

Instructor's Guide

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Note An *Instructor's Manual*, providing thirty-two supplementary activities and tests and a full answer key, is available separately for instructors who use *College Writing Skills with Readings* as a classroom text. It can be downloaded from the Instructor Edition of the Online Learning Center for the text. Please contact your local McGraw-Hill representative to receive a username and password to access this material.

Suggested Approaches and Techniques

On the following pages, I describe briefly some approaches and techniques I have found helpful while using the materials in *College Writing Skills with Readings*.*

Beginning the Course

Here are three brief activities—"Getting Acquainted," "Prewriting," and "Outlining"—that, right at the start of the course, will get students working together, writing, and thinking.

Getting Acquainted

An excellent way to get a class started is to leave it. I tell students that I'm going to go out of the classroom for about ten minutes and that during that time I want them to learn each other's first names. I explain that on returning, I want to be able to ask any one of them to introduce me to all the people in the room. I don't tell them how to learn each other's first names; I let them work out their own method. Invariably, a current of nervous energy and excitement is flowing as I walk out the door, and it is still there when I return. I then ask for a volunteer to introduce me to everyone else. I remind the class that they won't be shot on the spot if they miss a name. I say that they're not expected to remember every name (though in fact they usually do). Someone always volunteers, and as the introductions proceed, I shake everyone's hand. It's a little corny, but everyone enjoys it, and providing this personal touch at the start of a semester seems like a good thing to do. I often have about five other volunteers go through the names as well (though I dispense with the handshaking for these subsequent rounds). It's a good way for me and the students to begin to learn everyone's name. I congratulate the class afterward on their impressive performance and say I hope they'll all be around so that I can shake their hands at the end of the course.

Prewriting

Freewriting To get students writing from the very beginning of the course, I say something like this:

"Often, people don't like to write because they feel they have nothing to write about. I'm now going to introduce you to a technique that will

* Editor's Note: This material was written originally by John Langan and is thus presented in the first-person singular. However, it reflects the positions and views of both authors of this edition.

help you get words and ideas down on paper. It's called *freewriting*. Freewriting means trying to write on a specific subject for ten minutes. You write whatever comes into your head about the subject, and you *don't* worry about making mistakes in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. Mistakes don't matter; all that matters is getting thoughts and information down on paper."

"The subject that I want you to write about is *movies*. Everyone goes to the movies at times; some people go a lot. I want you to write about why you like going to movies or about why you dislike going to movies. See if you can write for ten minutes about why you like or don't like going to the movies. If you run out of things to say, just write *I am looking for something to say* until something comes. Remember not to worry about errors; they don't count. And don't worry about putting things in logical order; that doesn't count either. Try to keep your pen moving. Write all the details you can think of about why you like going to movies or don't like going to movies."

After the ten minutes are up, I say something like this:

"It looks as though you did a good job with the freewriting. You'll find that this can be a good way of getting started whenever you have an assignment to write. Freewriting helps you think about and explore a topic as you get words on paper. It helps you accumulate some raw material that you can then work with and shape in writing the assignment."

List-Making I next introduce list-making, or brainstorming:

"Let's suppose that you're going to write about why you dislike going to the movies. I'm going to write on the board the sentence, *There are several reasons why I don't like going to the movies*. Let's *brainstorm* this sentence. Brainstorming, much like freewriting, can help us generate ideas and details. We'll work together and think of as many reasons as possible why people might not like going to the movies. Reasons might include things like the high cost of tickets or the behavior of some moviegoers."

The students and I brainstorm a list of reasons. I write down all of their ideas under the topic sentence on the board. After we have a long list, we talk about items that overlap. We also talk a little (in what serves as an informal introduction to organizing details) about how some items fit under other items (that is, how some items are reasons and other items are supporting details for those reasons), and about how we might narrow the list down to three main reasons and supporting details for each of those reasons.

Outlining

I next explain that, even more than freewriting and list-making, outlining is a key to effective writing. I pass out copies of the paragraph on moviegoing (Chapter 1), and we read and outline it as a class. I emphasize the basic structure: that a point is made and followed by