

Preface

The *In Focus* texts, *Strategies for Academic Writers* and *Strategies for Business Writers*, are aimed at high-intermediate to advanced students who would like to sharpen their writing skills. Native and non-native speakers who need a concise guide to effective writing will find them useful books. The purpose of *In Focus* is to offer writers suggestions on how to enjoy the writing process and improve the written product. While teaching both academic and business writing to university students and working professionals for many years, I have developed a practical approach that provides a structure for managing writing as well as strategies for achieving an effective style.

Of course, our understanding of effective business writing depends on our cultural context. This textbook follows American business writing conventions. These forms are not “better” than the Asian, Latin American, European, or Middle Eastern forms of business writing, but they differ from them in major aspects such as *organization*, which is linear; *style*, which is clear, concise, and direct; and *format*, which tends toward simplicity and consistency.

In Focus: Strategies for Business Writers incorporates the process approach to writing, with pre-writing analysis to clarify goals and post-writing editing and revision to refine style. The chapters contain short excerpts from professional authors as well as student-written models for the various genres. Most of the models are the final version of a document that has been through a number of drafts, so errors in grammar and mechanics have been corrected. These models give students practice in the critical evaluation of a document’s strengths and weaknesses, which helps students become better editors of their own work and better peer editors of their classmates’ work. After reading each model, students discuss and practice specific strategies through a variety of tasks and then apply these strategies to their writing assignment. *In Focus: Strategies for Business Writers* features real-world assignments on the resume and cover letter, memorandum, business letter, short report, e-mail communication, public relations writing, business plan, and PowerPoint presentation. The text also encourages *response writing*, in which students

become accustomed to reacting to an article or idea and putting their reaction in writing, without revision. Thus, they gain confidence in their ability to articulate their ideas in written form.¹

Chapters 1 and 2 lay the groundwork for the remaining chapters with an explanation of the Focus Approach and the Power Writing Process. When writers use the Focus Approach, a pre-writing technique, they clarify their thinking about the writing task as they consider these five factors:

Format
Organization
Content
Understanding
Style

The Power Writing Process enables writers to take control of the writing task by breaking down the project into five discrete steps. This application of a well-known time management technique (the “Swiss Cheese” method described by Alan Lakein) makes any writing assignment manageable and less intimidating because it emphasizes working on one part of the writing project at a time.² When doing a writing assignment, writers will find the task easier to complete if they follow these steps:

<u>Prepare</u>	<u>Outline</u>	<u>Write</u>	<u>Edit</u>	<u>Rewrite</u>
Purpose	Thesis	Content	Clarity	Accuracy
Audience	Major points	Organization	Coherence	Readability
Goal	Minor points	Style	Conciseness	
	Supporting data		Precision	

Chapter 3 on effective business style presents sophisticated stylistic techniques and principles. Chapters 4 through 11 provide guidelines and strategies for specific forms of business writing, growing in complexity from the resume to public relations writing to the business plan.

¹ Response writing prepares students for the TOEFL® (iBT), which has two types of writing: a 30-minute opinion or preference (independent) essay and a 20-minute response to a reading and a lecture about the same topic (integrated essay).

The SAT now includes a section called “Raw Writing” in which students submit a first draft without revising it. This section tests the ability to write quickly and concisely about a topic.

² Alan Lakein, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life* (New York: Signet, 1974).

Four appendixes supplement the basic subjects of the text: Appendix A lists sentence connectors; Appendix B contains a step-by-step explanation of the Power Writing Process for each assignment; Appendix C has evaluation forms; and Appendix D explains how to conduct Internet research.

A NOTE ON DOCUMENTATION FORMAT

When writers incorporate another person's words, facts, or ideas into their own writing, they must cite the source of this information. The three most commonly used documentation formats in academic writing are the APA (American Psychological Association), the MLA (Modern Language Association), and the Turabian/*Chicago Manual of Style*. Many of the writing assignments in this text require the use of outside sources and the documentation of these sources. The MLA in-text citation format is suggested for these assignments. However, students may prefer to use the documentation format required in their academic field.

The MLA citation format gives the author's last name and the page number in parentheses in the text. It lists all sources at the end of the paper as Works Cited, arranged alphabetically by the author's last name, or by title if no author is identified. The recommended text is the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th ed. (New York: MLA, 2003).

The following websites contain information about the three major documentation formats:

- American Psychological Association: *www.apastyle.org* (contains guidelines and examples)
- Modern Language Association: *www.mla.org* (contains links but no guidelines and examples)
- Turabian/*Chicago Manual of Style*: *www.press.uchicago.edu* (contains FAQs and links but no guidelines and examples)

In addition, Duke University provides a Guide to Library Research with comprehensive information about citation rules under *Citing Sources (Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism: Documentation Guidelines)* at *www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/*.

For the rules on citation of electronic sources, see *Citation Styles: Using MLA Style to Cite and Document Sources in Online!* at *www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/cite5.html*.

ONLINE WRITING RESOURCES

This textbook contains models of writing assignments and short excerpts from published authors, but students can consult the following online resources for more writing guidelines and examples:

- Purdue University Online Writing Laboratory: *<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>*
- The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Writers' Workshop: *www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/*