

PREFACE

General Uses

The ESL Writer's Handbook is a reference work for ESL students who are taking college-level courses. Because its purpose is to provide help with the broad variety of writing questions students may have when working on school assignments, the text focuses on English for Academic Purposes.

The Handbook complements a student writer's dictionary, thesaurus, and grammar reference book. It would be suitable as a text for an advanced ESL writing course when used together with the companion Workbook (978-0-472-03404-8).

Special ESL Features

- The **topic selection** is based on ESL writers' needs as observed by the authors over many years.
- The **coverage of topics** is more complete than the limited amount usually provided for ESL writers in first language or L1 handbooks.
- The **explanatory language** is appropriate for ESL students, in contrast to the more complex and idiomatic language of other English handbooks.
- The **level of detail** is more manageable for ESL students, compared to what is in other English handbooks.
- Many of the **examples** of paragraphs, essays, research papers, and exercise sentences were **written by ESL students**; this encourages users of the Handbook to realize that they can also become effective writers.

Structure

We have structured the Handbook in what we feel to be the most logical manner. Sections 1 and 2 provide general information about paragraph and essay structure, which students must consider when beginning to work with academic writing. These sections include topics such as how to get ideas for an assignment, how to structure those ideas into a paper, and what to check for before turning in a paper.

Section 3, Patterns of Essay Organization, is more specific. It describes five common patterns for organizing an academic essay: narrative, process, comparison/contrast, cause and effect, and argument. Here we provide students with specific phrases and language structures that are used with these five patterns to help them build coherent sentences, and we provide models to help students build coherent paragraphs and essays. After the discussion of and exercises for each pattern of organization, sample essay topics are provided. Teachers should make use of these topics for essay assignments.

Often students are overwhelmed when given a large writing assignment. For this reason, Section 4 guides students through the different steps they must go through to create a good research paper. The task of writing a research paper is broken into its many component parts. Understanding and experiencing this process will not only allow for a better finished product but will help students to become better overall writers as well. Teachers may wish to use this section concurrently with Sections 1–3 in the Handbook to structure a semester-long research assignment based on the steps outlined in this section. Or, teachers may use this section independently, depending on their curriculum.

Section 5 addresses the grammar and style issues that ESL students writing in English seem to have the most difficulty with, helping students to recognize and correct errors at both the word level and the sentence level. This section provides clear explanations, examples, and exercises to build students' skills in these areas. Teachers may wish to assign various sections according to the needs of their particular class.

Section 6 provides basic information on punctuation, with examples for students to consult as models when they are writing, and offers some exercises as well for practice.

Section 7 provides a more visual approach to topics that ESL students commonly have difficulty with, such as verb tense and transitions. Information is provided mainly in the form of lists and charts so that students do not need to rely as much on their reading comprehension skills to understand and utilize the information.

Finally, Section 8 provides examples of different types of writing that students will be expected to do as undergraduates in the

United States. Because ESL students do not have a base knowledge of these forms, these examples should prove valuable to them. Teachers may wish to use the examples as a basis for their own assignments on these types of writing.

The Workbook Accompanying This Handbook

WB
Ex.

The Workbook that accompanies this Handbook extends the topics covered in the Handbook to enable a teacher to use the books as the core texts in an advanced-level ESL writing course or in a first-year undergraduate composition course. The Workbook provides additional exercises to facilitate students' understanding of the topics discussed in the Handbook. In the Handbook, an icon is provided in the margin next to a heading or exercise to alert the teacher or student that extra exercises on this topic are available in the Workbook. The teacher may wish to assign Workbook exercises as homework or use them in class with the exercises in the Handbook.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to our many students at the University of Pittsburgh in the English Language Institute and in university writing courses who have generously given permission for their writing to be used in this project.

We thank Kelly Sippell of the University of Michigan Press who perceived the need for such a Handbook and encouraged us to work on it for the Pitt Series in ESL and who provided insightful editorial suggestions for improvement of the Handbook during its development stages.

We also thank Dr. Alan Juffs, Director of the University of Pittsburgh's English Language Institute, for supporting this project as part of the Pitt Series in ESL.