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Laurie Blass and Deborah Gordon

Frontmatter

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# Writers at Work

From Sentence to Paragraph

**TEACHER'S  
MANUAL**

Laurie Blass  
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# Table of Contents

	Introduction . . . . .	iv
	Preview the Process . . . . .	1
Chapter 1	All About Me . . . . .	6
Chapter 2	Home Sweet Home . . . . .	13
Chapter 3	Work, Play, Sleep . . . . .	21
Chapter 4	Families . . . . .	29
Chapter 5	That’s Entertainment! . . . . .	36
Chapter 6	People . . . . .	44
Chapter 7	Jobs and Careers . . . . .	52
Chapter 8	Important Life Events . . . . .	59
Chapter 9	Going Places . . . . .	67
Chapter 10	In the Future . . . . .	74

# Introduction

## Audience

*Writers at Work: From Sentence to Paragraph* takes beginning-level students in either an ESL or EFL classroom through a process approach to writing. Though much of the content is personal, the writing concepts that are taught lay the groundwork for academic writing in the future.

## Approach

*Writers at Work: From Sentence to Paragraph* achieves the elusive goal of getting beginning-level students to benefit from a writing process approach. This is done through scaffolding the writing process with a strong emphasis on vocabulary and grammar in the first steps of the process. This focus on language development serves as a foundation for writing coherent and cohesive topic-related sentences in the first seven chapters, and paragraphs in the final three chapters.

## Organization of the text

*Writers at Work: From Sentence to Paragraph* consists of two parts:

### Preview the Process

This section introduces students to the writing process and familiarizes them with the structure of a typical *Writers at Work: From Sentence to Paragraph* chapter. Students learn the importance of vocabulary, grammar, and idea connectors in clear writing. They are also introduced to a drafting process that proceeds from freewrite to first draft, to second draft, and then to final draft. They become aware of the value and techniques of peer editing and of sharing their final work with their classmates.

### Chapters 1–10

Each chapter opens with a set of questions designed to get students thinking about the topic. Chapters are organized into five sections that take students through vocabulary acquisition and idea generation, review and acquisition of topic-related grammatical structures, revision and editing strategies, and sharing opportunities. These sections are described in detail.

## Chapter structure

Each chapter has the following sections:

### I Getting Started

Students start out by studying words and phrases related to the chapter topic that they will use in their writing assignments. You may want to read the words once or twice for students to listen and then repeat so they can learn how to pronounce them. However, it is not necessary to pre-teach these words. The activities allow for students to work together to learn them. They recognize, decode in context, and produce the new vocabulary through a variety of pair- and small-group interactive activities. These activities have two functions: They help students to learn the new vocabulary, and at the same time, they also help students to begin to generate their own ideas on the chapter topic, which they will use later in their writing.

Section I culminates in a freewriting activity. The purpose of freewriting is to encourage fluency and help students generate ideas on the topic. Freewriting is a timed activity, but other than that, it has no restrictions. Students should not worry about spelling, grammar, or organization. Freewriting is not collected or graded, or read by anyone other than the student. Remind students that their freewrites are not a draft, but rather should be seen as just an idea pool; it is recommended that you have students underline the ideas in their freewrites after they finish freewriting.

It's important that students be relaxed and comfortable when freewriting. The amount of time you give them depends on your assessment of their level. We recommend beginning with two to five minutes in Chapter 1. You can increase the time in later chapters. However, it helps to have students try to freewrite quickly, encouraging them to write as much as they can in a short period of time. To do this, you might want to have students keep a chart of the number of words they write in each freewrite. For classes with students who seem to like freewriting, you may want to assign freewriting tasks on other topics to break up the pace and to practice "fluency."

### II Preparing Your Writing

In this section, students learn and practice grammar structures related to the chapter topic that they will use in their writing. Structures are presented in information boxes. Before you go over information box material, you may want to begin by writing sentences on the board that illustrate the structure, and asking students analysis questions. Have students follow along as you read through the material in the information box. Have them repeat example sentences, and elicit or provide additional examples for the points in the boxes. Specific suggestions for presenting each information box are given in the chapter notes.

Practice exercises follow each information box. You can collect and grade practice exercises, or go over answers with the class. For discrete-item exercises,



you can have students compare their answers in pairs and then have volunteers share their answers with the class. For sentence-level exercises, it's often a good idea to have students write their answers on the board and discuss them as a class. For paragraph-level exercises and error correction, it is useful to put the activity on a transparency and make changes or corrections on the transparency as students call out the answers.

At the end of Section II, students combine the ideas they developed and vocabulary they learned in Section I with the grammar they've just been working on to write their first draft. In Chapters 2–7, students are given two writing assignments. We believe that providing students with two assignments gives them the optimal amount of practice for writing topic-related sentences. It also provides different contexts to practice using the new grammar and vocabulary. However, teachers may feel that for their particular class, working on just one of the two writing assignments will provide sufficient practice. In Chapters 8–10, students are given only one writing assignment. This allows them to focus on creating one cohesive, well-formed, and well-supported paragraph, which they will be doing for the first time. You can have students complete their first drafts as homework, or in class while you circulate to offer help, as needed.

Have students write as neatly as possible and on every other line, as this will be important in the feedback stage. At this stage of the book, students are not required to type their drafts, but if any students would like to, have them double-space their lines.

### III Revising Your Writing

Revising is an integral part of the writing process, albeit one that can be very difficult for beginning-level students. The *Revising Your Writing* section takes students step-by-step through two level-appropriate aspects of improving and revising their writing: expanding their vocabulary and connecting their ideas. Students also give and get feedback on their revised first drafts, and then write second drafts.

Each *Expand your vocabulary* part presents an opportunity for students to acquire and consolidate new words and expressions on the chapter topic that they can use to refine and extend their ideas. New vocabulary offers students the chance to develop new ideas and consequently to add new sentences as well as make changes in their vocabulary choices.

*Connect your ideas* presents ways for students to combine and support ideas so that their sentences are more complex. Information boxes in this section present a variety of logical connectors such as *and*, *or*, and *for example*. This section may also result in students thinking of more ideas they would like to add to their writing.

*Expand your vocabulary* and *Connect your ideas* each include practice exercises and an application activity called *Your turn*. *Your turn* is an opportunity for students to write new sentences and generally make changes to their drafts using the new vocabulary or idea connectors they have been practicing. To do this, students

write the changes directly on their drafts. If you do this in class, you may want to circulate to offer help, as needed.

It's important for students to get used to the idea of marking up their drafts with things that they want to add or change. Have students make notes directly on the page: in the margins, immediately above or below sentences, or at the bottom or top of the page. Have them use numbers or arrows to indicate the placement of the new information in their draft. You may also want to hand out or have students bring pens or pencils that are a different color from the one they used to write their drafts. Try to avoid red. Although it's noticeable, it sometimes means "incorrect," and these additions are anything but!

Section III also takes students through a peer feedback activity. Students read each other's first drafts and answer a series of questions about them. It's a good idea to encourage students to make an initial positive comment about their partner's work, and to make sure all comments are constructive. It can be useful to show students that it is easier to listen to advice after hearing something positive about their writing. You may want to illustrate this by modeling the process with one of the students.

To get the best results from the feedback process, have students get into pairs and exchange their books and their first drafts. Explain that they will discuss their drafts with their partner, and write the comments on the chart in their *partner's* book so he or she will have it to refer to later. Have students read their partner's paper(s) one time just to get the main ideas. After this first reading, have students underline and comment on parts that they liked about the paper. Then have students read the paper a second time and complete the chart. This time, they should be reading a little more carefully in order to answer the questions in the chart. Sometimes, students may need to explain to their partner where their new *Your turn* sentences go, and explain the reasoning behind their placement. Encourage students to ask their partners if they are not sure.

After giving and getting feedback on their first drafts, students write the second draft. Remind them to refer to the feedback charts that their partners filled in. They can write the second draft in class or as homework.

#### IV Editing Your Writing

This section teaches students to edit their writing for sentence-level mechanics issues, such as punctuation, spelling, and common grammatical mistakes.

Students first learn and practice a mechanics point, such as comma use. As with Section III, this section includes a *Your turn*. This *Your turn* provides an opportunity for students to look at their drafts for the specific mechanics point they have just learned and practiced. Have them check their drafts for that point only. Remind them not to get too caught up in their ideas or their sentence structure, as this will distract from the editing process. Remind students that they will have time to do this when they write their final drafts. Have students make their corrections directly on their drafts.



Students then review a common mistake related to the grammar they have learned in the chapter, such as subject-verb agreement. They edit a text correcting instances of the common error.

After this, students proceed to a cumulative, guided editing activity. Using a checklist, students check their own writing for the mechanics issues presented in this section. To do this, have students look for and check each item on the checklist. Have them make their corrections directly on their draft.

At this point, students will incorporate all their mechanics edits into a final, polished draft. Remind students that they can make additional changes if they wish, including new ideas and new sentences, as long as they carefully edit these for mechanics issues as well. As before, if students are typing their papers on a computer, tell them to double-space their lines.

## V Following Up

The *Following Up* section begins with an opportunity for students to share their writing with their classmates. Sharing writing with others is a valuable activity. It emphasizes writing as communication, develops community, and provides closure. This activity could take place before the final draft is turned in, or alternatively, you could make copies of the papers before you mark them.

Each chapter ends with a *Progress Check*. It offers a chance for students to reflect on what they have learned and what they need to keep in mind going forward. Have students complete the *Progress Check* form in their books. You can have students complete them in class as you go around and offer input, or you can have students do them as a homework assignment. Alternatively, you can meet with students to personally go over their assignments and have students fill them in with you.