Teaching with

Joining the Conversation
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Joining the Conversation

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Welcome to *Teaching with JOINING THE CONVERSATION*. This instructor’s manual offers numerous practical ideas for implementing the goals of the textbook and enlivening your composition classroom.

**ABOUT JOINING THE CONVERSATION**

*Joining the Conversation* invites students to apply and enlarge their existing conversational skills—verbal or written, in person or online—to engage in academic inquiry and argument and to adapt to writing situations wherever students encounter them. Conversational questions, positioned as the main headings, guide students through the book in an accessible and respectful way. The inquiry approach anticipates real questions students might ask, and responses are practical, clear, and reassuring.

The conversation model that underpins *Joining the Conversation* thrusts students into sophisticated writing considerations that traditional textbooks often save for late in the semester. Consider, for instance, that *Joining the Conversation*’s approach to inquiry and research begins nearly immediately. Students are asked to investigate topics and questions that interest them from the very moment they open the book. This immediate consideration of topical issues and writer’s roles propels students toward the use of sources, allowing them to perform early like mature learners and investigators who are ready to do research, understand existing conversations, and contribute to those conversations. Getting early exposure to such skills, students have the opportunity to think more about how their final products might be designed for audience and genre expectations. They have more opportunity to get feedback, revise, and improve their work.

The idea of joining the conversation presented here not only connects to the familiar metaphor of “conversation” as a way of describing academic writing, but also foregrounds that combination of efforts that are undertaken by a writer prior to writing and in order to become ready to write—a process that initially involves listening, reading, investigating, and thinking. In *Joining the Conversation*, there is no shortchanging these prewriting steps; rather, considerable investigatory effort is expected from students as they gain knowledge and understanding before inserting themselves into a discussion.

*Joining the Conversation* aims to get students to think about writing from the point of view of the roles that we adopt (and adapt) when we communicate with others for varying purposes and in varying rhetorical situations. A student may, for instance, take on the role of interpreter and offer analysis, or take on the role of reviewer and offer evaluation. This approach differs from many textbooks that offer decontextualized writing processes without regard for the
underlying action that the student wishes to take up, or the purposes and audiences that the student wishes to address. *Joining the Conversation*’s approach puts students in the driver’s seat, positioning them as decision-makers rather than adopters of existing forms and processes. Taken as a whole then, the book treats the student as a capable and increasingly skilled user of rhetorical strategies and techniques.

The second edition of *Joining the Conversation* offers changes and expansions to many parts of the book, so we have expanded the instructor’s manual to help you use the book effectively. In the chapters that follow, you will find suggestions for how you might use all parts of the book. The assignment chapters in Part Two, arguably the heart of the book, each get their own dedicated chapter. Note that Part Six is a new handbook section included in *Joining the Conversation: A Guide and Handbook for Writers*. To help you integrate this new material, in the Part Two chapters we have also offered rhetorical, functional, and critical approaches for teaching style, grammar, and punctuation. Even if you are using *Joining the Conversation: A Guide for Writers* without the handbook section, we hope these ideas will still be useful as you teach grammar and style issues in your course.

**STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING WITH *JOINING THE CONVERSATION***

To reinforce the overarching metaphor of *Joining the Conversation* and to establish a welcoming, collegial tone, try these conversational approaches in the classroom.

**Working with Small Groups**

The instructor’s manual suggests many activities that involve students working in small groups. You can provide a higher likelihood of success for group work by considering the responsibilities of both teacher and student. The teacher is responsible for providing a structure and accountability for student efforts. The student is responsible for engaging in the processes of the class, thinking independently, doing the work that is assigned in an engaged and serious way, and learning. Paying attention to both student and teacher responsibilities is especially important for establishing accountability for group work, without which collaborative efforts can dissolve into idle chit-chat or confusing busywork.

Practically speaking, try these strategies for small-group work:

- Convey the structure of the group task by projecting a set of steps or a list of questions onto the overhead screen or the marker board. Leave it there while students are working together, and check from time to time to see where they are in the process.

- Have students count off into groups so that groups are composed of people who don’t sit near one another.

- Move the process along rather more quickly than might seem comfortable. While students need a reasonable amount of time to complete group projects, their efforts will dissolve if they’re given too much time. Err on the side of brevity.
• Circulate among the groups and query any groups that seem stalled or distracted. However, don’t stay with any group, even struggling ones, for too long. Move on.

• Hold groups accountable by asking for evidence of their outcomes through a group transparency that’s shared with the whole class, a brief “oral report” given by a spokesperson from each group, or a short piece of in-class writing that is either done individually or signed by all members of the group.

Assigning In-Class Writing
There is a long tradition throughout academia of assigning in-class “low-stakes” (ungraded) writing. Such efforts are usually rewarded through the participation grade and simply recorded as check, check-plus, or check-minus efforts. The goals of in-class writing can vary, but this strategy offers considerable opportunities for critical thinking. Students can be asked content questions that probe their level of understanding; they can be presented with inquiry-based assignments that ask them to provide novel interpretations of data or ideas; they can be asked to give feedback on what they still do not understand. The options are nearly endless, but regardless of the objective for the writing that’s assigned in class, for students, the effort requires attention and concentration. Consequently, in-class writing generally increases student engagement and investment in the course material.

Vary the times at which you provide in-class writing prompts, in some cases doing it right at the start of class to get students focused on the topic, in other cases doing it at the end to review the day’s material, and in still other cases stopping midstream to allow students to integrate and reflect on their learning. If students turn in their in-class writing, don’t grade it but do hold them accountable for doing the work by awarding a participation grade. Then, when the class meets next, give whole-class feedback on the writing. You can either return this writing or keep it, maintaining a file for each student and perhaps giving it a critical final look at the end of the semester to measure student engagement and growth over the course of the term.

Leading Discussions
A central challenge facing college instructors, especially those working with first-year students, is getting students to participate in class discussions. Of course, generally one or two students will be ready and willing from day one, but the enthusiasm of these students must be managed, too. Learning to pause and consider who has and has not spoken during a classroom discussion is a skill worth working on.

For the reluctant participants, we have a special challenge and responsibility. Because first-year composition classes are often among the smallest and most intimate of classes that students are enrolled in, these classes may be the only opportunity some students will have during their first term to become participants. While we can’t force students to participate in the spirit of academic inquiry, we can certainly encourage them. An important strategy to develop is the ability to redirect a student question to other members of the class. We can also use the eight-second wait rule, which requires us to count to eight after asking a question, giving more
students time to process the question and to risk an answer. Given time, additional hands will go up as the burden to respond shifts from your shoulders to theirs.

Consider, too, that research shows that women and minorities are less likely to speak up in a traditional classroom setting, perhaps because of socialization pressures or insecurity with speaking in front of peers. To help alleviate this burden, try having students first discuss points in small groups or pairs and then opening up a general discussion. This additional step levels the playing field and may be just what’s needed to get the reluctant participants to speak up in the larger group.

Finally, consider your own body language when you ask a discussion question. Turn your attention to the rest of the class when a student is speaking. You can gauge the level of engagement of the rest of the class and see reactions from students as a peer speaks. Doing this also takes the pressure (or attention) of the direct gaze off the person who is speaking.

Using a Writer’s Notebook

A writer’s notebook can have many functions throughout the semester. One way to approach the notebook is to use it as a reader-response journal. Here students can reflect on the readings they are assigned and respond with questions, commentary, and analysis. Their entries will show students becoming more sophisticated communicators and more confident and informed participants in the conversations that surround them at school, at work, and in other communities. You can collect the notebooks periodically to assess student understanding of course objectives, such as developing a focused thesis, representing multiple perspectives, and supporting ideas.

As an alternative approach to the writer’s notebook, you might try a dialectical journal. Students write in response to a reading, and then either you or a peer responds with questions and observations; then students write again with deepened or revised responses. Such a method demonstrates academic conversation in action. If you go with this approach, ask students to divide notebook pages vertically into three columns—the first for their initial response, the second for a peer or instructor comment, and the third for the student’s return to the notebook entry and revision.

ESTABLISHING THE ETHOS OF CONVERSATION

You can model the conversational approach by creating a climate of collegiality and professionalism on the very first day and striving to maintain it throughout the course. Instead of lecturing to students for the full hour, try a classroom discussion, small-group work, or independent writing even on the first day. If you plan to review the syllabus on the first day, pick out particular sections and have students read those sections aloud. Or assign some critical reading of the syllabus itself to be accomplished for the second class period, such as doing an early rhetorical analysis of the syllabus, discussing author, audience, purpose, tone, and so on.
You can also involve students in some kind of introductory “icebreaker” activity to get them moving around. This is especially effective because many students will return to the same seat day after day. Getting students to surrender the first chairs they grab can help them develop comfort in a variety of locations, which in turn will lead to their talking with a greater variety of their classmates. This approach may be especially important if you sense that friends have enrolled in the course together and plan to sit beside each other. It’s important that they expand the conversation to those outside their immediate group of friends.

So let us welcome you now to the second edition of Joining the Conversation, which goes even further than the first edition to establish the first-year writing course as an appropriate location for developing students’ rhetorical approach to writing. Such an approach is aimed at providing students with the tools they need in their current academic settings and for all their future communication needs.

With Bedford/St. Martin’s, I wish you engaged students, compelling conversations, and satisfying evidence that students are learning.

Sue Doe

**JOINING THE CONVERSATION WORKS WITH THE COUNCIL OF WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS’ OUTCOMES**

The Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) established a set of desired outcomes for first-year composition courses across the country. As an inquiry-based rhetoric focusing on purpose and genre, Joining the Conversation helps instructors and students accomplish these teaching and learning goals. The following table provides detailed information on how Joining the Conversation supports each of the WPA outcomes.

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<tr>
<th>DESIRED OUTCOMES</th>
<th>RELEVANT FEATURES IN JOINING THE CONVERSATION</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rhetorical Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 1 introduces the concept of writing for particular purposes. Chapter 2 invites students to determine their purposes as they assess their writing situations. Chapters 5–10 present the most common purposes for writing—to reflect, to inform, to analyze, to evaluate, to solve problems, and to convince or persuade. Avatars in these chapters (see p. 10, for example) personify writers’ roles to make the concept of purpose more concrete.</td>
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<th><strong>Rhetorical Knowledge (continued)</strong></th>
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**Respond to the needs of different audiences**

Chapter 1 explains that readers' needs affect how they read documents, while Chapter 2 helps students identify their readers. Chapters 15, 16, 17, and 18 continue to help students respond to readers' needs as they organize, draft, design, and present their documents.

**Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations**

Each of the assignment chapters (Chapters 5–10) focuses on a different rhetorical situation that students are likely to encounter. The Writer's Role boxes in these chapters analyze the purpose, readers, sources, and context for each rhetorical situation (see p. 102, for example), and each chapter offers advice for reading, responding, drafting, and revising that is specific to the writer's situation, purpose, and audience.

**Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation**

Chapter 1 introduces the concepts of genre and design and shows how they relate to the writer's purpose. Advice about writing in Chapters 5–10 helps students make effective genre and design choices for their documents. Chapters 16, 17, and 18 provide advice and Checklists (see p. 556, for example) for following the design conventions of academic essays, multimodal essays, articles, and Web sites.

**Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality**

Readings in Chapters 5–10 demonstrate how various audiences, genres, and rhetorical situations call for different levels of formality, and essays by featured student-writers (see p. 150, for example) model appropriate tone for academic work. Chapter 20 and the Handbook (Part Six in some versions of this book) provide practical advice for writing with style and using appropriate voice, tone, language, and formality.

**Understand how genres shape reading and writing**

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of genre as linked to purpose and design and provides a practice activity on analyzing genre. Chapters 5–10 open with a Genres in Conversation feature that invites students to analyze how genre and writing situation influence design choices (see pp. 100–101, for example). Readings in those chapters are designed to reflect the various genres in which they were originally published. Chapters 16 and 17 address the composing processes and design conventions of popular and academic genres.

**Write in several genres**

Chapter 17 focuses on writing in various genres, including guidance on composing processes, writing conventions, and design features. Each genre is accompanied by a Checklist and Annotated Example (see p. 565, for example). Readings in Chapters 5–10 cover thirty-six genres, including memoirs, audio essays, literacy narratives, brochures, Web sites, infographics, news analyses, multimedia presentations, rhetorical analyses, progress reports, speeches, proposals, editorials, and advertisements. Each assignment chapter also ends with Project Ideas for essays and other genres suited to that chapter's purpose (see p. 156, for example).

### Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

**Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating**

Throughout the text, the metaphor of writing as conversation emphasizes writing as a tool for inquiry and the exchange of ideas. Chapter 2 covers inquiry extensively, establishing reading and writing as part of written conversations that in turn inspire and inform further discourse. Chapter 3 provides advice and strategies for reading critically and actively, evaluating sources, and reading for a purpose. Starting a Conversation questions (see p. 112, for example) enable students to engage critically with each reading in Chapters 5–10.
Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing (continued)

Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources

Chapter 2 breaks down the steps of analyzing an assignment and assessing the writing situation. Chapter 3 explains how to evaluate sources based on relevance, use of evidence, author, publisher, timeliness, comprehensiveness, and genre, as well as how to quote, paraphrase, and summarize sources. Chapters 5–10 discuss the kinds of sources best suited to each type of assignment, from print and electronic sources to interviews, observations, and surveys. Chapters 11–13 offer strategies for developing a search plan, locating print and electronic sources, conducting field research, and avoiding plagiarism.

Integrate their own ideas with those of others

Chapter 19 provides specific advice for integrating sources effectively; summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting strategically; and avoiding plagiarism. Chapters 21 and 22 help students document sources in MLA and APA style correctly and provide models for dozens of source types.

Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power

Chapter 1 introduces the idea of writing as a conversation in which writers share information, ideas, and arguments. Readings in Chapters 5–10, from Sito Negron’s analysis of drug violence in Juarez, Mexico, to a commencement speech about the civil rights movement by Michelle Obama, illustrate the profound effects of writing on readers. Furthermore, Chapter 10 provides detailed coverage of claims, evidence, and counterarguments.

Processes

Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text

Writing processes based on multiple drafts are demonstrated throughout Chapters 5–10. Chapter 20 emphasizes the importance of revising and editing and offers specific advice for working with multiple drafts.

Develop flexible strategies for generating ideas, revising, editing, and proofreading

Chapter 2 suggests different ways to generate ideas, including brainstorming, freewriting, looping, clustering, and mapping. Demonstrating that writing processes must vary with each writing situation, Chapters 5–10 provide purpose-specific guidance for generating ideas, preparing drafts, and reviewing and improving drafts. Chapter 20 offers practical advice and Checklists for revising and editing.

Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work

Chapter 2 introduces the concept of writing as a process that requires revision. In Process boxes in Chapters 5–10 (see p. 133, for example) follow featured student-writers through their writing processes from the early stages to the final draft. “Review and Improve Your Draft” sections in each of those chapters offer purpose-specific advice for revising different types of assignments (see p. 146, for example). Chapter 20 provides guidance on revising and editing.

Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes

By framing writing as conversation, the book underscores writing as a social act. Chapter 4 explains the value of working with other writers and offers specific guidance for both individual and collaborative projects. Peer Review boxes in Chapters 5–10 help students work together to review and improve drafts (see p. 149, for example). Working Together boxes throughout Chapters 1–10 suggest group activities to help students work through assignments.

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<th><strong>Processes (continued)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learn to critique their own and others’ works</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 4</strong> focuses on peer review and offers guidelines for giving and receiving feedback on written work. <strong>Peer Review boxes in Chapters 5–10</strong> help students work together to review and improve drafts (see p. 149, for example).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 4</strong> explains how working with others can benefit a writing project. <strong>Working Together boxes</strong> help students develop solutions to potential problems (p. 348), establish ground rules (p. 601), and create a project plan (p. 603).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences</strong></td>
<td>Readings in <strong>Chapters 5–10</strong> model a variety of technologies and media, with examples drawn from photo essays, Web sites, multimedia presentations, and blogs. <strong>Chapters 12 and 19</strong> provide advice for finding and integrating electronic sources, images, video, and audio. <strong>Chapter 17</strong> covers design conventions for multimodal essays and Web sites. <strong>Chapter 18</strong> discusses how technology can help you present your work effectively through a multimedia presentation or online portfolio tool.</td>
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<th><strong>Knowledge of Conventions</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Learn common formats for different kinds of texts</strong></td>
<td>The concept of genre-specific design and formatting is foregrounded in <strong>Chapter 1</strong>. Readings in <strong>Chapters 5–10</strong> are designed to reflect the various genres in which they were originally published to familiarize students with common formats and design conventions. <strong>Genres in Conversation chapter openers</strong> (see pp. 100–101, for example) help students analyze the reasons for various design choices as they relate to purpose and the writing situation. <strong>Chapters 16, 17, and 18</strong> provide advice and <strong>Checklists</strong> for following appropriate conventions for academic essays, multimodal essays, articles, and Web sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure to tone</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 17</strong> focuses on choosing the right genre and composing effectively in that genre. <strong>Starting a Conversation questions</strong> following each reading in <strong>Chapters 5–10</strong> focus on genre to help students analyze the structure, style, tone, and conventions of various types of writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Practice appropriate means of documenting their work</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 13</strong> is devoted to questions of plagiarism and research ethics. <strong>Chapter 19</strong> provides specific advice for integrating sources effectively and avoiding plagiarism. <strong>Chapters 21 and 22</strong> help students correctly document sources in MLA and APA style.</td>
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<td><strong>Control surface features (syntax, grammar, punctuation, spelling)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 16</strong> addresses syntax, effective transitions, and consistent point of view, and <strong>the Handbook (Part Six in some versions of this book)</strong> helps with the finer points of grammar, spelling, and punctuation as part of the drafting and editing process.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Composing in Electronic Environments</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 4</strong> explains how to use chat sessions, e-mail discussion lists, Web discussion forums, wikis, and blogs to generate and refine ideas; file-sharing Web sites to share documents; and word-processing programs to conduct peer review.</td>
</tr>
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Introduction

**Composing in Electronic Environments (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic sources</th>
<th>Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 10 integrate examples of students’ online research practices into advice about the writing process. In <em>Process boxes</em> in these chapters illustrate library catalog, database, and Web searches. Chapter 11 offers detailed advice on managing digital source material. Chapter 12 explains how to perform effective searches using electronic library catalogs, scholarly and other subject databases, the Web, and media search sites. It also demonstrates how to use Boolean terms and define search limits for more targeted results.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing processes and texts</td>
<td>Readings in Chapters 5–10 illustrate a variety of print and multimodal genres, from memoirs, essays, and letters to advertisements, Web sites, and multimedia presentations. Chapters 16, 17, and 18 address effective and appropriate design for academic essays, multimodal essays, articles, and Web sites.</td>
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**SAMPLE SYLLABI**

The traditional calendar imagined for both of the syllabi presented here is a fifteen-week, two-class-meetings-per-week schedule (thirty lessons altogether). However, the syllabi could also be applied to a ten-week quarter, during which the class meets three times a week. While both syllabi start with the same reflection assignment, they vary in their coverage. Syllabus 1 covers all six assignment chapters; however, because it is difficult to squeeze six full essay assignments into one term, two writing purposes are presented as subordinate steps: informative writing is incorporated as a sub-assignment of the analytical essay, and problem-solving writing is incorporated as a sub-assignment of the argumentative essay. In this way, instructors can present all six writing purposes in a manageable fashion. Syllabus 2 offers an emphasis on academic and public genres and covers five assignment chapters.

The first four class days in both syllabi are devoted to the core goals of *Joining the Conversation*: writing as a social act, writing as a rhetorical act, writing as a matter of genre and design, and writing as a collaborative act. They also introduce the writing rituals and habits that will be reinforced throughout the course.

The “IM options” section of each day lists the relevant activities, discussion starters, and teaching tips that can be found in this instructor’s manual. These are just suggestions, of course, and each chapter contains additional choices for all three categories. Keep in mind that many of the activities can be assigned as homework as well.

Don’t forget that the handbook chapters of *Joining the Conversation* can be a valuable resource when students are stuck on questions of style or grammar. You might consider assigning the style chapters during the revision process so that they are fresh in students’ minds.
| 1 | Course introduction: Writing as participation in conversation  
Review highlights of syllabus. 
Introduce the writer’s notebook and its uses.  
Define and discuss **reflection**. Distribute reflection assignment. Engage students in brainstorming activities to generate topics.  
**Chapter 5 IM options:**  
Activity: Keepsake Icebreaker Reflection  
Discussion Starter: Time Management Strategies  
Students should start a writer’s notebook with tabbed sections.  
For next time:  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 1, Making Connections, and Chapter 5, Writing to Reflect. |
|---|---|
| 2 | Drawing on one’s experience is a legitimate way to develop a paper. Students “mine” for details related to their topic. The goal is for students to see the relevance of their own experiences rather than to discount them. Additionally, they are encouraged to see how their own experiences relate to broader concerns in their communities or the world. The goal of this first paper is to start making these connections between self and culture.  
**Chapter 5 IM options:**  
Activity: Personal Influences and Beliefs Activity  
Discussion Starter: Reflections on Family Readings  
For next time:  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 2, Getting Started. Students should narrow their reflection topics.  
Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 5. |
| 3 | Focus on genre and design decisions. Invite students to discuss design options for the reflective paper they are writing, connecting design to audience and purpose. To whom are they writing?  
**Chapter 5 IM options:**  
Activity: Reading Faculty Doors  
Discussion Starter: Genres in Conversation  
For next time:  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 4, Working Together. Students should bring rough drafts of their reflective essays to class. |
| 4 | Students conduct their first formal peer review with an emphasis on focusing and developing their reflective drafts. (Refer to the IM introduction for information about setting up peer reviews and group work.)

**Chapter 5 IM options:**
- Activity: The Sixty-Second Spill
- Discussion Starter: Reflecting on Collaborative Processes

**For next time:**
Assign *JTC* Chapter 20, Revising and Editing. Students should revise and edit their essays.

| 5 | **Reflective essay due.**

Have students write a reflective postscript in class that provides closure to the first assignment. Consider a postscript prompt like this one, which queries students’ writing and revising processes: *What one area of this reflective essay are you especially pleased with? What one area could still use work if you had another week? What one strategy did you use during this assignment that you will use again?*

**Chapter 5 IM options:**
- Teaching Tip: The Reflective Postscript
- Teaching Tip: Hierarchy of Rhetorical Concerns
- Teaching Tip: Commenting on Student Writing

Discuss informative writing. The course moves quickly here because students are expected to inform and then analyze as they also integrate outside sources.

Distribute informing mini-assignment: a brief document about a topic of interest. Students will then use this document to scaffold their analytical essay on *the same topic*.

**Chapter 6 IM options:**
- Activity: The Imaginary Machine
- Teaching Tip: Identifying the Informative Element in Other Types of Writing

**Readings**
- *Assign JTC* Chapter 6, Writing to Inform.
- Students should generate ideas for their informative documents.
- Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 6.

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| 6 | Discuss informative genres and work on developing a main point for students’ informative articles.  
**Chapter 6 IM options:**  
Activity: Narrowing Informative Paper Topics  
Teaching Tip: Putting Students in the Informative Role  
Discussion Starter: Genres in Conversation  
For next time:  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 11, Beginning Your Search, and Chapter 12, Locating Sources. |
| 7 | Meet in the library to discuss searching for sources.  
**Chapter 6 IM options:**  
Activity: Evaluating Wikipedia  
Activity: Scavenger Hunt for Basic Library Reference Works  
Discussion Starter: Multiple Perspectives on Information  
Teaching Tip: Integrating Sources  
For next time:  
Students should gather source material and finish their informative articles.  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 7, Writing to Analyze. |
| 8 | **Informative article due.**  
Transition to analysis. Distribute analysis assignment and discuss analytical genres.  
**Chapter 7 IM options:**  
Activity: TV Show Genre Analysis  
Discussion Starter: Analysis across the Disciplines  
Teaching Tip: Ongoing Discussions of Rhetorical Situations  
Readings  
For next time:  
Using the topics of their informative articles, students should identify a particular aspect to analyze for the analytical essay.  
Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 7. |
| 9 | Practice using interpretive frameworks for analysis.  
**Chapter 7 IM options:**  
Activity: Class Classification  
Discussion Starter: Religion and Teen Pregnancy  
Teaching Tip: Inquiry Approaches  
Teaching Tip: Inventories |
### 9 (cont.)
**For next time:**  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 14, Developing a Thesis Statement. Students should bring preliminary thesis statements to class.

### 10
**Discuss thesis statements and using reasons to support them.**

**Chapter 7 IM options:**  
Activity: Paper Planning Analysis  
Activity: Drafting Debatable Claims  
Teaching Tip: Discovery Drafts  

**For next time:**  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 3, Reading to Write, and Chapter 13, Avoiding Plagiarism. Students should refine their thesis statements and work on supporting reasons.

### 11
**Discuss use of evidence.**

**Chapter 7 IM options:**  
Activity: Analyzing Evidence  
Discussion Starter: Comparing Source Integration  
Teaching Tip: The Synthesis Grid  

**For next time:**  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 19, Using Sources Effectively. Students should search for sources of relevant evidence for their analytical claims.

### 12
**Peer review of nearly finished draft of analytical essay.**

(See Teaching Tip: Informal Peer Review, in IM Chapter 10.)  

**For next time:**  
Students should revise and edit their analytical essays.

### 13
**Analysis assignment due.**  
Postscript to analysis assignment done in class; consider a postscript that functions as a classroom assessment or feedback reflection.

**Chapter 7 IM option:**  
Teaching Tip: Classroom Assessment  
Explore pre-evaluation activities and distribute evaluation assignment.

**Chapter 8 IM options:**  
Activity: Movie Reviews as Evaluative Assessments  
Discussion Starter: Difficult Evaluations versus Easy Evaluations  
Teaching Tip: Student-Writers and Confidence

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| 13 (cont.) | **For next time:**  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 8, Writing to Evaluate. Students should generate evaluation topic ideas and bring them to class. |
| 14 | Discuss and refine students’ evaluation topics. Have students practice conducting evaluations.  
**Chapter 8 IM options:**  
Activity: Source Evaluation  
Discussion Starter: Teacher Evaluations  
Teaching Tip: Ruling out Topics  
Readings  
**For next time:**  
Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 8. |
| 15 | Work on applying critical reading and thinking strategies to develop the criteria for students’ evaluative essays.  
**Chapter 8 IM options:**  
Activity: Criteria for Determining a Major  
Discussion Starter: Criteria for Health Care Legislation |
| 16 | Focus on major points and the kinds of evidence that will support an evaluative judgment.  
**Chapter 8 IM options:**  
Activity: Identifying Evaluative Evidence  
Activity: Evaluating Health Insurance Plans  
Teaching Tip: Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence |
| 17 | Informal peer review and practice evaluation activity  
**Chapter 8 IM options:**  
Discussion Starter: Late-Night Comedy Talk Shows  
Teaching Tip: Grading and Response Review  
Teaching Tip: Using Parody and Satire  
(See also Activity: Peer Review Memo, in IM Chapter 6, Writing to Inform.) |
| 18 | Formal peer review of nearly finished draft of evaluative essay  
**Chapter 8 IM options:**  
Activity: Reviewing Instructor Feedback  
Teaching Tip: The Annotated Bibliography as an Evaluative Tool  
**For next time:**  
Students should revise and edit their evaluative essays. |
**Evaluation assignment due.**

Do evaluation assignment postscript in class. Consider using the postscript as an opportunity to check in with students and do your own self-evaluation of how the course is going.

**Problem Solving and Argument.** Distribute argument assignment, which should focus on solving a particular problem. Students will use problem solving to launch an argument on a thorny issue that seems to resist easy answers. The first step is to develop a problem proposal; later, they will revise the proposal into a full-fledged argumentative essay.

**Chapter 9 IM options:**
- Activity: Residence Hall Problems and Solutions
- Discussion Starter: Identity Theft Discussion

**For next time:**
- Assign *JTC* Chapter 9, Writing to Solve Problems. Students should explore difficulties and bring potential topics to class next time.

**20**

Students must move quickly from a general topic to defining a specific problem. They should conduct research to determine the status of this problem and solutions that have been proposed or even tried. Remind them that they should aim for a broad representation of points of view and look for varied source types as well—newspapers, blogs, and Web sites as well as academic journal articles, government documents, and/or statistical resources.

**Chapter 9 IM options:**
- Activity: Rehearsing Problem Definitions
- Teaching Tip: Stuck in a Problem
- Readings: Jody Greenstone Miller, *How to Get More Working Women at the Top*

**For next time:**
- Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 9.

**21**

With their problems clearly defined, students must now turn to identifying solutions. Role-play problem-solution scenarios. Students will need reassurance that there are many solutions proposed for most problems and few solutions that are categorically the right ones.

**Chapter 9 IM options:**
- Activity: Mock Congressional Hearing
- Discussion Starter: Solving Problems with Presumed Consent
- Teaching Tip: Joining the Solution
- Teaching Tip: Representing Multiple Solutions

**For next time:**
- Assign *JTC* Chapter 16, Drafting and Designing.

*(continued)*
| 22 | Use roughly half of class time for the speed-dating activity to reveal problems in the proposal; the rest of class is for revising.  
Chapter 9 IM options:  
Activity: Speed-Dating Your Proposal |
| 23 | Transition to **argument**. The speed-dating exercise should give students a good sense of where their ideas are strong and where listeners may have questions. Building on the speed-dating exercise, students must reframe their proposals and develop them into full argumentative essays.  
Chapter 10 IM options:  
Activity: Preconceptions about Argument  
Activity: Refining Essay Topics  
Discussion Starter: The Advocacy Role  
**For next time:**  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 10, Writing to Convince or Persuade. |
| 24 | Help students move from problem solving to argument and develop their solutions into claims. Discuss using reasons and evidence to support claims and to address counterarguments.  
Chapter 10 IM options:  
Activity: Argumentative Appeals  
Activity: Appeals to Emotion (Pathos)  
Teaching Tip: Arguing a Solution to a Problem  
Readings  
**For next time:**  
Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 10. |
| 25 | Discuss using evidence to support argumentative claims. Discuss source integration and citation expectations for the argumentative paper, addressing the importance of style manual conventions. Show differences between MLA and APA style or any other style guides and discuss the reasons for these differences.  
Chapter 10 IM options:  
Activity: The Oppositional Claims Approach  
Teaching Tip: Unpacking a Claim  
**For next time:**  
Familiarize students with Chapter 21, The MLA Documentation System, or Chapter 22, The APA Documentation System. |
26 Explain logical fallacies. Focus on advertisements as a familiar argumentative genre.

Chapter 10 IM options:
Activity: The Ad Campaign
Discussion Starter: Adbusters
Discussion Starter: The Fallacy of Celebrity Endorsements

27 Peer review 1: Focus on audience and purpose, overall claim, development, and use of evidence.

Chapter 10 IM options:
Activity: Informal Peer Review of Argument Essays

28 Peer review 2: Focus on organization and its communication through design and clarity, source use, and style.

Chapter 10 IM options:
Teaching Tip: Self-Check List

29 Argument assignment due.
As the in-class postscript, ask students to design a revision plan adapting the essay to a new audience, as in the following prompt: How would you revise this paper for a new audience? What new audience would you choose, or who else needs to know about the problem you define or the solution you propose?

30 Class review, reflective postscript for whole course, course evaluations

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Syllabus 2. Argument with Academic and Public Emphasis (covers five assignment chapters)

1 Course introduction: Writing as participation in conversation
   Review highlights of syllabus.
   Introduce the writer’s notebook and its uses.

   Define and discuss reflection. Distribute reflection assignment. Engage students in brainstorming activities to generate topics.

   Chapter 5 IM options:
   Activity: Keepsake Icebreaker Reflection
   Discussion Starter: Time Management Strategies
   Students should start a writer’s notebook with tabbed sections.

   For next time:
   Assign JTC Chapter 1, Making Connections, and Chapter 5, Writing to Reflect.

(continued)
| 2 | Drawing on one’s experience is a legitimate way to develop a paper. Students “mine” for details related to their topic. The goal is for students to see the relevance of their own experiences rather than to discount them. They are also encouraged to see how their own experiences relate to broader concerns in their communities or the world.  
**Chapter 5 IM options:**  
Activity: Personal Influences and Beliefs Activity  
Discussion Starter: Reflections on Family  
Readings  
**For next time:**  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 2, Getting Started. Students should narrow their reflection topics.  
Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 5. |
|---|---|
| 3 | Focus on genre and design decisions. Invite students to discuss design options for the reflective paper they are writing, connecting design to audience and purpose. To whom are they writing?  
**Chapter 5 IM options:**  
Activity: Reading Faculty Doors  
Discussion Starter: Genres in Conversation  
**For next time:**  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 4, Working Together. Students should bring rough drafts of their reflective essays to class.  
Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 7. |
| 4 | Students conduct their first formal peer review with an emphasis on focusing and developing their reflective drafts. (Refer to the IM introduction for information about setting up peer reviews and group work.)  
**Chapter 5 IM options:**  
Activity: The Sixty-Second Spill  
Discussion Starter: Reflecting on Collaborative Processes  
**For next time:**  
Assign *JTC* Chapter 23, Style: Write Confidently, and Chapter 20, Revising and Editing. Students should revise and edit their essays. |
| 5 | **Reflective essay due.**  
Have students write a reflective postscript in class that addresses their writing and revising processes: *What is one area of this reflective essay that you are especially pleased with? What is one area that could still use work if you had another week? What is one strategy you used during this assignment that you will use for future assignments?* |
|5| **Chapter 5 IM options:**  
  Teaching Tip: The Reflective Postscript  
  Teaching Tip: Hierarchy of Rhetorical Concerns for a Reflective Essay  
  Teaching Tip: Commenting on Student Writing  
  Introduce the **analysis** assignment: *Analyze a particular piece of news coverage of a current topic of interest—a political issue, a sports figure, a music event, or anything else covered widely in the news and of interest to you. Start by finding several differing accounts or perspectives on your topic. Then zero in on one of them for your analysis.*  
  You might begin this section of the course by inviting students to consider how context influences a conversation. Then segue into a discussion of the features of the analysis assignment itself. Finally, have students brainstorm news topics and news sources that they might use for this assignment before leaving class today.  
  Discuss how they will find these sources, probably by using *AcademicUniverse* or another library database that gives them access to news sources.  
  **Chapter 7 IM options:**  
  Activity: Analyzing Bumper Stickers  
  Activity: Magazine Genres and Design Choices  
  Discussion Starter: Genres in Conversation  
  For next time:  
  Assign *JTC* Chapter 7, Writing to Analyze. Students should bring at least three varied examples of news coverage on their topic. |
|---|---|
|6| **Chapter 7 IM options:**  
  Activity: The Paper Planning Analysis  
  Activity: Drafting Debatable Claims  
  Discussion Starter: The Analytical Writing Situation  
  Readings  
  For next time:  
  Students should bring an analytical thesis statement. |
|7| **Chapter 7 IM options:**  
  Activity: Analyzing Evidence  
  For next time:  
  Students should bring a rough draft to class. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>8</th>
<th>Informal peer review of the rough draft. Spend class time troubleshooting problems and discussing analytical approaches that are working in students’ early drafts. Chapter 7 IM options: Teaching Tip: Inquiry Approaches</th>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Peer review of full, nearly finished draft (formal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Analysis assignment due.</strong> Introduce <strong>informing assignment:</strong> Conduct research to learn more about a topic that is important to you. Identify the audience you will be informing; collect and use three or four sources for this short informing assignment. Chapter 6 IM options: Activity: Narrowing Informative Paper Topics Teaching Tip: Putting Students in the Informative Role For next time: Assign JTC Chapter 11, Beginning Your Search, and Chapter 12, Locating Sources, as well as Chapter 6, Writing to Inform.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Practice basic strategies for summarizing a source—identifying the source and its author; applying attributions throughout the summary; offering fair and objective representation of points, main ideas, and supporting points. (Things to avoid: point-by-point explication of the text, statement of student’s position or reaction, overly simple or overly detailed representations of the text, failing to acknowledge sources.) Chapter 6 IM options: Activity: Single Source Position Analysis Discussion Starter: The Holiday Letter Readings For next time: Students should bring their overall point (thesis) for their informative paper. Assign e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Spend class time today planning the development and organization of the full draft and how the three or four sources will be used. Chapter 6 IM options: Discussion Starter: Footnoting as an Informative Tool Discussion Starter: Multiple Perspectives on Information For next time: Assign JTC Chapter 19, Using Sources Effectively. Students should bring their rough drafts to class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Peer review of full, nearly finished draft (formal)</td>
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</table>
**Informative draft due.**

Transition to **evaluation**. Distribute evaluation assignment: *Evaluate at least five sources on a new topic that you will follow in the argument section of the course*. Create an annotated bibliography that both summarizes and evaluates the sources you have selected. When you evaluate, ask yourself: *Why is this source important to my discussion? How reliable is it? Remember to aim for broad representation of points of view, not just ones that concur with each other or bolster your initial position. Look for varied source types as well—newspapers, blogs, and Web sites as well as academic journal articles, government documents, and/or statistical resources.*

Be sure to explain how students are to locate analytical articles from academic and news databases.

**Chapter 8 IM options:**
- Activity: Source Evaluation
- Discussion Starter: The Goals of Evaluating
- Teaching Tip: Student-Writers and Confidence

**15**

Teach students how to draft a short literature review that explains and evaluates what each source contributes to the discussion. Address the nuts and bolts of how to integrate and cite sources, providing a model of a reference or works cited page. Discuss the importance of style manual conventions. Show the differences between MLA and APA style or any other style guides and discuss the reasons for these differences. (For help with this idea, see Discussion Starter: Style Guide Analysis, in IM Chapter 7, Writing to Analyze.)

**Chapter 8 IM options:**
- Discussion Starter: Late-Night Comedy Talk Shows
- Teaching Tip: The Annotated Bibliography as an Evaluative Tool

**16**

Use one of the following activities from Chapter 8 as a mechanism for discussing the goals of evaluation.

**Chapter 8 IM options:**
- Activity: Naming the Evaluation Criteria in Professional Settings
- Activity: Organizing Evaluative Reports
- Activity: Using a Decision Matrix
- Activity: Evaluating Health Insurance Plans

Each of these activities requires students to think about the underlying rationale for conducting an evaluation and the decisions a writer must make when communicating findings.

**Additional discussion possibility:**
- Discussion Starter: Teacher Evaluations

*(continued)*
| 17 | Peer review of full, nearly finished draft (formal) |
| 18 | **Evaluation assignment due.** |
| | Postscript to evaluation assignment done in class. Consider using the evaluation assignment postscript as an opportunity to check in with students and do your own self-evaluation of how the course is going. |
| | Transition to **argument**. Distribute the argument assignment—academic focus: *Using the same topic that you’ve been working on for the evaluation of sources, write an academic argument that incorporates at least five sources using MLA or APA style. Apply the principles associated with academic argument, such as a fair representation of multiple perspectives and the integration of these perspectives through properly cited quotations or paraphrases, a clear statement of your own reasonable position, and well-selected evidence to support your position.* |
| | Use half of the class time today for students to write a zero draft, which explores their initial approach to their argument topic. Use the other half of class to conduct an informal peer review. |
| | **Chapter 10 IM options:**  
| | Activity: Informal Peer Review of Argument Essays  
| | Teaching Tips: The Zero Draft  
| | **For next time:**  
| | Assign *JTC* Chapter 10, Writing to Convince or Persuade, along with e-Pages and Genres in Conversation for Chapter 10. |
| 19 | Have students bring an introduction with thesis statement to class and spend class time “unpacking claims.” Have students move from their “unpacked” claim toward creating a rough outline of their paper. |
| | **Chapter 10 IM options:**  
| | Activity: Informal Prospectus Activity  
| | Teaching Tip: Unpacking a Claim  
| | Readings: *Men Can Stop Rape, Where Do You Stand?* |
| 20 | Ask students to consider this question: “In what ways am I connecting to and departing from established opinions of those who are already part of the conversation?” Then discuss how to integrate one’s own position in the midst of the larger conversation. Work on the mechanics of source integration based on academic standards. Review citation expectations. |
| | **Chapter 10 IM options:**  
| | Discussion Starter: Advocating the Unpopular |
Have students outline their thesis statement, evidence, and reasons and then use informal peer review to get feedback on the clarity of the argument and its development.

As students work now to complete their academic argument drafts, consider whether introducing them to an alternative form of argument, such as Rogerian argument, would be interesting to them. (If it will only confuse them, then avoid it.)

**Chapter 10 IM options:**
Activity: Rogerian Argument

Peer review of full, nearly finished draft (formal)

**Academic argument due.** Distribute revision assignment, focusing on a public audience.

The postscript on the academic argument should focus on the revision plan for presenting their academic argument into the public domain. Discuss the differences between convincing and persuading arguments, and ask students to consider their purposes for their public argument. Do they want to simply change people’s minds (convincing) or motivate them to act (persuading)? How are their audience and purpose different in the public essay than in the academic one?

**Chapter 10 IM options:**
Teaching Tip: Comparing Convincing and Persuading Arguments

For next time:
Assign *JTC* Chapter 18, Presenting Your Work.

Return to a discussion of evidence. Have students consider whether the kinds of evidence they used in their academic essay will be suited to their new, public audience. Discuss what other kinds of evidence might work better, including eyewitness testimony (quotations from those “on the ground”) and expert testimony (quotations from those who have authority on the topic because of position or education).

For next time:
Assign *JTC* Chapter 17, Working with Genres.

Discuss the importance of appeals. Ask students to consider how decisions about genre and design connect to appeals, purposes, and audiences. Ask them to talk about how their genre choices reflect their purposes. What genre suits their argument, and how should they present it to the public?

(continued)
| 25 (cont.) | Chapter 10 IM options:  
Activity: Argumentative Appeals  
Activity: Appeals to Emotion (Pathos) |
|---|---|
| 26 | Discuss logical fallacies.  
**Chapter 10 IM options:**  
Activity: Parodying Logical Fallacies  
Discussion Starter: The Fallacy of Celebrity Endorsements |
| 27 | Peer review 1: Focus on audience and purpose, overall point, and development. |
| 28 | Peer review 2: Focus on organization, design, and style. |
| 29 | **Public argument assignment due.**  
For the in-class postscript, ask students to describe and explain the changes they made as they moved from an academic to a public argument. |
| 30 | Class review, reflective postscript for the whole course, and course evaluations |
Teaching Part One: Joining a Conversation

The first four chapters develop the central metaphor of the book: conversation. This idea derives from the work of Kenneth Burke and Lloyd Bitzer. The Burkean parlor conjures up an image of people engaged in conversation and departing and entering that conversation once they have the tenor of it. In this model, ideas are developed via a relatively intimate social group in which notions are shared, disputed, enlarged, and improved. Bitzer’s model of the rhetorical situation suggests the widening circles of context in which such a Burkean conversation is situated. In this model, a text emerges from layers of context—some historic, some cultural, some locally situated—for both writer and reader; the current conversation itself becomes part of that context once it is produced and circulated. As these theorists suggest, writing is a social act and texts are socially constructed by both writer and reader. The conversation model is central to the premise of Joining the Conversation and to the processes that students are asked to engage in as members of the writing and academic communities. This process begins with listening, moves toward investigation after the development of questions, and eventually evolves toward the writer making a contribution to the conversation, or chiming in once the topic is understood and the writer is ready to “speak.”

Part One has been updated to offer a stronger focus on rhetorical situation and its relationship to the conversation metaphor that guides the book as a whole. One of the ways it accomplishes this is through a new scenario, starting on page 6, that makes the conversation metaphor both current and relevant. Three students write about issues relating to post-9/11 veterans, or those men and women (soldiers, sailors, airmen/airwomen, and Marines) who have served in the United States military during the period known as the Gulf War era and including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Taking into account the end of large-scale involvement in these wars, the students focus on veteran reintegration into civilian society, including civilian responsibility for this process. They utilize varying approaches to address this general topic and refine it into a workable focus for their writing. They also approach veterans’ issues from different levels of involvement and participation, including one student-writer who is himself a veteran. Exploring various interests in relation to the issues of veterans, one student writes an analytical piece about jobs for veterans in the green energy sector, another writes an argumentative piece about veterans needing resources for employment when they return home, and a third writes a reflective piece based on his own experiences as a returning veteran. The point of this case study is to show examples of students dealing with varied approaches to the same topic, each having his or her distinct purpose. Your own students may find these examples helpful, particularly because the student scenario provides a context for discussing the key steps in the writing process described throughout Part
One—finding a conversation, listening in, taking notes, marking and annotating sources, and peer review.

Note that the student scenario of Part One concerns itself with issues facing a new generation of not only veterans, but student-veterans. These student-veterans may be in your classes. It is estimated that student-veterans may represent as many as two million new students on U.S. campuses by peak enrollment in 2014 or shortly thereafter. The new GI Bill, which became law in 2009, is helping those student-veterans finance their educations as a way of repaying them for their military service. While similar efforts have been made for previous postwar generations, including Vietnam veterans, no effort since the original GI Bill, which went into effect after World War II, has come close to supporting the numbers of veterans who will eventually be supported by the post-9/11 GI Bill. The point here is that you and your traditional students have met, or soon will meet, many student-veterans. As a large and distinguishable demographic on college campuses, student-veterans are nontraditional students (generally over the age of 24 with adult responsibilities, such as families) who will be learning alongside traditional 18-year-olds who often know little about military service. They may assume, albeit incorrectly, that most student-veterans have seen combat or suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). We hope that this information may be useful as you integrate the scenarios from Part One and engage students in discussion of the documents there.

What follows are some suggestions for how you might use Part One in your classes. Remember that Part One forms the foundation for the book as a whole, establishing the conversation metaphor and using it to inform the substance, order, and emphasis of the whole book. It may be a good idea to introduce ideas from Part One early and then return to them later with increasing levels of detail and complication. Many of the skills you are introducing are systems types of skills, or heuristics, that can be used throughout the course and beyond it. In particular, you might consider the following executive functions that might become takeaways for students from the course: the skills associated with rhetorical analysis of situations and texts; discerning writer roles; invention, revision, and peer review processes; and critical reading strategies. In the paragraphs that follow, these topics are discussed first, with suggestions about how to teach them, followed by other priorities you may wish to integrate into your teaching.

**USING THE CASE STUDIES TO EXAMINE A RHETORICAL SITUATION**

In Part One, three students serve as case studies: Mia, Bob, and Megan. They undertake differing projects reflecting their varying writing goals of reflecting, arguing, and analyzing. Consider asking students to examine these students and their projects separately and as a set. Assign small groups of students to use information from the text as well as their own speculation in order to consider the student motivations and the diverse reading needs that their audiences might have. In general, how do the approaches of these writers differ? Consider bringing rhetorical analysis into the discussion even here and guide students toward their own rhetorical analysis of each student’s response to a writing opportunity or assignment. In doing so, they
will be practicing the very skills you want them to develop as readers and writers; the case studies provide a concrete focus for this work.

You might ask students these kinds of questions when referring to the veterans’ issues scenario:

**Audience:**

- Who might be interested in each student’s focus on veterans? What affiliations might interested readers of this conversation have? Who might be disinterested and why? Do you think that people should be interested in this topic?

- For whom is this conversation most relevant or most needed? Is the answer to this question the same as the answer to the question above about who is most likely to be naturally interested in the topic?

- What are the limitations and opportunities associated with only addressing people who already have an interest in a particular conversation? Is it ever appropriate to address audiences that are not interested or who you feel need to be educated about a topic? If so, what are some methods by which a writer gains the attention and interest of disinterested readers? What techniques might these writers try to engage disinterested readers and make the conversation matter to them?

**Purpose:**

- What do Mia, Bob, and Megan seem to want to accomplish with their differing approaches to writing?

- Can you identify a task that each writer sets out to accomplish, perhaps by locating one or more verbs that are present in the writer’s objectives?

**Genre:**

- What form would you expect each writer’s document to take? What might that document look like? To which genre might it be said to belong? What would readers expect in this genre?

**Background:**

- What is each writer’s relationship to his or her topic? How did each writer become interested in the topic? What level of confidence do you have in this writer’s ability to represent the issue fairly and fully? Is it ever a benefit to have firsthand knowledge of your topic? Is it ever a disadvantage?

- Does a writer’s relationship to his or her subject matter?
IDENTIFYING THE WRITER’S ROLES

Consider helping students who may be familiar with modes-based approaches to writing (comparison and contrast, definition, classification and division, etc.) to think first about their writing of various texts as reflections of their own agentive purposes and possibilities, rather than only as applications of particular methods or strategies for developing ideas. Modes may be explained as smaller subsets of options that are actually much larger and serve more of an executive function in students’ writing. Hence if a writer is imagining the many large approaches for conveying ideas to readers, he or she might consider the roles laid out in Chapter 1. In some cases, a student should recognize in an assignment when he or she is being asked to evaluate or to problem-solve. Often such information can be gleaned from the verbs that are used in the assignment. On the other hand, if a student can choose his or her approach to a topic, then the student may wish to consider which of these roles will best serve the audience and purpose that he or she has in mind. This takes students back to analyzing one’s writing context. Tapping into such questions reinforces the larger goals of a rhetorically based writing course, as imagined by Joining the Conversation. Here are some questions that may help students as they think about their choice of a role as a writer.

If the assignment implies or requires a particular role:

• What verb or verbs are used in the assignment you have been given? What role or roles do the verbs imply for you to undertake as a writer?

• Given the role you are asked to undertake, what strategies would make the most sense for addressing this assignment?

If the assignment does not imply or require a particular role:

• What question is guiding your inquiry, investigation, or research into the conversation you are joining? Does this question imply certain types of roles you might undertake as a writer and possibly exclude others? (Pages 9–11 of Joining the Conversation might be helpful in this regard.)

• What role does your reading tell you is needed in this conversation? What is missing in the current debate?

Evaluating your position:

• What role do you feel confident taking? What would be a really difficult role to take on and why?

• What is your relationship to this topic? Do you have firsthand knowledge of it? How did you become interested in the topic? What level of confidence do you have in your ability to represent the issue fairly and fully or to offer a fresh perspective?

• Whether as a result of firsthand experience or as a result of research, you may know quite a bit about your topic. How might you convey that you have more knowledge of the topic than many of your readers without “talking down” to them? It’s also possible that others among your readership know as much or more than you do about your topic. How might
your role address this likelihood? *(Hint: you might consider the use of qualifiers rather than absolutes.)*

- Does a writer’s relationship to his or her subject matter?

**ENGAGING STUDENTS IN WRITING PROCESS AND REVISION CONSIDERATIONS**

*Resources in this instructor’s manual: Freewriting Prompts, p. 37; Personal Influences and Beliefs Activity, p. 38; The Sixty-Second Spill, p. 42; Narrowing Informative Paper Topics, p. 57; Discovery Drafts, p. 80; The Zero Draft, p. 139.*

For homework, have students inventory the range of invention strategies discussed in Chapter 2. Consider spending half a class period doing nothing except invention and revision so that they see that generating and improving ideas for papers can take many forms and does not need to be followed as a lock-step procedure.

Try taking them through a 50-minute class like this one:

1. Spend two minutes each on various invention approaches that are outlined in the book, such as brainstorming, looping, clustering, and mapping (8 minutes total). Expose them to strategies they might not have tried before.

2. Spend 10 minutes with students working in pairs discussing each other’s topic. Have them find out what a partner knows about the topic or would like to know.

3. Spend an additional 15 minutes in small fishbowl configurations in which five students work together. Each student gets one minute to explain his or her focus and then roughly two to three minutes in the fishbowl, sitting in the middle and taking questions from others in the group. For each student in the fishbowl, someone else in the group takes notes for the writer who is in the middle and will want a record of the questions that were asked.

4. Return to individual work for five minutes. Have students identify one or more questions they may need to find sources on, based on their partner conversation and fishbowl experience.

5. Engage students in freewriting or blindwriting if you’re in a computer classroom (5 minutes).

6. Provide a five-minute peer review of the freewriting or blindwriting that was done in class, developing a single question that a peer might reasonably give feedback on.

7. Allow a final minute or two of class for writers to develop a strategy for using what they learned from the invention and revision process they just engaged in.
INTRODUCING STUDENTS TO CRITICAL READING

Resources in this instructor’s manual: Responding to a Work of Art, p. 39; Respond to a Reading, p. 43; Main-Point and Key-Point Summaries, p. 43; Evaluating Wikipedia, p. 58.

Most adults read everything at the same speed, but you can help students by expanding their repertoire of reading speeds. Try introducing this notion by encouraging them to read fast as preparation for reading slowly and critically. Note that Chapter 3 of Joining the Conversation talks at some length about both scanning and critical reading strategies because both are invaluable for scholars-in-training.

First, teach students how to scan a text, such as one of the documents in Chapter 3. Learning this is a survival technique that can help them make good selections among their inquiry/research readings as they attempt to understand the existing conversation on any topic. Scanning and skimming also help readers activate their deep memory on topics that they may claim to know little or nothing about. Scanning and skimming can reveal at least small areas of familiarity, which helps to facilitate deeper, closer reading. You will also do your students a big favor if you teach them how to survey/preview a text before reading it from start to finish. Tell them that a full survey of a text should take only a few minutes and then demonstrate in class how surveying is done. Here’s a step-by-step suggestion for how to teach this process:

1. Ask students to thumb through a whole document or text, noting its length.
2. Next ask them to read the introduction and the conclusion of the text in their entirety.
3. Next have them look closely at any illustrations, graphics, or figures and have them read the captions for these figures.
4. Have them read headings and form questions before starting the process all over again and reading section by section at a normal pace for full, critical understanding of the substance of the text.

After learning to survey/preview, students can then read slowly to understand, interacting with the text as a critical reader and both summarizing and asking questions in the margins. In a third and final pass over the reading, students can be shown how to make connections between the content of the text and the author or source of it, considering affiliations, loyalties, beliefs, and values that help to explain the focus and position taken in the text.

INTRODUCING SOURCE USE

Resources in this instructor’s manual: Respond to a Reading, p. 43; Main-Point and Key-Point Summaries, p. 43; Single Source Position Analysis, p. 59; Integrating Sources, p. 65; Comparing Source Integration, p. 77.

We tend to put off source use until it’s too late in the course to have the kind of effect we hope to have. Joining the Conversation starts the process early by placing source use within the
context of the conversation metaphor. Having identified a conversation that’s of interest, students then seek out sources that address the conversation. This approach also has a kind of democratizing effect on source use, helping students to see that valuable sources range from scholarly articles to blogs and that people and entities with a vested interest in a topic need to be heard and understood as part of the conversation, rather than only academic writers commenting from the safety of the academy. Along the way, students learn how to summarize, paraphrase, and quote from sources of all types, in addition to learning how to manage their source files. Managing source material is perhaps one of the most neglected and problematic areas of student research, especially in the digital age when it is arguably far too easy to find sources the first time, and far harder to find them a second time unless you have taken careful notes. Explain to students that one of the main reasons for citing sources is so that someone else can find that source easily. By facilitating the next researcher’s inquiry, we continue the conversation, demonstrating the way that academic scholarships build on one another.

With the help of Chapter 3, students get many opportunities for learning how to (1) represent what others say; (2) identify those sources and their authors, publication sites, and dates; (3) pay attention to genre; and (4) determine what is worthy of quotation and what would be better represented as paraphrase. Spending ample time on these skills at the beginning of the course will pay dividends later when students are integrating multiple sources from varied locations. These are skills that are best learned recursively and so starting early makes sense.

Even a simple response to a single source can become an important exercise in rhetorical situation. Try encouraging your students to summarize a source succinctly, using all their available rhetorical tools to do so. Next, teach the notion of response, but make sure that they direct their response toward a specific audience—perhaps one that is named in the source itself—that would benefit from a careful and critical examination of the source’s points and perspectives.

Students are often frequent and adept users of technology, but they still may not possess the critical skills to evaluate the information they obtain from digital sources. Pages 70–71 of Joining the Conversation present detailed information on examining, evaluating, and citing digital sources. This information will help you and your students navigate the world of digital sources, ranging from Web sites to e-mail listservs to wikis. Learning how to evaluate what they read online may be a useful life skill for your students, not just an academic one for the course you’re teaching.

**USING GENRES**

Resources in this instructor’s manual: Reading Faculty Doors, p. 40; Creating Wikis, p. 56; Inventorying Informative Genres, p. 65; Magazine Genres and Design Choices, p. 69; TV Show Genre Analysis, p. 69; Movie Reviews as Evaluative Assessments, p. 83; Grant Writing, p. 108; Opinion Columns versus Letters to the Editor, p. 122; Adbusters, p. 135.

Notice the genre examples that are sprinkled throughout Part One. For example, consider the cluster of genres addressed on pp. 20–22. We see a PowerPoint presentation, a brochure, a Web site, a scholarly article, and a newsletter. Engage students in a discussion of these varying genres and what they learn from each of them.
Where do students imagine that such genres would be used and for what purposes?
Who would their audiences likely be and how would these audiences differ from one another?
How might they be reused, remixed, or excerpted for new purposes?
What features of design do they see in each genre? (Encourage students to consider the use of space, color, hierarchies, and indentions as a reflection of structure, data, illustrations and graphics, etc.)

**ACTIVATING PEER REVIEW PROCESSES EARLY**

*Resources in this instructor’s manual: Reflecting on Collaborative Processes, p. 48; Peer-Review Memo, p. 56; Peer Review Discussion, p. 97.*

Because peer review is a major emphasis of *Joining the Conversation*, you have available to you many reminders to use peer review. Early efforts can work to build student understanding of the ethics and common processes of successful peer review through simple, teacher-directed prompts that are carefully managed. For instance, you might consider a peer review on something as narrow as partners locating one another’s thesis statements within an introductory paragraph and offering comment on those theses. A subsequent peer review might address nothing but the clarity and adequacy of the main reasons of support offered for the thesis, where such statements are located, and whether these statements connect support to thesis explicitly.

As Chapter 4 suggests, group collaborative processes can extend beyond peer review as well. As you introduce students to collaborative processes, remember that they may be unfamiliar with effective peer review. You can address such shortcomings by engaging in various forms of collaborative work and by holding groups accountable for what they do. Specifically, ask students to report their findings and to turn them in as part of the final product. Students turn in drafts, in-class writing, their outside sources (or abstracts of them), and peer review feedback. Ask them also to write a reflection on how they used their peers’ feedback or the portions of advice they took and the parts they discarded. This kind of accountability also works to reduce plagiarism by making it very difficult to fake an entire writing and revision process.

*Joining the Conversation* provides many mechanisms in Chapter 4 for integrating collaborative efforts. Like everything else in Part One, these ideas are introduced early so that they can be used throughout the course and with minimal explanation in subsequent applications. You are setting course foundations with these early efforts, so don’t worry that you are wasting time.

**RETURNING TO THE CONVERSATION METAPHOR**

Consider returning often and with increasing complexity to the conversation metaphor so that students internalize the notion and use the vocabulary of conversation in increasingly sophisticated ways. You might explain that in using the conversation approach, they are entering into
partnership with other people who have similar concerns and similar interests in issues and topics. They are becoming informed and participatory conversation partners with other engaged persons, whether academic or otherwise. This social emphasis may help students understand why writing is such a central part of the academic enterprise. When thought of as engagement in a conversation, writing can be understood as profoundly social, and perhaps even fun, noisy, and collaborative, rather than an exercise in solitary confinement. Such repositioning can help to rehabilitate writing in the eyes of students who too often feel coerced to comply with university expectations and core curriculum requirements such as first-year composition. They may see courses like your own as obstacles on their way to what they’re really interested in, their major, or, as a result of your instruction, they might awaken to the possibility that they are taking a course of real importance to their lives both inside and outside school.
Teaching Part Two:
Contributing to a Conversation

Part Two offers many new readings and new student essays. One of the biggest changes to Part Two is the addition of e-Pages, a rich array of multimodal content that reflects the increasingly seamless relationship between print and digital texts. Students access the e-Pages directly from the Joining the Conversation companion site at bedfordstmartins.com/conversation. (The e-Pages are free with a new book, or students can buy them separately at a discount.) The e-Pages for Joining the Conversation include three readings per assignment chapter, many featuring audio, video, and other interactive media. The Genres in Conversation sections that open each Part Two chapter are expanded in the e-Pages, giving students practice in analyzing how purpose and audience affect genre and design choices. You can use the print and e-Page readings to give students practice with careful reading and critical analysis. For instance, the Genres in Conversation feature works well as a pre-class assignment, to get students thinking about the writing purpose you’ll discuss that week. Assign students to read the complete documents in the e-Pages for a more complete analysis and then compare them by answering the writing prompts available there.

The readings comprise the first part of each Part Two chapter and model what writing for a specific purpose can look like. The second part of each Part Two chapter instructs students on how to write a document of their own. It follows a featured student-writer through his or her writing process, thus acting as a guide to help students produce effective writing pieces. Together, the published texts and the featured student’s writing model techniques and strategies that students can use in their writing.

Among these techniques and strategies are the writer’s roles and purposes of the writers themselves. Consider having students identify the roles that the readings’ authors take as well as their apparent goals for these texts and then amplify the book’s emphasis on critical reading and thinking by having students examine the assumptions and implications of a writer’s claims. Build on Joining the Conversation’s interest in rhetorical analysis by having students inquire into the contexts of each piece of published writing that they read, imagining its origins and the affiliations of its author(s). Integrate the new handbook section’s interest in matters of grammar, style, and punctuation by having students spend a portion of their time closely reading for textual features of the writing, examining how these features reflect the rhetorical choices of the writer. Encourage students to consider matters of genre and design as they examine these texts. Push them toward increasingly sophisticated analyses of these features of writing.

In this instructor’s manual, we have kept many of the activities, discussion starters, and teaching tips from the first edition, and we added new ones that integrate the new print and
e-Page readings. **Classroom Activities** offer hands-on opportunities to engage students actively in an inquiry-based approach. Activities ask students to *do*, not just to think. They build on the key skills covered in that particular assignment chapter. Suggested categories for the activities enable instructors to scaffold student learning, working from what students know to what they don’t know. After a brief introduction for instructors, the shaded portion of each activity is addressed to students. This stylistic decision was made so that you can use the ideas “as is.” The activities are categorized by topic, so you can decide where they might fit best into your course as a whole; they are flexible and can be moved around from unit to unit across the semester or quarter. **Discussion Starters** welcome students by reminding them that they already understand much about the social nature of language. By participating in discussions, students get the chance to mirror the many roles they will play as communicators in the multiple conversations of their lives. Discussion starters may also address a theme from the readings in that chapter. They can be used both in person and electronically—on class blogs or threaded discussion lists. These discussion starters may also inspire future writing projects. **Teaching Tips** suggest strategies for creating and maintaining an engaged and student-centered classroom. They address instructors directly with ideas about how to approach the writing purposes and genres in their class. The **Readings** section offers ways to use the readings in both the print book and in the e-Pages. **Integrating the Handbook** points you toward interesting grammar, style, and punctuation choices in the readings and offers ideas for incorporating them into student writing.
When composition instructors think of reflective writing, we often think of journaling and memoir. In fact, reflection can go well beyond these activities to become an ongoing habit of mind that contributes to students’ critical thinking. In his books *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987), Donald Schon called for greater attention to reflective processes in higher education, arguing that professionals in all fields develop reflective abilities as they work and enlarge their repertoire of responses to novel situations. So, for instance, as an architect works through a design difficulty, she reflects on previous experiences and adds the new approach to her repertoire. Yet according to Schon, too little attention is paid to reflection-in-action in college courses, making the transition from school to professional practice a more difficult leap than it would be if reflection were systematically integrated into university courses. If Schon is right, then we may be missing important opportunities to lay the groundwork for habits of mind that are critical to the development of professional competence, regardless of the discipline.

What is reflection? In simplest terms, it is thinking over past events as a strategy for informing current and future needs. Although reflection is something we engage in routinely, we may not consciously use it to full and productive effect. Reflection can provide opportunity for students’ critical examination of their own experiences within a context of social forces, historical events, and cultural developments and ideas. As such, reflection can help a student place the particular events of an individual life or a particular issue into a larger context.

In the composition classroom, reflection can also help students with source use. Starting by acknowledging the self as source, students then move on to consider the larger conversations their ideas are part of, as well as where they part ways from others’ interpretations or analyses. In academia, reflective writing is usually a response to other documents, such as articles or essays. Teaching reflective writing will allow you to teach necessary skills such as making connections, developing commentary, and choosing an appropriate medium. Reflective writing, which is the observable form of reflective thinking, provides an opportunity for students to think critically about their positionality—that is, their own stake in the conversation—as it relates to a larger conversation.

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For these reasons and others, it seems appropriate for the first assignment chapter in *Joining the Conversation* to be devoted to reflection. And while both sample syllabi in this instructor’s manual include a reflective assignment, we believe that reflective efforts should permeate the semester. In order for our students to derive maximum benefit from reflection, we should think of it as an ongoing practice that must be developed and nurtured, rather than as an isolated writing assignment that is assigned and completed. Reflection can be used either by itself or as a prelude or postscript to other forms of thinking, writing, and doing. For instance, informal, ungraded writing can become a regular feature of most classrooms and can be utilized to accomplish several teaching and learning objectives, not least of which is the habit of stepping back and thinking critically for short, concentrated periods of time. Asking students to reflect on academic goals or performance on an exam may motivate them halfway through a term, or it might provide insights to students at the end of a term. These purposes allow you to use reflective writing as both formative and summative assessments of student progress.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Personal Reflection Activities**

The following activities introduce students to the principles of reflection. These activities may work especially well at the beginning of the reflective unit and the start of the course. They are intended to provide opportunities to reconsider past contexts and generate new ideas for the future.

**KEEPSAKE ICEBREAKER REFLECTION**

Consider having students do this reflective writing activity as a first experience with in-class writing for engagement and critical thinking or as a first entry in their writer’s notebooks. Here’s the activity:

Bring a keepsake to share with the class, in the manner of show-and-tell. The keepsake could be something from your past (a photograph, a childhood object, a favorite souvenir from a trip) or something that represents a current interest (an object you use in a sport, a hobby, an extracurricular activity, or a job). Consider why this particular object is important to you and what it represents, what it reminds you of, or what associations it has for you. After the class has shared their keepsakes, write a short memoir reflecting on your experience with your own artifact and its significance to you. How did having an audience of classmates influence the story of your keepsake?

**FREWRITING PROMPTS**

This activity invites students to look more closely at their own background and interests. It is also fun and brief, and it helps students acclimate to brainstorming, freewriting, and other strategies for generating ideas.
Take five or ten minutes to fill in the table on the next page. Then choose one item and freewrite a reflection about it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line from a book or movie you will always remember</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most embarrassing moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprising talent or skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earliest childhood memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite piece of artwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proudest moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place you feel most at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place you would love to visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream job (don’t worry about experience or credentials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your next life, you would most want to . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thing you like best about yourself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PERSONAL INFLUENCES AND BELIEFS ACTIVITY**

Like the Freewriting Prompts above, this activity builds on suggestions in *Joining the Conversation* about generating ideas for reflective papers (pp. 133–134). Students are invited to look closely and critically at their own contexts in order to better understand where they derive their beliefs and values. Armed with a new understanding of themselves, they can go on to write a reflective essay focusing on one of those beliefs or values. A good model for this assignment is the radio program *This I Believe*, featured on National Public Radio; one such essay, “Remembering All the Boys” by Elvia Bautista, is included in the e-Pages for *Joining the Conversation* (bedfordstmartins.com/conversation/epages). Here’s the activity:
Reflect on your own beliefs or convictions by taking stock of the important influences in your life. What has shaped you as a person?

- Describe the early years of your life, such as where you grew up—your home, neighborhood, school, town/city.
- Describe your values and beliefs, your convictions, any important affiliations, and/or where you get your morals or your sense of right and wrong. Where do you think your sense of values came from?
- What people have been most influential in shaping your interests and views?
- What literary or media texts (such as stories, films, books, newspapers, video) have influenced the way you think or approach issues?
- How were you schooled—at home or in a public, private, religious, charter, or alternative institution?

Once you have answered these prompts, consider how these factors have influenced your beliefs and values. Choose one of those beliefs as the basis for a reflective essay.

Extension question:

Browse the “This I Believe” essays at thisibelevue.org. Choose a narrative by a famous person and do a little research into his or her past. How might the events, historical forces, and other contexts of that person’s life have led to the philosophy he or she now holds?

RESPONDING TO A WORK OF ART

This easy activity engages the senses and gives students a focal point for reflective writing. Choose a work of art that is dynamic and easily shared with the class, such as a recording of a piece of music or a series of photographs like the New York Times’s “Year in Photos.” Play the music or project the images for a few minutes, giving students a chance to jot down the ideas that are swirling in their heads at that moment. Afterward, students can swap their reflections with peers or read them out loud to the entire class to see how different classmates reacted to the same work of art. (This activity can also be expanded into a media review for Chapter 8 of Joining the Conversation.)

Freewrite a paragraph reflecting on the work of art your instructor has presented to the class. Include reactions, comments, questions, associations, or impressions of the artwork. What does it make you think of? How does it make you feel?
Observational Activities

These activities help students practice the skills of observation that are crucial to reflective writing. Assign students to read the section on conducting an observation in Chapter 5 of *Joining the Conversation* (pp. 135–136) before completing these activities.

**READING FACULTY DOORS**

Students can reflect on their campus by observing items posted in public spaces. This activity, which can be conducted in small groups or by individuals, gets them up and out of the classroom and their residence halls to explore the interior spaces of campus buildings. As students reflect on their findings, they get a taste of how field research yields tentative conclusions and begin to understand the limits of these conclusions when the field sample is small. Reporting the findings back to the class adds another dimension to the activity. Here’s the activity:

Conduct an observation of the various postings on office doors in the department you’re considering as a major. Observe the kinds of items that the faculty in this department have posted on their office doors—newspaper clippings, photographs, postcards, political cartoons, and so on. Write a few paragraphs reflecting on what these postings suggest about the interests and concerns of these faculty members and perhaps their discipline. Do the postings convey a sense of humor? What shared values or interests do you see exhibited in that hallway? What questions do you have about these values? Are you more or less likely to major in this discipline after seeing these postings?

**OBSERVING A SCENE**

Observation skills are central to reflective writing; this activity invites students to extend the field research experience of observing faculty office doors and to broaden it to a scene at large. Here’s the activity:

Choose a place to observe closely; it may be on campus or off, crowded or solitary, as long as it gives you the chance to use your senses to learn more about the scene. You can choose to observe a scene with a lot of activity (short-order cooks in a diner handling the lunchtime rush, a nursery school classroom) or a scene without much activity (a lake at dusk, an empty movie theater after the audience has gone home). Regardless of your choice, be specific in including details and remember that you have other senses besides sight that add to your observation. How do the smells, sounds, and feelings associated with the place contribute to the overall experience? You can review pp. 135–137 of *Joining the Conversation* to learn more about conducting observations and to see an example by featured writer Caitlin Guariglia.
THIRTY (OR MORE!) DETAILS
Here’s an activity that can reassure students that they have ample observational abilities and that there are always more concrete details in their immediate surroundings than they recognize at first. The point of this exercise is to show students that good observation is a skill in and of itself, requiring careful attention, hard work, and even creative approaches.

Pass around a simple #2 pencil and tell students that you’re looking for thirty (or more) details that describe it. (Choose a number that is beyond the number of students in the classroom, for reasons that will be explained in a moment.) Things will start easily enough, but pretty soon the students at the rear of the class will realize that they have a much more difficult task than those who started the activity. Students will sometimes break the pencil or use the pencil in creative ways to come up with new details when it is their turn. You can ask these students in a debriefing after the activity how they extended themselves to come up with additional details.

WRITING DIALOGUE
Assign students to read about dialogue on pp. 147–148 of *Joining the Conversation* and then to complete this activity:

Go to a crowded place where you will not be noticed—a train station, the campus gym, or a busy café. After scanning the crowd, visually target a couple of people engaged in conversation and eavesdrop on them for a few minutes. Jot down a brief excerpt from their conversation that sparks your interest, and use it as the basis for inventing a dialogue. It may help to imagine what this conversation might have sounded like before you started listening, or how it continued after you left.

Metacognitive Reflection Activities
The following activities get students thinking about their thinking. Each activity engages students in a different way of reflecting on their thinking and learning.

REFLECTING ON WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
Students often have trouble in the early stages of college in part because they don’t understand how the assignments they’re given relate to the goals of the course. In this activity, students are asked to reflect on the connections between an assignment and the course syllabus and to locate the reasons for the assignment. You can use this as an opportunity to review the critical reading skills in Chapter 3 of *Joining the Conversation*, too. Here’s the activity:
Reflect on the current writing assignment for this or another course, considering how the assignment fits into the overall goals of the course. (You can usually find course goals or objectives listed on the syllabus.) Using your critical thinking skills, mark and annotate both your assignment sheet and the course syllabus to make connections between course objectives and writing assignment objectives.

THE SIXTY-SECOND SPILL
This activity underscores the conversation metaphor by asking students to freewrite—out loud—about a chosen paper topic for sixty seconds. It gives them immediate feedback in a fun, energetic way. Have students brainstorm about their topic first; then call them up one at a time to present their idea to their peers. Let them know you’ll be timing them. After the “spill,” facilitate a minute of discussion that gives feedback about how the student can develop his or her ideas for this essay. The emphasis should be on affirming that everyone has good ideas to work with. This activity can apply to a variety of topics, but it works especially well for essays on beliefs, such as the essay that may develop out of the Personal Influences and Beliefs Activity above.

You will have ten minutes to brainstorm about your topic for your “This I Believe” essay. Then, you will each be called up to the front of the room, where you’ll have sixty seconds to explain your idea to the class. Try to fill the entire sixty seconds; keep talking, even if you have to improvise. Afterward, the class will respond to your “spill” and help you identify the best ways to develop your idea.

THE ONE-SENTENCE JOURNAL
Regular, consistent writing provides valuable discipline, but it can often be hard for students to find the time. This activity is meant to be more of an ongoing practice during the term, giving students a place to keep daily reflections.

A one-sentence journal gives you the benefit of daily writing without the pressure to fill a whole page or even a paragraph. Just one sentence each day is enough. Find a time every day to write your entry; don’t skip any days. Use the entry as an opportunity to reflect on some aspect of your day, your mood, your activities, your thoughts. At the end of each week, reread your entries and see if a theme or common thread develops throughout, or if there are any seeds here for a larger writing project.
Reflecting on Sources

The following reflective activities ask students to use reflection to prepare for formal source-based writing.

RESPOND TO A READING

This activity gives students practice in reading critically and responding to sources, as discussed in Chapter 3 of Joining the Conversation.

In your writer’s notebook, write a series of one-paragraph responses to an assigned reading, following the agree/disagree, reflective, and analytic response methods (see pp. 77–79 of Joining the Conversation).

• Agree/disagree response: Start by establishing the main idea of the reading and then explain why you agree or disagree with it.

• Reflective response: Consider the reading’s implications, connect it to your own experiences, or carry on a conversation with the author, asking questions and recording your responses to the author’s ideas.

• Analytic response: Analyze the key components of the reading, such as its purpose, main idea, organization, style, or use of evidence. If you were to integrate this reading into a paper that required outside sources, what conversations or debates might it pertain to? Would you use this source to support your own points, or would you refute the points in this reading?

End with a summary of your reader responses.

MAIN-POINT AND KEY-POINT SUMMARIES

Unlike other writing purposes, reflective writing does not always have an easily identifiable thesis statement. It may therefore be useful to have students practice identifying the main idea and supporting points in the readings in Chapter 5 of Joining the Conversation. This activity starts out individually and then opens up to small-group work.

Review one of the assigned readings from Chapter 5 of your textbook. Jot down what you think is the main idea of the reading. Then develop a list of three or four key points that support that main idea. (See p. 75 of Joining the Conversation for a refresher on main-point and key-point summaries.) In small groups, compare the points each member wrote down and discuss the differences. Working together, come up with a main-point summary and a key-point summary of the reading that you can all agree on.
"FRIENDING" SOURCES

Building on students’ fluency with social-networking sites, this activity gets students to think of authors of sources they rely on as friends or part of their research team. It lends itself especially well to reflective documents like memoirs and literacy narratives such as Salvatore Scibona’s “Where I Learned to Read,” in the e-Pages for Joining the Conversation (bedfordstmartins.com/conversation/epages), because of their personal nature.

As you work on an essay assignment and begin to gather sources, imagine the authors of these sources as friends in your online social network. Create fictional Facebook profiles for them and “friend” them (in a purely imaginative way), making them part of your research social network. In your imaginary profile, record information about each author and summarize each source to help you remember and distinguish them. You can search for author Web pages and incorporate a photo or include favorite quotations from the sources themselves. You can even show conversations between authors as a series of Facebook wall posts. Flesh out these imaginary profile pages to show how each author contributes to the conversation and offers something new.

READINGS

Cheryl Strayed, *What Kind of Woman Are You?*

Strayed effectively weaves narrative with reflection, which allows for more interesting commentary and deeper reader engagement. Students may begin understanding this piece by identifying specific moments of reflection in the essay and sharing them with the class. Have students consider how the integration of Strayed’s reflections with the events of this episode affects the piece overall. They might also consider where Strayed provides clear insight into her experiences and where she leaves room for interpretation.

When students identify specific examples of reflection in Strayed’s writing, they can also arrange these reflections topically. Which topics or thematic concepts are explored in this essay? Two recurring concepts are danger and wounds. You may have students think about the events in the narrative, making connections where the concepts of danger and wounds appear. Does the author include more positive or optimistic concepts as well? Students can discuss optimism and hopefulness as they appear in the essay. One of the essay’s attributes is the author’s ability to weave these seemingly disparate thematic concepts into a cohesive, interesting piece.

Reflective writing allows the role of author as observer. Students can read through the essay, highlighting specific observations presented to the reader. Are the observations sensory? Do they deal with social constructions? Are they emotional, physical, or mental observations? In addition to exploring the information that the author includes, it might be helpful to examine what information is excluded. Where are there gaps in the author’s thoughts and feelings? How do the inclusion and/or exclusion of particular information affect how the essay unfolds?
INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

Using figurative language is a stylistic choice that can make reading more enjoyable; students may also employ it, when appropriate, to make their own writing more rhetorically effective. Strayed uses straightforward diction throughout her narrative. Have students identify some examples of vernacular or colloquial language to demonstrate style. One metaphor Strayed uses in the essay is the following: “My hunger was a numb finger.” You might ask students what this metaphor means and why it is effective in the essay, or why it isn’t. Refer students to Joining the Conversation, Chapter 23, “Style: Writing Confidently,” for guidelines on figurative language and how to choose the correct style for each writing situation.

David Sedaris, Keeping Up

This selection’s headnote discusses the concept of humor in writing. While it is difficult to define, one thing is sure: “comic writers are careful writers.” After reading this piece, students might consider the essay’s deliberate, effective organization. Sedaris cleverly links his personal experiences to larger life lessons, which makes his reflection more relatable and accessible. Have students contemplate how Sedaris’s unique style allows for the making of connections and the sharing of insights. You can discuss with students that Sedaris intentionally provides a humorous depiction of his life experiences. Questions for students might include the following: How might this approach (incorporating humor) affect the credibility of the narrative and, by extension, Sedaris’s insights? Does the truthfulness (or lack thereof) of his accounts and reflections matter? Why or why not?

After examining the humor, broaden the conversation to address Sedaris’s overall point. Ask the following: What do you think Sedaris’s purpose is? Is humor the most effective way to convey his message or purpose? What other approaches might achieve the same effect (keeping in mind the intended audience)? If this essay were written in a nonhumorous manner, would readers’ interpretation be affected? If so, how?

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

The comma is one punctuation convention that can be difficult for students to remember. The following sentence from “Keeping Up” may be an opportunity to discuss comma rules with students: “It’s short, this street, no more or less attractive than anything else in the area, yet vacationing Americans are drawn here, compelled for some reason to stand beneath my office window and scream at one another.” Not all comma rules need to be examined, but a few primary rules would probably be a beneficial refresher for students. After reviewing the rules in Chapter 25, “Punctuation and Mechanics: Giving Your Readers Direction” (pp. 755–760), ask students to justify why Sedaris places the commas where he does in the above example.

James Mollison, Where Children Sleep

Mollison’s photographs and text are part of a book-length project published in 2010. The entire book consists of only three simple elements: a photo of a child, brief descriptive text, and a photo of where the child sleeps. Ask students to consider the importance of each of the three elements. Why did Mollison include the text alongside his visual work? What is the impact of
including the photos of the children, in addition to photos of their beds? What reflections does Mollison want to invite on the part of his readers?

In his introduction to the book, Mollison recounts in detail the contents and décor of his childhood bedroom, from the Batman car to the Duran Duran posters on the wall. “My bedroom was my personal kingdom,” Mollison reflects. Invite students to reflect on their own childhood bedrooms: What did they look like? Were they shared with siblings or pets? What colors, fabrics, or contents come to mind when thinking back on those spaces? Do certain toys, books, clothes, or other objects stand out as especially meaningful? Encourage students to include detailed descriptions. Because of its universality, this topic offers rich opportunity for class discussion, regardless of students’ age or culture, and can easily be extended as an individual writing project. If they are able, students might even get an old photograph of their childhood bedroom to incorporate into a reflective document, or perhaps contrast the past and present with a photograph of where they currently sleep. (Students can read Mollison’s reflections on his Web site, jamesmollison.com/wherechildrensleep.php.)

Salvatore Scibona, *Where I Learned to Read*

The essay begins with the author’s blunt declaration that he tried to “flunk out of high school.” In many cases, this would make him seem like less of an authority, someone whose authorial legitimacy might be questioned. After students finish reading this essay, ask them what they think of Scibona’s opening line. This is a good method of bringing up the concept of a “hook” in writing. What about that first sentence draws the interest of the reader? How would it change the essay if he began by describing his positive experience in college rather than his negative high school experience? You can expand your discussion of introductory techniques with *Joining the Conversation*, Chapter 16, “Drafting and Designing,” pp. 527–533.

Elvia Bautista, *Remembering All the Boys*

Open the discussion by asking students to think about local memorials, such as crosses placed alongside a road where an accident took someone’s life or flowers on a grave. Ask students if they have seen these kinds of local memorials. In her audio essay, Elvia Bautista offers her thoughts on placing flowers on graves, another one of these visible, local memorials. Ask students about the function of these local memorials: What do they commemorate, and why are they constructed as they are? How do they differ from public memorials? What messages are being conveyed by the “writing on the landscape” that these makeshift memorials foster? You can also use Bautista’s essay to move into a discussion of reflective writing about memorialization. What are the components of a memorialization genre? How do design and genre mingle and reflect the values of the living?
Firoozeh Dumas, *Waterloo*

“Waterloo” is a chapter in Firoozeh Dumas’s book *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America*. Dumas uses humor to reflect on her father’s failed attempts to teach her to swim. Along with describing this learning process, this essay reveals a great deal of information about the author’s family. Even as she laughs gently at her father’s obsession with swimming, she is also reflecting on why it was so important to him as an individual and so culturally significant for them as a family. Ask students to consider how Dumas positions herself within her family and within the larger American culture. What larger narratives is she engaging?

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

**GENRES IN CONVERSATION**

One of the central premises of *Joining the Conversation* is that writing involves genre and design choices. The Genres in Conversation feature at the beginning of each assignment chapter juxtaposes three documents on the same topic, each using a different genre and design. Use the Genres in Conversation feature in Chapter 5 to start a discussion on what reflective writing looks like. Have students view the Genres in Conversation feature in the e-Pages before class and answer the prompt here. In class, discuss the audience and purpose of each document shown. Have students consider what the genres have in common and how they use design differently to accomplish their purposes. Ask students if they can think of other genres that would work well to inform readers on the topic of returning veterans. Finally, ask students what elements of these varied sources would be effective for their own writing purposes and audiences.

**REFLECTIONS ON FAMILY**

Several of the readings in Chapter 5 feature family relationships. Invite students to comment on the different ways that family dynamics function in these readings. How do the authors portray their own relationships to their families? Why might reflective documents focus on family more than do other types of documents (such as evaluative documents or argumentative documents)?

**USING TECHNOLOGY IN REFLECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Ask students to compile an inventory of their everyday uses of writing and to consider how reflective they are; you can use the Practice activity on p. 5 of *Joining the Conversation* for detailed prompts. Students should place the various forms of communication technology they use on a continuum from least reflective to most reflective. For instance, a synchronous communication technology allows for much less reflection than does an asynchronous one; blogs and e-mail, then, are more reflective than Twitter and instant messaging. Ask:
• Where do social-networking sites fit on this continuum?
• Does the tempo of various writing technologies contribute to or detract from reflective processes?
• Have you ever sent a message too quickly, without fully reflecting on its content, and then felt regret?

REFLECTING ON COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES
Probe student experiences with collaborative classroom approaches that you may wish to use but that you know students have had mixed experiences with. By opening up a class discussion of peer reviews and collaborative projects, you can encourage students to reflect on their experiences and analyze the features of their successful or failed efforts. This information can then be cycled back into your lesson plans, and, in turn, students can be reminded of their responsibility in making collaborative projects a success. Assign Chapter 4 of *Joining the Conversation* and ask students to reflect on the effectiveness of peer reviews and collaborative projects they have been part of in previous classes. What were some common problems? How might these be avoided? What was gained from these efforts?

TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
Managing time wisely is a perennial difficulty for first-year students. Open up a discussion of time management processes by asking students to reflect on previous writing projects. This approach allows them to engage in metacognition, thinking about their thinking; developing this dual vision—reflecting on one’s thinking in the past to plan for thinking in the future—is a valuable skill of successful learners.

Ask for volunteers to share stories of particularly successful or particularly unsuccessful time management in past writing projects. As students share stories of their best and worst experiences managing their time, it might be helpful to share your own, too, showing that even professionals struggle with starting early enough or juggling multiple demands on our time. Ask students how they would manage their time for a project due in one week, in one month, or at the end of the semester, and then discuss the differences in their answers. End by brainstorming together a list of strategies for time management.

TEACHING TIPS

THE REFLECTIVE POSTSCRIPT
When an assignment is turned in, take advantage of the opportunity presented by a reflective postscript. Ask students questions that probe their approach to the assignment, the challenges they faced, and their use of ideas developed in the class and in the textbook. Opening the door for their candid feedback at this early stage can help you learn the assumptions on which they are functioning. For instance, if one or more students say they were especially concerned about whether their grammar was acceptable, you might respond with reassuring feedback about their ability to communicate and point out the higher-order concerns, such as focus and support of their points, or perhaps you can identify a single pattern of mechanical error or stylistic
weakness they might work on. Consider asking one or more of the following questions in a postscript:

- What features are you most happy with in your finished product?
- What writing processes did you try for the first time with this assignment, and what would you like to try next time?
- What are you most concerned about in terms of your final product?
- If you had another day or two to work on this project, what would you focus on?

**HIERARCHY OF RHETORICAL CONCERNS**

Consider using the following approach for prioritizing the efforts of student-writers working on reflective essays. Move from top to bottom as you grade and respond to higher-order concerns as first priorities; move toward more nuanced layers of sophistication and polish as the writing improves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus (main point, thesis statement, reflective purpose)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detail and Development (support, evidence, observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent Sequence (organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity and Polish (word choice, detail)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMMENTING ON STUDENT WRITING: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TEACHER AS WRITER**

At the early stages of the course, it may be especially important to be selective and conversational in your responses to student writing. But always, you should be forward-looking. There is still much time in the course and in their academic lives more generally, so all feedback to first-year students is formative. Here are some suggestions:

- Focus on the text and not the person. Say “This point in the text seems to cry out for more detail!” rather than “You did not develop your paper sufficiently.”
- Try questions instead of orders—for example, “Could you provide a fuller description here so that I can see this moment better?”
• Focus on feedback rather than a justification of the grade. Think of yourself as a coach, helping each student address the most important upgrade that’s needed to his or her writing.

• Be forward-looking and keep the acronym HINT (How to Improve Next Time) in mind at all times. Always help the student think ahead to the next paper and how to take what was learned on this one and apply the lessons next time. How might you reinforce one or two of the essential skills you hope to see improved for the next writing assignment?

• If the student’s paper is hard to read because of mechanical errors, try two things. First, can you discern one or more patterns of error? If so, choose one, show where it occurs, and then ask the student to revise to address only this concern for an improvement to the grade. Second, if the paper seems to be full of varied errors, including spelling mistakes that should have been caught by a spell checker, don’t grade it. Give the paper back to the student and give the student a deadline, say twenty-four hours, for a cleanup before the paper defaults to an F.

FEEDBACK BOX
In addition to the mid-semester feedback suggested above, a good way to build trust and encourage student participation is to establish a Feedback Box, located at the back of the room. Invite students to drop off anonymous comments regularly, perhaps on their way out of class. Remind them that such feedback, which can focus on content, readings, class discussions, and the like, should be constructive.

CLASS NOTES
Beginning college students often have fairly poor note-taking skills. They also tend not to review their classroom notes until sometime shortly before an exam, and often this is too late to get clarification on a tricky or difficult point. Spend some class time discussing note-taking strategies and looking closely at students’ notes. Address note taking as a writing task that involves keeping track while simultaneously trying to understand. Like members of an orchestra, students must keep their eyes on the score and on the conductor. Remind students that they are both writer and reader of their class notes, so it is important that their written record is something they can understand and use.

Students may benefit from exposure to note-taking methods like the Cornell two-column note system, where they keep notes on the right two-thirds of the paper and label their notes on the left. Labeling is itself a reflective practice that reinforces classroom learning and enhances memory of lecture and other classroom material. Have students bring their notes to class, whether from this class or from another, and ask them to choose a few days’ notes when there was material that was returned to and enlarged upon. In addition, bring in a variety of notes showing different formats: formal outlines; informal outlines; bullet points; maps, clusters, diagrams, and so on. Show the different formats to the class, illustrating how such notes record a new point or expand on a point, add detail, or show conflicting opinions. Help students “decode” the notes by pointing out the strategies embedded in them. Calling students’ attention to their note taking and enlarging their repertoire of note-taking strategies can
deepen their awareness of themselves as learners and can directly help them with course performance.

“TAking the PULSE” OF THE CLASS

Consider “taking the pulse” of the class at any given time during your course. Give students index cards and ask them to record their thoughts about the subject that’s being discussed at that very moment. (Silly responses are less likely if they initial their entry.) Then pass around an envelope and have students drop the cards in. While this takes some courage on your part, it can help you gauge the level of understanding of concepts as they are being discussed and see how much students really comprehend about a particular reading, assignment, theme, or discussion. If you have success with this idea, try opening up the responses on one occasion to include their thoughts on issues outside the course. What’s really on their minds today? This brief glimpse into their internal lives may tell you a lot about the issues that face your students on a day-to-day basis.

USING THE FEATURED STUDENT-WRITER PROCESS MATERIALS

Chapter 5 of Joining the Conversation follows Caitlin Guariglia’s reflective writing project on how a trip to Italy deepened her understanding and appreciation of her family heritage. Students may underestimate the steps that go into the reflective writing process, thinking of the end result as something inspired or spontaneous. It may be especially helpful to walk through the In Process boxes in Chapter 5 to illustrate the following key steps:

- how to conduct an observation (p. 135)
- how to make comparisons between your subject and another relevant one (p. 139)
- how to draft engaging dialogue (pp. 147–148)
Many of our students seem to have a naive understanding of “information” and its reliability. Specifically, their respect for published texts can suggest a belief in the unassailable authority of anything published. They may seem unwilling or unable to offer critique of published accounts they would be skeptical of in conversational contexts. Alternatively, they may find themselves so saturated in information and overwhelmed by its complexity that they stop reading and listening altogether. In either case, these reactions can be symptoms of information overload. Who among us does not recognize this feeling? As information and its technology proliferate, the burden of filtering through it all can sometimes be daunting.

For these reasons, Writing to Inform is very important to the education of our students. We can enlarge students’ sense of what constitutes a text and challenge the reliability of “information” by deepening what they already know—that messages are conveyed via all kinds of sources, from print sources to electronic ones, and even from their clothing, technology purchases, food choices, and energy consumption. As a result, they will be better able to recognize information in the texts they read and write and to distinguish credible from noncredible sources.

In Chapter 6 of Joining the Conversation, students learn about strategies for finding and conveying the information they learn through research and discovery. They work on purposeful informing, which involves the key writing strategies of inquiry, drafting, and revision. They also learn to adopt the role of a reporter. Reporters gather and distribute information to their audience and allow audience members to draw their own conclusions. Reporters generally do not analyze the information they’re presenting. Student-writers engaging in informative writing tasks should consider how to provide information without commenting on it and how to reduce their personal bias in their reporting as much as possible. As you teach, you may want to pay special attention to the examples of informing texts that are offered in this chapter, perhaps especially the student essay by Ellen Page. Students may find Ellen’s example of moving from a broad idea to a tightly focused and well-supported essay encouraging because the process she engages in is systematic and therefore seems doable.

Finally, by dedicating a section of our course to informing, we have the opportunity to directly address the common student crisis in confidence regarding the adequacy of their knowledge. When the novice college student asks, “How can I inform anybody about anything? I’m here to learn that stuff!” we can demystify “information” itself, reassuring students that we can still enter existing conversations even when our knowledge is incomplete. We can show that through conversation itself, we learn.
While it may surprise students to discover that their college education is less about accepting the information that’s given to them than about becoming part of the conversation, they will eventually learn that information itself is a moving target. They deduce that information may be open to reconsideration and revision and that educated people are always revising their positions on topics based on new information. Helping students see that knowledge is always partial may be one of the most essential lessons we can convey about the college experience itself. Students can become not just information consumers but information producers. As they conduct their lives in the personal, professional, and public realms, they will be called on to produce new ideas, freshly informed by inquiry and examination.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Informal Sources of Information

KEEPING THE FOLKS BACK AT HOME INFORMED

A real issue for first-year college students is the challenge of staying in touch with parents and friends back at home. For some students, the need to communicate will be a daily event, while for others it will be the holidays before the first phone call is made. (A wise college president, giving his convocation address, recently urged the first-year students seated in front of him to do him a favor and call home once a week. “You’ll save me a number of conversations with your mom,” he reported.)

Ask students about what they would say to inform the folks back at home about how things are going. Probe those informative details that students might leave out, and have them consider the importance of audience to the kinds of information they would convey. Here’s the activity:

Do a short, informal piece of in-class writing in which you explain how you are staying in touch or plan to stay in touch with loved ones back at home. What would you tell them? What would you leave out? Did your family and friends suggest any particular methods for staying in touch—perhaps Facebook or Skype? How do the methods of keeping your family informed differ from the ways you keep your friends informed?

Then, in the inventory section of your writing notebook, inventory the range of your information-sharing strategies. Try this approach: Create a table with three columns—one for audience, one for the medium (Skype, texting, Facebook, etc.), and a third for the information itself, in brief. Then, in a small group, compare and contrast the audiences and media you and your classmates have listed.

THE IMAGINARY MACHINE

This activity is a bit silly, but it gives students a chance to think about process and description, and to try their hand at the professional genre of writing instructions. Encourage students to let go of inhibitions about being good artists and to embrace their own creativity. You can even bring in colored pencils for students to use. Start the activity by dividing students into pairs. Here’s the activity:
On a blank sheet of paper, draw a diagram of an imaginary machine. It can have levers, pulleys, buttons, smoke, gears—just about anything. You don’t have to know what the machine is for or even what it does; that’s your partner’s job. After your drawing is complete, switch papers with your partner and write a paragraph explaining how to use the machine pictured in your partner’s diagram. Be specific in your explanation, and feel free to use instructions, too. Then switch back to see what your partner wrote about your drawing.

THE SUMMER VACATION LETTER: ANALYZING AUDIENCE

This exercise provides a lesson in audience that has a good history of working in varied classrooms. Try changing the specific type of document and the target audiences, too.

Think of an e-mail message you might write to a good friend while you are spending the summer at home or on a study-abroad program. For instance, perhaps you would describe what you do each day or what your living situation is like. Write this e-mail just as you would compose it in real circumstances. Next write the e-mail for someone you know less well or with whom you have a somewhat more formal relationship—perhaps your resident adviser or a friend’s mom. Write the e-mail a third time as if it were to a professor or boss. Compare the e-mails and identify differences in rhetorical choices you made for each writing situation. What assumptions about audience are buried in the e-mail that’s written for your good friend? Did you make different assumptions when composing the e-mail for your RA or a friend’s mom? And what about for your professor or boss? What kinds of courtesies did you feel compelled to include there? Did you omit anything in the e-mail to your professor or boss that you included in the one to your friend? Do the letters differ in other ways? Would a different genre (snail mail, note on the counter, or text message, for instance) better reflect the needs of your reader?

Informative Genres

INVENTORYING INFORMATIVE DOCUMENTS AROUND CAMPUS

This activity offers an opportunity for students to get out and about in the campus community. It provides another opportunity for students to inventory information and look closely at the effect (rhetorical and/or aesthetic) of layered “traces” of information. Additionally, this activity gets students thinking about genres of informing texts as well as methods for distributing or circulating information. As an optional extension, you can ask students to perform the same inventory beyond the campus borders and compare the kinds of informative documents found on and off campus. For helpful examples, have students view the infographic on pp. 172–174 of Joining the Conversation or the FEMA brochure in the e-Pages. Here’s the activity:
Collect several genres of informative communication that you find on campus. Consider both hard-copy communications and electronic ones, such as notices about residential hall meetings, posters to join clubs and organizations, syllabi from courses, bookstore return policies, student government announcements, library information sheets, brochures from the campus health center, and so on. In your writer’s notebook, inventory the documents and answer the following questions:

- What kinds of information are conveyed in each source?
- Which ones are the most successful in their purpose of writing to inform?
- What are some categories you might use to group the information by genre—for example, posters, information e-mails, flyers?
- Can you clearly determine the intended audiences of these documents? Are any assumptions being made about those audiences?
- What groups are represented by these postings (who might the authors be?), and what are their concerns or interests?
- As you collect, you may notice kiosks or electronic bulletin boards that have several layers of informative documents. How many layers of information can you see in the most layered area? Peel back a layer or two: How old do the oldest postings appear to be? How do differing posts “talk” to each other or contradict each other? Are there any amusing juxtapositions of information?

OFFERING INFORMATION AND ADVICE

This activity invites students to write an informative report to next year’s first-year students. Addressing a nonacademic audience may wake things up in the late stages of the unit when energy starts to ebb. Students could work in groups on this activity, doing it as a collaborative in-class writing assignment. Here’s the activity:

Write an informative report for next year’s first-year students, giving them a simple approach to surviving their first semester of college. Your report should cover the social, academic, emotional, and practical aspects of being away at college for the first time. Be sure to maintain an unbiased, informative tone. The key questions to ask yourself are: What do new students need to know? What information could you have used that would have made your transition easier? What form would you publish this in so that it reaches your intended audience? Considering your audience of new college students, what stylistic approaches, such as the level of formality of your writing, should you take?
CREATING WIKIS
Creating a wiki with their classmates allows students to consider the basic principles of this informative genre and reflect on its usefulness in group writing projects. Your more tech-savvy students can create the wiki online, but it can also be done in a simple word-processing program; each student in the group can add to the document and edit or revise what’s already there. If you have not yet experimented with wikis in the composition classroom, now may be the time to get some training from your IT professional. We can use the technological know-how and interest of our students to our pedagogical advantage if we learn about the opportunities for composition that new media and technology are creating. (This activity can work in tandem with the activity on p. 58 on evaluating Wikipedia.)

Do any of your classes use wikis? If so, how are they used? In groups, put together a simple informational wiki on a subject of interest to you and your classmates (e.g., the most useful aspects of texting or the best deals on pizza for students in your town or city). Everyone should contribute by a specified date. In our next class meeting, we’ll follow up by reviewing each group’s wiki and discussing everyone’s experience creating it. What guidelines would you draft for contributing to and maintaining this wiki? What are the strengths and weaknesses of coauthored information sources like this wiki? Would you use Wikipedia after participating in a wiki’s construction yourself?

PEER-REVIEW MEMO
Peer reviews offer an effective way of both giving feedback to a writer while a work is in progress and developing reviewing skills, which in turn can help writers get some distance or objectivity on their own writing. This activity goes beyond the standard peer-review form and instead uses a memorandum that summarizes key points and offers direct advice to the writer. This memo establishes a different way of communicating and of framing that communication because writing the memo requires a consideration, again, of audience and purpose. Before assigning this activity, have students read the peer-review guidelines on pp. 89–93 of Joining the Conversation. Here’s the activity:

Write an informational memo to the person whose draft you most recently peer-reviewed. Explain what you see working well in this draft and the areas that confused you or caused you to have questions that were not answered in the draft. Consider how you will arrange your memo so that the most important information for your peer comes first. As you review your memo, consider your audience and purpose and ask yourself whether the tone of your memo reflects the goals of peer review as they have been established in this course.
Writing Informative Documents

NARROWING INFORMATIVE PAPER TOPICS

This activity serves several purposes. First, the collaborative nature of the activity facilitates dialogue among peers, an important first step toward understanding the role of conversation in larger academic discussions. Second, the activity enables students to make progress on writing projects by sufficiently narrowing their focus. The strategy of moving from subject to topic to issue to research question is one that will serve students for a variety of writing projects and writer’s roles and is recommended in other chapters of this instructor’s manual as well. You can assign students to read “Ask Questions” in Chapter 2 of Joining the Conversation (pp. 38–40). Here’s the activity, to be done in pairs:

After doing some independent brainstorming for informative paper ideas, discuss with each other a general subject of shared interest, such as the environment. Listen carefully to your partner and point out when each of you has named a promising topic for a short informative paper. Then take turns narrowing each other’s topics, moving from general subject to broad topic to specific issue to research question. By the conclusion of the exercise, produce two or three distinct research questions per person that might guide the research and inquiry to come. As you phrase your questions, consider how well they adhere to the purpose of writing to inform. (You can ask your instructor for some quick feedback on these potential questions, to see which ones are viable for a short informative paper.) Choose the most promising one and conduct a knowledge inventory on it, listing what you already know about the subject and what you still need to learn. (See p. 490 of Joining the Conversation to learn more about knowledge inventories.)

Example:

Subject: the environment  
   Topic: climate change  
      Issue: the role of developing countries in combating climate change
   Research Questions:
      • Can developing countries be expected to reduce carbon outputs at the same rate as developed countries?
      • What responsibility does the developed world have to assist developing countries as they try to meet greenhouse gas emission recommendations?
      • Will carbon credits help the developing world reduce greenhouse gases?

INFORMAL OUTLINING

While many students prefer not to do formal outlines, informal or scratch outlines offer a low-key way of supporting the structural or organizational steps of writing a paper. Informal outlining can be as simple as doodling, its very informality making it possible for students to en-
gage in the activity over a cup of coffee, in front of the TV, or while doing household chores. Such outlining on a routine basis keeps ideas percolating and incubating while the marks on the page maintain a record of the evolving plan. Assign students to read “Create an Informal Outline” on p. 512 of Joining the Conversation. Then give this activity:

Jot down an informal outline of your current writing project. This outline can consist of phrases or even just words at the beginning. Its main purpose is to get your ideas going, but it can also help you figure out a useful structure or strategy, genre, and design.

Working with Informative Sources

EVALUATING WIKIPEDIA
Many professors are justifiably concerned about students’ reliance on Wikipedia as an information source. This activity invites students themselves to evaluate Wikipedia directly and to consider more generally the power of wikis to open up the possibilities of coauthorship from remote locations.

Evaluate Wikipedia as a source of information by looking up a subject that you are knowledgeable about. How complete is the coverage of information? How timely is it? Based on this example and the examples of peers around you, what do you believe are the strengths of Wikipedia? What are its weaknesses? Why might some professors be skeptical about the use of Wikipedia as a source cited in an academic paper?

SCAVENGER HUNT FOR BASIC LIBRARY REFERENCE WORKS
This activity gets students into the central site of information on campus, the library. Doing a scavenger hunt for basic information sources may empower students to visit the library on their own and to use the innumerable print reference sources that are still available, despite our increasing reliance on the Web even within our college libraries. This activity also invites students to compare the coverage of a single topic in multiple sources, so that they become aware of the varied approaches to topics. Before assigning the activity, have students read “How Can I Locate Sources Using Print Resources?” (pp. 473–478) in Joining the Conversation. Here’s the activity:

Visit the campus library and browse the shelves in the reference section. Then write a one-page informative report on the available handbooks, almanacs, specialized encyclopedias, and statistical sources (such as Statistical Abstract of the United States) related to your major or a disciplinary area of interest to you. Find a single topic addressed by three of these information sources and describe the differences in their coverage. Do all of these basic information sources include a bibliography or list of recommended sources on the topic? How else do they differ in their treatment of the topic?
INTERVIEWING FOR INFORMATION

Interviewing experts is a key skill in gathering information. Assign the section in Chapter 6 of *Joining the Conversation* on conducting an interview (pp. 189–191). Then divide students into pairs for the following activity:

Even though you may not be nationally recognized experts, each of you brings a significant body of knowledge to the class. With your partner, take five minutes to brainstorm about your respective interests, hobbies, backgrounds, current and past jobs, and experiences. Jot down a brief list of topics you are fairly knowledgeable about; these can be things you currently do or things from your past, something academic or something extracurricular. Here are some examples: the physical and emotional benefits of yoga, how the Catholic Mass is conducted, the best places to eat in your hometown, how the British parliamentary system works, how heavy metal music differs from punk or rock.

From your partner’s list, choose the topic you are most interested in learning about, and then draft six to eight questions about this topic and interview your partner. Write down your partner’s answers to each of your questions. Allow the interview to take its own course, and be open to asking new questions you hadn’t considered before or follow-up questions based on your partner’s initial answer. Then switch places and repeat the activity.

SINGLE SOURCE POSITION ANALYSIS

Students might be encouraged to construct a table like this one as they begin collecting and reading their sources. Using this format, students will be able to summarize each source more easily and have a strategy for keeping a compact record of many sources. Such a table has the additional advantage of making the comparison of sources relatively simple as it can easily be enlarged to include multiple sources. Here’s the table, with an example provided:
This table provides a handy way to record key information about sources. Review the example in the first row and then fill in the table using a source you have recently read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source (author, title, date, publisher)</th>
<th>Topic, Thesis, Purpose</th>
<th>Readers (technical, academic, lay, etc.)</th>
<th>Support (types of evidence and reasoning used)</th>
<th>Author Agency, Authority, and Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smith (speech, 2007)</td>
<td>• Identity theft</td>
<td>Congressional subcommittee</td>
<td>Statistics, legal precedent</td>
<td>Invited guest, authoritative and expert, adamant and passionate advocacy for legislation to curtail identity theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identity theft can be controlled through certain forms of legislation on credit cards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To challenge the credit card lobby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**READINGS**

**George Chauncey, *The Legacy of Antigay Discrimination***

This piece first appeared in Chauncey’s book *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today’s Debate over Gay Equality*, which recounts the historical impact of laws toward gay and lesbian citizens in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. Understanding the past can help shed light on issues that affect the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities today. Students can explore what information this selection offers regarding laws concerning sexual orientation. Is the information biased or prejudiced? Is it balanced and well-supported? Once students read this selection, have them draw conclusions about the issue based on the information presented.

Chauncey’s book was published in 2004. Because it was published relatively recently, and taking into account current attitudes toward the LGBT community, the book might be said to have been published during the right kairotic moment. Here, you may take a few minutes to discuss kairos with your students and why the timing of this book’s publication would affect...
how positively or negatively the public receives it. You may also include in discussion the follow-
ning questions: Who do you think is the intended audience? Are you part of the intended
audience? If not, how does your reading of the chapter affect your interpretation of the con-
tent? What other issues can you think of that are different today than they were twenty or
thirty years ago?

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

Nine of the author’s paragraphs begin with “Fifty years ago.” You might ask students: What
impact does this repetition have? How does this stylistic choice affect how you read and inter-
pret the information? This technique could be considered a rhetorical choice meant to make a
clear distinction or connection between mid-twentieth-century laws and current laws. It could
also be considered a persuasive technique being used in an informational piece, which shows
students that writing purposes can overlap. To have students explore the concepts of repet-
tion and stylistic word choice in greater depth, see Joining the Conversation, Chapter 23,
pp. 693–718.

AVG.com, History of the Internet

Many of our students do not remember a time before existence of the Internet. Those of us
who do marvel at how the Internet has placed so much information so easily within reach—
and so quickly. For most of us, the Internet is our primary source of local and global infor-
mation, from movie times at our neighborhood theater to the latest news about international
current events. The Internet has grown to encompass—and at times even replace—other in-
formation sources; instead of looking up a phone number in the Yellow Pages or getting a pa-
per map to plot out a road trip, almost all of us go directly online.

You might start a discussion by asking students what they already know about the history
of the Internet, and what information in the infographic surprised them. Another useful way
to approach an informative document is to consider what the writers have left out. Ask stu-
dents if they would have included any other milestones or reference any other companies.

Like the Internet itself, the genre of infographic is relatively new but probably very familiar
to students. Start by asking students what other infographics they have seen. You might even
collect several infographics about different topics and bring them in for students to compare.
Browse Web sites like Daily Infographic (dailyinfographic.com/) to find some. This info-
graphic from AVG.com takes a historical approach. Which others use a timeline? What other
approaches do infographics take (statistical, process-oriented)? Then discuss which topics
work best with which types of infographics. A fun homework assignment might be to give stu-
dents a narrow topic (or have them pick one themselves) and develop their own infographic
about it.

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

The infographic opens with two passive clauses: “A connection is made between The Univer-
sity of California Los Angeles and The Stanford Research Institute—Arpanet is born” (p. 172).
Referring to the handbook section in Joining the Conversation on passive voice (pp. 711–712),
ask students why the authors of the infographic used passive voice in this case. What would this sentence look like in the active voice? Which is a better choice in this case?

**Colorado State Programs and People, Animal Welfare and Autism Champion**

Profiles are generally brief pieces of writing, sometimes combined with images, that convey information about a place, group, or person. The people described by profiles sometimes represent a larger group of people who have been affected by an event or issue. Many profiles appear in popular magazines, and the information contained in them is usually drawn from various sources. Students can be asked: How is this genre effective or ineffective, depending on its purpose and audience? You may ask students: What information from the profile was most memorable for you? How does this profile emphasize the importance of one individual while still acknowledging the larger community? Students might also use this as a model for creating their own profiles.

**INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK**

Many sentences in this profile are simple, which can make reading easier for students. The lack of sentence variety, however, can sometimes lose audience engagement. Have students identify some complex sentences, such as these two: “While CSU classes remain a priority, much of her time is currently spent traveling to share her animal behavior and autism experience” and “Though she had little experience with drawing in perspective, she was able to create elaborate blueprints.” Then review these sentences with students as an opportunity to teach subordinate clauses and complex sentence structure. You may consult the list of subordinating conjunctions, words that begin subordinate clauses, in Chapter 23 on pp. 696–697 of the handbook section of Joining the Conversation.

**The Centers for Disease Control, Concussion in Sports**

This Web article and the accompanying video are part of a governmental information source. Point out to students how the URL of this Web site ends in .gov, a useful way to recognize a government source. This material provides an opportunity for students to consider how information can be aimed at multiple audiences simultaneously. You might ask students: Is the entire country the target audience of a government Web site? Why might someone come to this site but not be interested in this particular page?

“Concussion in Sports” also includes the link to a video featuring a survivor of traumatic brain injury. Sharing the relevant story of one individual can be a powerful method of transmitting information and engaging the audience. Ask students to discuss how the video might deliver information more effectively than the Web page alone. Consider asking the following questions: Why would the Centers for Disease Control choose to include a “Survivor Stories” section on their information Web site? How does the video add to the audience’s understanding of the information? Does it add bias in any way?
FEMA, *Preparing Your Pets for Emergencies Makes Sense*

Unlike the other e-Page readings for Chapter 6, the brochure is a much older form of communication. Like most brochures, this one utilizes a combination of images and text to convey a message. Ask students to examine the layout of the brochure and consider the images featured in it. You might also ask them: After dedicating the front of the brochure to an image, why are there additional photos on the interior pages? What do the images add to the brochure overall? How does the layout of the information make it harder (or easier) for the reader to understand the information?

Along with useful information on caring for pets in emergencies, this brochure dedicates an entire page to logos for various related organizations. In many cases, such organizations have helped fund a program or create media like this brochure. Students should consider what impact these logos have on the brochure. It would be valuable for them to think about the implication of authority that comes with a logo, particularly one affiliated with the government. Helpful questions to ask include: Why would it be important to the contributing organizations to have their logos included in this brochure? How do these logos influence the reader of the brochure? Would the brochure be as effective without the logos?

**The World Bank, World DataBank**

Students will probably be familiar with using a map for driving directions, but this set of interactive maps can expand their sense of how maps act as informative documents. Created by the World Bank, a nongovernmental organization focused on ending extreme poverty, World DataBank offers maps that chart more than ten indicators of global progress for the first decade of the twenty-first century. Users can customize the maps by choosing a specific indicator and a specific year from the pull-down menus. Discuss the genre of maps by asking students to consider other ways the World Bank could have presented the same information. What advantages does a map have over a table, chart, or report? What disadvantages does it have in comparison to those and other informative genres? Have students discuss how they might use the data they glean from World DataBank. For what kinds of writing projects or topics might they choose to consult this tool?

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

**GENRES IN CONVERSATION**

One of the central premises of *Joining the Conversation* is that writing involves genre and design choices. The Genres in Conversation feature at the beginning of each assignment chapter juxtaposes three documents on the same topic, each using a different genre and design. Use the Genres in Conversation feature in Chapter 6 and in the e-Pages to start a discussion on what informative writing looks like. Ask students to view the e-Pages before class and answer the questions there. Then discuss the audience and purpose of each document shown. Have students consider what the genres have in common and how they use design differently to
accomplish their purposes. Ask students if they can think of other genres that would work well to inform readers on the topic of medical devices. Finally, ask students what elements of these varied sources would be effective for their own writing purposes and audiences.

FOOTNOTING AS AN INFORMATIVE TOOL
This discussion is prompted by the heavy use of outside sources in George Chauncey’s historical discussion of the gay rights movement (“The Legacy of Antigay Discrimination,” pp. 164–170). As the first endnote to Chauncey’s article states, “it seemed important to provide documentation of the discriminatory measures it [this essay] describes” (p. 168). What does Chauncey mean by this? What is the relationship of the informative purpose in general—and the genre of informative essays in particular—to the heavy use of footnoting? What kinds of information are conveyed through footnotes? Why is citing sources sometimes done in footnotes or endnotes? What would the effect be if this information were integrated into the text rather than presented in footnote form?

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON INFORMATION
Students sometimes think that information is information; it’s either right or wrong, either information or misinformation. However, a look at multiple reports on virtually any controversial topic reveals that different people understand information differently. For instance, look at news accounts of the debates over health care reform; these accounts suggest that even when information comes from the highest sources, such as government officials and records, it is interpreted differently. Think of a controversial national or local event that occurred in the last year or two and find three separate news reports of it; bring them to class. Have your students read the accounts carefully for differences in the coverage. Are the basic facts the same in each source? Do the news stories place emphasis on different aspects of the story? How do they describe or explain what happened? Do you sense bias, one way or another? Do you see an effort being made to provide balanced reporting? How does each report reflect the audience of the news source? You can move the discussion from the specific news event to questions about how information sources can provide varying perspectives:

• How is information understood differently by parties who have a stake in an issue?
• How do our interpretations reveal our affiliations and loyalties?
• How are our interpretations influenced by our backgrounds and past experiences?

EXPERT OPINION AND EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY
Students often think of “sources” as limited to print and electronic media—books, magazines, statistical data, and Web sites; they tend not to consider the many sources that field research can yield. Enlarge students’ sense of outside sources by beginning a discussion about using expert opinion or eyewitness testimony. When might these source types be most valuable? What kinds of conversations or topics lend themselves to expert opinion? To eyewitness testimony? Name a few topics that your students are probably familiar with, such as something related to sports or pop culture, and ask them what interviews with experts or eyewitnesses could add to an informative essay on those topics.
TEACHING TIPS

PUTTING STUDENTS IN THE INFORMATIVE ROLE
When students become participants in classroom discussion, they have direct experience of academic discourse as (spoken) conversation. Getting students to speak to one another, rather than only to the instructor, reinforces a democratization of information. It suggests that informing is the province of student and teacher alike, rather than belonging strictly to those who have earned advanced degrees. Encourage students to see themselves as informers, not just consumers of information. Of course, we must provide a safe environment for their ideas so that their willingness to take this risk is not greeted with undue criticism or a dismissive attitude. Even if some students’ responses seem way off the mark, you can find a way to acknowledge their contribution without completely endorsing their point. Try reframing their response, stating it back to them in slightly revised form. Or try recording information on the board and allow the class itself to evaluate the merits of the varied efforts. Give students the opportunity to inform one another, either by pairing up and trading what they have learned in individual research, or by presenting research to the class as a whole. Directly state your appreciation for a student’s participation.

INVENTORYING INFORMATIVE GENRES
Students might be encouraged to recognize genre and design choices in the texts of their everyday lives. As part of the “inventories” section of their writer’s notebook, have students keep an inventory of informative genre and design examples they confront every day: in advertising, in street and building signage, on Web sites and electronic media, and even in music videos and television shows they enjoy watching. They may be surprised at the range of genres through which they regularly receive information.

IDENTIFYING THE INFORMATIVE ELEMENT IN OTHER TYPES OF WRITING
One of the strengths of informative writing is that it is ubiquitous. Practically all problem-solving, argumentative, evaluative, analytical, and even reflective documents contain at least some informative portions. As you work through the other chapters in Part Two of Joining the Conversation, ask students to identify sections of the readings that are informative in purpose. From time to time you might also bring to class examples such as newspaper editorials or blog posts and have students pick out which parts are informative. Ask them to bring in other genres they encounter, too, and dissect them to identify any informative kernels. Doing so may help students recognize that writers’ roles are fluid and varied, not static.

INTEGRATING SOURCES
A central challenge for beginning college writers is the effective integration of sources. Too often students think that gathering source information is just a necessary ritual proving that they’ve “done their homework” and that referring to their sources is a mechanical process involving their dutiful citation of an established number of authorities. They may not yet understand that the use of sources is an integral part of entering into a conversation because it demonstrates that the writer is sufficiently engaged in the topic to investigate what others have said about it. When Joining the Conversation suggests that students “listen in” before
participating in an academic conversation, the text is suggesting nothing less than the ethics of scholarly discussion, a way of understanding that intelligent participation in any academic conversation requires much more than meeting the mechanical expectations for how to introduce a source and how to insert one’s own views. Because the book uses conversation as a central metaphor, it may be useful to start working on source usage early and then sustain and build on it for maximum results. The writer’s notebook could be used for this purpose, and you should routinely examine the students’ efforts.

An ambitious goal for any introductory composition course is introducing students to the uses and value of outside sources. Demystifying the process by breaking it down into a series of doable steps is half the battle. A side benefit of this process may be to reduce the amount of plagiarism you and others see. As student-writers work step-by-step to enlarge their range of options for source usage, they become less likely to opt for the quick (and unethical) solution.

CREATING PROJECT TIMELINES
Beginning college students often need help planning their time. In fact, if there’s one problem first-year students have, it’s making responsible use of their typically vast hours of open time. You can help by introducing the idea of backward planning. Show them a graphic representation of the information that’s buried in all those syllabus dates (and the careful organization that underlies that syllabus). Encourage them to practice the strategy in other courses, starting with the due date for a term paper and working their way back to establish intermediate steps and target dates.

**Paper Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sept 1</th>
<th>Sept 15</th>
<th>Sept 30</th>
<th>Oct 10</th>
<th>Oct 22</th>
<th>Nov 1</th>
<th>Nov 15</th>
<th>Nov 29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper assigned</td>
<td>Topic selected</td>
<td>Library research done</td>
<td>Biblio done</td>
<td>Scratch outline done</td>
<td>Full outline done</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>Paper due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**USING THE FEATURED STUDENT-WRITER PROCESS MATERIALS**

Chapter 6 of *Joining the Conversation* follows Ellen Page’s informative writing project on a topic that some students might find daunting: the use of DDT in malaria prevention. Yet even the most complex topic can be approached systematically, step by step. Walk through the In Process boxes in Chapter 6 to illustrate the following:

- how to search an online library catalog to learn more about a topic (p. 183)
- how to ask questions by clustering (p. 185)
- how to evaluate a source’s reliability (pp. 188–189)
- how to develop supporting points and evidence to bolster a thesis statement (p. 194)
Analysis is one of the most consistently applied academic activities of the college years. It may even be considered the essential intellectual capability of the college-educated person. Generally speaking, analysis involves interpreting an item, a text, or an idea, taking it apart, and looking at the parts closely enough to understand the item more deeply, in its entirety. Analysis and critical thinking are closely related, and analysis often leads to synthesis, or the joining of analyzed components to answer a new question. Analytic writing positions students as interpreters and framers of understanding, and writing the analytic essay marks a key moment in the student’s development, helping him or her to interpret information and ideas for audiences, perhaps even helping readers to reexamine their presuppositions. Analytic writers bring forward new ways of understanding a topic. As this chapter suggests, some topics lend themselves to analysis better than others. In turn, the analytic thesis reflects the goals of the interpretive role; it becomes the product of analytic inquiry, analytic framing, and the examination of analytic evidence.

Varied and flexible in application, analysis can be accomplished through innumerable mechanisms and may be integrated into virtually any assignment. Analytic listening and response are also obligatory features of classroom discussions. While undergraduates will probably have done some amount of analysis in high school, most will not have encountered the kind of detailed analytical and critical thinking that is required in college. They may not have been asked to provide the kinds of evidence and explanation for their analyses that are the hallmarks of college work. They almost certainly will not be familiar with the varied analytic methods associated with differing disciplines.

Perhaps most important, it is unlikely that they’ll have much experience with the kinds of critical analysis typically used in scholarly inquiry and research. In fact, they may have developed a reverence for the printed word. They may be unaccustomed to asking the kinds of contextual questions that are necessary in college-level thinking, such as: Where does this idea come from? How do the author’s background and affiliations help explain the reasons for taking this position? Instead, students may read sources for information only. It should not surprise us then when they break our genre and convention expectations, perhaps reporting “truths” or slavishly regurgitating what one of their sources says, rather than challenging those ideas or offering new interpretations.

If we keep in mind that our students are apprentices to these processes of analytic thinking, we can plan our classes so that they build essential abilities in rather direct ways. We can scaffold our efforts, manage our own expectations for student performance, and even utilize students’ interest in social networking to launch analytic processes to new modes of communication.
Recalling the principles that inform *Joining the Conversation*, we can help students become informed participants in important disciplinary, professional, and public conversations while maintaining the central goals of analytical thinking and writing. We can help students analyze writing or rhetorical situations and anticipate the genre expectations of readers—an ability that will serve them well in college and beyond. We can encourage an enlarging sense of the social nature of academic writing through peer review and working with their conversational skills to rehearse the planning and execution of their writing. We can assist students as they develop an analytic approach to the role of design, even encouraging multimodal strategies for more effective communication of ideas.

In this chapter, students are invited to consider various ways of examining a subject through approaches such as classification and division and comparison. Students also learn about interpretive frameworks for analyzing their topic, such as historical framing, cultural analysis, economic approaches, rhetorical analysis, and feminist analysis. Students are shown how to select evidence and here they learn that certain kinds of evidence fit certain approaches to writing. For instance, in certain rhetorical situations and for some topics, numerical data is important for making the analytic case. In others, the most persuasive evidence is words or images from texts. Chapter 7 points out that the analytic thesis often comes at the end of the analysis rather than at the beginning. Wherever it is located, it is supported by evidence that contributes to the analytic framing. Learning to write an analytic paper is a significant step for students to make informed contributions to existing conversations.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Genre Analysis Activities**

**ANALYZING BUMPER STICKERS**

This activity helps students build on the field research skills they learned in earlier chapters by analyzing their findings. It also shows students how to use classification as a way of identifying patterns and exploring similarities and differences.

The bumper stickers people place on their cars can yield considerable information about a community. Use your field research skills and take careful notes as you canvass two parking lots in different parts of town, closely observing bumper stickers and their thematic concerns. Record specific messages you observe and choose a classification scheme for them. Are the bumper stickers political? Are they humorous? Consider whether some bumper stickers might fall into more than one category. Do frequency counts to determine the concerns or interests people broadcast in your town or on campus. How might you compare or contrast the differing concerns? What questions about these concerns or interests would you have for community members if you could do follow-up interviews with them?
MAGAZINE GENRES AND DESIGN CHOICES

For this activity, bring in copies of magazines from home or have students bring their own copies of general-interest newsmagazines. The goal of this exercise is to have students use their existing genre knowledge to identify the routine design and layout choices in magazines. This activity also gets students handling the print medium and looking at it with an objective and critical eye. Refer students to Chapters 16 and 17 of Joining the Conversation for more on the role of design element in various genres.

Scan a recent issue of a general-interest current events magazine/newsmagazine such as The Atlantic or Time. Survey the entire issue as a whole, looking at article titles, photographs, advertising, and the table of contents. Next, flip back through the magazine and jot down two lists—one of the written genres that you see represented inside the pages of just this one issue, and the other of the design decisions the editors have made. For instance, you may see genres such as a news article, a feature article, an opinion article, and letters to the editor, among others. You may also see design choices such as use of color, unusual typefaces, images, and sidebars. Make note of any particularly creative design choices. Next, consider how the design of the various genres reflects their purposes; for instance, what function does a pull quote have in an article? How does the title treatment of an opinion column relate to its analysis?

TV SHOW GENRE ANALYSIS

In this activity, students are encouraged to analyze the genres of television viewing, selecting a show they are familiar with to examine in some detail.

Review the channel listings for a particular day of television or the “Popular” shows section of Hulu and write a list naming as many genres of television viewing as possible (e.g., prime-time comedy, soap opera, etc.). Now select one show you’re familiar with and consider the conventions of its genre—what that genre typically consists of in terms of characters, plot, and setting. For instance, what is the general plot shape of the reality show? The prime-time comedy? The prime-time drama? What kinds of characters are typical? How does the time allotted to the show influence its pacing? How is a thirty-minute show divided? How is a sixty-minute show divided? Write out a “mock-up” description showing how time is typically divided over the course of an episode. Considering this typical narrative arc, come up with your own idea for an upcoming episode. Sketch out the episode in an informal outline or storyboard. Share your episode ideas and narrative maps with your peers.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ANALYSIS

Students are so comfortable using technological tools to communicate that they may not have stopped to think about the differences among them. You can use this activity as a springboard
for a discussion on how individuals switch styles as they move from genre to genre or audience to audience. Ask students if they are able to switch styles easily, and why the ability to do so is important.

Inventory the electronic genres you use to communicate, and analyze their differing uses. Which genres do you tend to use to talk to your parents, to friends, to teachers, to co-workers, to your boss? Do the tools depend on oral or written communication? How would you characterize the “style” of these communications? Compile your findings in a grid like this one; the first row has been filled in as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text message</td>
<td>friends</td>
<td>text abbreviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analytical Processes**

**CLASSIFICATION**

As Chapter 7 of *Joining the Conversation* explains, classification is an important way to understand how a subject relates to other subjects. This activity gives students practice classifying themselves by identifying similarities and differences. After they have grouped themselves in three or four different ways, have students discuss whether the classifications were meaningful, and what constitutes a meaningful classification.

How many ways can your class be classified? As a group, start by drawing up a brief list of classifying principles, taking into account living arrangements, family, hobbies, academic interests or major, extracurricular activities, geography, and so on. Then stand up and assemble in different corners of the room according to the first principle and count the results. For example, you could group yourselves by the month in which you were born or the number of siblings in your family. After tallying the results, reclassify yourselves using another principle. Classify yourselves three or four times according to different principles, and then consider these questions: Did you have similarities with the
students you were classified with? Which classification produced the most cohesive group? Were any students unable to classify themselves? Which of the classifications would allow you to create subcategories?

A MISSION, DIVIDED
Like the previous activity on classification, this one focuses on division as a way of analyzing a subject. You can vary the content by asking students to choose a business or a nonprofit organization and examine its mission statement, too.

Look at the mission statement of your college (usually prominent on the Web site). Then consider the different categories on the school’s home page (such as academics, athletics, campus life, alumni, research, etc.). Examine these “parts” and consider how they contribute to the “whole,” the overall mission of the college. Do any parts seem to be less relevant to the stated mission? Do any parts seem to be completely missing from the university Web site, or not sufficiently represented?

GENERATIONAL TREND ANALYSIS
This activity aims to give students a better understanding of analyzing trends, an interpretive framework used in many disciplines. Divide the class into small groups and then reconvene afterward to discuss the results.

As a group, identify a trend among your generation of college students. Consider academic, political, social, and cultural trends (for example, veganism, political activism, living at home to save money). What evidence (statistics, anecdotal evidence) can you draw on to establish that this trend exists? What conclusions can you draw? What do you see as the future of this trend? (Will it continue? Fizzle out?) What might be the consequences of the trend?

Drafting Analytical Documents

PAPER PLANNING ANALYSIS
Offering peer-review feedback before you’ve even started writing might seem premature, but talking over a theoretical piece of writing can save a writer a lot of time. Early feedback can help the writer begin to anticipate other questions that readers will have and can help direct the writer’s research as well as construction of the paper. For this activity, try encouraging students to discuss a classmate’s informal outline or rough plan for an upcoming paper. In other words, get them to discuss a paper that doesn’t yet exist. Consider using the following analytic
questions to guide this pre-paper conversation between two classmates. Then have the pair switch roles. You may be able to use these partner discussion questions to launch students on their writing assignments at the very earliest stages of a paper assignment. They may even use this strategy for writing assignments in the future. Here’s the activity:

In pairs, discuss your plan for an upcoming essay project. Use the following questions to review and analyze the assignment and your partner’s informal outline:

- What is the purpose of this paper, and to what reader is it directed? Who will evaluate this paper? Are the reader and the evaluator the same person?
- Do you know what the evaluation criteria for the paper will be? How much is the paper worth in the course?
- What does the assignment ask you to do? Locate the verbs in the assignment and identify the tasks that are being asked of you.
- What led you to select your topic? What background or framing will readers need to understand this topic?
- Orally rehearse your thesis statement. It’s okay to begin with “clearing your throat phrases” like “I suspect my paper will argue that . . .”

ANALYZING EVIDENCE

Although they may be able to identify cogent evidence to support their claim, students often have trouble analyzing that evidence sufficiently. They may think that a quotation from an expert or an impressive statistic “speaks for itself.” This activity asks students to focus narrowly on providing context and analysis for the evidence they use in a writing project.

At the top of a sheet of paper, write out the thesis statement of your current essay draft. Then list three or four important quotations from a source or pieces of data. Next to each piece of evidence, write a sentence analyzing how the evidence supports the thesis statement. Try beginning with active phrases that analyze what the source is doing (for example, “Here, the author compares . . .” or “This statistic illustrates that . . .”).

DRAFTING DEBATABLE CLAIMS

Students may know that they need a thesis statement or claim at the center of their essays, but they may not realize that this claim needs to be debatable. This activity gives students practice in determining whether a claim is actually debatable and, subsequently, has potential for an analytical essay. You may choose to augment the examples here with claims that relate to your course content.
Read the following claims and consider whether they are appropriate for analytical essays. Can the claim be argued against? Does it offer an analysis, or does it simply state the obvious? Is the claim actually a statement of fact? If you determine that the claim is not debatable for these reasons, revise it into a debatable claim that contributes to the conversation on this topic. Then trade papers with a peer to see other ways of shaping debatable claims.

- Autism is a serious emotional and psychological disorder that afflicts young children.
- Computer technology has improved the way goods are mass-produced by affecting the speed at which markets respond to shifts in supply and demand.
- Citing severe and even fatal car accidents, several states have banned texting while driving.
- In her twenty years on television, Oprah Winfrey’s huge following among women across America secured a legitimate place for talk shows in political campaigns.

**READINGS**

**Sito Negron, *Baghdad, Mexico***

The prefatory remarks to Negron’s essay posit that the essay “relies primarily on the direct observation and research of its author” (p. 218) to support his analysis. Students might be asked to identify examples of Negron’s direct observations and to discuss how these support his analysis. They might also be asked to identify examples of Negron’s research and how this research supports Negron’s overall analytic claim. (For more on conducting formal observations, consider referring students to pp. 135–137 in *Joining the Conversation*.)

Considering the rhetorical situation of the article, ask students whether Negron is more or less convincing due to his close proximity to the situation he describes. Have them consider features of the rhetorical context, such as the magazine itself and its affiliations. Students could also consider additional contextual information such as U.S. policies on immigration and illegal immigrant labor. For instance, they might discuss whether the issue of border murders is only a matter of passing (current) interest or whether it might be expected to have relevance ten years from now.

**INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK**

Notice that Negron occasionally uses sentence fragments, as on p. 220: “That might be the only way order can be restored. Not to stop the drug trade, a ridiculous idea, but to at least get the business back to where most of the killing takes place among those involved in the trafficking.” Ask students to identify the sentence fragment and how it might be corrected. For a review of sentence fragments, refer to pp. 735–737 in the handbook section of *Joining the
Conversation. Why do they think Negron chose to use a sentence fragment here? Do they think that his doing so reflects a sloppy or careless writer and thus diminishes his credibility? Do they believe that someone might sometimes be right to break the rules of grammar?

Brooke Gladstone, *The Goldilocks Number*

Have students discuss the central argument of this analysis and its uses and/or misuses. Can they think of other examples of baseless numbers that are used as if they were irrefutable fact? Why does the question of the authority of data matter to students of writing and analytic considerations? How does source usage figure into the use of data? What questions do students believe that critical readers should ask as they read data? Can they come up with a kind of heuristic for such questioning of data? A heuristic would offer a set of questions that would work regardless of the topic. If the students in your class can agree on a heuristic, you might consider posting it to the course Web site for later reference.

Another key consideration is the genre through which the message is conveyed—the graphic argument. Analytically speaking, students might be asked this question: What are the advantages and disadvantages of this genre? Ask students to examine the design elements of this piece carefully, including features such as frames, movement, background components, how time is handled, how narration is handled, and how the protagonist and the sources she calls upon for her investigation are characterized. (You might give students a clue such as this: Consider how the characters in “The Goldilocks Number” are dressed and otherwise depicted.) What general attributes of reliable and unreliable sources do students deduce from these depictions?

**INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK**

Gladstone uses ellipses extensively throughout “The Goldilocks Number.” Have students look up ellipses in the handbook section of *Joining the Conversation* (p. 771) and explain how they are typically used. Students might then consider these questions: How do ellipses function in this text and how is that different or the same as the way they’re addressed in the handbook? How does genre affect decisions about punctuation and other mechanical concerns?

Nick Bilton, *Disruptions: Digital Era Redefining Etiquette*

This reading opens up opportunities to discuss digital communication and the ethics surrounding their use. Ask students whether they believe different rules apply to communication in digital contexts. For instance, do students think people should open e-mails with a salutation (e.g., “Hi, John”)? Or do they believe that such courtesies are superfluous and time-consuming, as Bilton suggests? Probe students for other conventions associated with communication in various settings, such as how drivers communicate with each other while in their cars. Are there communication “rules of the road” just as there are behavior “rules of the road”?

Bilton’s point about informal communication is highly relevant to writing projects both formal and informal. In the second to last paragraph, he underscores the importance of considering audience: “How to handle these differing standards? Easy: think of your audience. Some people, especially older ones, appreciate a thank-you message. Others, like me, want no
reply” (p. 230). Ask students to make connections between Bilton’s advice on digital etiquette and their own writing projects. How does audience shape tone, genre, and medium?

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

Because he is discussing communication etiquette, Bilton uses many quotations throughout this article, both full sentences spoken by others and brief quotations of one word, such as “Hello” or “Thank you.” Point students to the section on quotation marks in the handbook section of Joining the Conversation (pp. 762–764) and review the examples from Bilton’s article. Pay special attention to how punctuation is used with quotation marks.

The Chicago Tribune, Our Drone Future

This article analyzes uses and misuses of drone technology, both those that have already occurred and those that are likely in the future. Although the article is short, it provides a great deal of context on the issue of drones, exploring the political fallout of drone usage, legal action that is already being pursued, and possible future applications for drones. Ask students to determine whether they feel that this analysis is properly grounded, or whether it might contain too much or too little information. Does the interpretive framework seem like an appropriate choice? How does the origin of this piece—a newspaper—affect the strength of the analysis? When you cover Chapter 10, “Writing to Convince or Persuade,” consider returning to this article as a useful comparison tool. Ask students whether this article could be considered a persuasive piece as well as an analytical one. Why or why not? What could be changed about the article to make it more persuasive? More analytical?

Adriana Barbaro and Jeremy Earp, Consuming Kids

In this video, a group of experts discuss the ways in which companies use advertising to reach children and the impact these campaigns can have on their target audience, in this case kids under the age of eighteen. The speakers alternate, and their discussion is interspersed with clips from commercials, movies, television shows, and studies conducted on children.

This video also serves as a valuable avenue into a discussion about advertising as a form of communication. Where students might text with friends or Skype with their parents, companies communicate through commercials, print media like coupons and flyers, direct communication on the product itself (such as on cereal boxes), and through games and contests. Invite students to consider how someone can be a passive participant in such a “conversation” and what it means to engage actively with advertising. Can buying decisions, both purchasing the product being advertised and choosing to avoid it, be considered a method of communicating with the company? How does the target audience of the product (in this case, children) alter the method of communication? Are children, who have not yet reached the age of consent, able to engage actively in communication with companies? Be prepared for students to have varying opinions on the topic, and consider setting boundaries to the discussion before inviting student responses. As an extension, consider pairing this video with “Our Letter to LEGO”
by SPARK, in Chapter 10 of the e-Pages. This open letter, written by girls and young women to the LEGO toy company, provides an opportunity to discuss a particular instance of marketing to children. Ask students to explore the differences in the rhetorical situations of the two readings, especially between the analytical and persuasive purposes.

**Marlene Zuk, Misguided Nostalgia for Our Paleo Past**

Although Marlene Zuk is an evolutionary biologist, this excerpt is aimed at a broader audience. The issue that Zuk is analyzing is not the science itself, but the way in which our society thinks about that science. Zuk offers her thoughts on what might be termed the mythology of evolution and the impact she sees on our culture. Ask students to point out the thesis of the excerpt. Why does Zuk introduce her main point later in the excerpt and not in the opening paragraph? Why does she include the opening vignette? What does the vignette add to her ultimate conclusions? How does Zuk’s analysis of the process of examining DNA facilitate the process of analyzing our cultural perspectives on evolution?

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

**GENRES IN CONVERSATION**

One of the central premises of *Joining the Conversation* is that writing involves genre and design choices. Use the Genres in Conversation pages at the beginning of Chapter 7 and in the e-Pages to start a discussion on what analytical writing looks like. Ask students to view the Genres in Conversation feature in the e-Pages and answer the questions before class. Then discuss the audience and purpose of each document shown. Have students consider what the genres have in common and how they use design differently to accomplish their purposes. Ask students if they can think of other genres that would work well to inform readers on the topic of children learning through play. Finally, ask students what elements of these varied sources would be effective for their own writing purposes and audiences.

**THE ANALYTICAL WRITING SITUATION**

Focus on the rhetorical situation of analytical writing by pointing out to students the Interpreter avatar on p. 216 of Chapter 7. The avatar suggests that analysis offers an informed or educated set of insights into a topic. Ask students to discuss the following questions: So perhaps we know why a person writes an interpretation or analysis, but why would anyone read such a piece of writing? Why not just do the analysis and interpretation oneself, such as going to the movie instead of reading someone else’s analysis of it? What kinds of interpretations do you read? Do you have particular interpreters or analyzers of movies, music, or books that you respect over others? Where are their interpretations published?

**ANALYSIS ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES**

Professional or academic disciplines, such as the social sciences, the physical sciences, and mathematics, provide an excellent opportunity to consider how wide-ranging analysis can be. Ask stu-
dents to identify the kinds of analyses that are favored by the social sciences, the humanities, the physical sciences, and mathematics. What genres of documents emerge from these types of analyses? What genres of sources are used by the different disciplines? Invite students to draw on their academic experiences with these disciplines or share knowledge from their majors.

RELIGION AND TEEN PREGNANCY: A CASE STUDY IN CAUSAL ANALYSIS

Causal analysis is a common assignment in composition courses because it makes use of students’ natural curiosity about why things happen or what effects they may have. It is easy, however, to conflate causality with correlation. Newspaper articles or radio news reports are often good sources of material for examining the relationship between causality and correlation. Here’s one example: A New York Times parenting blog discussed the conclusions of a recent study from a scholarly journal that teenage girls living in more religious states are more likely to get pregnant (see the blog entry at parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/17/religions-link-to-teen-pregnancy/).

Have students read the blog entry. Then start a discussion about whether religiosity is a cause of teen pregnancy or merely has a correlation with teen pregnancy. What causes teenagers to have sex without contraceptives? Lack of access to contraceptives? Lack of sexual education? Lack of income? Ask students if they can think of other situations in which causality might be confused with correlation.

COMPARING SOURCE INTEGRATION

Providing three or four brief examples, from blogs to newspaper columns to scholarly articles, ask students to reflect on how sources are introduced in a range of documents. Distribute the documents and ask students to pay close attention to the attributions and signal phrases. Have students consider how the integration of sources indicates the way they’re being used by the writer. Do they

- add credibility or authority?
- indicate consensus of opinion?
- suggest opposition points?
- represent an official position?
- represent the opinion of someone “on the ground” (an eyewitness)?
- provide a launching-off point to alternative ideas or views?

Encourage students to contrast the writers’ integration of sources across the documents.

STYLE GUIDE ANALYSIS

Engage students in a discussion about documentation styles to help them better understand the purposes and methods of the systems. Assign Chapters 21 and 22 of Joining the Conversation, on MLA and APA style, and walk students through the parts of a citation in each system. Put an MLA-style bibliographic entry for a source on the board, and then invite students to transform this citation into APA format. As a group, reflect on why and how these citation methods differ
and what each system seems to value most. Do the same with an in-text citation and again reflect out loud on the differences. Why do citation systems such as APA prioritize date of publication? Why does MLA style care less about dates than does APA style but also seem to care more about authors’ complete names? Invite students to add their own queries and observations.

**TEACHING TIPS**

**INQUIRY APPROACHES**

When students are involved in inquiry approaches, their level of engagement with course material is often quite high. You can tap into their natural curiosity and their enjoyment in being surprised by implementing some simple approaches. Start classes with a question that will be answered by the end of the class time, and end the class by asking students to answer the original question. Alternatively, start class with a set of data that students must analyze and about which they must inductively form conclusions. For instance, students might be presented with data sets of high school completion rates, public school funding levels, percentages of the local population living in poverty, and college completion rates, all drawn from two different locations (one relatively affluent, the other not). Students could analyze these data sets as evidence of the disparities of educational funding. Inquiry approaches could be used to derive test questions for an in-class exam, could launch entries in students’ writer’s notebooks, or could simply be done as routine and informal in-class writing.

**ONGOING DISCUSSIONS OF RHETORICAL SITUATIONS**

Consider encouraging students to volunteer reports on communication situations they encounter in their everyday lives. These could be routine interactions with classmates, teachers, parents, roommates, coworkers, and/or others. Or these could be less routine encounters with the police or other first responders or with government officials. Such reports could become an ongoing class starter, done perhaps once a week. Students might even keep a log of the situations in a section of their writer’s notebooks. Ask students to examine the rhetorical choices and both the opportunities and limitations of the communication situations. For instance, a student who works as a restaurant server might describe a recent interaction with a customer. What are the typical types of conversation that one has with customers? What style, tone, and word choice are used? What are the limitations in communicating with customers at restaurants? For instance, aside from what the student did say to the customer, what were some of the things the student may have wanted to say? As each scenario is discussed, students will have a growing list of rhetorical situations and communication options. They may leave the class with new strategies for how to communicate in a variety of contexts.

**INVENTORIES**

Inventories can provide a wealth of potential topics for writing projects. Note that throughout the text, students are encouraged to do inventories to mine their own experiences and interests for writing ideas. Consider having students devote a section of their writer’s notebooks to just the genre of the inventory. (Similar inventories have been suggested elsewhere in this instruc-
They could label these various inventories and, by the end of the semester, have a collection of topic ideas that will serve them in other courses.

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

Classroom assessment tells us much as teachers about student learning as well as about our own best strategies and where we might profitably change things in our classroom delivery. Here are a few suggestions for classroom assessments (see also Feedback Box, p. 50 of this manual). The first assessment provides a template for checking student learning. The second assessment asks for students’ own evaluations, telling you how they think things are going in terms of classroom protocols/courtesies, respect for others, and the class’s overall effect on them as students. These are meant as examples for the kinds of efforts you might engage in to get ongoing assessment of your course’s effectiveness. After collecting student responses, look for patterns of difficulty students are having. Similarly, try not to overreact to feedback that is either too good or too bad to be true. As a follow-up, report back to students about what you can and cannot change in terms of the course as well as what they might change to enhance the experience of their fellow classmates.

**Assessment to Check Student Understanding**

Compare the point made today about _______ to the point made at our last class meeting about _______. In what ways do these points contradict each other? In what ways do they supplement each other?

**Assessment for an Improved Classroom Atmosphere**

- Do you feel comfortable taking part in discussions in this classroom?
- Do you feel that others contribute constructively to class discussion?
- Do you wish that others would speak up so that you don’t always have to?
- Do you sense that the instructor is interested in everyone’s perspective? What indicators suggest interest or lack of it?
- Does anything in this classroom interfere with your ability to focus?
- Do you find that this course offers multiple ways to participate, beyond just class discussion (such as small-group efforts, electronic discussion forums)? What additional ideas do you have for making this class more democratic in terms of participation?
- Do you think that this class offers multiple ways of learning, helping learners who are kinesthetic (need to move around), auditory (like to listen) and visual (need to see words or pictures)? Which learning style is tapped into the most?
- Are you comfortable with the pace and atmosphere of this course?
- When you leave this class each week, do you feel confident about your ability to complete the work, overwhelmed by the work that’s coming, or somewhere in between?
**DISCOVERY DRAFTS**

For many of your beginning college writers, the ability to lead with a thesis statement is difficult. Often you will find their thesis near the end of the essay, and sometimes this thesis will not match the ideas presented at the beginning. It may help students to know that some writers have to draft a whole paper to discover what it is they have to say. We sometimes call the result a “discovery draft,” in which the student-writer uses the space of the essay and their time writing as the mechanism for “finding” their thesis. Because students often are not accustomed to revising their work, they sometimes believe they are finished when they “discover” this thesis at the end. We can help them understand that finding the thesis is actually just the start to a polished college essay. They now must revamp the essay, moving the thesis to the beginning and following it with a systematic development of points. For many students, this news is frustrating or even alarming because they hadn’t imagined that writing a paper would take so much time or involve so much writing and revision. Providing an opportunity for a first turn-in date and then the expectation of revision can ease the transition to the higher expectations of college writing.

**THE SYNTHESIS GRID**

A synthesis grid is a useful heuristic for students to use whenever they are evaluating multiple sources on a single topic. The basic principle is for students to develop a grid or chart that allows them to consider the perspectives of several authors while reviewing them all in one location. The emphasis can be as much on synthesizing the perspectives of several authors as on the writer’s developing his or her own ideas. The synthesis grid derives its strength from its efficient distillation of many perspectives in an easily read single sheet. If a student were analyzing the differing perspectives of four writers on a literacy question—such as “Are the benefits of mastering public school literacy greater than the costs?”—he or she might choose from sources by Amy Tan, Deborah Tannen, Mike Rose, and Andrea Lunsford; although these writers do not answer this question directly, all of them take a position that make it possible to infer their opinion on this issue. The student would place the authors’ names (or the titles of their texts) at the top of the grid and the relevant areas for consideration—costs and benefits or pros and cons—at the left. The student would then consider the perspective of each author and write a short analysis within each relevant block. Here’s an example:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Tan</th>
<th>Tannen</th>
<th>Rose</th>
<th>Lunsford</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English fluency gives students access to the middle class</td>
<td>There’s value in female college students’ learning the communication strategies of male counterparts, and vice versa</td>
<td>Doors open to career opportunities when mainstream literacy is mastered</td>
<td>Classrooms offer mainstream opportunities for language exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Distance from family accrues as mainstream literacy of second-language learner replaces home language</td>
<td>Minorities (women and racial minorities) in traditional college classrooms face disadvantages</td>
<td>The common educational approach of “tracking” kids in low-literacy classes has a negative effect, one that is self-fulfilling</td>
<td>Traditional literacies taught and reinforced within non-mainstream communities have value, too</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can use this grid to help students analyze several sources on a topic simultaneously, even adding a column for their own ideas.

**USING THE FEATURED STUDENT-WRITER PROCESS MATERIALS**

Chapter 7 of *Joining the Conversation* follows Ali Bizzul’s analytical writing project about football players and obesity. Walk through the In Process boxes in Chapter 7 to illustrate the following processes:

- how to search online databases using Boolean operators (p. 236)
- how to apply an interpretive framework to evidence (p. 246)
- how to support reasons with specific evidence (p. 254)
- how to support a point using a figure or an illustration (p. 256)
Evaluation is used in every walk of life and, when written down, takes on new levels of authority and importance. The judgments in written evaluations often provide a shortcut for others who might rely on the information. Evaluations may also provide a springboard to additional analysis. Virtually every choice we make in our everyday and professional lives is guided by evaluation, making it essential that we continue to develop our evaluative skills throughout our lives. Students need to understand these arguments for the importance of evaluation so that they know why they’re being asked to both read and write evaluations in various forms.

Because it’s essential that students understand that an evaluation is only as good as the criteria used to make it, this chapter of Joining the Conversation goes to some length to suggest the first question of evaluation: Will the criteria for evaluation need to be explained, or can we safely assume that they will be understood? Whether the criteria are treated as “explained” or “understood,” they must be valid or appropriate for both purpose and audience. Once the criteria are effectively established, a strategy for applying the criteria fairly is needed. This instructor’s manual offers several strategies for students to learn how to impose order and consistency on this process.

Students must also understand that all the criteria and discussion in the world are only useful if these processes lead to a conclusion or “verdict” about the object being evaluated. While it is sometimes difficult for students to draw conclusions, it is essential that we encourage their increasing comfort with taking this risk. Sometimes this is a matter of helping them accept that while their understanding is tentative and incomplete—and whose isn’t?—they can still enter into the conversation and actually will learn more by doing so.

We can help students by reducing their anxiety and letting them know that they not only evaluate things all the time but are capable of adding their voices to academic evaluations as well. Evaluation is simply an opinion based on evidence, which means that evaluative writing contains personal bias. Your students will appreciate hearing that personal opinions are usually clearly visible in evaluative writing, as they should be. However, effective evaluative writing also offers alternative points of view to appear balanced and give readers a more holistic perspective of the issue. In everyday life, genres of evaluative writing include reviews for movies or restaurants, product comparisons, book reviews, and formal reports on programs or projects. In academic settings, evaluative writing includes assessing the reliability or validity of an article, evaluating a potential source for a research paper, and writing an annotated bibliography.

By gaining confidence in evaluative processes, students learn strategies for using language to report, with insight and conviction, the reasoned decisions of their academic, personal, and professional lives. For this reason, many of the activities and discussions for this chapter of the
instructor’s manual involve real-life evaluations, such as how to evaluate health care options available at work. Such topics not only make legitimate critical thinking tasks for college students but also offer legitimate uses of evaluative processes, especially as expressed through writing. With this chapter, then, we hope that students learn that they can use writing to make decisions, to convey their decisions to others, and to argue for improvements to their private and professional lives. To accomplish these goals effectively, they need to consider issues of genre and design as well because genre expectations necessarily inform readers’ evaluations.

CLASSEROOM ACTIVITIES

Pre-Evaluation Activities

MOVIE REVIEWS AS EVALUATIVE ASSESSMENTS
This unit may be students’ first time writing evaluative documents. They can assess their own progress in writing to evaluate by writing two movie reviews, one now and one after they have completed Chapter 8 of Joining the Conversation, and then comparing the results.

In a few paragraphs, evaluate a movie you have seen recently, keeping your roommate in mind as your reader. Put this piece of writing into your notebook. Later, at the end of the unit on writing to evaluate, draft a second movie review addressing the same audience and then compare the two reviews. Which is more effective? Ask yourself honestly: What did I know about evaluative writing when I came into this course? What do I know now? What ideas, discussions, or activities helped me learn something new? What did my second review accomplish that my first one did not?

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING A MAJOR
The Working Together box on p. 297 of Joining the Conversation offers a collaborative activity for developing and applying criteria to evaluate majors. Expand that activity by having students compare their own criteria in choosing a major to those of their parents. Consider referring students to the “College Scorecard” in the e-Pages to open the discussion about how to choose criteria.

Make a list of the criteria you considered when you chose your major or, if you haven’t chosen a major yet, the criteria you are currently considering. Then make a second list of the criteria you think your parents would use to evaluate your potential majors. How would your parents’ criteria differ from your own or from those developed by fellow students? Discuss your results with your peers: Are their criteria similar to yours? Are their expectations of their parents’ criteria similar to the ones you think your parents would use?
NAMING THE EVALUATION CRITERIA IN PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS

This activity gets students to consider the way that evaluation functions when selecting the tools of their trade. Here students are asked to think practically about the kinds of products or tools they may need to select and to make a case for in their chosen profession. Students are also asked to consider how audience and purpose affect the explanation of their criteria.

As your textbook points out, a writer might evaluate new fitness technology products, focusing on the criteria of effectiveness, cost, and ease of use. Think of a product or tool that might need to be evaluated in a profession related to your major. For instance, a landscape architecture major might need to evaluate sprinkler systems. A visual arts major working in a museum might need to evaluate lighting fixtures for an exhibit. Having named a product or tool, write a paragraph identifying the criteria you would use to evaluate this product. If you were writing an evaluation of this product for an “insider” audience, such as other students in your major, professors in your major, or working professionals in your field, how important would it be to explain these criteria? What if you were explaining your criteria to an “outside” audience like a funding agency? What kinds of additional information might they need to understand your evaluation and the criteria that inform it?

IDENTIFYING EVALUATIVE EVIDENCE

Once students have a general sense of the goals of evaluation and the strategies used to conduct it, they can apply their knowledge to identify appropriate evidence for different types of evaluations. Try using this activity at the conclusion of the first stage of your discussion of evaluation to assess how well students are grasping the principles. You can extend the table to add your own evaluation types.

Here are several types of common evaluations. Come up with evidence that would be most appropriate for each one; the first two have been filled in for you as examples. (You can review a discussion of identifying evidence on pp. 302–303 of Joining the Conversation.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object Being Evaluated</th>
<th>Suitable Evaluation Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>The movie itself, interview with director, friends’ testimonials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building restoration project</td>
<td>Budget reports, building codes, interviews with community members, architects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering project proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flat-screen television</td>
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<td>School lunch nutrition initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dormitory recycling program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candidates for student government president</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Job application</td>
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**ORGANIZING EVALUATIVE REPORTS STRATEGY**

This task focuses on the thinking and planning that precede writing an evaluative report; it may even include doing an informal outline. For this activity, students work in small groups to consider the scenario that’s described and then to lay out a plan recommending an organization for the report. Because real-world evaluations often involve informing some audience about findings, this is a useful exercise to create a preliminary planning document. The exercise enables the writer to consider audience, purpose, limitations, and challenges. Here’s the activity:

Reporting is a task conducted in virtually every profession. Imagine that you work for a large nonprofit and have been instructed to conduct site visits to branches of your parent organization. Your assignment is to evaluate the state of the satellite locations. You travel from Monday through Friday, and most of your visits are routine. However, you learn two important pieces of information. At one site, management is dissatisfied with the quality of certain promotional pieces your office recently created. At another site, management wanted to express appreciation for the way the central office handled a particular issue last quarter. As you draft a report of the findings from your trip, consider how best to organize...
it: Chronologically? Geographically? Bad news, good news, and the routing news? Routine news first? Some other way? Discuss your strategy with others in a small group. What principles or priorities should determine how you present your evaluation?

**USING A DECISION MATRIX**

Life is all about decisions, and often decisions are based on an evaluation of options. A decision matrix is a strategy that many people use to evaluate complicated options, particularly when there are several good ones. Try this exercise with a topic that’s fun, like choosing a dog, as shown in the following table. Here’s the activity:

Take a look at the table Dwight Haynes developed to evaluate campus alcohol prevention programs (p. 304 of *Joining the Conversation*). Such tables can be helpful for making any kind of complex decision. We sometimes call this a decision matrix, with choices listed along one axis and criteria along the other. Use a decision matrix to conduct a fun evaluation, such as deciding what kind of dog you want to get. Your criteria are the following: temperament, size, shedding levels, and purchase price. Your breed options are German shepherd, Alaskan malamute, standard poodle, and Pembroke Welsh corgi. Create a decision matrix that looks something like this, and rank each dog for all criteria on a scale of 1 to 3. You can learn about these breeds by going to a Web site such as dogster.com. Add your scores to determine your decision. (Of course, if you go to look at actual puppies, the decision matrix will be meaningless because the imposition of a logical system on an emotional decision rarely works!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>German Shepherd</th>
<th>Alaskan Malamute</th>
<th>Standard Poodle</th>
<th>Pembroke Welsh Corgi</th>
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<tr>
<td>Temperament</td>
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<td>Purchase price</td>
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**Conducting Evaluations**

**SOURCE EVALUATION**

This activity provides a strategy for evaluating any source for any purpose, one of the most common uses of evaluation in academic settings. You can assign students to review the criteria for evaluating sources discussed on pp. 66–72 in Chapter 3 of *Joining the Conversation*. 
Choose a source you are considering for a current research paper, either in this course or in another, and evaluate it according to the following criteria. Jot down answers and assess whether the source can be useful to your writing project.

**Evaluate the relevance.**
- Does the source address the particular topic you are interested in?
- Does the source represent a unique position in the conversation on this topic?
- Would the paper be compromised by not using this source?
- Does the source offer important commentary on your topic?

**Evaluate the author’s credentials or experience with this topic.**
- Does the author demonstrate knowledge on the topic?
- What are the author’s credentials for writing on this topic?
- What affiliations does the author have?
- Is having this author’s view represented important in any particular way?

**Evaluate the publication.**
- What community is represented by this publication?
- What affiliations does this publication have?
- Is having this publication’s approach represented important in any particular way?
- Does the publication generally reflect a fair or balanced approach to issues?

**Evaluate the scholarship and evidence.**
- Is the source academic, professional, or lay (nonexpert)?
- What evidence is used to support the main point?
- Does the source refer to other sources that are of value?

**Evaluate the currency.**
- Is the source ten or fewer years old?
- Does currency matter, or is the source of lasting importance?

**Evaluate bias.**
- Does the source approach the topic from a neutral position?
- Does it have an obvious bias?

**Evaluate the overall perspective and its usefulness.**
- Is the source comprehensive enough?
- Does this source contribute essential information to the dialogue?
- Does this source enlarge our understanding of the issue?

**BIAS IN NEWS SOURCES**
Like the previous one, this activity addresses source evaluation but focuses specifically on bias. After students have completed the activity, you can use their work to launch a discussion about how to identify bias-related evidence in a source.
Using an academic database that includes news sources, such as Academic Universe, look up coverage on a highly covered but now “old news” topic such as Edward Snowden leaking details of U.S. surveillance or the inauguration of Pope Francis. Find three or four news accounts of the event, making sure that the accounts reflect differing perspectives on the issue. Evaluate the reporting that you see in these sources. What words would you use to describe the perspective or bias of each news source and its coverage? Now find one or two other non-news sources (blogs, political Web sites) that addressed this event, and evaluate their bias as well. Do you notice any differences in the treatment of the event by non-news sources versus professional news sources?

DEVELOPING AN EVALUATIVE ASSIGNMENT FOR A COURSE

This activity asks students to design a classroom writing assignment that involves evaluation. Their writing of this assignment will require that they understand the goals of evaluation, possible applications and uses of evaluation in their courses, and the genre conventions of academic assignments.

Consider other courses that you are taking this term. What possible evaluative assignments might you be asked to do in those courses? For instance, in an introduction to music class, you might be asked to attend a number of performances and write reviews of them. In an introduction to psychology class, you might evaluate psychological claims that are presented in local news stories. Design a writing assignment for one of your other classes that asks you and your fellow students to do some form of relevant evaluation. Draft the actual prompt or assignment sheet for students to respond to. Consider what verb you might use to assign the central task of the assignment and how you will designate the evaluative criteria.

REVIEWING THE REVIEW

This activity invites students to consider the way that media or place reviews often evaluate more than their primary subject. These reviews sometimes offer commentary on trends, issues, and topics that are reflected in the subject of the review but not limited to it. In that sense, the subject under review can be said to be emblematic or suggestive of some larger topic. One example is Lindsay Zoladz’s review of Thao & Get Down Stay Down on pp. 286–288, which discusses life experience in the context of reviewing a popular album. Getting students to see the larger purposes of reviewing may be a valuable task for your course’s purposes. For this activity, bring in a variety of widely available magazines and newspapers, such as Time, the Atlantic, or the Washington Post, or have your class meet in the periodicals room of your campus library.

Scan a few of the magazines and newspapers in front of you. Locate a media review and read it carefully and critically. What topics does the review cover? Does the review go be-
yond a description and evaluation of the review’s primary subject to address larger cultural, social, or professional implications? Underline or highlight statements in the review where you see the writer extending the discussion beyond the primary subject. Then jot down in the margins those additional topics being addressed. Be prepared to read these passages aloud and to discuss them in class.

IN-CLASS WRITING ABOUT REPORTS
This activity asks students to consider more deeply the purposes of reporting by thinking back to an organization they’ve been part of and using the LIFT report (e-Pages for Joining the Conversation) as a model. In short, LIFT’s report accomplishes “accountability” to a number of constituencies. This activity invites students to consider how accountability reports have worked, or might have worked, with organizations they’ve been part of. Here’s the activity:

Like the LIFT report in the e-Pages for Joining the Conversation, reports serve many purposes beyond conveying information. They can provide information updates, remind interested parties of pending issues, ensure that accountability matters and that results are reported, or hold reporting parties responsible for their part of the project or task. Think of an organization you are or were part of; it could be a high school club, a campus group, a local chapter of a civic or religious organization, or any other organization. Did that group ever generate a report? If so, to whom was it directed? Of the reasons for issuing a report that are given above, which one comes closest to why your group wrote a report? If your group did not produce a report, given the challenges that faced the group, which purpose would have been most useful? Freewrite in class to answer these questions.

Alternative approach:
Consider a campus group that you’re not part of but are aware of. What kinds of accountability reporting do you think this group should be doing?

WRITING A REPORT FOR MULTIPLE AUDIENCES
This activity presents students with a complex rhetorical challenge involving writing for two audiences whose purposes are different. The goal for the piece of writing may be the same—to sell an idea—but the strategies for convincing the two audiences will necessarily be quite different. This activity can also be used in group work.

You are the project leader for a biomedical engineering firm that has developed a new synthetic product that helps bone regenerate. In order to continue with expensive product development, your firm needs to present its findings to investors, who will evaluate your company on two criteria: (1) the cost-effectiveness of your business model and (2) the profitability of the product. Meanwhile, a group of orthopedic veterinarians at a
teaching hospital learned about the product and may be willing to try it. Their decision is also based on two criteria: (1) that the product could significantly improve patients’ quality of life and (2) that the cost to pet owners would not be prohibitive.

You have the resources to draft only one report for both the investors and the veterinarians. Consider how to draft a report that meets the needs of both audiences and also demonstrates awareness of their differing expertise. How will you help both groups evaluate the promise of this product as they make a decision? What evidence will the members of each group need to make their decision? What design features will your report have so that it addresses the criteria of both sets of readers without forcing them to read items that don’t apply to them? Strategize your approach and then draft an informal outline of the report. Remember: you have a vested interest in selling this idea!

EVALUATING A CAMPUS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT

College campuses are always under construction, and this activity invites students to consider not only the value and success of a particular capital (brick-and-mortar) improvement but also its implications for student learning. Because capital improvements involve the outlay of a great deal of money and the decision to do so requires much planning as well as fund-raising, campus values are made manifest by these investments in the physical infrastructure. Encourage students to think critically about the choices being made. Here’s the activity:

Identify a capital improvement (construction project) going on at your campus; it could be the construction of a new building or the extensive remodeling and enhancing of an existing one. Write a review of this project for your campus newspaper. What are your criteria for evaluating the project, and what is your judgment about the success of the overall project? Find out about the strategic planning that was involved to get to the point of bricks and mortar. As you explain this project to a student audience, decide what your readers need to know to understand the evaluation you’re offering of this physical “improvement” to the campus. Can you go beyond a review of this campus place to suggest the larger implications of the capital improvement or of the budgetary priorities that led to its construction?

REVIEWING INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK

A common suspicion that instructors report is the concern that students do not read their detailed comments on papers. If the suspicion is accurate, then we may be spending a lot of time giving feedback that never reaches its intended audience. Try this activity not just to witness student reading of your comments but to take it a step further and invite them to plan a revision based on your feedback. Having done this once, you may never again turn back a paper without a writing session like this one! Here’s the activity:
Individually review the feedback you have received from your instructor on a recent draft or a finished paper for this class. Read the marginal and end comments carefully. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of this draft based on your instructor’s feedback. What, in general, is going well in your writing? Where do you need to work? What will you focus your efforts on first as you return to revise this paper or as you take the lessons of the last graded paper and move forward to improve on your next one?

Optional extension for later in the term:

Do a self-evaluation of your progress by reviewing the comments on all your written work this term. According to these comments, what are your strengths and weaknesses as a writer? What are you consistently doing well, and what are you repeatedly having trouble with? In what areas have you improved from the beginning of the course to the present?

EVALUATING HEALTH INSURANCE PLANS

This activity, like several others in this chapter, focuses on health care as a current issue that college students ought to be aware of. Divide the class into groups for this complex evaluation.

New employees often have a choice of company health care plans, and they must carefully weigh the costs and benefits of each when choosing coverage. Here is the information for three basic health care plans provided by an employer. Working with your group, first read through the grid and plan specifications below. Decide as a group what criteria you would use to evaluate the different plans and write them down. Conduct your evaluations, keeping in mind costs such as premiums (the amount you pay each month toward your insurance coverage), deductibles (the cumulative amount you must pay first before coverage kicks in), and co-pays (generally a small amount you need to pay at the time of a doctor’s visit or for a prescription, while your insurer pays the rest), as well as the levels of coverage provided by each plan. Consider what is covered and what is left out. Then write down your judgment: Which health plan would you choose based on these criteria? What’s the most important factor for you? (Assume that all members of your family will be covered under these plans.)
### Plan A vs. Plan B vs. Plan C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan A</th>
<th>Plan B</th>
<th>Plan C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No deductible</td>
<td>$1,000 deductible</td>
<td>$2,000 deductible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No co-pay</td>
<td>$10 co-pay</td>
<td>$10 co-pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 million annual cap</td>
<td>$500,000 annual cap</td>
<td>$20,000 annual cap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventive care: full</td>
<td>Preventive care: OB/GYN only</td>
<td>Preventive care: none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premium: $1,000 monthly</td>
<td>Premium: $500 monthly</td>
<td>Premium: $200 monthly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Information:** Here are some additional pieces of information about these insurance plans. Does this information help you with your decision?

- Plan A members can choose any doctor. Under Plan A, all family members are entitled to one physical per year, including school physicals. All prenatal appointments are included. Prostate cancer screening is also included.

- Plan B members may go to any doctor but *all* charges are covered only if the doctor is a member of the plan’s network. If a Plan B member goes outside the approved list of providers (doctors, pharmacies, hospitals, etc.) and the charges are higher than those of approved providers, the plan will pay 80 percent of the difference, and the member must pay the remaining 20 percent. Plan B includes preventive appointments at no charge for annual gynecological exams and prenatal care only.

- Plan C members are reimbursed at set rates paid directly to participating providers only. Members going outside the plan are responsible for 100 percent of the difference between participating physicians’ approved charges and actual charges. Plan C does not cover any preventive care visits.

### READINGS

**Christina Hoff Sommers and Sally Satel, MD, *Emotional Correctness***

In their book *One Nation Under Therapy: How the Helping Culture Is Eroding Self-Reliance*, Hoff Sommers and Satel evaluate the effectiveness of talk therapy for psychological health, questioning the belief that the most well-adjusted people “focus attention on and talk about their feelings.” The authors conclude that this belief is empirically unsupported.

With an opening anecdote, this piece begins as a reflective or informative piece might. However, we see overt signs that this piece is evaluative. Ask students to identify specific sen-
tences that demonstrate this piece as evaluative. The authors’ judgment, or opinion, regarding talk therapy is alluded to at the beginning of the essay in the following sentence: “Ivins’s spirited refusal to open up is a breath of fresh air.” You can ask students to consider the following questions: What are the authors trying to express in this sentence? Are they perhaps trying to convince you of something here? Here, we see that evaluative writing may overlap persuasive writing.

If you have covered Chapter 6, “Writing to Inform,” you may ask students to draw similarities and differences between informative writing and evaluative writing. Once students acknowledge that evaluative writing includes making a judgment about an issue, have them focus more closely on how that judgment is conveyed in this piece and what evidence the authors use to support that judgment.

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK
These authors use rhetorical questions like “But is this true?” and “What about self-absorption?” to introduce ideas and reinforce their position. You can ask students: What effect do these rhetorical questions have on the essay overall? What do rhetorical questions do, in general? When are rhetorical questions appropriate in academic writing?

The authors also include repetition to emphasize their position. An example of repetition occurs in the following sentence: “But she wanted to show that recounting one’s anxieties (again and again) or pondering them (over and over) is not required for psychological health” (p. 279). Even though the repetition is in parentheses, the authors felt it was important enough to include. Students may be asked: What impact does repetition have on this passage? To have students explore the uses and impact of repetition in greater depth, see p. 540 in the handbook section of Joining the Conversation.

Lindsay Zoladz, Review of Thao & the Get Down Stay Down, We the Common

While students are certainly familiar with reviews and may even have written some themselves on sites like Amazon or Rotten Tomatoes, they may not consider these reviews to be legitimate evaluations. Often, students consider their comments on Web sites like Yelp to be “just their opinion.” Lindsay Zoladz’s review of the album We the Common is an opportunity to get students to consider the genre of a review and what makes someone else’s opinion about a product, hotel, or movie worth reading or listening to. Zoladz may have done some research to gather information about the Get Down Stay Down or its lead singer’s background, but the review is mostly the product of the writer’s opinions and perceptions of Thao Nguyen and her work. Invite students to identify the central opinion or opinions driving Zoladz’s piece. What facts does she add that lend authority to her evaluation? How does she integrate the factual statements with the opinion statements? Consider using the review as a model to discuss how students can take their own opinions and develop them into a compelling evaluation.

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK
In the very first sentence of her review, Zoladz uses a semicolon to connect her opening thoughts about the pursuit of life experience and how it manifests in our society. You may remind students that writers sometimes depart from standard sentence structure in the opening
sentences in order to catch the reader’s attention or to set a certain tone for their document. What impression is created by Zoladz’s use of a semicolon? Was it necessary? Many students are unsure of the appropriate use of a semicolon in their own writing. Review the handbook section on semicolons (p. 738 in *Joining the Conversation*), and ask students how this sentence might be rewritten without the semicolon.

**Steve Garbarino, *The Crescent City’s Greatest Po’Boys***

Start a discussion about how some documents address multiple purposes, perhaps shifting midstream. The first portion of Garbarino’s review seems to inform the audience, whereas the evaluation comes at the end. Have students consider the style of both portions of the review. Is the information in each section presented similarly or differently? What effect would it have on the review if it contained only the evaluative component?

This article is a good model for showing how the writer identifies his criteria. Consider discussing with students whether these criteria are used evenly in all of Garbarino’s reviews. The reviews are very brief, and some don’t provide much detail about the food itself. Are students able to glean enough information from the short reviews to make a decision, or do they wish more information were provided?

The presentation and layout of this review are also worth considering. How do the images affect the reading of the review? Do they engage you more? Are they unnecessary? For this kind of writing, are there certain features that would enhance the presentation of information for the audience? How important is the visual component of a review? This might lead to a fruitful discussion on the presentation of information, and how it affects audience engagement and reception of information.

**INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK**

This essay describes a company slogan not written in standard American English: “Its delivery trucks, marked with its slogan, ‘Sink ya teeth into a piece of New Orleans cultcha,’ are a part of the city’s fabric” (p. 291). The regional dialect is emphasized in this slogan, and New Orleans’s “fabric” is portrayed in a manner inconsistent with standard American English. What is the author able to convey about the city’s culture and language by incorporating this slogan into the essay? What do readers learn about the city? Could this be an unfair stereotype of the residents of New Orleans? Before the discussion, have students review the handbook section on language free of bias and stereotyping (pp. 707–709 in *Joining the Conversation*) to facilitate their discussion.

**LIFT, oneLIFT 2012 Impact Report**

Self-evaluation is an important component of assessment. Students are frequently in the position of evaluating their own work, in the classroom and in any extracurricular jobs or activities in which they participate. They should understand the temptation to exaggerate their successes or downplay mistakes, even if they have never succumbed. Discuss the role of ethics in self-evaluation. How can a writer evaluate and critique his or her work with as little bias as possible?
In this impact report, the nonprofit organization LIFT evaluates its accomplishments to inform donors and sponsors of the impact of their contributions and, one can presume, to encourage them to donate again in the future. In small groups, have students discuss the report’s dual purpose. Ask them first to identify factual statements (including statistics) and then look for persuasive statements. Is the ratio reassuring?

EnviroMedia Social Marketing and the University of Oregon, *Greenwashing Index*

“Greenwashing” is a term used to describe a recent development in advertising where companies and products are made to appear more environmentally friendly than might actually be the case. Much like the “College Scorecard”—the next e-Page reading—and this Web site invites a great deal of participation from its target audience. Encourage students to click on the source link in the e-Pages and visit the Greenwashing Index directly. There, they can learn more about the concept; view, rate, and comment on ads posted by other users; and upload their own examples of misleading marketing. Ask students to consider the impact of a group evaluation. How does the rating system give the appearance of a collective conclusion?

U.S. Department of Education, *College Scorecard*

In this reading, students will discover that none of the evaluation has been done for them. Instead, the “College Scorecard” invites users to consider criteria, explore the data, and draw their own conclusions. Ask students to consider the strengths and weaknesses of this method of presenting information. Is there more work involved for readers? What do readers gain by doing the evaluation themselves? Are they more certain of their conclusions? Are there genres of information that cannot be presented this way?

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

**GENRES IN CONVERSATION**

One of the central premises of *Joining the Conversation* is that writing involves genre and design choices. Use the Genres in Conversation feature to start a discussion on what evaluative writing looks like. Because all three documents focus on the same topic, their differences in genre and design are more apparent. Ask students to view the Genres in Conversation feature in the e-Pages and answer the questions before class. Then discuss the audience and purpose of each document shown. Have students consider what the genres have in common and how they use design differently to accomplish their purposes. Ask students if they can think of other genres that would work well to evaluate fitness technologies. Finally, ask students what elements of these varied sources would be effective for their own writing purposes and audiences.
SEEKING OUT EVALUATIVE WRITING
Point out to students that their textbook claims that evaluative writing is “something readers are likely to seek out.” Ask if they have ever sought out a review of a movie or CD before purchasing it. If they were purchasing a car, what evaluative resources would they use to make a decision?

THE GOALS OF EVALUATING
Remind students that their textbook says that evaluations usually aim to accomplish one of two goals: “to determine whether something has succeeded or failed, or to help readers understand how something might be improved or refined.” Ask them the following questions: Do you believe that evaluation boils down to these two tasks, or can you think of other kinds of evaluation? What about deciding where to go, with whom to go, or what to do on a summer vacation or even just on a night out? Do these evaluative decisions involve the two goals your textbook identifies?

DIFFICULT EVALUATIONS VERSUS EASY EVALUATIONS
Ask students about the chapter-opening list of potential evaluations we might undertake (described on p. 276 of Joining the Conversation), including evaluations of movies, restaurants, treadmills, GPS devices, and even insect repellents. Ask which items they believe would be more difficult to evaluate and which less difficult. Why? How does the kind of evidence available (qualitative versus quantitative) affect the difficulty in evaluating an item? You might also ask what subjects or items students believe would be the most difficult to evaluate.

WORD CHOICE IN EVALUATIONS
Engage in a discussion on word choice in Steve Garbarino’s evaluation of po’boy sandwiches (pp. 290–293 of Joining the Conversation). Ask students which words they noticed in particular and why they think Garbarino may have chosen certain words over others. For instance, why did Garbarino choose the word rivalry instead of the evaluative term comparison? Ask students to find three other words in the piece that demonstrate that Garbarino is consistent with tone, style, and register. Do you see any inconsistencies among his word choices? Based on his word choice, what assumptions does Garbarino make about his readers? Are these safe assumptions? You can also expand on this discussion by comparing Garbarino’s word choice with that in a different reading, such as the LIFT report (in the e-Pages). Ask students to compare the tone of the two readings. Which is more neutral? Why?

CRITERIA FOR HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION
Reform of U.S. health care has been front and center in the news for many years, even decades, with renewed interest in the idea of universal health care for American citizens. However, solutions related to health care reform have been elusive, in part because the criteria for judging plans have themselves been difficult to agree on. Ask students to name as many criteria as they can think of for officials to consider as they make this important public policy evaluation. They
might share their lists of criteria with two other classmates. How do their lists compare? Do these lists themselves suggest varied values and beliefs?

**LATE-NIGHT COMEDY TALK SHOWS**
Invite students to review the news satire of Stephen Colbert and the comedic news reporting of Jon Stewart. How do they differ in style and substance, perhaps even in genre? Which do your students prefer and why? What aesthetic criteria do they bring to the evaluation of comedy?

**PEER-REVIEW DISCUSSION**
Peer review is a central feature of most writing classrooms. Yet without focused instruction on the pitfalls of peer review, our assumptions about students’ readiness for assisting one another may not be valid. Discuss with your students the problems and opportunities of reviewing their peers’ writing:

- When you receive feedback on your writing, what do you need and want from a peer?
- When you provide feedback on others’ writing, what do you worry about, if anything?
- In general, why do most peer reviewers, when giving feedback on writing, tend to say either too little (“This is great! Just clean it up a bit!”) or too much (“This is a mess! Where did you learn to write?”)?
- Consult the general guidelines for writers and reviewers on pp. 90–93 of *Joining the Conversation*. Based on this class discussion, do you have any guidelines to add?

**TEACHER EVALUATIONS**
Many students relish the chance to turn the tables and evaluate their instructors at the end of the term, but they often understand little about the process. Academic departments rely heavily on student evaluations, despite their enormous flaws, and tenure and promotion—even continued employment—are directly linked to them. Have students read the September 2008 article “Judgment Day” from the *New York Times*: nytimes.com/2008/09/21/magazine/21wwln-evaluations-t.html.

The article profiles a Wesleyan professor who was not rehired after receiving poor evaluations from a handful of her students. It discusses several psychological studies that reveal some of the problems with having students evaluate their teachers: their evaluation responses are too easily swayed by grades and, in one study, by chocolate. What do students in *your* class think about course evaluations? By what criteria should professors be evaluated? How heavily should student evaluations be weighted in a professor’s job or tenure status? Do you think professors should be evaluated on a quantitative basis (i.e., they have to receive a certain percentage of excellent evaluations) or a qualitative basis (i.e., they have to receive positive comments from students)?
As suggested by the Reviewing Instructor Feedback activity on p. 90 of this instructor’s manual, you might consider developing a routine approach for having students review the feedback you give them on their writing. Because few things are more frustrating than responding at length and then not knowing if students have read your responses, it can be gratifying for you to know that students have read and responded to your comments. One way to make this happen is to return papers with fifteen to twenty minutes left in the class and then have students read your comments and write a “next time” plan, which could function either as a revision plan or as a strategy for future papers if there will be no revision of the paper you’ve already responded to.

Joining the Conversation suggests the value of listening in to conversations in order to find a topic for an evaluative essay. In Chapter 8, we learn that student-writer Dwight Haynes selected the topic of reducing alcohol consumption, a topic that might raise red flags for us because so many college students seem eager to write about their alcohol consumption during their first months of college. Other topics may cause us to react similarly. After all, when you’ve read your twentieth essay on the death penalty or abortion, you start to wonder why students revert to these predictable topics. But Dwight’s sample paper and the process that takes him to a specific focus on alcohol abuse prevention programs also suggest why it’s important to go slowly when you’re inclined to rule out topics. With help, Dwight was able to move past the predictable evaluation he had in mind, one that would assess the pros and cons of alcohol consumption in college. He stayed with the general subject of alcohol but moved into the narrower and more promising topic of campus alcohol abuse prevention programs. Even a topic like the death penalty can be salvaged by getting a student to focus on some aspect of the issue. For instance, a student might consider the laws associated with age or handicap restrictions in relation to death penalty rulings.

While many of our students will discover that they routinely evaluate items as they consider a purchase or debate how to spend their time, they may find it more difficult to formulate a final judgment when considering ideas that are posed in academic writing. They may believe that their knowledge is too tentative, their claims to expertise too slight, even if they are completely clear about their positions on the topic and the soundness of their criteria. Staking a claim by stating an evaluative thesis—or any thesis—in a formal college paper may lie outside their comfort zone. Among other things, they may not be familiar with conventions we may consider commonplace in college writing. Familiarizing students with the genre conventions of academic writing and giving them repeated practice in staking claims (whether evaluative, analytical, or argumentative) can help build their confidence.
USING PARODY AND SATIRE

Consider developing a fun exercise in which students subvert the standard expectations of evaluation. For instance, they might choose the most outrageous criteria they can imagine and take a satirical approach to evaluating a product or program. Alternatively, ask them to find a media review or other published evaluation and draft a full-blown parody of it; for instance, they might parody a place evaluation by critiquing a hideous eyesore in the middle of campus, such as a public restroom. Because both parody and satire require a deep understanding of genre conventions as well as of evaluation, students must think a lot about how a standard evaluation or review is conducted and then subvert the expectations of the genre. Doing so can be a learning experience that infuses new life into a course.

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE

As Chapter 8 of *Joining the Conversation* explains, figuring out the kinds of evidence to use is an important part of any evaluation. Students may not yet be aware of the availability of vast quantities of statistical data from sources such as the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* and the U.S. Census. Because trends data can be an important component of many student papers, an awareness of statistical resources is invaluable. Students can also be encouraged to consider that quantitative data derived from statistical sources is made far more convincing through accompanying qualitative information obtained through interviews and observations of actual people. Exposing students to the value of both quantitative and qualitative evidence can be a rich teaching opportunity with lasting impacts. To accompany this discussion, see the list of statistical resources offered on p. 140 of this instructor’s manual.

THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY AS AN EVALUATIVE TOOL

Use Chapter 11 of *Joining the Conversation* as an opportunity to focus on the evaluative nature of annotated bibliographies. Review pp. 450–451 with students and remind them of the three parts of an annotated bibliography entry: (1) the citation, correctly formatted and following the conventions of the style guide used; (2) a brief summary of the source; and (3) an evaluation of the source. The evaluative portion of the annotation may be the most challenging for students, but it provides students with an opportunity to flex their intellectual muscles and to weigh the importance of the source to their study. A good evaluative annotation should address the central questions: Why did you select this source? How will it contribute to your analysis and discussion?

USING THE FEATURED STUDENT-WRITER PROCESS MATERIALS

Chapter 8 of *Joining the Conversation* follows Dwight Haynes’s evaluative writing project on a topic that is surely familiar to many students—reducing alcohol consumption on college campuses. Walk through the In Process boxes in Chapter 8 to illustrate the following processes:

- how to search the Web to learn more about a topic (p. 299)
- how to brainstorm to focus on a subject (p. 300)
- how to make judgments by listing evaluative criteria and evidence (p. 304)
- how to use evidence to support judgments (p. 307)
Teaching Chapter 9, Writing to Solve Problems

Our lives and the world are full of problems. In fact, a good place for students to begin to see the relevance of their education is by setting them to work on naming and finding solutions to the problems around them. Discovering existing conversations about these problems is an essential piece of this effort, and Joining the Conversation provides students with strategies for participating in this central academic enterprise. Through careful and conscious guidance, we can invite students to join the conversation about issues that concern them and help them become contributors and, ultimately, problem solvers. Their efforts reward them with a rising appreciation for their own abilities coupled with a dawning sense that with this capability—indeed with this education—comes responsibility. The world is waiting for their solutions.

But first, students need to learn how to identify a problem and break it down. This begins with naming the slice of the problem they will address and understanding the parts of the problem they’re leaving out in the process. Problem definition, as Joining the Conversation reflects, is the most essential and sometimes the most difficult part of the challenge for writers of problem-solving texts. This is more than a matter of writing, though. It is a matter of doing. As problem solvers, we ask: What can I reasonably hope to do? What piece of the puzzle can I add? What difference can I make?

Problem-solving topics neatly illustrate how important it is to connect with existing conversations. After all, students will agree that it would be discouraging to spend hours putting together a solution only to discover that someone else had already tried—and reported—the same approach. Students can see the practical advantage of learning from others’ efforts. For instance, in reading others’ ideas, students may discover some small variation that might make the proposed solution work better. The need to locate others’ perspectives becomes abundantly clear with problem-solving papers, offering a bridge to source-based writing more generally. As students become increasingly able to situate themselves within existing conversations, they become more engaged participants in the processes that are central to academic thinking, writing, and doing.

In this chapter of Joining the Conversation, students learn to identify or define a problem, to explain the significance of a problem, or to propose solutions. Because documents that attempt to solve problems are published every day, students will be familiar with this type of writing and should be able to provide examples of it. They might also have a more personal connection with it and be more invested in this kind of writing. If students are provided the opportunity to explore problems on campus, in their community, or on a global scale, their investment in a self-selected topic may yield more successful academic writing. Problem-
solving documents can also take many forms. Students may produce traditional essays or design an advertisement, Web site, blog, or multimodal composition accompanied by a rationale.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Analyzing Problems and Solutions**

**RESIDENCE HALL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

Some of our most vexing problems occur closest to home. In this activity, which could take as long as a full hour of class, students are asked to identify problems that have emerged in their residence halls or apartments. The activity asks students to consider the rhetorical roles that various people might play in relation to these problems as well as the strategies for generating solutions and communicating those solutions to stakeholders.

In a small group, brainstorm the problems that need to be solved in your residence hall or wherever you live (in an apartment, at home). Potential sources of problems include treatment and upkeep of common areas; noise standards, especially late at night; trash disposal; and respect for private property. Once you have generated a list of about ten problems, decide on the top three solvable issues your group shares in regard to living space. Consider the following questions and then examine the roles you might adopt in focusing on these problems.

- Who is in a position to solve this problem? (Who has authority in this context?)
- What types of compromise are required?
- How do communication obstacles factor into this problem?
- What are some strategies for addressing this problem? (What options are there for action? How will those strategies or ideas be communicated?)
- How would people know if the problem has been solved? What will be the measurable and verifiable results, the indicators of success? How should these objectives be communicated to the people who are involved—the stakeholders?
- At what point in the process of addressing this problem might you take on the role of the Observer? the Reporter? the Interpreter? the Evaluator? the Advocate?

To conclude this activity, spend a final five minutes developing a general approach for defining and solving problems. What steps did you take to identify, define, and solve the problem?
PARODIC OR INAPPROPRIATE SOLUTIONS
This activity invites students to craft inappropriate solutions—both serious and parodic—to a minor problem. Inviting students to let loose and offer wild solutions helps them assess practicality and feasibility in a creative way. This activity can act as an extension of the Working Together box on p. 348 of Joining the Conversation, which focuses on collaboratively talking through a minor problem and solution. Preface the activity by defining parody; you may also want to pair this activity with one of the more famous literary problem-solving texts, Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal.” After the groups have brainstormed and developed their “solutions,” reconvene the class so that students can present their ideas to one another. Here’s the activity:

Your textbook states that solutions must be practical and swift and not cause greater problems. In this activity, you are freed from these constraints and can let your imagination run wild. Working in small groups, generate a list of inappropriate solutions to a problem that matters to you, such as how to resolve a conflict with a roommate or neighbor or how to get your work done in light of your “addiction” to Facebook. First, brainstorm or cluster as many solutions as you can—both parodies and serious solutions that are impractical or will almost certainly make matters worse. Have fun with this. As a group, choose the solution you all like best and develop it further. Prepare a problem definition and description of your solution to present to the rest of the class.

CAMPUS PROBLEMS IN THE NEWS
Getting students engaged with their campus is an important task for any instructor of first-year students. This activity gets students looking critically at their campus newspaper and considering it as a problem-solving genre. It also helps students focus on the different perspectives that multiple sources on the same issue may take. Here’s the activity:

Go to your campus newspaper for discussions of problems on campus. Skim back issues of the newspaper and find an issue that has been addressed more than once. Cut out three articles that deal with this problem and bring them to class. In class, analyze how each article addresses the problem. Do different writers define the problem differently? Is more than one solution discussed? Can you track the development of the problem over time? Pay special attention to the different genres of articles represented—news reports, opinion columns, editorials, letters to the editor—and consider how those genres might also be influencing the problem definition and proposed solution.

REHEARSING PROBLEM DEFINITIONS
We can help students develop increasing levels of fluency in defining problems by formulating specific ways of accomplishing this task. This activity reviews four approaches offered in Joining the Conversation for identifying problem definitions. Students are asked to apply these four approaches to two different issues. Then, to encourage the idea of writing as a recursive pr-
cess that involves drafting and reviewing, and more drafting and reviewing, assign students to revise their problem statement. Here’s the activity:

On p. 353, your textbook says that a clear problem definition is “the single most important element of your problem-solving essay.” Practice defining problems using two issues that are relevant to many colleges or universities: the problem of large class size in introductory courses, and the problem of high prices for textbooks.

In a small group, identify four different problem definitions for each issue by using the methods discussed on pp. 354–356 of your textbook:

1. Exploring the situation and its effects
2. Focusing on the agent, his or her goals and actions, and the results of those actions
3. Examining the severity and duration of a problem
4. Considering goals and the barriers to reaching those goals

Fill in the chart by drafting four definitions for each problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Large class sizes in introductory courses</th>
<th>High textbook prices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation/effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent/goals/actions/results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity and duration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals and barriers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss with your group how the solutions that emerge from these different problem definitions vary. Finally, choose the problem definition you think is most compelling and has the most potential for solutions, and then revise it so that it clearly explains the problem.

CUT AND PASTE: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Try a competitive cut-and-paste activity as a way of supporting revision through collaborative efforts. With this activity, you will need a short problem-solving essay with several paragraphs, preferably twelve to fifteen. It helps if the essay is somewhat less than fully successful at providing transitions between paragraphs and/or sections, so a rough, unpublished essay you have written or a student sample paper for which you have obtained permission works well for this.
While you will need to make several copies of the whole essay (one for each group of three or four students), you can reuse these copies in future semesters. Before you duplicate the essay, randomly number the paragraphs in the margins. Then cut the essay into paragraphs. Ask the groups to reassemble the essay correctly. Time the activity to determine the winner. Later, when you check each group’s work, you can simply scan the numbers to see if students got the correct order. Just be sure to maintain the full, original copy with the random paragraph numbers you assigned, so that you know the proper order. A benefit to this exercise is the careful reading students must do to put the paragraphs into meaningful order. It may astonish you—and them—to see how satisfying they find reading and rereading an essay in a competitive context, as they get to know its structure by reconstructing it. (This cutting and rearranging process can be very helpful for students working on their own papers, as discussed in the Teaching Tips in this chapter.)

INFORMAL OUTLINE OF A PROPOSAL

As already discussed in this instructor’s manual, informal or scratch outlining offers many advantages, one of which is that a writer can develop a basic shape for a writing concept without committing to writing the full draft. Often, when a writer sees the planned paper in outline, both the flaws and the opportunities leap out in ways they would not if the whole paper were already drafted. Here’s the activity:

Write an informal outline for a proposal that addresses a problem you are aware of in your town. Are citizens angry about rising property taxes or changing parking rules? Have you heard about corruption in the local government? Identify an emerging problem or an ongoing policy that you think needs attention, and develop your informal outline proposal. Be sure to include at least some of the proposal elements described on p. 336 of Joining the Conversation. After you have drafted your informal outline, trade with a partner and give each other feedback on the outline. Identify for each other any noticeable flaws—places that have logical gaps or points that haven’t been addressed—or any solutions that might have been overlooked.

COMPARING INFORMAL OUTLINES

This activity invites students to flex their muscles as they consider multiple ways of addressing an issue and organizing any paper. As students develop two different informal outlines in this activity, you might consider having them transfer these outlines to a transparency or PowerPoint and projecting their “solutions” to this challenge for the rest of the class. They may be surprised at the range of approaches the class generates. Here’s the activity:

On p. 359, your textbook presents two different problem definitions related to the shortage of qualified teachers. With a partner, work together to draft informal outlines for the probable development of each paper. Place the outlines side by side to discuss differences.
Drafting Problem-Solving Documents

IN-CLASS WRITING ON RISING TUITION COSTS

Have students brainstorm additional focus ideas for a topic that’s treated by the featured student-writer in Chapter 9. Getting students to consider other directions in which they might take a topic and identify other potential research questions is a valuable skill they can use in many contexts. We want students to develop a degree of flexibility and capability as they generate ideas. Starting with a focus that has already been selected and “improvising” new ideas can help students see the wide range of directions in which they might take any paper.

Read Jennie Tillson’s problem definition on p. 355 of your textbook and consider the situation of rising tuition costs and its effects. What other problems are associated with this general issue? If you were going to write a paper on the broad topic of rising tuition costs, what alternative focus might you take, based on your own experience or your knowledge of this issue and its effects?

CONDUCTING A QUICK SURVEY

One of the research methods discussed in Chapter 9 of Joining the Conversation is conducting surveys; the chapter explains how surveys can help a writer learn more about how a large group of people experiences a particular issue. Have students work in small groups to draft and conduct a mini-survey of their peers. Then circulate the surveys throughout the class in a round-robin fashion. Afterward, reconvene the groups to analyze their survey data and create a graphic to represent the data. This activity gives students practice in using data from sources and considering the context of that data.

Prepare a survey of your classmates on a topic of interest (for example, attitudes about vegetarianism; number of hours of sleep each night; spending habits). Remember that surveys are most helpful for answering “what,” “who,” and “how” questions, rather than “why” questions. Spend about fifteen minutes drafting survey questions using true/false, yes/no, rankings, Likert scales, and multiple-choice formats. Aim for five to eight questions, and start passing them around the class. When every student has taken all the surveys, collect your group’s responses and tally the results. Considering which format best suits your topic, create a figure (a bar graph, pie chart, etc.) to represent the data. What conclusions can you draw about your topic? If outside observers looked at the data, what false conclusion might they come up with if they took the data out of context? (For instance, an outside observer might not know that students are in the midst of midterms, which affects the number of hours of sleep they get each night.)
FRAMING AN INTRODUCTION WITH AUDIENCE IN MIND

As students get further into drafting a problem-solving paper, consider having them pause to reflect on their audience. Ask whether they have assembled the information that audience will need and even whether they’ve selected the best audience for the purposes they have in mind. One efficient way to accomplish this goal is by inviting them to write an introduction with this audience in mind. Writing an introduction not only can reveal the information that still needs to be assembled but also can shine a glaring light on any weaknesses in the named audience’s agency or authority. This activity offers an efficient way to make this discovery, which would be costly down the road when the paper is further along. It then allows students to reconsider their audience and perhaps identify a different audience better suited to their proposed solution. Here’s the activity:

For the problem-solution paper you are drafting, take ten minutes to draft an introduction that frames the issue for the reader you have in mind. (If you have already drafted your introduction, review it now.) How much background will your readers need? What kind of introduction will capture their attention? If your paper calls for a particular action that will be the solution to the problem, who has the agency to make your solution happen? Is this person an assumed or a named audience for your paper? If the audience is not named, why not? Now draft two alternative introductions, each addressed to another reader (or set of readers) who is involved in the problem you are addressing. For instance, a student writing on the problem of shipping organic produce long distances across the country might draft separate introductions addressing consumers, farmers, or the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Once you have drafted all three introductions, consider which audience is the best one to address in your paper. Which audience would have the most influence in helping to solve the problem you are addressing?

SPEED-DATING YOUR PROPOSAL

This activity applies a popular dating approach to getting feedback on a draft, maximizing the number of peer comments. To facilitate the activity, set up two facing rows of chairs or desks; each student will initially partner with the person facing him or her. Bring an egg timer or set a cell phone clock to beep after one and a half minutes; then instruct the pairs to switch roles, so both students get a chance to present. After three minutes, instruct one row of students to shift to the right while the other row stays seated, mixing up the partners for the next round. You may also want to note particularly successful pairs—these could make for good peer-review partnerships.

It always pays to have a trusted reader look over your proposal (and other drafts as well) before you submit it. A fresh set of eyes will catch areas of confusion that you can’t see, even if—and maybe even because—this person doesn’t share your knowledge of the topic. Today we’ll use the speed-dating approach to getting feedback. For just a minute
and a half, explain to the person sitting opposite you the problem you are addressing and your proposed solution, including important evidence where needed to support your main points. Then ask your partner for comments on your proposal. When the buzzer rings, switch roles so that your partner is presenting and you are listening. When the buzzer rings again, it’s time to switch partners. One row of students will shift to the right, and you will repeat the activity with the new person seated opposite you. Keep presenting your proposal to as many people as possible, much as you would with speed dating. If you find a “love connection” or someone who really seems to grasp your paper idea or gives you solid, workable advice on revision, start building the relationship immediately. After all, boyfriends and girlfriends come and go, but trusted readers are forever!

Problem-Solving Scenarios

**MOCK CONGRESSIONAL HEARING**

This extensive activity likely will take the full class and perhaps more. The idea here is to use the genre of the congressional hearing to elicit credible responses to a particular problem. As an advance homework assignment, students could research not only the topic but also the stakes for the stakeholders whose roles are described below. For the in-class activity, be sure to give students a great deal of latitude in developing their “creative” responses. Here’s the activity:

Role-play the personas of people testifying before a U.S. congressional hearing on the costs of a college education. Inform yourself about the situation of rising college costs; begin by reading the sample student essay by Jennie Tillson that begins on p. 367 of Joining the Conversation. Then research the topic further by tracking down some of Jennie’s sources (see her Works Cited list) or finding other reliable sources on this topic. Using your research, consider all of the characters listed in the chart and what they can contribute to the congressional hearing. Draft a brief testimony for one of them. What kinds of information would each speaker use in his or her testimony?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Purpose of Testimony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A full-time student receiving financial aid but still needing to work to make ends meet</td>
<td>Define the problem of rising college costs and describe the impacts in terms of challenges to completing a degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A parent of three college-age students (Because this parent makes more than $130,000 per year, the family is ineligible for financial aid or tax breaks for college expenses.)</td>
<td>Define the impacts of financial aid restrictions on middle-class families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A representative of the university faculty council</td>
<td>Explain faculty initiatives in response to rising college costs. Argue for solutions and explain the classroom effects if solutions are not found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two college administrators—one from a large public institution, one from a small private institution</td>
<td>Explain why college costs have gone up so much. Argue the essential role of a college education to an informed citizenry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A U.S. Department of Education representative</td>
<td>Explain the role of higher education in the earning power of workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A state legislator exploring diminishing state support for public institutions</td>
<td>Provide common justifications for reductions in state support for education in general and higher education in particular. Propose a solution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GRANT WRITING**

This activity introduces students to one of the most common types of proposals, the grant proposal. It is a genre that many students may encounter in their future professions. Bring in several examples of grant proposals, either from individual professors or academic departments on campus or from nonprofit organizations. Many of these are available on the Web. Then have students collaborate to create an outline of a potential grant proposal of their own.

Skim the grant proposals your instructor has provided as models. Pay attention to their structure and tone. Now, working with your group, think of a problem-solving project that would require applying for a grant. It can be for research, a campus event, a charitable endeavor, or any other worthwhile project. Think also about which organizations you would apply to for funding; for instance, if your proposal is a scientific research project, you might apply to the National Science Foundation for funds for equipment and material; if your proposal is to start a new campus theater group, you might apply to the dean of student activities for administrative funds. As you draft your proposal, consider these important elements:

- How are you defining the problem?
- What evidence do you need to demonstrate that your proposal will address the problem?
- Have you provided a budget or some indication that the money you are asking for is reasonable for the project and will be used well?
- Have you addressed the grant proposal to an appropriate audience? (That is, is this specific organization or foundation suited to the type of proposal you have written?)

Write an outline of a grant proposal that addresses these considerations.
READINGS

Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein,
How to Make Lazy People Do the Right Thing

Thaler and Sunstein suggest that businesses and government should use “choice architecture” to prod people into making better decisions but still allow them personal freedom. This piece provides opportunity for a rich class discussion about the ethical quandaries this practice raises. For example, the authors acknowledge: “Of course, some government nudging makes people nervous, and rightly so” (p. 333). Based on this statement, you can ask students the following questions: What is the danger in having this kind of power over people? Ethically, where do we draw the line? Is choice architecture nefarious, benign, or somewhere in between? Should it be implemented, as the authors suggest? Why or why not?

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

Exclamation marks are generally uncommon in academic writing, but the following sentence from this essay contains one: “Amazingly, the method the government picked was to choose a plan at random!” (p. 334). The authors’ use of the exclamation mark is effective here, and you can discuss with students why it is appropriate. You might also discuss why we generally limit the number of exclamation marks in academic writing, and when it is appropriate or inappropriate to use them. For a more detailed discussion of punctuation to end sentences, see p. 761 in the handbook section of Joining the Conversation.

Dan Hughes, Proposal for Skateparks under Bridges

Dan Hughes, a skateboard enthusiast, wrote this proposal to city officials for skateparks to be adopted by the city of Seattle. The proposal contains several components: a description of the benefits of skateboarding for youth, acknowledgment of a lack of skateboarding facilities in the city, and a detailed plan for creating skateparks under bridges and overpasses. When students examine the layout of this reading, they will notice several features: the use of pictures, centered information, bulleted information, numbered information, headings, and information in bold type. You may ask students to think critically about the essay and identify the features of this proposal that show particular awareness of audience. Like many problem-solving pieces, an argument is embedded in this reading. Hughes is trying to persuade city officials to introduce skateparks for youth. As an extension, students can debate whether or not Hughes argues his point effectively, keeping in mind his larger goal.

Consider providing or having students search online for other proposals. Options include proposals for services, grants, or marketing projects. Students can compare these proposals to Hughes’s proposal, discussing which features are similar or different. They may also write about why those features are appropriate for their respective audiences.

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

Point out to students that Hughes uses the acronym “N.I.M.B.Y.” in his proposal (p. 338). Ask students if they were familiar with this acronym, and see if they can name any other common
acronyms (e.g., scuba). Then review the coverage of acronyms on pp. 775–776 in the handbook section of Joining the Conversation.

**Jody Greenstone Miller, How to Get More Working Women at the Top**

In this essay, Miller politely criticizes the framework of someone with whom she disagrees, Sheryl Sandberg. Miller provides her own framework and solutions to the problem, and comments that Sandberg’s solution is inadequate: “That’s the irony of Ms. Sandberg’s cheerleading for women to stay ambitious: She fails to see that her own agenda isn’t nearly ambitious enough.” The author wants to persuade the reader that her own solution is a better alternative to Sandberg’s. Discuss with students Miller’s personal bias to her own solution, and how this bias is presented to the reader. You can also discuss the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of Miller’s reasons that support her solution.

**INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK**

Point out to students where the author uses informal language and conversational tone to address her audience, such as the following: “and if that’s their choice, more power to them” or “this isn’t advanced physics.” Ask students to consider the effect of this stylistic choice: Does it make the intended audience take the author more or less seriously? Refer to pp. 705–707 on matching tone and word choice to one’s writing situation and pp. 713–714 for more on clichés, both in the handbook section of Joining the Conversation.

**Jim Trainum, Get It on Tape**

As a former police detective, Jim Trainum offers a compelling argument for videotaping police interrogations in order to prevent wrongful convictions for crimes. The crux of Trainum’s argument lies in his personal experience with a false confession during a murder case. Ask students to consider the genre of Trainum’s article. What audience would this article need to reach to have a meaningful impact? Does it seem to be composed for that audience?

**Atul Gawande, Suggestions on Becoming a Positive Deviant**

Gawande begins his essay by describing the feeling of being in a rut, following a comfortable routine but wondering whether he is making an impact. It can be easy for instructors to fall into the same trap as Gawande. Classes and students can start to blur together in the endless march through the syllabus. Students have the same issue as well. They are frequently looking for the right answer, but as Chapter 9 makes clear, it is likely that there is more than one answer or that in fact there is no clear-cut right answer at all. In the second section of this reading, Atul Gawande quotes Paul Auster making a very valuable suggestion: ask an unscripted question. This is a great moment to pull out the Parodic or Inappropriate Solutions activity in this chapter of the instructor’s manual (p. 102). Give students license to break out of their typical patterns and see what they come up with. How do their solutions compare to the benefits
Gawande discovers in being unscripted? Do any of the proposed solutions seem as though they might be viable, after a bit of tweaking?

Gawande connects to the conversation metaphor when he ends by inviting the reader to “keep the conversation going.” Start a discussion with students about the conversations in which they are currently engaged. These might be classroom discussion of course material, an e-mail waiting on their computer, a protest they recently attended, a petition they signed, or a flyer they passed in the hallway about an event in their dorm. Ask students how each of these pieces of communication might be viewed as writing to solve a problem. Can the method of communication itself be a potential solution? Can it be problematic?

Cynthia Graber, Fare Start

It is valuable for students to realize that most real-world problems do not have a single solution, and that problem-solving continues even after some approaches are put to work. For example, in the beginning of this audio report, chef David Lee is described as having delivered meals to homeless shelters before he was inspired to create Fare Start, which trains homeless and at-risk individuals for employment in the food industry. What Lee was doing—delivering meals to people without food—was already addressing the problem of hunger. Some problems are large enough, however, that we are in constant need of new and innovative solutions.

This report, which aired on Public Radio International, offers the opportunity to discuss whether and how journalists are involved in problem solving. After students listen to the audio clip, ask them whether they think the reporter, Cynthia Graber, is communicating to solve a problem. Many will probably conclude that she is only reporting on a solution and not proposing one. However, it might be valuable to elaborate on the impact of Graber’s report, not in proposing a solution but in presenting and publicizing one. By informing others of the work being done by the Fare Start program, Graber spreads awareness to both those who need help and those who may wish to further support the cause of this organization. Ask students to consider what other genres can serve as problem-solving documents. You might refer them to the FEMA brochure from Chapter 6, found in the e-Pages for Joining the Conversation (bedfordstmartins.com/conversation/epages).

DISCUSSION STARTERS

GENRES IN CONVERSATION

One of the central premises of Joining the Conversation is that writing involves genre and design choices. The Genres in Conversation feature at the beginning of each assignment chapter juxtaposes three documents on the same topic, each using a different genre and design. Use the Genres in Conversation feature in Chapter 9 to start a discussion on what problem-solving writing looks like. Ask students to view the Genres in Conversation feature in the e-Pages and answer the questions before class. Then discuss the audience and purpose of each document shown. Have students consider what the genres have in common and how they use design differently to accomplish their purposes. Ask students if they can think of other genres that would work well to inform readers on the topic of identity theft. Finally, ask students what
elements of these varied sources would be effective for their own writing purposes and audiences.

**A PROBLEM WITHOUT A SOLUTION**

Ask students whether they think it is ever appropriate to name a problem without providing a solution for it. Probe their reasoning and see if anyone in the room can recall a large social issue for which it was appropriate or necessary that the problem be named, without offering solutions. (The textbook mentions the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s as a good example; in the early days of AIDS awareness, it was essential to define the problem in order to begin thinking about a solution.) Discuss—or perhaps debate—positions. If possible, share an example of a recently published article that describes a problem without naming a solution and summarize the article’s strategy for students to consider and discuss.

**USING HUMOR IN PROBLEM SOLVING**

In class, have students read the opening two paragraphs of “How to Make Lazy People Do the Right Thing” by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (pp. 331–335 of Joining the Conversation). Do they find this opening clever, or even amusing? Through what techniques is the humor achieved? Do Thaler and Sunstein have any other moments of humor in their essay? More generally, probe whether students believe that humor can work effectively alongside discussions of serious problems. Are there risks associated with injecting humor into a serious discussion? Why might the authors have chosen to begin their article this way?

**SOLVING PROBLEMS WITH PRESUMED CONSENT**

One of the benefits of the readings in this textbook is the “coincidental learning” that accompanies them. Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein’s article explains how “choice architecture” can help solve problems. Start a discussion by making sure students understand how choice architecture works; explain that people are automatically included in a particular program unless they take specific action to opt out (e.g., a new employee is automatically signed up for a retirement savings plan unless he or she chooses to opt out). Have students work in small groups to brainstorm situations in which this approach might solve a problem. Then, as a class, discuss which proposed solutions use choice architecture most effectively.

**FAILED SOLUTIONS**

Problem solving often requires innovation, and to pursue a novel idea, problem-solving writers must be familiar with the old ideas, the solutions that have been tried and have failed. Look at a specific problem, either current or historical, and discuss the solutions that failed to solve it. Why did the solutions fail? Did some solutions unintentionally create new problems? One example is the smoking ban in bars in many U.S. cities; researchers found that drunk driving rates rose in such cities because residents were driving farther to bars in neighboring towns that did not have a smoking ban. The “solution” to the problem of secondhand smoke thus caused a greater problem: more fatalities because of drunk driving (see sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080521120216.htm). What can we as problem solvers learn from such failed solutions?
ADVERTISEMENTS AS CONSUMER PROBLEM SOLVERS

Although advertisements often have an argumentative purpose (and are covered in Chapter 10 of Joining the Conversation), they can also take a problem-solving stance, framing the product as a solution to a consumer’s problem. Cleaning products and over-the-counter medicines are good examples. Collect a few advertisements that portray a product as the solution to a problem and show them to the class. (Given their length and opportunity for narrative, television commercials adopt this stance more often than do print advertisements, though you may find good examples in both media. Browse YouTube for videos of television commercials.) After students have passed around the print ads or viewed the videos, ask the following questions:

- How has the advertiser defined the problem?
- Who is the ad’s intended audience: a general audience of consumers or a specific segment of the population?
- Has the advertiser presented the consequences of the problem? Are they exaggerated? Are they shown in a humorous or serious way?
- How has the advertiser demonstrated its product as the solution to the problem? Does the ad compare the product with a competitor’s product? Does it use testimonials or show people using the product? What rhetorical devices are used to persuade the reader or viewer?
- Do you think the problem and proposed solution are compelling enough to get people to buy the product? Why or why not?
- In what ways do advertisers try to convince you that you do have a problem that needs fixing?

TEACHING TIPS

STUCK IN A PROBLEM

Joining the Conversation points out the all-too-common problem of the essay that spends too much time describing the problem and too little time explaining the proposed solution. If you recognize this difficulty in your classroom, have students discuss possible explanations for why writers “get stuck” writing the problem description. You can then brainstorm some strategies a writer might try before writing the paper to avoid this common mistake.

JOINING THE SOLUTION

Students may be relieved to find out that they are generally not expected to find definitive solutions to the questions they pose or to align themselves with one or the other side of polarized positions. Rather, their job is to represent fairly the solutions offered by valued others and to position themselves somewhere in the conversation, for now. Generating a thesis or position is a matter of stating a tentative position of “Here’s where I stand right now based on available information.” Indeed, as the textbook argues, the principal imperative of the college
writer (and perhaps the central task of the college student) is to join the conversation—listening, rehearsing, and joining—not to end it. Perhaps our central job as instructors is to welcome students into this community of conversationalists by assuring them that their positions, however tentative, are welcome.

At the other extreme, for those students who seem to have made up their minds regardless of emerging information and perspectives, the challenge may be more difficult. At the very least, though, they should be confronted with differences of opinion, thus challenging their allegiances and expanding their awareness of alternative positions. For these students, a sense of discomfort or unease with their existing positions may be a healthy sign. The usual variety of positions in a classroom can help with this goal; peer groups who challenge others’ ideas can be more effective than an instructor’s challenges.

**REPRESENTING MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS**

Chapter 9 of *Joining the Conversation* emphasizes the importance of considering the views of others who have addressed a problem that a student is writing about. While students recognize that they need to obtain outside sources, they may not understand the reasons for seeking those sources, or the value that college writing places on situating oneself in an existing conversation. It is vitally important that we encourage students to engage in the fair representation of multiple perspectives, rather than to seek sources that all agree on a particular point of view. Indeed, students may need to be told directly that one of the conventions of academic writing is to hold off affiliating too quickly with one source or one perspective as the “answer.” Students can learn that it is the conversation itself that is of interest to most academics, so college teachers will expect them to represent fairly multiple perspectives and to affiliate themselves tentatively with one or more of them, or perhaps to create a hybrid or unique perspective. (If you have already taught Chapter 10, “Writing to Convince or Persuade,” draw students’ attention to the similarities between representing alternative solutions and representing alternative arguments. If not, you can make this point when you discuss arguments in Chapter 10.)

**CUTTING AND PASTING DRAFTS**

As suggested in the cutting-and-pasting activity on p. 103, breaking down a document into its building blocks of paragraphs can reveal logical flaws, unanswered questions, and problems of transitions and flow. This process is a powerful and visual one that often has great impact on students. Encourage students to use this technique on their own work, disassembling a draft paragraph by paragraph to try out new organizations, or even a single paragraph sentence by sentence to focus on paragraph unity. Use this strategy in conjunction with Chapter 20, “Revising and Editing.”

**THE WRITER’S NOTEBOOK**

Remember that student performance in the writer’s notebook should show improvement over the weeks of the semester. Refer back to the “Using a Writer’s Notebook” section in the introduction to this instructor’s manual. Do you see progress in most students? Are they about where you want them to be at this stage of the semester? This might be a good time to re-
engage the class in a discussion of the notebook and the features of writing you hope to see there and the progress you hope they will make in the coming weeks.

**USING THE FEATURED STUDENT-WRITER PROCESS MATERIALS**

Chapter 9 of *Joining the Conversation* follows Jennie Tillson’s writing project on addressing the increasingly complex problem of rising college tuition costs. Walk through the In Process boxes in Chapter 9 to illustrate the following processes:

- how to develop a survey (p. 352)
- how to define a problem (p. 355)
- how to begin developing a solution (p. 357)
- how to identify evidence and provide support for key points (p. 362)
It could be argued that all writing, and by extension, all communication, is rhetorical. This claim maintains that all communication, on some level, contains a persuasive element that is contextually situated, or responds to matters of audience and purpose. We’ve seen in Part Two that informative, analytic, evaluative, and problem-solving writings may also aim to persuade readers. For example, if students write an analysis paper, they are generally arguing certain positions and supporting them with evidence; the ultimate goal is to convince the reader that their positions are compelling and supported well enough to deserve merit. Even though persuasion might not be the overt goal of all writing, most writing is written to be rhetorically effective, to be part of a larger conversation, and to be convincing to someone.

Argument provides space for rehearsing new ideas and proposing improvements before putting them into action. Argument allows us to evaluate and reassess ideas at little cost before implementing them at great expense, thereby saving communities and individuals substantial resources. Argument challenges the status quo, providing mechanisms for people to vocalize new ideas and open them up for debate, rather than ramrod them through or just accept the old.

Argument, we might convey to students, is in large part how progress is achieved in a literate culture protected by the rule of law and an informed citizenry. It is difficult to imagine democratic processes without the possibility of argument. For this reason, writers who attempt to convince or persuade are referred to as advocates. Students can become advocates through their writing, and they have a plethora of rhetorical choices available to persuade their readers. Their contributions come to life when they realize their input has real-world influence and can effect meaningful change.

Persuasive communication can occur in a variety of media. Because it is so abundant, students will be able to identify many persuasive texts. But the intent to persuade is not always obvious. For students to grow into thoughtful, informed citizens, they need to master critical thinking, especially when it comes to persuasive texts. Students must be able to identify and produce persuasive writing effectively in order to complete academic pursuits, participate in the democratic process, and contribute to society in a meaningful way. In addition to having students read and analyze persuasive texts, consider asking students to create persuasive texts in alternative genres, such as advertisements or political campaigns, commercials, Web advertisements, speeches, articles for the college or local newspaper, blog posts, or a company’s promotional materials. By understanding and appropriately utilizing these rhetorical choices, students may convince a given audience of their ideas or persuade members of that audience to take action, and they may be able to resist poor arguments.
Understanding Argument

PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT ARGUMENT
This in-class writing exercise may help activate student interest in a topic while providing you with an opportunity to assess their existing knowledge of and attitudes toward argument. Here’s the activity:

Write for seven or eight minutes about argument using the following questions:

- What are the images that come to mind when you think of an argument? (Here are some ideas to get you started: two people yelling at each other after a fender bender; a reality show with opposing “camps” dueling for “immunity”; a courtroom drama with a public defender and a district attorney making their closing statements; the chambers of a city council or a school board with citizens duking it out over a proposed change that will affect their way of life or that of their children.) Feel free to illustrate your ideas, too.

- When you think of argument, what emotions do you experience? Can you explain why you react as you do to the notion of argument?

ARGUMENTATIVE APPEALS
This activity helps students keep the appeal classifications straight. Among argumentative appeals, which are so central to argumentation and particularly to persuasion, appeals to character often present students with the greatest difficulty. The confusion derives from the fact that the appeal to character points directly back to the writer, not to the substance of the argument and its development. As Joining the Conversation explains (pp. 415–416), when an appeal to character is made, the writer is saying, “Trust me. I’m qualified to speak about this issue.” This appeal should be clearly distinguished from an appeal to principles, values, and beliefs, which the reader presumably shares.

Review the different types of appeals listed on pp. 414–417 of Joining the Conversation. In your own words, explain each type of appeal below. Then think of a memorable example that represents the appeal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal Type</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to authority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to emotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to principles, values, and beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to character</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to logic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPEALS TO EMOTION (PATHOS)

Appeals to emotion can be incredibly persuasive, yet as the textbook mentions, inappropriate emotional appeals can pose a threat to an argument’s integrity. Two good examples of appeals to emotion are the FEMA brochure (Chapter 6 e-Pages) and the LIFT impact report (Chapter 8 e-Pages). This activity allows students to examine the merits and successes of appeals to emotion.

Look up the Web sites of a few different nonprofit organizations that help children, seniors, the disabled, the homeless, or other groups; these can be local, national, or international groups. Then answer the following questions:

- What role does the appeal to emotion (pathos) play on these Web sites as the organizations try to persuade you to support their cause? Can you identify specific images or passages of text that make emotional appeals?

- Do you find these emotional appeals convincing or persuasive? Why or why not?

- Imagine the Web site without any emotional appeals. What would it look like? Try to identify the parts of the Web site that appeal to logic (logos) and values (ethos) rather than emotion (pathos). For instance, are there statistics, data, expert testimony, mission statements, or other forms of content that use different types of appeals?

- Whom do you perceive as the audience of the organizations’ Web sites? Citizens? Donors? Policy makers? How does the audience help determine the kinds of appeals used?

- Do you think that the integrity of the organization’s argument is enhanced or compromised by making emotional appeals? Choose one image or excerpt from the Web site that represents an appeal to emotion, and be prepared to discuss whether you find it successful or not.

PARODYING LOGICAL FALLACIES

Because a discussion of argumentation would not be complete without a discussion of logical fallacies, try working in fallacies by having students parody several types. Choose a topic they’ll have strong opinions about, such as random drug testing in the workplace. Ask students to write parodies demonstrating the following logical fallacies. Then have students share them in small groups and select one from each category that each group thinks is the best. To get things started, the first example has been filled in.
Working in pairs, write a parody of an argumentative claim for each of the following fallacies. For more explanation of the different types of logical fallacies, you can review pp. 410–412 of *Joining the Conversation*. Think creatively and take each fallacy to its logical extreme. Here’s an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logical Fallacy</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweeping (or hasty) generalization</td>
<td>Drug testing is needed at every coffeehouse in the country. After all, everyone knows that baristas smoke dope when they’re not consuming caffeine. How else do they wind down after consuming all those double-shot iced mocha lattes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post hoc fallacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non sequitur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straw-man attack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hominem attack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either/or argument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red herring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Argumentative Genres

The following activities give students a chance to study a few argumentative genres in greater depth. The genres represented here—the speech, the opinion column, the letter to the editor, and the blog—are journalistic forms that frequently present “arguments of citizenship”; these genres are available to citizens who want to inform and argue in the public sphere.

ANALYZING A SPEECH

Politicians, entrepreneurs, and activists make speeches to convince an audience of a certain belief or persuade an audience to take action. This activity focuses on speeches as argumentative performances. Ask students to view the speech by Michelle Obama in the e-Pages for this chapter and then answer the questions there. You might model this activity with students before asking them to complete it on their own. Look for other great speeches and encourage students to do the same. Before listening to the speech as a whole class, discuss the context or occasion for the speech as well as its audience and purpose. Here’s the activity:

Search Web sites such as YouTube (youtube.com) and the History Channel (history.com/video.do?name=speeches) for a video or audio clip of an argumentative speech. The example you choose can be a convincing, persuading, or negotiating/mediating argument. Write a one-page description of the speech addressing the following questions. Be prepared to explain the context for the speech and how you found it. Do some background reading so that you know something about the speaker.

- What type of argument does the speech contain (convincing, persuading, negotiating/mediating)?
- What is the speech’s thesis, and where in the speech is the thesis located?
- What is the speech’s main structure or organization?
- What techniques does the speaker use to substantiate his or her claim?
- How does the speaker use evidence? Does the speaker present examples of eyewitnesses and expert testimony? Does the speaker use his or her own experience as evidence? Does the speaker use data, statistics, or research findings?
- How does the speaker tailor the text to his or her audience and purpose? What connections do you see between function and form?
- How important is the sound of the speech? How does the human voice work to assist the argument? Extending this idea, what are some special argumentative effects available to authors of written arguments, effects that create emphasis that speakers might accomplish through modulation of voice?
- Do you find the argument interesting because it confirms something you believe, challenges something you care about, motivates and inspires, offers a unique point of view, or for some other reason? Are you convinced or are you persuaded by the speaker’s argument?
OPINION COLUMNS VERSUS LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
This activity focuses on two genres that are familiar to readers of newspapers and magazines; it allows students to investigate how writers of opinion columns construct their arguments and how readers respond to those arguments in their own letters to the editor. Ask students to read Cyrus Habib’s opinion column “Show Us the Money” in the e-Pages for this chapter and answer the questions there.

In the periodicals room of your campus library, browse through the newspapers and magazines to find an opinion column that touches on a topic of interest to you. Analyze the context for the column. Does it respond to a current event that’s local? Regional? National? International? Does it respond to an article that appeared previously in the newspaper? Write an outline of the column’s development. Can you identify its overall claim, reasons, and supporting evidence? Do you think the argument presented in this column is effective? Why or why not?

Now browse subsequent issues of the same publication and look for letters to the editor responding to the opinion column you chose above. Try to find two or more letters responding to that same column.

• How do the argumentative approaches differ between the letters? Do they all make the same point?
• Which approach seems most effective?
• Do the letters make any particular appeals to their readers?
• Can you identify the intended audience for each letter? Are any of them really “to the editor,” or are they addressing a different audience?
• What are the space constraints for letters in each publication? Do they allow for a full argument in response to the opinion column?
• How does the news source identify the letter writer? What do these conventions for the signature block say about the news source?

ARGUMENTATIVE BLOG POSTS
This activity works best in a computer lab, so that students can view and compare the blogs onscreen.

Find two argumentative blog posts—ones that aim to convince readers of a certain belief or persuade readers to take a certain action, not ones that reflect on personal circumstances. Choose one blog post written by an individual and one sponsored by an organization. Compare the blog posts by answering the following questions:

• What is the fundamental argument of each blog post? Does it aim to convince its readers to accept a certain belief or to persuade its readers to take a specific action?
• How do the perspectives of the blogs differ? Are you more impressed by one or the other? Do you view the individual blog differently than you view the blog affiliated with an organization?

• Do either of the blogs include multimedia links (photos, videos, animation, audio, etc.)? How do these multimedia elements help the blog advance its purpose?

• How long have the blogs been active? How active do they seem to be currently, and how often do the bloggers contribute? Does the blog sponsored by an organization have one or multiple contributors?

• How likely would you be to visit these blogs again? Why?

Writing Argumentative Drafts

REFINING ESSAY TOPICS

One of the hardest things for students to understand about successful written argument is how to narrow the focus to a level that’s practical for the time available and the context. Students tend to start big when it comes to topics, in part because they usually don’t know enough about a topic in the early stages to formulate appropriately narrowed questions. This activity gets students learning about the conversation they are going to join—that is, reading about a topic of interest and understanding not only the larger subject it is part of but also the range of potential debatable questions within the topic. Assign students to read Chapter 2 of Joining the Conversation. Once students have done some preliminary “listening in” on the conversations they want to join, they can complete the following chart. Afterward, they will need to do more reading on the narrowed issue and question they have decided on. Encourage students to ask questions for which there is no easy answer and on which there is debate. Their research will eventually lead to a statement that provides at least a tentative answer to the question and also clarifies the significance or implications of the answer. Here’s the activity:

Narrowing your topic ideas is essential to an effective focus for most arguments. As you think about the conversation you wish to join, try identifying your subject, topic, issue, and research questions to move toward a clearer and narrower focus. Try to think of at least three different questions, and use exploratory question words such as what, why, when, where, who, how, would, could, and should, rather than straightforward yes/no questions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Public health and safety | Safety of specialized research facilities studying infectious diseases | The close proximity of a CDC testing facility to the city’s water supply                                                                                                                                  | • How has the proximity of the CDC testing facility affected the city’s water quality?  
• Should the CDC move its facility to a new location?  
• Should new water testing be implemented to ensure public safety in the local area? |
| Broadway shows in the 1980s | Marketing strategies for Broadway shows | The marketing strategy for the Broadway production of *La Cage aux Folles*, which used stereotypical images of homosexuality and alienated an important segment of the viewing audience | • Was the strategy used for marketing *La Cage aux Folles*, which exploited stereotypical images of homosexuality, a necessary marketing technique or an unacceptable compromise of integrity?  
• Was the stage production of *La Cage aux Folles* more negative for gay and lesbian groups or more positive, given the opportunity the controversy afforded for educating the public?  
• What impact did this marketing strategy have on the demographics of the show’s audience? |
INFORMAL PROSPECTUS ACTIVITY

Once students have narrowed their topics to a specific issue and even further to a question, encourage them to stabilize their topics and develop their thoughts by writing an informal prospectus. By jotting down an informal outline of their statements and connecting their supporting points to an overall thesis, they may see central areas of difficulty with the topic or the argumentative approach they were planning to take. This activity has benefits to both the students and the instructor. The students get started on their projects early and benefit from instructor feedback on their ideas. The instructor is able to review a one-page prospectus, which is much simpler than reading a whole draft. You also have the opportunity to intervene if you see an “argumentative train wreck” on the horizon. Invite students to compare their prospectuses and offer feedback. Here’s the activity:

Answer the following questions to flesh out your topic and the general contours of your argument. Start with your thesis or overall claim, and then list reasons supporting your thesis and the evidence supporting each reason. This will be your informal prospectus.

- The relevance of this question can be demonstrated by . . .
- My interest in this question comes from . . .
- My sense of the current debate or conversation on this matter is that . . .
- In regard to this question, I hope to address the following audiences: . . .
- I believe that the forms or genres that might work best for presenting my information and argumentation to my audiences will be . . .
- The overall claim I am making in this essay is . . .
- I will give my readers solid reasons to accept my claim, including . . .
- The evidence I will use to support my reasons include . . .
- Some potential counterarguments to my claim are . . .

INFORMAL PEER REVIEW OF ARGUMENT ESSAYS

An informal peer review like this one can be conducted at many points during the semester. Here, unlike more formal and hour-long peer reviews, students give one another quick feedback, and student-writers are able to see if their arguments are making sense. To ensure participation, hold students accountable for even an informal peer review like this one by having them turn in their review either at the time of the peer review or with the final draft and other process elements. Allow about fifteen minutes for this mini-peer review. Here’s the activity:
Informal Argumentative Peer Review

Writer’s name ____________________________

Reader’s name ____________________________

The writer indicates at the top of the draft the audience and argumentative purpose for the text.

The reader/responder makes all comments on the paper itself, using the following steps:

a. Locate the claim/thesis and underline it with a squiggly line.

b. Locate the reasons to accept this claim, and number them 1, 2, 3, and so on.

c. Locate evidence and indicate expert testimony (use of scholarly outside sources) by placing an X in the margins next to each instance. Indicate eyewitness testimony (nonscholarly and primary documents) by drawing an eye in the margins next to this testimony. Indicate numerical or statistical data by writing a number sign (#) in the margins.

d. Note how the writer has integrated sources. Has he or she introduced them sufficiently? Has the writer used quotations sparingly and meaningfully? Where do you see an effective use of sources? Write an S in the margins where you think source integration could be better.

e. Locate the writer’s explanation/discussion of the evidence by drawing a smiley face in the margins next to this discussion. Be sure to look for an explanation for every piece of evidence.

f. Note where the writer has addressed counterarguments by writing “CA” in the margin.

What is one specific thing you really like about this draft? What is the top thing you would recommend that this writer work on for the next draft? Discuss your annotations and recommendations with your partner.

THE OPPOSITIONAL CLAIM APPROACH

Once students have had some exposure to argument principles, examples, and approaches, you might try showing them the “oppositional claim” approach, an argumentative strategy that is not discussed in the textbook. In this approach, a writer begins to develop an argument by first representing the claim of the opposing side. The writer then refutes it and uses that refutation as the basis for his or her own claim. You could have students simply follow along with the example below or, better yet, have them outline a new argument using this structure. Students take away from this activity the idea that arguments have discernible forms or patterns. Here’s an example and the heuristic for students:
**Topic: Stem Cell Research**

Begin with the opposition’s claim: “Stem cell research should be conducted by all who are capable so that advances are made more quickly because of market forces.”

Next, list the points that support this claim as well as the points that contradict it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Reasons</th>
<th>Contradicting Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More researchers = more potential success</td>
<td>Potentially unscrupulous researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less critique will save time</td>
<td>More critique = better-quality work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More profits for additional investment</td>
<td>Need to keep profit levels sustainable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write a statement that acknowledges the possible strengths of the opposition’s view and then ends with and emphasizes your rebuttal claim. This statement should have two clauses: first, a subordinate “although” clause that integrates the supporting reasons for the opposition’s view, and second, an independent clause that presents your rebuttal based on the contradicting reasons. For example, “Although market forces can accelerate scientific advances, stem cell research should be conducted only in prestigious national centers for academic research and development and under rigorous control and review.”

Use this format to try the oppositional claim approach for your own topic:

**Topic:**

The opposition’s claim:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Reasons</th>
<th>Contradicting Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A statement that begins with an “although” clause acknowledging the possible strengths of the opposition’s view and ends with your rebuttal claim:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Argumentative Scenarios

THE AD CAMPAIGN

Here’s an activity that builds on the Interpreter and Evaluator roles discussed in Chapter 7, “Writing to Analyze,” and Chapter 8, “Writing to Evaluate,” respectively. We can help students see that both analysis and evaluation often function argumentatively, and, as Joining the Conversation explains, a writer may adopt different roles in different parts of a document. In this activity, students are asked to write a pitch. The context that’s created is a professional one, and the goal is to demonstrate that this recommendation is argumentative but derives from both analysis and evaluation. Here’s the activity:

You are the advertising coordinator for a magazine called the Progressive. The soap manufacturer Element is looking for a new location to place an ad, and your job is to convince the CEO that the Progressive would be a good fit for Element. Start by developing a mental image or fictional profile of the magazine and the soap company; be creative! Then write a two- or three-paragraph pitch describing your magazine—its mission, readership, staff writers or contributors, the topics it addresses, the genres it features—and explaining why the Progressive is a fitting location for the Element ad. You should adopt three roles during this activity:

- evaluating the magazine and the soap product
- analyzing why the magazine would be an effective advertising location for this product
- persuading the CEO of Element to purchase ad space in your magazine

MEDIATING AND NEGOTIATING ACTIVITY

Engaging students in the highly civilized act of mediating and negotiating early in the argument unit can help to demonstrate the productive and positive role of argumentation. Students will learn that the divisive examples of argumentation they’ve seen on television bear greater resemblance to fighting than to argument in the rhetorical sense of the word. This activity gives
students firsthand experience in the difference between mediation and negotiation by addressing the same issue—overnight guests in residence halls—two ways. The first scenario puts the students in charge of negotiating a residence hall policy on overnight guests. The second scenario involves mediating a conflict between two roommates about overnight guests. Here’s the activity:

Especially when your argument involves solving a well-defined problem (see Chapter 9), you can often reach acceptable solutions through negotiation and mediation, two forms of consensus building.

With a negotiating essay, you seek to find resolution of conflict among members of a group to which you belong. In other words, as a writer of a negotiating argument, you clearly state the positions of all group members—including your own—and argue for a resolution acceptable to all group members. With this principle in mind, work in small groups to negotiate a policy on overnight guests in residence halls. The members of your group should take different views. Establish a leader who will take into account his or her own point of view as well as the views of others in the group. Negotiate a policy that all members of your group can live with.

The mediating essay assumes that the writer is an impartial mediator observing a conflict. As writer/mediator, you have no stake in the argument except as a concerned party interested in fostering conflict resolution. You state the positions of all interested (and conflicting) parties so that no one feels privileged or put down. You then analyze the central differences among various positions and present a workable resolution based on logic as well as appeals to character and emotion. With this principle in mind, work in small groups to mediate a conflict between two roommates regarding overnight guests in their dorm room. Designate members of your group to role-play those two parts and have them state their cases. Then work as a group to mediate their claims and develop a workable solution.

**ROGERIAN ARGUMENT**

This extended activity, like mediation, should help propel student understanding of argument beyond the assumption that arguments necessarily yield yes/no, innocent/guilty, and on/off decisions. It introduces students to Rogerian argument, which works toward consensus. You will need to allow a considerable amount of time for this exercise because one of the lessons is that consensus building takes time. Explain the following ground rules to students, and then have them practice the approach in small groups using a local debatable topic, such as whether it’s justifiable to raise the price of parking permits in order to fund a new parking facility on campus. Each member of the group could role-play concerned parties, such as students, faculty members, the manager of the campus parking office, or the dean of student life. As you construct this exercise, be sure to assign articulate and fair-minded group leaders to the small groups. Distribute the instructions in hard-copy form so that group members can easily refer
to them. At the end of the activity, collect the instructions so that you can use them again next time.

Regardless of how well the consensus building goes, debrief the process so that students see the challenges and the advantages of Rogerian argument. Ask students when they think such an approach might be most useful (possible answer: in the midst of an emotionally charged, highly divisive issue) and what components are necessary to building a successful Rogerian argument. Having tried this role-play, students learn that a Rogerian approach is actually quite difficult. You can encourage this lesson by insisting that group members work together with their group leader until their verbalizations are recorded or written down to their satisfaction. This effort should demonstrate to students that achieving the language of compromise is difficult and time-consuming, though in the long run, also worthwhile.

After a class discussion about the activity, make the transition to writing. If the role-play suggests what happens when we do Rogerian argument, what special efforts would the writer of a Rogerian argument need to make? Hopefully, students will recognize that this writer must fully understand the thinking of all the involved parties. The writer must present the readers’ perspectives with absolute accuracy, anticipating their needs, beliefs, values, prejudices, and affiliations.

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**Procedures for Rogerian Argument**

A. All participants agree to assume that civilized people can find middle or common ground on issues that are not life-threatening.

B. The leader asks all parties to articulate the problem as fully as possible and takes note of various points of view. The leader records on the board or in another visible space the different ways that people are affected by the problem. *(Note: The Rogerian argument does not begin with any position at all. It doesn’t present the issue in such a way that parties are divided, nor does it present a position that demands agreement/disagreement. The consequences of the problem and its solution are simply recorded.)*

C. Once all ideas have been recorded, the leader attempts to describe the points of view, conveying the validity of the concerns from all parties and stating as accurately as possible the contexts in which the different views are valid. Only if the leader represents each point of view accurately, sincerely, and fairly will each party be willing to move toward compromise. If adjustments to the explanation are needed, the parties should speak up now. Step C is of key importance because a misstep at this moment will render the leader ineffective and the chances of consensus low.

D. The leader now presents, as clearly and fairly as possible, his or her own compromise based on the preceding discussion. This step is again crucial for establishing the trustworthiness of the group leader and maintaining the belief and goodwill of the group.

E. The leader now asks competing sides to say if they are willing to concede the points established in the leader’s statement. If the leader has achieved a fair description, parties are likely to be willing to compromise.
READINGS

Anu Partanen, *What Americans Keep Ignoring about Finland’s School Success*

Start by asking students to identify the author’s reasons and evidence; they might either annotate the article or list them in a graphic organizer. After identifying the reasons and evidence, you can discuss with students how each piece of information is strategically placed in the essay and why these organizational choices are effective or ineffective. This conversation will show students one structure available to them as they draft their own papers.

After discussing these components with students, consider discussing what gaps exist in the author’s argument. You may want to model this for students by providing them with one or two gaps. One example would be the lack of discussion about Finland’s and the United States’ cultural differences. Finland’s population might value schooling much more than Americans do, which would explain their public investment in education. Another gap is the lack of connection between equity in education and student achievement. You may ask students: How does the funding of schools (public or private) affect student achievement? This connection is not made clear in the article. In fact, student achievement in the United States is partially dependent on home life, socioeconomic status, and acquisition of the English language, none of which the author mentions. After students identify gaps, consider asking them how these gaps weaken the author’s argument.

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

The author makes a stylistic choice of juxtaposing a long sentence with a short one. You can discuss with students what impact this stylistic choice has on the following passage: “Decades ago, when the Finnish system was badly in need of reform, the goal of the program that Finland instituted, resulting in so much success today, was never excellence. It was equity” (p. 385). You may also ask what words or ideas are emphasized by using this technique.

Men Can Stop Rape, *Where Do You Stand?*

Advertising is a form of persuasion that almost all students are familiar with, although these ads fall into a special subset: the public service announcement. Creating a piece like this requires an incredibly focused message; there is no room for lengthy speeches or paragraphs of carefully layered argument. Instead, these posters use images linked with single-sentence scenarios to create their message. Do students find them compelling? Consider asking students to create their own single-sentence scenarios, on this or another topic. Is it easier or harder to be convincing in only a sentence? Was the message clear?

As is the case with most advertising, these posters combine text with images. Ask students to consider the words without the pictures. Does the message still make sense? Do the statements seem less convincing? What if different images were included with the same text? Give students some time to browse online for other images. Invite them to find one that still supports the message and one that confuses the meaning of the poster. Is the visual communication through the image equally as important as the text? Or is it more important? Less important?
INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

These posters were created with a serious purpose in mind: to call attention to how men can take an active role in preventing rape. While the intent is serious, the tone of these posters is incredibly casual, employing slang phrases like “give her an out” and “she’s not into you.” Students might assume that writing about a somber topic must employ a formal tone, or they might expect that a genre such as advertising would always use a casual tone. Ask students to read about matching style to the writing situation on pp. 705–707 in the handbook section of Joining the Conversation. Start a discussion on how topic and genre both affect style. Could students imagine a writing situation in which posters use a more formal tone? Does it matter that these posters are part of a public service campaign and are not advertising a product?

Alexandra Le Tellier, Judge Stops NYC Soda Ban, but Don’t Celebrate Karin Klein, Soda’s a Problem, but Bloomberg Doesn’t Have the Solution

Point/counterpoint editorials illustrate opposing views about an issue and usually incorporate quotes from published sources, quotations from interviews, or statistical data to support both sides of the conversation. In this point/counterpoint editorial, Le Tellier argues that the reversal of the soda ban is detrimental to people’s health and encourages readers to support bans on large, sugary drinks. Klein argues, however, that the reversal of the ban is beneficial for the city, and she refutes many of Le Tellier’s points.

Have students consider how the author draws on one expert to bolster her claims. Le Tellier quotes Wendy Walsh, a psychologist and human behavior expert: “We have an unfettered desire and craving for [sugar, salt, and fat] that many of us actually can’t control” (pp. 394–395). Then point out how Klein refutes the quotation by Walsh, saying “I don’t buy the argument that people are helpless in the face of sugar” (p. 396). However, Klein does not provide a reason, empirical evidence, statistical data, or expert quotes to support her assertion. Instead, Klein believes that the public is simply ill informed. Ask students to evaluate the strength of Klein’s argument here. Can both writers be correct in what they are saying? Which author’s position is more convincing?

After students compare the strengths and weaknesses of both arguments, have a discussion about the arguments’ rhetorical appeals. The following questions might be helpful discussion starters: Which argument incorporates more logos, ethos, and pathos? Which argument is stronger (more logical) and which is more effective (convincing)? Why? Which editorial do you think is more persuasive for the intended audience? Why?

INTEGRATING THE HANDBOOK

Le Tellier begins and ends her editorial in attention-grabbing ways. You might discuss with students how the following stylistic choices affect one’s reading of the editorial, and whether these choices are effective for the intended audience. Le Tellier begins the editorial with this sentence: “Sugar addicts and libertarians rejoice!” (p. 394). This emphatic, albeit sarcastic, sentence attracts and keeps the reader’s attention. The last paragraph of the editorial begins with: “I’m siding with Walsh. And with Bittman” (p. 395). These short sentences are intended to emphasize the author’s position in a clear, concise manner. Do students believe that they meet this objective? Do students feel at liberty to make stylistic choices like this, which may seem to
defy grammar “rules”? For additional guidance on stylistic choices, see Chapter 23, “Style: Writing Confidently,” in the handbook section of Joining the Conversation.

Michelle Obama, *Who Are You Going to Be?*

Michelle Obama begins her speech with both thanks and compliments. She acknowledges those who organized the event, the choir, the families of the students, and then the college pride of the students themselves. Beginning with gratitude and positive reinforcement, particularly when the sentiments are sincere, can be a very effective method for winning over a crowd. Obama is hoping to inspire her audience, convince them of her sincerity, and send them forth feeling optimistic about their futures. It is much easier to persuade an audience if you have already won them over. At the same time, audiences can become hostile if they feel that they are receiving false flattery. Ask your students to evaluate the effectiveness of Michelle Obama’s introductory statements. Does she seem sincere? How does her audience respond? How does she transition from her opening statements into the body of her speech?

Obama weaves the historical narrative of the Greensboro Four into her speech. Stories like this one provide concrete narratives for listeners, helping the speaker to hold their attention. And if the speaker is effective in relating the protagonist to the audience, the story can be an efficient way of leading the audience to value what the protagonist values or to draw the same conclusions. Give students a bit of background about the sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960. Then ask them if they think the story of the Greensboro Four is an apt choice for Michelle Obama’s audience. What are the messages she hopes her listeners will receive from the narrative?

**SPARK, Our Letter to LEGO**

First-year students may not have encountered an open letter like this one. As a genre, the open letter addresses a narrow, specific audience (in this case, the LEGO company), and yet it is clearly intended for a much larger audience as well. You might compare this to sending an e-mail to a supervisor and copying everyone in the company. Open letters make a formal complaint or observation while simultaneously creating public awareness and applying public pressure.

Ask students to consider whether the public nature of this communication would make LEGO more or less likely to meet with SPARK representatives. Students might consider what in the letter is clearly directed at LEGO, what is clearly directed at the larger public audience, and what information is meaningful for both audiences. Consider assigning students the Writing a Report for Multiple Audiences activity (p. 89 in this instructor’s manual) for practice in targeting multiple audiences simultaneously.

**Cyrus Habib, Show Us the Money**

The opening sentence of Cyrus Habib’s opinion column celebrates the fact that U.S. paper currency may soon be made recognizable to the blind. He goes on to describe the hardships and
concerns for those who cannot identify the currency they are using and the process of the lawsuit that might bring about the changes Habib is so excited about. Why would Habib begin his persuasive article with the news that the change he is seeking may already be occurring? How might that weaken his argument? If the currency is already being changed, what might be the motivation behind this article?

Habib’s case is a clear appeal to character. He has set himself up as a sympathetic narrator who shares the plight of the rest of the blind population in the United States. Unlike the 70 percent of unemployed blind people in the United States, Cyrus Habib was a Rhodes Scholar and a JD candidate at Yale law when he wrote the essay. He has since gone on to hold public office in Washington State. In what ways does this increase his credibility on the issue? In what ways might it undermine the effectiveness of his appeal to character?

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

**GENRES IN CONVERSATION**

Ask students to view the Genres in Conversation feature in the e-Pages and answer the questions there before class. Then discuss the audience and purpose of each document shown. Because all three documents focus on the same topic, their differences in genre and design are more apparent. Have students consider what the genres have in common and how they use design differently to accomplish their purposes. Ask students if they can think of other genres that would work well to convince readers about the value of music education. Finally, ask students what elements of these varied sources would be effective for their own writing purposes and audiences.

**THE ADVOCACY ROLE**

The textbook suggests that the writers of argumentative documents adopt the role of the Advocate. Ask students if they believe that an argument always “advocates” something—some position, some change, some idea—or if some arguments are less about advocacy and more about taking the adversarial role. *Note:* When students have discussed this question rather fully, you might point them toward the notion of playing devil’s advocate, which is discussed on p. 84 of *Joining the Conversation*. Do they find this term and the concept that’s implied a useful way of understanding the arguer’s role as advocate?

**ADVOCATING THE UNPOPULAR**

Alexandra Le Tellier’s column (pp. 394–395) advocates a position that may be unpopular on many college campuses—support for banning large sodas. Ask students to discuss the major points Le Tellier makes to support her claim. Then have students write an in-class informal paragraph about an unpopular position that they hold; assure them that their secret is safe with you. Perhaps they will state an unpopular opposition to premarital sex or underage drinking. In their private piece of in-class writing, have them identify the main reasons they take this position. Ask if they can imagine trying to convince or persuade their peers to this way of
thinking. Have them fold their sheets of paper and turn them in without names. Then have a full class discussion about the courage required to take an unpopular point of view. What sorts of opposition do they imagine Le Tellier might be exposed to?

COMPARING ADVERTISEMENTS
Of all argumentative genres, advertisements are perhaps the most common and most familiar to our students. Students understand that advertisements attempt to persuade us to purchase a product or service, or to adopt a certain belief, like the “Men Can Stop Rape” advertisements. Building on students’ well-developed critical abilities when it comes to advertising and popular culture, start a discussion about audience and context by comparing a company’s advertisements across different publications. Do a bit of legwork before class by browsing consumer publications with different audiences, tones, and purposes in order to find different advertisements by the same company. Pass around the magazines or newspapers in class and ask students why, for instance, the ad for Gap shows one set of images in the New York Times Magazine and another set of images in Parents magazine.

ADBUSTERS
Once students are comfortable analyzing advertisements as argumentative documents, introduce them to the satirical advertisements created by Adbusters (www.adbusters.org/gallery/spoofads). Use a projector and a laptop computer to project the advertisements onto a screen in front of the class, and then start a discussion about the target audience and purpose. What advertising strategies are being critiqued? Are these critiques effective?

THE FALLACY OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS
One type of fallacy that students are sure to relate to is citing inappropriate authorities, such as celebrities paid to endorse a product. Browse YouTube to find a few TV advertisements that use celebrity endorsements, and show them to the class using a laptop and projector. (Some examples may be sports figures endorsing Nike or Adidas, actresses endorsing makeup or hair care products, or celebrities and musicians promoting nonprofit organizations like Rock the Vote.) After viewing the commercials together, ask the following questions:

- Do you pay attention to celebrity endorsements? If so, why?
- What qualities make specific celebrities attractive for certain advertising campaigns?
- Who wouldn’t you trust in an endorsement? For instance, what kind of celebrity wouldn’t do well to endorse an athletic shoe or a candidate for public office?
- Do you agree with the idea of celebrity endorsements as a logical fallacy, or do you think celebrities sometimes do have the credentials to make recommendations?
• How does the fact that celebrities are often paid large sums of money for endorsements affect how you perceive the endorsement?

• Is an unpaid celebrity endorsement for a politician or a nonprofit more valuable or trustworthy than a paid celebrity endorsement for a product?

• The example of celebrity endorsements is a clear example of an argument meant to persuade rather than convince: the advertiser wants you to actually do something. Is this intent to persuade implicit or explicit in the endorsements you viewed? Do you think the arguments are effective?

TEACHING TIPS

COMPARING CONVINCING AND PERSUADING ARGUMENTS

When a writer is arguing about an issue, it may help students to know that the writer has a bigger job ahead if the goal is persuasion. Convincing requires readers to “entertain” or accept an idea, whereas persuasion requires readers first to accept the idea and then to act on it, to make concrete and real their commitment.

To explain the differences between convincing and persuading, you might have students use columns like the ones below to argue for a particular change on campus. Test their understanding of the differences between convincing and persuading by asking: Who would you want to convince? How might you use the information from a convincing argument to make a case to those you want to persuade? Who would you want to persuade on this topic, or who would have the agency or authority to act on this issue?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convincing</th>
<th>Persuading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Get readers to accept your point of view</td>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Get readers to act on the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience:</strong> Usually only marginally informed or inclined in one direction or another. Readers will entertain an idea that’s presented to them. If their minds are made up already, you have a tougher job ahead of you.</td>
<td><strong>Audience:</strong> Typically neutral or slightly leaning toward your point of view. An audience will need to be convinced of your ideas before being persuaded to act on them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development:</strong> Establish, acknowledge, and offer rebuttal to central objections to your proposed solution.</td>
<td><strong>Development:</strong> Logical appeals from a convincing argument plus appeals to values or emotion, urging a reader to act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> The reader of the convincing argument accepts the writer’s beliefs and ideas.</td>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> The reader of the persuading argument takes action in response to the argument.</td>
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</table>
ARGUING A SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM

It may help students to see how other writing purposes, such as writing to solve problems, can also be understood as applications of the convincing and persuading roles. A single lesson might move from the general notion of convincing and persuading (in the previous activity) to convincing or persuading in a problem-solving situation, as shown here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convincing</th>
<th>Persuading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Get readers to understand the problem as you do.</td>
<td><strong>Goal:</strong> Get readers to implement your proposed solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience:</strong> Usually only marginally informed or inclined in one direction or another. They will entertain an idea that’s presented to them.</td>
<td><strong>Audience:</strong> Generally agree with your characterization of the problem but may have other ideas about solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development:</strong> Review the problem in depth and establish, acknowledge, and rebut central objections to your proposed solution.</td>
<td><strong>Development:</strong> Include a very brief review of the problem, appeals based on analysis of the audience’s interests and existing beliefs, and arguments demonstrating why your proposal is better than the alternatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> The reader is convinced of your characterization of the problem and the best solution.</td>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong> The reader, who has agency or authority, implements the solution you advocate.</td>
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UNPACKING A CLAIM

A useful lesson that can be repeated throughout a course and that introduces ways to develop an argumentative thesis or claim is the notion of “unpacking” a claim. Claims are unpacked by taking them apart, section by section. Students can develop this skill by first applying the idea to a simple argumentative statement, then trying it on a published thesis statement, and finally applying it to their own writing. Unpacking claims are also instructive for collaborative peer review. Here’s an example of a claim and its unpacking:

Bagels eaten plain or with low-fat cream cheese are the best food a working person can have on hand for those early-morning grab-bag breakfasts.

We would “unpack” this claim by establishing its parts. The development of the argument would then follow the written “promises” established in the claim.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>Meaning/Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagels eaten plain or with low-fat cream cheese</td>
<td>Establishes limitations on the kind of bagel to which the claim applies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are the best food</td>
<td>Not good, not better, but best—so this part of the claim will require establishing the bagel’s superiority as a food by establishing the criteria by which it is being judged. Criteria for judging food might include healthiness, tastiness, staying power (fills you up and keeps you full), affordability, and ease of preparation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a working person can have on hand</td>
<td>Clarifies that the claim applies to a subset of the population, working people, who presumably are rushed for time. Now we understand the criteria for judging the food “best.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for those early-morning grab-bag breakfasts</td>
<td>Establishes that we’re talking about the daily ritual of eating quickly before going to work, not the morning when longer and more thoughtful food preparation is possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXPLORING ORATORY

Michelle Obama’s speech in the e-Pages (bedfordstmartins.com/conversation/epages) presents an opportunity to expose students to the foundations of many of our current views of writing—the traditions of classical rhetoric and the medium of oratory. Discuss the parallel relationships between speaker/listener/speech and writer/reader/text, and examine the differences between speech acts and written acts. For instance, you might ask why the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. not only are replayed from audio recordings but also appear in print. What does writing do that speech cannot? What does speech do that writing cannot?

Consider introducing students to the notion of the *kairotic* moment—the special, or even unique, opportunity presented to a speech maker (or a writer) by a particular moment in time when circumstances come together to form a context for communicating with others. Someone at this precise moment is called on to speak or to write. Have students generate a list of such moments in public or private life, such as the inaugural speeches of our presidents every four years, as well as a list of moments when people are expected to speak, though extemporaneously—for instance, at a time of tragedy or disaster.

If you are intrigued by speeches, you might consider devoting a whole section of your course to discussions of a particular set of speeches, perhaps acceptance speeches for the Nobel Peace Prize, political speeches, inaugural addresses, or speeches of dissent. If possible, bring recordings or video to class so that students can actually hear or see the speaker. Clips of fa-
mous speeches are often available on YouTube and other Web sites. You can also ask your campus librarian or audiovisual resource center for help in locating more obscure recordings.

**RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF AN ARGUMENT**

Consider providing students with a strategy or heuristic for analyzing virtually any argument. This one is called **WATCH: Writer, Audience, Text, Context, Help or Hinder**.

**Writer:** What do you know about this writer? Think here of qualifications, background and associated biases, or affiliations and allegiances. Does the author attempt to establish a credible and reliable “ethos”? Does the writer attempt to connect to readers? What is the writer’s general attitude toward the audience?

**Audience:** Who are the intended readers, in terms of age, gender, occupation, education, affiliations, and authority? What do the audience and the writer share in terms of common backgrounds, beliefs, and goals? Where do they differ?

**Text:** What features of the text stand out and most clearly represent the goals of the writer and the assumptions about audience? Consider claim, organization of points, kind and quantity of evidence, use and type of appeals, tone and attitude, style and register or level of formality, design elements, and genre restrictions.

**Context:** How does the larger context (its history or its social, political, and economic context) of the argument influence the writer and/or the audience? What limitations, restrictions, needs, and aspirations does the audience impose on the writer and his or her goals?

**Help or Hinder:** What occasion or opportunity is potentially being helped or hindered by this argument? How did this moment become an exigent one, necessitating the argument or leading to the decision to argue? How tied to the moment is the argument? Will the opportunity be jeopardized if it’s not taken advantage of at this moment? What is motivating the writer and the audience?

**THE ZERO DRAFT**

The idea of a zero draft is to write quickly without editing and without consulting sources and notes. Students should try to recall their best, most basic reasons and the general evidence they’ll use to support their main point. Even if the specifics escape them, they can actually clarify their most important reasons and evidence by freeing themselves from the specifics. They will revise later to gain additional specificity. They should sustain the writing for at least thirty minutes to complete an entire draft or at least a full section. This approach to writing a quick first draft helps students get over the hurdle of just getting started. It also gets ideas down that students can then work with and revise. Zero drafts can be undertaken before a full draft has been written and anytime after sources have been collected and analyzed.

**STATISTICAL RESOURCES FOR ARGUMENT**

Statistical tools like the ones listed below may prove quite useful to students as they ground their arguments in trend statistics or seek data for tables and graphs to represent their issue
visually. (These resources can also be very useful for informative essays.) In addition to these electronic resources, ask a reference librarian at your school library for print sources as well. See p. 468 of *Joining the Conversation* for a list of other government agencies and institutions and their Web sites.

- **Bestplaces.net** ([bestplaces.net](http://bestplaces.net)): Cost of living in the United States.
- **The Book of Odds** ([bookofodds.com](http://bookofodds.com)): A reference of probabilities of everyday life occurrences.
- **Index of Economic Freedom** ([heritage.org/Index/](http://heritage.org/Index/)): An annual ranking of economic freedom among nations.
- **Inflation Conversion** ([oregonstate.edu/cla/polisci/sahr/sahr](http://oregonstate.edu/cla/polisci/sahr/sahr)): Conversion factors from 1700 to 2010, from Oregon State University.
- **Population Reference Bureau** ([prb.org](http://prb.org)): Census data and text on the United States and other nations.
- **State Health Facts Online** ([statehealthfacts.kff.org](http://statehealthfacts.kff.org)): State-by-state comparisons, from the Kaiser Family Foundation.
- **UNdata** ([data.un.org](http://data.un.org)): Statistical resources from the United Nations.
- **World Audit Democracy** ([worldaudit.org/democracy.htm](http://worldaudit.org/democracy.htm)): Ranks nations according to various measures of democracy.

**UBIQUITOUS ARGUMENT**

As a way of reviewing the assignment chapters in *Joining the Conversation* and perhaps even bringing the course to a satisfying close, students might examine the way that argument brings together many writing roles and forms of writing. Like the expository mode of definition, which is often a hybrid of classification, comparison, process analysis, and other forms of exposition, argument is a hybrid form that often requires every role and strategy a writer has in his or her repertoire. To illustrate this point clearly, have students review one of their favorite readings in Chapter 10 and examine it closely for other writing purposes—reflecting, informing, analyzing, evaluating, and problem solving. You might ask how these roles work within larger arguments and in service to those arguments.
SELF-CHECK LIST

Students have a lot to keep in mind when writing an argument. Try presenting a self-check list to remind students of the key elements of an argumentative essay. Have students add to the list as they practice writing arguments. You might also use this list as part of your grading rubric for the argumentative unit.

When writing an argument, remember to do the following:

✓ State the existing perspectives on the issue and illuminate their essential similarities and differences.

✓ Clarify the values, beliefs, or affiliations that explain those differing perspectives.

✓ Highlight the most important literature on the subject.

✓ State your claim, keeping in mind your audience’s potential difference of opinion.

✓ Explain the reasons behind your argument—why you are convinced by it and why others should be as well.

✓ Include evidence to support your reasons.

✓ Explain and clarify your position.

✓ Link your position to the essential literature (peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal documents, etc.).

✓ Anticipate and address counterarguments.

✓ Use appeals to logos (logic), ethos (values), and pathos (emotion) effectively and appropriately.

✓ Be respectful of difference but forthright with your position, clarifying how you distinguish your point of view from others’.

✓ Consider your rhetorical context—the writing and/or speaking situation in which your work will be displayed.

✓ Decide on a presentation (genre and design) that best suits your purposes.

USING THE FEATURED STUDENT-WRITER PROCESS MATERIALS

Chapter 10 of *Joining the Conversation* follows Vince Reid’s argumentative writing project on the future of online games. Walk through the In Process boxes in Chapter 10 to illustrate the following skills:

- how to generate ideas and explore conversations that interest you (p. 399)
- how to locate sources on the Web (p. 403)
- how to choose evidence for each reason in support of a claim (p. 408)
Teaching Part Three: Working with Sources

Part Two builds on the introduction of sources in Part One of the book. By discussing source use at the very beginning, Part One suggests that listening to existing conversations (and isn’t that what research is?) must come early in a writer’s process and must be given adequate attention to be done well. The entire success of the enterprise of participating in a conversation depends, after all, on this early step! And then Part Three reminds students to develop systems for managing all this information; research sources are too often poorly filed, resulting in unnecessary duplication of effort.

Chapter 11 lays out a series of steps for making the research process seem doable, rather than overwhelming and incomprehensible, for a first-year student. This chapter urges students to develop a research question and then refine it based on preliminary searching and feedback from others. It also shows students how to manage their source files so they will be ready to collect research materials in an organized fashion. Chapter 12 offers an important, expanded version about electronic resources and search tools while also shortening and simplifying the overall discussion of finding sources. Students can glean key information from this chapter about how to use electronic databases as well as Web pages, blogs, social-networking sites, metasearch sites, Web directories, and multimodal search tools that deliver audio files and images. The library itself is not forgotten in this treatment because Joining the Conversation foregrounds the importance of browsing shelves. Field research is also addressed because Chapter 12 both recommends and expands traditional search methods, helping students define what counts as legitimate searching in a college setting.

Chapter 13 addresses plagiarism and serves as an important reminder to students that the dangers and seductions of misrepresenting work as your own have never been greater than they are today. Students are often overwhelmed by the proliferation of information and misguided by the incorrect assumption that given such volume, ideas and excerpts are untraceable. This chapter offers important information about the ethics of research and offers practical approaches for guarding against plagiarism, information about why plagiarism is such an affront to teachers and the academic community, and what a student should do if accused of plagiarism.
CONNECTING RESEARCH TO THE CONVERSATION METAPHOR

Resources in this instructor’s manual: Observing a Scene, p. 40; Evaluating Wikipedia, p. 58; Interviewing for Information, p. 59; Expert Opinion and Eyewitness Testimony, p. 64; Conducting a Quick Survey, p. 105.

Joining the Conversation separates the research part of the writing process from the documentation (or citation and style guide) part of the process. Research is presented early—a move that makes it possible for beginning college writers to break down the task of inquiry into reasonable steps and to start that process early. Students need ample time to explore topics and conduct thoughtful research, skills they will use in all their future writing and research needs. Taking this approach to heart is one way to demonstrate a commitment to the conversation cycle as a labor-intensive process that requires an investment of time and energy but can get faster with experience. Because most of our first-year students will not have had the kind of research experience that is modeled in Joining the Conversation, giving them time to do this for their first time may be a key contributor to their long-term success as writers and as students.

Consider spending more time than seems reasonable on initial research questions. Students will need time for their early efforts, and particularly time for the refinement of their questions, which will lead directly to better research. This refinement will occur naturally if they are reading sources, thinking about how the ideas of others build on one another, and thinking critically at all times about what they are reading. Where are the tensions among these sources? What seem to be the contact zones that may be productive areas for research questions and additional research? Thinking critically leads to questions that can provide direction for a paper.

To facilitate students’ time management of these complicated and sometimes discouraging first steps, consider establishing milestones that break down the task of doing an initial search, reading critically, and generating increasingly refined questions. Align these refinements with a timeline that is generous enough to allow time for the development of a thoughtful research question but not so long as to invite distraction, a loss of interest in the project, or excessive detail. Hold students accountable for these milestones by collecting evidence of their progress and giving them feedback.

Foreground the importance of file management; nothing is more discouraging to a beginning researcher (or an experienced one, for that matter) than losing information or failing to document where a source was found. Learning how to keep good records of information is practical information that is too often skipped and can plague a writer for life. Given the proliferation of sources and source types, systems of file management are not optional but rather essential. Guide students toward the practical advice in Chapter 11 on how to keep track of sources that are found during research.

As students gather sources, consider spending time on how to identify beliefs and assumptions that deserve critique and hence might lend themselves as a focus for the student’s research and eventual thesis statement. Show students how to build from these critical postures toward the development of a position. Have them consider the assortment of writer roles (which are spelled out in Part Two) that are available to them, and help them match roles to topic and needed information and perspectives. Taking such an approach will help students
see that there is an ongoing interplay between research/inquiry and the role that evolves and emerges for them to address their topic.

Help students see that their inquiry efforts matter and are valued by you, perhaps by requiring a process analysis that describes and analyzes the research processes they undertook. You may be able to intervene if problems are evident in such a document. Then students can build their research plan by considering the conversation and who is involved. Ask: How will you gain access to these perspectives? What is your level of knowledge of the topic and the involved parties? Are all the key stakeholders represented among your sources? What are their values, beliefs, and affiliations? What kinds of support will be credible for involved audiences?

Once students have established a position or role for themselves from which to write, encourage them to go back to the conversation and use the qualifying terms suggested on pp. 438–439 in Chapter 11. These terms signal the student’s knowledge of the existing conversation and willingness to offer a point of view that adds to, differs from, or challenges established positions on a topic. Through such an approach, students demonstrate that they have listened to the existing conversation and developed a degree of critical expertise. Then help them take the courageous step of stating their critical position, as they also position themselves as reasonable, educable people who are open to new information that might change their minds.
Part Four addresses the concrete challenges of drafting and revising a piece of writing that becomes part of a larger conversation. In this part of the book, *Joining the Conversation* urges students to give special consideration to the type of document (genre) that best fits the rhetorical situation and how design figures into a text’s performance of part of the conversation. Part Four establishes that, in order to accomplish a successful “performance” in writing, students must first consider the role they are taking as they address their topic and their document’s intended audience and purpose. They can then plan the construction of their manuscript, which includes considering factors such as evidence sequencing or arrangement of evidence, as well as genre and design. In these chapters, manuscript design is specifically addressed as a subset (and manifestation) of audience considerations.

The second edition of *Joining the Conversation* offers two new chapters as well as other changes in Part Four. Organizing and drafting are separated to give complete coverage of both. Chapter 15 addresses organization alone, while Chapter 16 addresses both drafting and design. In both chapters, the goal is for the organization of the document to reflect the priorities and approaches required by the topic, audience, and rhetorical purpose; Chapter 16 then takes up the task of drafting and making design choices. Chapter 17, “Working with Genres,” is a new chapter that showcases many of the typical genres that are available to students. This chapter includes suggestions for alternative assignments that situate writing in a wider range of contexts. Chapter 18, “Presenting Your Work,” another new chapter, discusses types of presentations, from oral presentations to multimedia presentations, from group presentations to portfolios. Chapter 19 resumes a discussion of integrating sources, and Chapter 20 discusses revising and editing as necessary for a polished performance.

**DEVELOPING A THESIS STATEMENT**

*Resources in this instructor’s manual: Paper Planning Analysis, p. 71; Analyzing Evidence, p. 72; Drafting Debatable Claims, p. 72; Refining Essay Topics, p. 123.*

Chapter 14 opens Part Four of the textbook by moving from the research of Part Three back to the students’ papers and recommending strategies for developing a thesis statement. This chapter provides a kind of early culmination to many of the strategies that have been established thus far in the book. It connects back to the conversation metaphor by reminding students that their thesis is the succinct outcome of becoming a contributor to an existing
conversation. It might be said that an entire world of research is tied up in such a sentence, reflecting the engaged listening that the student has done, the careful research, the identification of a particular role, and the understanding of the rhetorical situation the student now enters as a full and functioning member of the conversation.

**ORGANIZING AND OUTLINING STRATEGIES**


You can help students with Chapter 15 by pointing out the idea that when a writer organizes carefully, he or she aids the larger conversation by helping readers see connections between previous parts of the conversation and the writer’s new ideas. Organization signals transitions between old and new as well as between the easily agreed upon and the controversial. Thus, organization makes the relevance of the writer’s contribution clear, emphasizing the main point through placement as well as through the substance or content of the text.

Have students look closely at model essays with an eye on how the organization signals the relationships among the writer’s points. You might ask: Why does the writer place this information here rather than there? Or given that the writer leads with this idea and ends with this other idea, what does the arrangement of ideas indicate about the writer’s position on the topic? Students might also consider what-ifs. For instance, you might ask them about a writer who is following a chronological organization: What would be the effect of reversing that chronology? Or if a writer is describing, can you tell if he or she is describing from the middle out, from the periphery in, or from left to right? If a writer is defining, what other organizational strategies (such as comparison, classification, and description) does the writer use as embedded organizers?

One good way for students to rehearse their ideas before writing them down is to talk about organizational strategies in the hypothetical. As *Joining the Conversation* suggests, a portion of one’s organizing time may be well spent on thinking about best organizational approaches, a notion that is too often skipped in the rush to put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. Considering the role and purpose is also a crucial step in choosing the best organizational method. For instance, if students were to think about organizing a book review, they would first need to see that a review involves taking the role of an evaluator or critic. If one is going to evaluate something, you might ask students, what organizational approaches come to mind? They might first write independently about this concept and then share notes in small groups, perhaps evaluating candy bars or some other concrete object that is easily distributed in class. (Save the eating part for the end!) Students should seize quickly on the idea that an evaluation involves making a judgment based on measurements using a consistent set of criteria. So perhaps with candy bars, the criteria would be freshness, size of portion, general deliciousness, and the absence of added ingredients such as nuts. Can they imagine what the organization of the paper would look like? Thinking about organization in this way may help students see how much of their work can be accomplished by having a plan before they start writing and developing an organizational strategy that matches the role they are adopting.
Once students have decided on an organizing approach, *Joining the Conversation* recommends outlining. You might consider showing students the notion of the thumbnail outline as it applies to a simple story they’re all familiar with, such as a fairy tale or a popular movie. Doing this will demonstrate how simple and basic an informal, thumbnail outline can be. Formal outlining can then also be taught as a further evolution of the thumbnail outline. Topical outlines take a student through the basic skeleton of a review based on, for instance, the evaluation of an object along several criteria. A sentence outline could then be shown as a next step in formalization, in which actual statements are made that reflect the findings of the evaluation.

**ADDRESSING GENRE AND DESIGN**

*Resources in this instructor’s manual: Genres in Conversation, pp. 47, 63, 76, 95, 111, and 134; Reading Faculty Doors, p. 40; Inventorying Informative Documents around Campus, p. 54; Magazine Genre and Design Choices, p. 69; TV Show Genre Analysis, p. 69; Advertisements as Consumer Problem Solvers, p. 113; Argumentative Blog Posts, p. 122.*

Chapter 16 connects the outline to the draft, and moves into planning the document design. Rather than suggesting that design is something one applies after a text is written, *Joining the Conversation* addresses design considerations as an important part of the drafting process. Design helps a writer achieve his or her purposes in writing while also reflecting the role the writer is taking, the goals of the document, and the genre expectations of readers. Such concerns apply to all types of documents, even academic papers whose expectations can vary from one course to another.

Consider showing students throughout the semester as many examples of genres as possible, looking especially at articles, multimodal essays, Web pages, and blogs, all of which are examined in Chapter 17. This chapter demonstrates that, whether writers are talking about magazine articles or blogs, the rhetorical tasks associated with creating these texts remain the same. Ask students to compare and contrast the guidance on how to create different genres, noting particularly the overlap or similarity in approach. This overlap suggests that more is the same than is different when applying rhetorical analysis to texts, regardless of genre. In each case, the writer-designer is concerned with purpose, analysis of one’s audience, development and organization of the presentation, decisions about how to integrate and represent sources, and drafting and designing the text.

Help students develop a critical eye for the ways that design elements are integrated into these genres. Use the language of design throughout the course, as suggested in Chapter 16. By the end of the course, students will have developed a shared vocabulary of design as well as an aesthetic sense around design features they admire. There are also many ways to teach design, even if you and your students do not have access to technology in the classroom. Show your class some examples of student papers and examine the use of space, fonts, margins, titles, and so on. Consider the size and arrangement of paragraphs. Examine whether each academic paper seems accessible and readable from a visual perspective, and whether it conveys a sense of organized points. Students might reflect that long paragraphs sometimes convey density of ideas while other times they reflect disorganization, or the perception that “everything but the kitchen sink” has been put into the paragraph container.
DRAFTING PARAGRAPHS

Resources in this instructor’s manual: Cut and Paste: A Collaborative Effort, p. 103; Framing an Introduction with Audience in Mind, p. 106.

One way to teach the paragraph as a visual container is to show students two versions of the same paragraph of information. Make it a topic that’s highly technical or one they are not likely to know. Have them fold the piece of paper in half and read the first version of the paragraph, which should lack transitions, a topic sentence, and connective phrases. Show the second version and ask which one was easier to follow. Most of the time students will prefer the second example, although a few in each class may find transitions hackneyed and tedious.

Return to the conversation metaphor as you teach introductions and conclusions. How do students feel about people, particularly strangers, who start talking without saying hello or stating their name? How do they feel when someone leaves a conversation midstream and doesn’t explain the abrupt end? Help students translate these principles to writing introductions and conclusions, and explore the purpose of these elements. Why do readers need context provided in introductions? Why do they seek conclusions, perhaps especially when those conclusions do something more than just reiterate what has come before?

PRESENTING ONE’S WORK

Resources in this instructor’s manual: The Reflective Postscript, p. 48.

The social necessity of introductions (salutations) and conclusions (farewells) can also be extended to the discussion of varied forms of performance in Chapter 18, “Presenting Your Work.” Today, digital presentations are becoming nearly as common as oral presentations. Addressing the components of the rhetorical situation (audience, purpose, context) and design apply here as they do to a written text.

Consider linking a discussion of group presentations to a peer review or workshop in class. What techniques have students found most effective in managing group projects in the past? What role do they think teachers should play in managing group presentations? How have they benefited from group presentations in the past? Have they found them detrimental? What is their sense of why group projects and presentations are assigned?

Chapter 18 also discusses how portfolios maintain a file of written work or other projects. As Joining the Conversation points out, portfolios often include reflective statements that contextualize the work and point to features the writer would like readers to notice. Investigate whether portfolios are a possibility using the course management system at your college or university. Students at Colorado State University, for instance, can maintain portfolios into perpetuity via Writing Studio, which offers this special feature. Some course management systems dump the course material shortly after the end of the course, so a crucial question is whether your system has the capacity to maintain files. For purposes of maintaining records and sample pieces of writing for future employers or for graduate school, a portfolio’s value extends well beyond its usefulness in a particular classroom. If you can make a case for portfolio capability at your school, consider doing so.
TEACHING STUDENTS ABOUT INTEGRATING SOURCES

Resources in this instructor’s manual: “Friending” Sources, p. 44; Comparing Source Integration, p. 77; The Synthesis Grid, p. 80; Source Evaluation, p. 86.

In the age of copy and paste from the Internet, you can’t be too clear or too basic when conveying to students the importance of the practical aspects of source documentation. Consider assigning a process explanation/critical analysis notebook for this portion of the course. Students keep this notebook throughout the research process, from the moment they start considering topics to the final draft. This could be a double-entry notebook that is turned in either in hard copy or electronic form. In the left column, students record their processes, and in the right column, they critique their approaches. Both you and peers could then offer comments at various stages of the research process, as documented in the notebook. Students could use this space to play around (at low or no risk) with ideas they have for roles they are considering for their paper and the organizing and design elements they are thinking about. Peer review and instructor evaluation of the notebook provide opportunities for intervening in the process long before students commit to ideas and processes are set in stone.

Expectations around source use are deeply embedded in the needs of readers, who bring to every reading situation, whether consciously or unconsciously, a set of beliefs and values around the kinds of evidence they expect and the way they expect that evidence to be presented. The topic might be broached this way: documenting sources via an approach that meets a reader’s needs actually facilitates a conversation or helps it along. On the other hand, not meeting a reader’s needs in regard to source representation can create the perception of carelessness on the part of the writer or even accusations of ethical impropriety, including charges of plagiarism. The use of recognizable documentation conventions also connects a writer to his or her intended purposes and roles, and makes him or her more likely to be understood by readers.

Another way to connect source use to the conversation model is by thinking of the sources who are also writing about your topic as conversation partners, people with whom you develop a relationship based on a shared interest. For some students, digital contexts provide a mechanism for enjoying varying levels of relationships and of watching some of those relationships develop through (or some would say, in spite of) the contact-widening effect of Facebook or LinkedIn. Thinking of sources this way, students can see that it’s possible to have a kind of long-distance relationships with fellow research inquirers that is respectful, tactful, and connected to ideas and concerns, which are sometimes topics that can’t be discussed face to face with old friends. Conversation partners may position themselves somewhere along a continuum, with committed allies at one end and committed adversaries at the other. Even if some of the participants disagree on fundamental features of the conversation, people who are engaged in similar discussions support one another just through their shared interest. (See the “Friending” Sources classroom activity in this instructor’s manual, p. 44.)

Students might also blog about their topic and find themselves getting conversation partners via their blogs if people from locations around the globe chime in. If you try a blog option, be clear about who will have access to it and how you will manage off-color or inflammatory posts. Will these student blogs be restricted to course participants, or will
they be available to anyone on the Internet? If you have a blogging mechanism that is con-
trolled by your school, then doing a restricted blog (without broad public access) may be the 
best way to start.

REVISION AND PEER REVIEW:
CORE STEPS IN THE WRITING PROCESS

Resources in this instructor’s manual: Reflecting on Collaborative Processes, p. 48; The Reflective 
Postscript, p. 48; Hierarchy of Rhetorical Concerns, p. 49; Commenting on Student Writing: Rec-
ommendations to the Teacher as Writer, p. 49; Peer-Review Memo, p. 56; Reviewing Instructor 
Feedback, p. 90; Peer-Review Discussion, p. 97; Self-Check List, p. 141.

Learning to revise and in fact to embrace revision is one of the key goals of most first-year 
composition courses. It sometimes helps students if you say something like this: “There are no 
perfect documents, only deadlines by which you must turn in your imperfect ones.” This point 
underscores the notion that we do the best we can with the time and resources available to us 
as writers. It is important not only to show students how to revise but to collect documentation 
of their having done so.

Revision occurs once a writer, a peer, or a teacher has reviewed a document and used 
feedback. One of the best things we can do when considering Chapter 20’s emphasis on revis-
ing and feedback is to help students understand how to give, how to receive, and how to use 
feedback. Peer review, which is developed in Chapter 4 of Joining the Conversation, is a key 
piece of this puzzle. Too often students do not understand the value of peer review to the feed-
back loop. The key to helping them recognize its importance is to make the peer-review work-
sheet as clearly reflective of the assignment goals as possible and to provide mechanisms for 
the reviewer to consider elements of the assignment that he or she may not have internalized 
before. By helping someone else reach those goals, that peer reviewer also sees more clearly 
what he or she must do as well. It is not too pedestrian to articulate this process of intervention 
as a process also of self-learning. Somewhere along the way, it might even make sense to have 
the students themselves develop the peer-review worksheet from the assignment and grading 
criteria or rubric.

You as a teacher are also an important variable in the equation of revision. A great deal 
can be accomplished by collecting drafts for the purpose of intervening midstream in your 
students’ work. Too often, we reserve comments until the final, graded draft. By then, it’s too 
late to have an impact on that grade and on that assignment (unless you have an open-revision 
policy). Giving feedback on an intervention draft does not need to be as burdensome as you 
might think. Make it clear to students that, in your feedback, you will respond solely to the 
primary thing they most need to work on at that point in the process. Then you need to re-


spond only to this item, which is likely to be a large-scale concern, rather than a polishing 
piece of advice. Such higher-order feedback can be accomplished in a well-selected sentence or 
two with perhaps one note also made in the margin where you see the problem emerging. You 
can let students know that this is your approach beforehand, which also takes the burden off 
you for noting students’ every single deficiency. You don’t want to rob students of their own
agency because extensive feedback takes too much of the learning responsibility from them. What will you have shown, except that you know what the paper should look like? Instead, consider posing questions. The wealth of research on teacher feedback has consistently found that less is more and that it is most effective when it is offered in stages, over time, and along levels of priority, working from the most global (audience, purpose, thesis) first down to the most local (editing level concerns) last.
Teaching Part Five: Documenting Sources

Part Five discusses MLA and APA styles, with recent examples of each type to model proper citation. You can address many big-picture documentation issues with students. You might help students understand why MLA and APA are both useful in composition and general education courses. Specifically, these two documentation systems reflect the preferences of those in the arts (MLA) and those in the sciences and social sciences (APA). Hence, a first-year composition course might touch on forms that students will need for their first two years of college.

This part reinforces the book’s overall goal of connecting to the conversation metaphor by reminding students that style guides reflect more than simple rules. Instead they reflect a kind of shared language that implies responsible communication within academic and professional communities. Explore with students how documentation systems make it possible for persons within academic disciplines, and to some extent professional communities, to communicate easily because of the shared citation convention that they employ. These conventions often seem invisible to those functioning within the group due to their pervasive use, but they also reflect varying approaches to citation as well as aspects of design. Perhaps most important, they suggest the differing conversations to which these styles pertain. Talking to students about the conventions and values of documentation systems may never be more appropriate than in the first-year composition course, before students become fully accustomed to using one system more than another. At this early stage, they may be better able to step back from all of these systems and examine them critically, rather than feeling loyal to one or another due to experience and familiarity.

Students should also be aware that MLA and APA documentation systems are but two of literally dozens of established documentation styles, which include Chicago and the Council of Science Editors (CSE). They may be required to use different styles in other courses. Remind students that once they are taking courses in their major, they will generally use only one style of citation and that they’ll get much better at it as a result of repeated practice.

In the first-year composition course, you have a special opportunity to work with students so they understand that the differences between MLA and APA are not random or arbitrary. Instead their differences reflect the differing values of the arts and the sciences. MLA uses authors’ full names while APA uses a surname and initials, and these differences are meaningful. Students might be asked to explain these differences. They might theorize that, for those in the arts who use MLA, gender disclosure as one facet of identity is important, while in APA, the emphasis is less on the identity or subject position of the author(s) and more on the findings and the research. Also, scientific fields put a greater emphasis on date of publication than the
In the sciences, the relevance of findings is largely dependent on their currency. Thus, APA users put the year of publication immediately after the author’s name both in the in-text citation and in the references page. As a result, students who use APA should learn to record a source’s publication year immediately upon finding the source. MLA documentation, on the other hand, completely omits the publication date from the in-text citation and includes it only near the end of the works cited entry. This approach may reflect the fact that MLA often places value on historical texts and even the texts of antiquity. When talking about texts, whether archival or current, they are generally discussed in the present tense, as living documents. Research findings within APA, on the other hand, are reported as past events, even when that research is quite recent. Other questions you might pose to students about documentation style include the following: Why do you suppose that the first letter of each word in a title is capitalized in an MLA works cited page but not in an APA references page? Why are commas used between author and year in the APA in-text citation but not between the author and page number in the MLA citation? Why is paraphrase favored over direct quotation in APA, and direct quotation used often in MLA?

A practical way of introducing students to documentation is by spending a day with books and computers, using a whole class period to do detail-oriented error-checking of citations in the drafts of their papers. Students can use the documentation models in Part Five for this purpose. Show students how to correct their initial entries by referring directly to the documentation models; the conventions can best be applied and checked by referring directly to a resource, one citation at a time. Doing so demonstrates that this work takes time and attention to detail. It also helps students to recognize that it makes little sense to try to commit all the rules to memory; it would be impossible for most mere mortals to do so, and documentation rules are being updated, or changed, all the time. It is best to refer to the style guide rather than attempt to remember the rules. This process is rather like following a recipe that you want to get exactly right: you keep the recipe in hand and refer to it often to make sure you are doing things properly; you put tabs on cookbook pages that you know you will use often. You familiarize yourself with how the documentation system is laid out in the style guide so that you can find details easily. You pay attention to detail because it is all about paying attention to detail, which is a lesson itself worth sharing.
Teaching Part Six: Handbook

Part Six is an entirely new section included in Joining the Conversation: A Guide and Handbook for Writers. Even if you are using the guide-only version without the handbook, the coverage of style, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics in this gloss may be helpful nonetheless. Authored by stylist Barbara Wallraff, the three chapters of Part Six offer accessible and practical guidance on style (writing confidently), grammar (writing skillfully), and punctuation (giving readers direction). In this instructor’s manual, we have folded considerations of grammar, mechanics, and style into our discussion of the readings in each of the Part Two chapters (Chapters 5–10).

We hope that the addition of the handbook provides you with new opportunities for helping students consider grammar and mechanics during discussions of rhetorical situations and writing choices. The teaching tips below treat these concerns as part of the rhetorical objectives of the composition course and offer strategies for connecting them to course goals, rather than simply for the internalization of rules and conventions. This effort reflects our belief that grammar and mechanics are best addressed in situ rather than as isolated, late-stage efforts that are divorced from actual writing.

Joining the Conversation presents style, grammar, and punctuation as subject to varied and fluid rhetorical purposes rather than as rigid rules that can or should be universally and consistently applied. For instance, in some situations the passive voice is appropriate (e.g., lab reports on scientific experiments). On the other hand, students should understand why there is a general aversion to passive voice, particularly when it is deployed for purposes of avoiding responsibility. Such a conversation elevates a discussion of grammar and mechanics out of a rules approach and into a contextual approach. Similarly, you can start a discussion by pointing out when a writer chooses to truncate a sentence and create a fragment. Such a style decision may best be discussed as a choice rather than a violation of a rule.

Teaching from a handbook can be invaluable if it is integrated into the goals of your course and is responsive to the needs of your students. We respond here to several common questions relating to the use of the handbook section of Joining the Conversation.

How might an instructor best use the handbook?
Consider how the handbook relates to the larger goals of your course, and make connections between the handbook and students’ writing. Divorcing the study of mechanics from course objectives tends to lead to one of two approaches—either focusing on mechanics to the exclusion of other important features of writing, or offering no constructive feedback at all on mechanics, which often constitutes a missed opportunity. The former may be a more serious
problem than the latter, but certainly feedback that focuses solely on rhetoric can lead to the complete neglect of style and mechanics, which can be frustrating to teacher and student alike. It is essential to address mechanics in the context of students’ writing because students are often able to apply rules to worksheets but are unable to transfer those skills to the actual writing they do. And international students in your class may need help with verb tenses or subject-verb agreement so that they can speak effectively to native audiences.

If you address mechanical issues as they relate to both the course and the students’ writing, particularly as that writing touches on rhetorical situations (or audiences, purpose, genres, etc.), you increase your chances of having a meaningful effect. This also means that you must prioritize your feedback on mechanics, just as you prioritize your feedback on student writing as a whole. One approach to avoid is the wholesale circling and correcting of errors. In fact, an error or deficiency focus may in general be less effective because it is often not instructional. When a teacher finds student errors, circles them, and perhaps even corrects them, that teacher becomes a copy editor, and he or she must question the instructional value of this approach. Error pattern analysis might be considered as a better way to hold students accountable for learning. Another approach involves addressing issues of grammar and mechanics as interesting features of rhetorical effect or a reflection of a writer’s ethos or ability to communicate responsibly with an audience. Engaged students can have their interest piqued by discussions of mechanics and grammar that characterize them as features of rhetorical situations, or choices that effectively speak to audiences.

*How might an instructor move effectively between the guide section of* Joining the Conversation and the handbook section?

*We encourage you to consider how you might connect grammar and mechanics to the broad goals of* Joining the Conversation *and particularly to the objectives of your course. As you work with the book, develop ideas for how to integrate the handbook into its sections in ways that don’t derail the general purposes of the rhetoric. Here are some examples.*

*In Part One, you might connect grammar and mechanics to considerations of writers’ roles and the questions students ask as they undertake inquiry and research. One way to start this discussion might be with writing assignments themselves. Point out to students that the role and approach one takes to a writing assignment is often signaled through verbs in the assignment itself. Students might locate the verbs in their assignments for other classes. (Are students being asked to define, to compare, to discuss, etc.?) In your own assignments, you might discuss how your choice of verb signals the tasks that students are expected to undertake. Whether assigned or self-determined, the role that a student takes when composing a text will determine many features of style and mechanics. If the document will be an informational report, readers will likely expect authority to be conveyed in the writing, even stylistically. If the document will be an evaluation, readers will anticipate a clear, authoritative statement of the evaluation criteria and will appreciate a balanced approach to weighing the value of the multiple items being examined. In all cases, students will benefit from an analysis of the audience and purposes the text undertakes. Ideas about style, tone, and register (or level of formality) can be discussed as part of these concerns.*

*As another example of how the handbook might be integrated into your use of Joining the Conversation, consider Part Four and its emphasis on organizing patterns, genres, design decisions, drafting processes, and presentations of one’s work. This part of the book makes*
direct connections between the substance and the appearance of one’s writing, or connections between form and function. By this point, students will likely have determined their audience and purpose, including their writing role. As they contemplate the best form for presenting their work, they can consider how matters of organization, clarity, and style connect to these concerns. For instance, if students work on PowerPoint presentations, they will almost certainly need help with issues of parallelism as they attempt to create pages of material that are easy to follow. Such formats also invite conversations for discussing the role of transitions and how they differ from one genre to another. In general, consider the particular teaching opportunities that naturally derive from various forms, genres, and designs.

Matters of grammar, style, and mechanics can be addressed during drafting and revision. When you teach drafting, discuss how revision offers the opportunity for thinking more closely about all parts of a document, including grammar, style, punctuation, and mechanics, and their impact on the overall effectiveness of the document. These handbook elements might be characterized as language-level reflections of choices about genre, design, and presentation. Peer review can also be central to writers internalizing the fundamentals of grammar and mechanics. Peer response might be directed toward whether the writer’s grammatical or stylistic choices meet the needs and expectations of readers. As part of this effort, students will likely need to be shown how to give and how to use feedback from peers and others on grammar and mechanics. Your task as their instructor will be challenging because they will likely have experience with editing others’ papers, and they will need assistance in seeing how peer review is different, even when there is a focus on mechanics included.

At any point in the course, consider asking students how confident they feel about grammar and mechanics, as well as their beliefs about how important it is to have good command of grammar and mechanics. How important do they think these issues are to employers or customers? This would be a good time to talk about a Top Five list, in which you identify the most disruptive errors that writers make. Limiting such a list to five elements will give students a manageable focus. Another way to reinforce this point is to remind them that errors are generally patterned; most people have a few errors they make again and again. Explain how students can integrate their new understanding of grammar and mechanics through the feedback loop. How will you hold them accountable for their learning?

As students draft, they might take an inquiry approach to style and mechanics, aided by your questions. This approach treats issues of style and mechanics as applications of rhetorical or functional grammar. In other words, choices about style and mechanics are made with the expectations of readers in mind. Writers stay within the conventions to communicate easily and fluidly with readers. On the other hand, sometimes writers deliberately subvert rules to make a point more emphatically with a particular audience and purpose in mind. You might ask why writers take liberties with some issues of style but remain vigilant about others. For instance, have students keep track of the sentence fragments and run-on sentences they find in published writing that they read. Point out that writers play with sentence lengths and constructions for rhetorical power. Ask students: Are sentence fragments and run-on sentences used equally for such purposes? What other liberties do people take with the rules and conventions in writing?

It is more interesting, challenging, and relevant to discuss grammar, style, and punctuation as part of rhetorical decision making than as rules that should be blindly followed. It is also more accurate to contextualize matters of convention as subject to change because, in the
end, conventions are merely that: conventional associations with a particular time and place. Nevertheless, students, perhaps particularly international students, may be helped a great deal by underlying definitions, such as those associated with English verb tenses, irregular verbs, and subject-verb agreement. All students may also benefit greatly from reminders about what constitutes a sentence and what does not. The handbook can help them make this knowledge part of their writing toolkit, which enables them to communicate effectively. Having control of such conventions also allows them to decide when to bend or subvert rules based on their rhetorical purposes.

What’s the best way to help students consult the handbook and learn how to navigate it while they are drafting and revising their work?

We argue for an embedded approach to grammar and mechanics instruction, in which students’ style and grammar problems or concerns are addressed as they materialize. Hence, we would argue for teaching students to use tabs to identify the parts of the handbook that are most relevant to their needs so that they can find those sections easily. This approach might best be taught through use of an example. For instance, perhaps you have noticed that more than a few students are having trouble with jumbled logic in their sentences. You examine several examples and note that the problem lies in their use (or nonuse) of commas. You suggest that students tab the section called “Use Commas to Keep Your Sentences Organized and Readable” from handbook Chapter 25, “Punctuation and Mechanics: Giving Your Readers Direction” (p. 753). You have also noticed that some students have little idea about how to use subordinate clauses to connect parts of a complex sentence and accentuate one part over another. You might address this as a whole-class exercise and provide several examples from students’ papers. Working in small groups, students can address other categories of comma misunderstanding over the course of a few class sessions; each group could give a five-minute presentation on the subtopic within the comma category in the handbook.

Another idea is to have students do a survey or preview of the handbook at the beginning of the course and write a descriptive outline or create a self-indexing tool of the categories of grammar, style, and punctuation covered. They might tab areas that they would like to know more about using one color, and tab areas they are pretty sure they have trouble with using another color. Limit each student to three interests and three concerns, and anthologize these to see if there are recurring patterns you might address with the whole class. Offer extra credit for students who, near the end of the course, demonstrate with examples of their own work how they have learned one of the challenging topics they identified at the beginning of the course. Offer double extra credit to students who discuss their grammar, style, and punctuation decisions in light of larger rhetorical concerns. Offer triple extra credit for any example where students can show they have consciously and effectively subverted a convention.

Remember that, in our discussion of Part Two, we integrate discussion starters on grammar, style, and punctuation as applied to the readings, to model how these issues are reflected in real-world texts.