achieving the desired effect within the given social context. The strategy will suggest the kind of document you want to emerge, although the content will still need to be developed and the details of language will still need to be worked out. The actual writing then becomes a more limited task of choosing and realizing the techniques that will achieve your purpose. (In Chapter 7 you will be looking at this process from the opposite direction. There, instead of analyzing what you—the writer—want to do to a reader, you will analyze what another writer is trying to do to you-the reader.)

To turn the general strategy into a plan of action, you must decide how to find and develop the detailed substance of the paper. Will you need to read some background documents, collect statistics, or talk to consumers in order to come to conclusions or develop supporting evidence? Will you need to analyze government economic statistics or design an experiment or think through a philosophic question? In this process of discovering ideas and information, you may learn many new things and come to new conclusions. You may even start to see your writing situation and problem in a new light, and consequently may need to reevaluate your strategy.

Then, when you are ready to put the ideas and information together, you must decide on the best way to organize the material, the appropriate level of language, and the tone you are going to adopt. That is, you must decide on some general questions of policy for the paper. These policy decisions may again lead you to new realizations about your material and purposes. As you start to visualize how your writing will fit together, you may see weaknesses or power in your argument that you had never imagined. By this point you have made so many decisions that a general picture of the kind of paper you want to write will emerge. You will know how you want to fill the blank page.

Repeated Situations, Cookbook Strategies, and Originality

Much of this book is devoted to suggesting specific strategies, procedures, and even patterns of organization for writing assignments. In each chapter, the purpose of each assignment, the general strategy for approaching each problem, the steps for preparing the material, and the

formats for the completed assignment are all laid out in detail so you can complete the assignment-almost as though you were following a recipe in a cookbook. Such fixed analyses of specific writing problems are possible, not because writing must always follow the same pattern, but because many writing situations seem to arise again and again. Because many basic elements of the writing problem reoccur, similar solutions are often possible. Many situations in business, such as ordering parts from a supplier, are so repetitive that a single form letter can be used time after time with only a few names and numbers changed to meet the specific circumstance.

The assignments in this book probably bear some similarity to writing you may have done in previous writing courses. After all, the school situation inevitably defines much about writing in writing courses. Thus these assignments rely on much you have learned earlier, such as the importance of the thesis statement, organization, coherence, and development through the use of detail. But because the assignments here are probably more specific than you may be used to, these principles of writing are presented as parts of detailed formats rather than as general rules. Similarly, the concepts and skills of the writing process also run throughout this book, but as parts of specific instructions for specialized assignments.

The assignments and instructions in this book are based largely on the kinds of writing situations that occur in academic and other intellectual and professional contexts. The purpose of writing in such situations is generally coming to understand some subject against a background of information and ideas received through reading and research. The audience is usually limited to a small group of people who are interested in understanding or acting on the same subject-what might be called a research or professional community. Throughout the book, you and your classmates are writing to each other on the basis of what you have found and sharing your discoveries, understanding, perceptions, and conclusions. Specifically, you want the other members of the research community, your classmates, to accept your ideas and information as valid and intelligent; the foundation for achieving this effect is careful research of the relevant information and thoughtful analysis of the evidence you discover, as is discussed in Part 2 of this book. The specifics of each assignment vary, of course, because the kind of material you are examining and the method of analysis or interpretation vary the writing task.

The fact that you and your classmates are students is an additional factor in the social situation. You are not yet expected to have a wide background in your subjects; moreover, in most cases, an important reader of your papers is a teacher. The teacher usually gives grades, and most students would prefer to have good ones, so students become very adept at discovering what teachers like. Fortunately, what most teachers like is thoughtful writing that takes into account a range of evidence and background knowledge appropriate to the student's level. At the college level, most teachers see their role as introducing students to the work of their professional community, so their standards and ideals vary little from general academic and professional values.

Even though many of the basic requirements of writing in the academic situation seem fixed, one student's paper does not and should not look exactly like the others in the way business letters resemble one another. A number of factors vary; and that is where your originality comes in. The background knowledge, the readings, ideas, evidence, and thought you bring to each subject are your individual contribution and will lead to an original argument. No matter how narrowly defined your research assignment is, for example, most students in the class will be investigating slightly different subjects and will be finding different materials to think about. Even if several students research exact1y the same topic, they will approach the subject with different attitudes, interests, and questions; they will discover a different range of sources and will come to different sets of conclusions, which in turn will lead them to organize their

arguments differently. Even the same data may lead two different people to different interpretations. These differences are what make for intellectual excitement and debate. Every research project is a journey of personal discovery that bears the stamp of the researcher.

Expanded Opportunities, Varied Situations

As you learn the methods, materials, and limits of your subject, the opportunities for originality expand, because your purposes may no longer be limited to basic understanding .of the subject. You will be in a position to argue basic issues, seek new kinds of evidence, or bring new methods of analysis or ideas to bear. Your relationship with your colleagues changes as you evolve from student to professional. All these changes in the situation will change the writing problems you confront, and you will be less able to rely on the kinds of cookbook recipes offered in your college textbooks. The more deeply you analyze your writing situation, the more flexibly you will be able to manipulate and vary the basic patterns presented here and elsewhere in your student career. The patterns provide a starring point and some sense of how useful carefully specified writing procedures and formats can be, but ultimately it is up to you to use them intelligently to meet your own professional, intellectual, and personal needs.

As you move from one community to another, you will also find various kinds of differences. Part 3 introduces you to some of the basic ways academic disciplines (that is, different subject areas or areas of investigation) try to cope with different kinds of problems and evidence. Disciplines also change over time as different kinds of evidence and analysis become available or seem more desirable. Writing in political science has changed radically, for example, during the last forty years as researchers have come to rely heavily on statistical evidence and mathematical analysis. Cookbook recipes will not help you advance clear, forceful, and intelligent arguments during such periods of change.

In nonacademic careers, as well, specific kinds of writing serve particular needs. Understanding what these documents are supposed to do will help you use them more intelligently. Laws, legal briefs, judicial opinions, and contracts establish the rules and interpretations that keep our society organized and ordered. Reports, memos, and letters keep the wheels of business turning. In all kinds of organizations, newsletters, brochures, and pamphlets keep people in touch. In order to use these familiar forms effectively, and even innovatively, you need to be able to analyze the basic writing problems that create the need for such documents.

Some of the pleasure of writing is finding a beautiful phrase or a striking thought; yet good writing begins with understanding why you are writing and then developing an effective writing strategy to meet the situation. You must make some of the most important decisions about your writing long before you begin to write. If you let formulas, habits, accidents, or thoughtlessness dictate those decisions, your writing will rarely hit the mark, for you won't even know which target you are aiming at. But if you try to understand and control those basic decisions, you can choose your target and go after it. The power and confidence of a well-aimed shot will support the graceful motions of words and thoughts.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Imagine that you have missed the deadline for a paper assigned for this course. In order to request permission to hand in the paper late, you decide to write a note to your instructor. Describe in a paragraph the strategy you will adopt; then write the note.

2. Imagine that you are an advertising executive devising a campaign to market a new small automobile to people in their twenties. Write a memo to your client describing two different strategies for the campaign: one that is similar to previous campaigns for small cars and one that takes a novel approach. In the closing section of the memo, discuss the benefits and risks of each advertising approach.

3. Obtain the application form for admission to your college, for a student loan, or for a job. Write a short essay (two hundred to two hundred fifty words) discussing the extent to which your responses are constrained by the format and printed directions, and how much originality is allowed: for example, what restrictions there are on your responses, how these limitations serve the "purpose of the application, and whether these limitations in any way undercut the application's purpose.

4. In order to understand what goes into the development of standard written forms that meet the needs of individuals facing similar situations, imagine that you and two or three of your classmates are starting a dating service or a roommate-referral agency. Work collaboratively to develop a questionnaire that will screen applicants and help you make successful matches. Consider who your clients are likely to be, how information from the questionnaire will be used, how clients are likely to react to the various questions, what information will be most useful, and which questions are likely to elicit the most valuable information. As you create questions, discuss whether the ones you ask should require short, specific answers that limit originality or whether open-ended questions would result in more useful information.

5. Pick a classmate to work with on the following set of activities; then carry out the tasks in order.
   a. Write an open-ended question to your classmate in order to elicit, in writing, information or ideas that you wish to know, such as personal background, special interests, areas of expertise, opinions about issues, evaluations of courses, or inside information on how to deal with certain instructors.
   b. Write a brief paragraph (fifty to one hundred words) explaining why you want this information and what kind of writing situation your question creates for your classmate: for example, what will she or he need to do to answer the question? What goals or purposes will this classmate have?
   c. Exchange questions and respond in writing.
   d. Exchange responses and write a brief paragraph (fifty to one hundred words) analyzing the response you received to your question. Did you obtain the information you wanted? If not, why? Was your question too open-ended or not open-ended enough?
   e. Write one paragraph (fifty to one hundred words) describing the experience of responding to your classmate's question. What approach to the question did you take? What problems did you have in answering it? Would you prefer more rigid guidelines or less rigid ones?

f. Either revise your question in order to clarify it or write a follow-up question to obtain additional information.

6. Describe a writing situation in which you felt you had much freedom to respond in original ways. Analyze the writing problem and discuss why you could develop an original strategy. You may also consider a writing problem you are currently working on. Your discussion should be no longer than three hundred words and should be directed to your classmates as part of your joint attempt to understand writing.