

Refining Composition Skills

Rhetoric and Grammar

Fifth Edition

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Contents

Unit One	The Paragraph	1
Chapter 1	The Writing Process	1
	Getting Started	2
	<i>Journal Writing</i>	2
	CNN® Video Activity: "The 37,000-Page Diary"	3
	In this clip, CNN interviews a man who has kept a diary for over 30 years. He talks about why he keeps the diary and reads a few segments from important moments in his life.	
	<i>Video Follow-up: Discussion Questions</i>	3
	The Process of Writing	3
	Prewriting	3
	Generating Ideas	4
	Invention Techniques	4
	Brainstorming	4
	Freewriting	5
	WH- Questions	6
	Clustering	6
	Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	8
	Planning	8
	Drafting	8
	Revising	8
	Editing	9
Chapter 2	Introduction to the Paragraph	11
	Getting Started	12
	CNN® Video Activity: "Learning to Read and Write"	12
	This video shows children learning by the whole language method, explains how this method works, and describes what parents, teachers, and children think of it.	
	<i>Video Follow-up: Discussion Questions</i>	12
	What Is a Paragraph?	13
	The Topic of a Paragraph	13
	Prewriting: Planning	14
	The Topic Sentence	17
	Improving the Topic Sentence	19
	Recognizing the Topic Sentence	21

Formulating the Topic Sentence	24
Prewriting: <i>Generating Ideas</i>	24
Support	25
Prewriting: <i>Planning</i>	25
Unity	28
Coherence	30
Internet Activity: <i>Composition Skills and the Internet</i>	34
Composition Skills	35
Revision	35
Peer Review	35
Revision Checklist for the Paragraph	35
Chapter 3 The Narrative Paragraph	36
Getting Started	37
CNN® Video Activity: <i>“Messages for Princess Diana of England”</i>	37
When Princess Diana died, many people wrote poems, notes, and letters to leave at her memorial sites. In this clip, people reflect on why they were moved to write these messages.	
Video Follow-up: <i>Discussion Questions</i>	37
Readings: Personal Reflections	37
Reading 1: <i>From “My American Journey”</i>	38
In this excerpt, General Colin Powell, whose parents were born in Jamaica, tells the story of his visit to the village where his father was born and his first feelings upon meeting his extended family.	
Reading 2: <i>“The Best Part”</i>	39
In this paragraph, Mary Kay Mackin reflects on Christmas holidays she has spent with her family and comes to a conclusion about the part she likes best.	
Reading 3: <i>“The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl”</i>	41
In this essay, which first appeared in the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Elizabeth Wong tells of her painful experiences growing up in the bicultural atmosphere of Los Angeles’ Chinatown. She describes the difficulty of being Chinese on the outside but American on the inside.	
Writing	44
Present Narration	44
Internet Activity: <i>Composition Skills and the Internet</i>	46
Composition Skills	48
Coherence	48
<i>Adverbials of Time and Sequence</i>	48
Grammar Review	48
Past Narration	49
Composition Skills	51
Coherence	51
<i>Adverbial Clauses of Time</i>	51
Internet Activity: <i>Composition Skills and the Internet</i>	51
Grammar Review	51
Composition Skills	52
Revision	52
Peer Review	52
Revision Checklist for the Narrative Paragraph	53

Chapter 4 The Descriptive Paragraph	54
Getting Started	55
CNN® Video Activity: “Yosemite National Park”	55
This clip describes some of the beautiful natural views that can be seen at Yosemite but also shows how a visit to Yosemite can be affected by the thousands of other people who are visiting the park.	
Video Follow-up: Freewriting	55
Readings: Important People, Important Places	55
Reading 1: “Uncle Kwok”	56
In this selection from <i>Fifth Chinese Daughter</i> , Jade Snow Wong presents a memorable portrait of her Uncle Kwok. She describes his physical appearance and his actions from the time he entered the Wong factory until he gets settled at his job.	
Reading 2: From “Beyond the Sun”	59
In this excerpt from an article which appeared in <i>Traveler</i> magazine, David Butler describes Finnish Lapland as he saw it on a cross-country skiing trip one winter.	
Writing	61
Description of a Place	62
Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	65
Activities	65
Composition Skills	65
Coherence	65
Adverbs of Place	65
Modification: Specific Details	66
Grammar Review	67
Description of a Person	68
Composition Skills	71
Coherence	71
Adjective Clauses	71
Grammar Review	73
Composition Skills	74
Revision	74
Peer Review	74
Revision Checklist for the Descriptive Paragraph	74
Chapter 5 The Expository Paragraph	75
Getting Started	76
CNN® Video Activity: “The Artwork of Petroglyphs”	76
This report shows rock art made by Native Americans between 500 and 2,000 years ago. An archeologist explains what some of the rock art means.	
Video Follow-up: Creating Pictographs	76
Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	76
Readings: Arts and Entertainment	76
Reading 1: From “Survival”	77
Margaret Atwood, born in 1939, is a well-known Canadian novelist and poet. In the following reading, taken from the introduction to her 1972 book <i>Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature</i> , Atwood describes her reading experiences as a youth. She explains that even though she was almost unaware of Canadian authors, she found delight in the few she did read.	

	Reading 2: "Jackie Chan"	80
	In this reading, students learn a little bit about the Hong Kong actor Jackie Chan. The author explains what has made Chan such a popular and well-liked film star.	
	Writing	82
	Support of the Generalization	84
	Specific Details	84
	Examples	88
	Illustrations and Anecdotes	92
	Composition Skills	93
	Coherence	93
	Organization of Details and Examples	93
	Transitional Words and Phrases	96
	Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	100
	Grammar Review	100
	Revision	101
	Peer Review	101
	Revision Checklist for the Expository Paragraph	101
Unit Two	The Essay	103
Chapter 6	Introduction to the Essay	103
	Getting Started	104
	CNN® Video Activity: "A Case of Plagiarism of Romance Novels"	104
	This clip examines the writing of two writers of romance novels. One writer has admitted to plagiarizing the work of the other.	
	Video Follow-up: <i>Gathering Information about the Consequences of Plagiarism</i>	104
	Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	105
	Introduction to the Essay	105
	The Thesis Statement	105
	The Introduction	108
	Prewriting: Planning	109
	The Developmental Paragraphs	112
	Prewriting: Planning	113
	The Conclusion	121
	The Outline	124
	Prewriting: Planning	124
	Composition Skills	126
	Revision	126
	Peer Review	126
	Revision Checklist for the Essay	126
Chapter 7	The Example Essay	127
	Getting Started	128
	CNN® Video Activity: "The Lost Language of the Wanino Tribe"	128
	This documentary shows how men and women from the Wanino tribe are learning to speak the language of their ancestors using recently discovered tape recordings of a woman who spoke the language. The people who are studying this lost language comment on the connection between language and culture.	

<i>Video Follow-up: Sharing Your own Experiences</i>	128
Readings: The Power of Culture and Language	128
Reading 1: "How Unwritten Rules Circumscribe Our Lives"	129
In this article, Bob Greene writes about the unwritten cultural rules in our lives. Greene gives multiple examples of the rules we follow without even thinking about them.	
Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	132
Reading 2: "Americanization Is Tough on <i>Macho</i> "	133
In this essay, which first appeared in Rose Del Castillo Guilbault's column for <i>This World</i> , she gives an example of the power of language. She shows how a particular Spanish word has come to have different meanings in different cultures.	
Writing	137
Number of Examples	137
Choice of Examples	140
Composition Skills	143
Coherence	143
Organization of Examples	143
Transitions Between Paragraphs	143
Transitions to Introduce Examples	144
Repetition of Key Words and Phrases	147
Grammar Review	150
Revision	152
Peer Review	152
Revision Checklist for the Example Essay	152
 Chapter 8 The Comparison and Contrast Essay	 153
Getting Started	154
CNN® Video Activity: "Workplace Communication: Gender Differences"	154
This report examines the growth of the communication training industry and notes that women are often the target market for communication training seminars, tapes, and books. The clip includes a short interview with Deborah Tannen and other communication experts.	
<i>Video Follow-up: Brainstorming</i>	154
Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	155
Readings: Styles of Communication	155
Reading 1: "Conversational Ballgames"	155
In this excerpt from her textbook <i>Polite Fictions</i> , Nancy Masterson Sakamoto explains the difference between Japanese and American conversation styles. She uses an analogy that compares each conversation style to a particular sport.	
Reading 2: "Intimacy and Independence"	159
This excerpt from Deborah Tannen's book <i>You Just Don't Understand</i> examines the different ways that American men and women view decision making. She notes that the different notions of communication that women and men have can lead to conflict between couples.	
Writing	163
Points of Comparison	164
Emphasis on Comparison or Contrast	165
Patterns of Organization	165

Composition Skills	173
Coherence	173
<i>Transitions for Comparison and Contrast</i>	173
Grammar Review	180
Revision	181
<i>Peer Review</i>	181
<i>Revision Checklist for the Comparison and Contrast Essay</i>	182
 Chapter 9 The Classification Essay	 183
Getting Started	184
CNN® Video Activity: "Museum of Product Failures"	184
This report shows people visiting a very special museum which houses a collection of new products that were unsuccessful. People in marketing often visit this museum to help them understand why products succeed and fail.	
<i>Video Follow-up: Finding Out More about Products</i>	185
Readings: Advertising and Consumers	185
Reading 1: "Weasel Words"	186
In this excerpt from his popular book <i>Doublespeak</i> , William Lutz examines the words that many advertisers choose to make misleading but legal claims for products they wish to sell.	
Internet Activity: <i>Composition Skills and the Internet</i>	194
Reading 2: "Motivation"	194
In this excerpt from a college textbook, the authors explain Maslow's hierarchy of needs and show how advertisers can appeal to each type of need to influence consumers' buying behavior.	
Writing	197
The Principle of Classification	198
<i>Making the Classification Complete</i>	200
Internet Activity: <i>Composition Skills and the Internet</i>	201
<i>Organizing the Classification Essay</i>	201
<i>Introducing the Categories</i>	202
Composition Skills	205
Introductory Paragraphs	205
<i>The Turnabout</i>	205
Coherence	207
<i>Transitions for Classification</i>	207
Grammar Review	209
Revision	210
<i>Peer Review</i>	210
<i>Revision Checklist for the Classification Essay</i>	210
 Chapter 10 The Process Analysis Essay	 212
Getting Started	213
CNN® Video Activity: "Profile of a Communications Software Company"	213
This clip features Hilgraeve, a small software company which has found its niche in communications software. The founders of the company talk about how their company got started and what they believe they must do to continue to be successful.	

<i>Video Follow-up: Using the Internet</i>	213
Readings: The World of the Internet	213
Reading 1: "The Life of e-mail"	213
This magazine article traces the path an e-mail message follows as it travels from the sender's computer to the receiver.	
Reading 2: "A Brief History of the Internet and the World Wide Web"	216
This textbook reading follows the development of the Internet from the first connection between two computers in the 1960s to today's worldwide networking capabilities.	
Writing	224
Planning the Process Analysis Essay	224
Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	226
Organizing the Process Analysis Essay	227
Composition Skills	233
Introductory Paragraphs	233
<i>The Dramatic Entrance</i>	233
Coherence	235
<i>Participial Phrases</i>	235
Grammar Review	236
Revision	237
Peer Review	237
Revision Checklist for the Process Analysis Essay	237
Chapter 11 The Cause-and-Effect Analysis Essay	238
Getting Started	239
CNN® Video Activity: "The Success of Xavier College Pre-Med Students"	239
This video clip profiles Xavier College, which successfully prepares more African-American students for medical school than any other college in the United States.	
<i>Video Follow-up: Using Campus Resources</i>	239
Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	239
Readings: Academic Achievement	240
Reading 1: "Surfing's Up and Grades Are Down"	240
This report from the <i>Washington Post National Weekly Edition</i> examines the effects that computers have on college students' education and lives. In general, Sanchez reports positive effects, but she finds growing concern about Internet addiction, which can cause students to get low grades and even drop out of college.	
Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	243
Reading 2: "Why They Excel"	246
In this excerpt from an article written for <i>Parade</i> magazine, Fox Butterfield investigates the causes for the achievement of young Asians in the United States. She finds the causes rooted in the traditional values of their culture.	
Writing	250
Multiple Causes → Effect	251
Organizing the Causal Analysis Essay	254
The Thesis Statement for the Causal Analysis Essay	255
A Problem in Reasoning	258
Cause → Multiple Effects	259
Organizing the Effect Analysis Essay	260

<i>The Thesis Statement for the Effect Analysis Essay</i>	262
The Causal Chain	264
Composition Skills	267
Introductory Paragraphs	267
<i>The Dramatic Entrance</i>	267
<i>The Relevant Quotation</i>	270
Coherence	272
<i>Transitions and Expressions for Cause and Effect</i>	272
Grammar Review	273
Revision	274
Peer Review	274
Revision Checklist for the Cause-and-Effect Analysis Essay	274
Chapter 12 The Argumentative Essay	275
Getting Started	276
CNN® Video Activity: "Campus Activism"	276
This video examines activism on U.S. college campuses and gives reasons why student activism today may look very different from the activism that attracted so much media attention in the 1960s.	
Video Follow-up: <i>Investigating Your Campus</i>	276
Readings: Issues on Campus	277
Reading 1: "College Lectures: Is Anybody Listening?"	277
In this magazine article, David Daniels questions a traditional teaching method: the lecture class. He explains problems he sees with the lecture class and suggests an alternative which he believes would improve education at American colleges and universities.	
Reading 2: "Let's Put the Excellence Back in the A"	279
Elliott Miles, a retired educator and university president, discusses a disturbing trend on college campuses: grade inflation.	
Writing	281
The Argumentative Thesis: Taking a Stand	282
The Opposition: Knowing What You Are Up Against	283
Supporting and Explaining Reasons	284
Internet Activity: Composition Skills and the Internet	288
Refuting and Conceding the Opposition	289
Organizing the Argumentative Essay	290
Composition Skills	294
Coherence Review	294
Revision	298
Peer Review	298
Revision Checklist for the Argumentative Essay	298
Unit Three Grammar Review	299
Adjectives (Ch. 4)	300
Participles as Adjectives	301
Adjective Clauses Reduced to Participial Phrases	303

Adverbials (Chs. 3, 4, 10)	305
Adverbs of Place	305
Adverbials of Time and Sequence	306
Prepositions in Time Expressions	307
Adverbial Clauses Reduced to Participial Phrases	310
<i>The present participle (Verb + ing)</i>	311
<i>The perfect participle (Having Verb + ed)</i>	311
<i>The passive perfect participle (Having Been Verb + ed)</i>	311
Articles (Chs. 5, 9, 11)	313
Definite and Indefinite Articles	313
<i>The Indefinite Article</i>	313
<i>The Definite Article</i>	314
Articles with Quantifiers	317
Articles with Count and Non-count Nouns	321
Clauses (Chs. 3, 4)	322
Adjective Clauses (Ch. 4)	322
Adjective Clause Subordinators	323
Punctuation of Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Adjective	326
Adverbial Clauses of Time (Ch. 3)	327
Adverbial Clauses of Comparison, Contrast, Concession (Ch. 8)	331
Adverbial Clauses of Purpose (Ch. 10)	335
Adverbial Clauses of Cause and Result (Ch. 11)	336
<i>Adverbial Clauses of Cause</i>	336
<i>Adverbial Clauses of Result</i>	337
Noun Clauses (Ch. 7)	339
<i>As Direct Objects</i>	339
<i>Noun Clauses Derived from Questions as Direct Objects</i>	340
Subjunctive Noun Clauses	342
Comparisons (Ch. 8)	344
Indicators of Equality or Similarity	344
Indicators of Inequality	346
Correlative Conjunctions (Ch. 9)	349
Gerunds and Infinitives (Ch. 7)	352
Gerunds and Infinitives as Subjects	352
Gerunds and Infinitives as Objects	353
Gerunds as Objects of Prepositions	356
Verb/Tense System	358
The Simple Present vs. the Present Progressive (Ch. 3)	358
<i>The Simple Present Tense</i>	359
<i>The Present Progressive Tense</i>	360
The Simple Past vs. the Past Progressive and Past Perfect (Ch. 3)	362
<i>The Simple Past Tense</i>	363
<i>The Past Progressive Tense</i>	363
<i>The Past Perfect Tense</i>	363
Verb Tense Review: The Present Perfect vs. the Simple Past (Ch. 5)	367
<i>The Present Perfect Tense</i>	367
Adverbials Used with the Present Perfect and Simple Past Tenses	369
The Passive Voice vs. the Active Voice (Ch. 4)	372

The Passive Voice: Five Points to Review	373
Conditionals	376
<i>Real Conditions (Ch. 10)</i>	376
<i>Unreal Conditions (Ch. 11)</i>	377

Appendices 381

Appendix I	382
Peer Review Checklist for Paragraphs	382
Peer Review Checklist for Essays	383
Appendix II	385
Using Others' Ideas	385
Appendix III	388
The Definite Article with Place Names	388
The Definite Article with Other Proper Nouns	389
Appendix IV	390
Punctuation Problems	390
Rules for Punctuation	391
Appendix V	400
Rules for Capitalization	400
Appendix VI	402
Noun Plurals	402
Appendix VII	405
Subject-Verb Agreement	405
Appendix VIII	409
Principal Parts of Irregular Verbs	409
Appendix IX	415
Verbs and Their Complements	415
Appendix X	420
Sample Business Letters	420

Index 425

Preface

Level and Aim of the Text

The fifth edition of *Refining Composition Skills* presents an integrated program of writing for high-intermediate and advanced students of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). It combines extensive practice in rhetorical strategies and techniques with a review of appropriate grammatical structures and verb tenses. With its extensive appendices, the text can further serve as a handbook for writing, grammar, and mechanics. The primary audience is the academically oriented ESL student; however, the text also can be useful in developmental writing courses for native speakers who could benefit from more guidance in writing compositions.

Flexibility of the Text

Refining Composition Skills can accommodate the needs of students of varying degrees of experience and levels of writing skills. Inexperienced writers will build a solid foundation in writing beginning with Unit One, which presents the basic paragraph patterns useful for high school- or college-level writing: narrative, descriptive, and expository. This unit covers developing and restricting topic sentences; organizing and developing effective, detailed support of the controlling idea; and outlining. Students who have had considerable practice composing the types of paragraphs presented in this unit may consider the chapters in Unit One a review. More experienced writers might begin the text with Unit Two, which focuses on the multiparagraph essay. This unit introduces the common patterns of exposition along with argumentation. Here the emphasis is on a strong thesis statement and appropriate and well-organized support. Another option for experienced writers is to review the writing process and the paragraph in Chapters 1 and 2 before or after starting essay writing in Unit Two. *Refining Composition Skills* contains enough material so that teachers can pick the chapters most appropriate for their students and thus design writing courses of varying difficulty.

Design of the Text

Except for Chapters 1, 2, and 6, which provide introductions to the writing process, the paragraph, and the essay, respectively, each chapter in *Refining Composition*

Skills focuses on a rhetorical mode of development and the conventions associated with that mode. Each chapter contains four basic components: getting started video and journal writing activities, reading selections, an introduction to the rhetorical pattern, and the relevant composition skills (devices for achieving coherence).

Each chapter (except Chapters 1, 2, and 6) begins with several thematically chosen readings with topics geared toward the interests of academically oriented ESL students. The readings are followed by comprehension/discussion questions intended to generate lively class discussions and provocative essay topics. In addition, each chapter topic is reinforced in the examples and exercises throughout the chapter. The reading passages also function as examples of the rhetorical modes and of professional writing, providing evidence that the principles of rhetoric apply in writing both outside and inside the classroom. The reading component allows for flexibility in teaching: Teachers who wish to focus on the academic content of the essays can begin with the introductory essays, and teachers who prefer the developmental approach can begin with the sections on rhetoric.

In the rhetoric section, the rhetorical patterns are carefully and clearly explained and illustrated, often with student samples that can be used as models early in the chapter. The section on composition skills introduces techniques for achieving coherence, such as the use of adverbial clauses and transitional expressions, and encourages the application of those skills in the writing of compositions, thus emphasizing the necessity for revision in the writing process. In addition, each chapter includes exercises for mastery of the composition skills. To further encourage revision and a focus on accuracy, the writing component in each chapter includes references to relevant grammar points in Unit Three, Grammar Review. To conclude the chapter, writing assignments of varying difficulty are included, including several "assignments from the disciplines," which are assignments typical of those students might encounter in a college-level content class.

Major Revisions in the Fifth Edition

One of the major changes in the fifth edition of *Refining Composition Skills* is the "Getting Started" section which begins each chapter. This section is designed to introduce students to the chapter theme and goals and help them activate schema which will enable them to benefit more fully from the activities which follow this introduction. Each "Getting Started" section includes journal writing prompts as well as a CNN Video Activity to go along with the CNN video available at no charge to teachers who adopt *Refining Composition Skills*. Teachers may select from these initial activities to appeal to a wide variety of learning styles and to prepare students for the activities they will encounter later in the chapter.

Other revisions in this edition include the inclusion of "Composition Skills and the Internet" activities which encourage students to explore the Internet as a source of both information and inspiration. Because of the changing nature of the Internet,

references to URLs have been kept to a minimum, although there are some references to pages that seem to be reliable. In case one of the URLs does not work, keywords are always provided so that teachers and students can use their favorite Internet search tools to complete the activities. These “Composition Skills and the Internet” activities are designed to complement the text but can be skipped without losing continuity if Internet access or class time is limited.

Similarly, the new “Assignments from the Disciplines” at the end of each chapter can be used to simulate college-level writing assignments. However, if students do not have the background knowledge, time, or preparation to respond to these questions, teachers may elect to use the more general questions which precede the “Assignments from the Disciplines” or to refer to these assignments as examples of university writing requirements.

Other changes include the clear articulation of chapter goals at the start of each chapter, the inclusion of several new appendices, including peer review checklists, information on using others’ words and ideas, and model letters. These new appendices are added to the comprehensive references provided in the appendices and the grammar review section, allowing the text to function as both a textbook and a writer’s handbook. Finally, a number of the reading passages have been changed to continue to offer up-to-date readings which will be of interest to students.

With this edition, *Refining Composition Skills* retains its developmental, step-by-step approach to writing while providing greater emphasis on the reading/writing connection and the process of writing.

Articulation with *Developing Composition Skills*

Developing Composition Skills, an intermediate-level writing program, has been developed as a natural stepping stone to *Refining Composition Skills*. This intermediate-level text introduces students to the various rhetorical modes through an approach that affirms the interconnectedness of writing, reading, and grammar.

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