

Preface

This handbook has been helpful to writing students and others since 1979, when the first edition appeared. Over the years, *The Short Handbook for Writers* served as an authoritative guide to the conventions of grammar, punctuation, mechanics, usage, and style. This eighth edition, now titled *The Practical Handbook for Writers*, continues in the same tradition.

Like the earlier editions, this revision of what has become a standard textbook is intended to provide users with a handy source of reference as well as with essential information on the composing process. You can use this handbook either as a textbook in any course that requires writing or as an independent tool that answers your questions about grammar, punctuation, usage, documentation, and other essentials.

The eighth edition features expanded coverage of audience and of inclusive writing. American English changes—slowly, to be sure—but it does so to reflect social and cultural needs. Also, since our seventh edition the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) have issued new editions of their style manuals, and our revision of Chapter 10 reflects these changes. Third, we are very happy to add Christina Connor to our author team. She brings a fresh perspective, a variety of skills, and an impressive work ethic.

The three divisions of this text indicate its distinct purposes: Part I guides you through the writing process, including rhetorical emphasis on the sentence and paragraph; Part II serves as a source of reference on matters of grammar, punctuation, and diction; and Part III presents most of the major practical writing applications that composition students encounter.

Part I will interest you if you are looking for guidance on planning and writing an essay. You will find tips on topic selection, development, revision, and writing effective paragraphs and sentences. Included in the chapter on sentences are exercises intended to help you review the material covered in each section of the chapter.

Refer to Part II when you wish to edit your work and need help with language, punctuation, grammar, or usage. The exercises in these sections will test your knowledge. Please note that a complete set of extra exercises is also available.

Part III concentrates on applied writing. If, for example, you are looking for information on how to write a documented essay or research paper, Chapter 10 offers a thorough guide, including sample papers using the current MLA and APA documentation styles.

At the end of the text you will find a Glossary of Terms, as well as a Glossary of Usage that draws distinctions between accepted usage and usage not appropriate in today's college-level writing.

Our book provides clear, brief answers to the basic questions that arise whenever people write. By avoiding unnecessary technical terms, *The Practical Handbook for Writers* provides an accessible yet authoritative guide to the essentials of English.

We are indebted to the innumerable students who have used earlier editions of this book and to the many college instructors who have made suggestions about these editions. We are grateful to Dan Luciano, to Academic Media Solutions, and to the editors at Textbook Media. We extend special thanks to Victoria Putman for her amazing ability to create books.

We hope that you enjoy *The Practical Handbook for Writers*, and we invite you to contact us with any comments, questions, or suggestions: info@academicmediasolutions.com.

Gerald J. Schiffhorst

Donald Pharr

Christina Connor