

Bank Street College  
Graduate School of Education

# A Writer's Handbook



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## Writers on Writing

The great art of writing is the art of making people real to themselves with words. (Logan Pearsall Smith, *Afterthoughts*)

But true expression, like the unchanging sun,  
Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon,  
It gilds all objects, but it alters none.  
Expression is the dress of thought, and still  
Appears more decent as more suitable.

(Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism*)

I'm probably the world's worst writer, but I'm the world's best rewriter.  
(James Michener)

A writer's problem does not change. He himself changes and the world he lives in changes but his problem remains the same. It is always how to write truly and, having found what is true, to project it in such a way that it becomes a part of the experience of the person who reads it. (Ernest Hemingway, *The Problems of a Writer in War Time*)

If there be nothing new, but that which is  
Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,  
Which, labouring for invention, bear amiss  
The second burthen of a former child!

(William Shakespeare, *Sonnet LIX*)

There's a common notion that self-discipline is a freakish peculiarity of writers—that writers differ from other people by possessing enormous and equal portions of talent and willpower. They grit their powerful teeth and go into their little rooms. I think that's a bad misunderstanding of what impels the writer. What impels the writer is a deep love for and respect for language, for literary forms, for books. It's a privilege to muck about in sentences all morning. It's a challenge to bring off a powerful effect, or to tell the truth about something. (Annie Dillard, *To Fashion a Text*)

# Developing Writing Competencies: Toward The Integrative Master's Project

## Introduction

Strong professional communication requires good use of all language areas. Of significant importance is writing. At Bank Street, we consider writing to be critical to learning and to expression. We value writing done as self-reflection as well as writing of research papers; we encourage narrative and essay writing. Whatever the form or the purpose, quality in writing is expected. This Handbook is the outcome of the work of a faculty committee whose members wanted to provide additional help to students and others with questions about expectations and processes involved in writing. It is meant to be a useful source as well as to offer challenge. Faculty do not require students to be proficient professional writers when they come to Bank Street. However, students are expected to use this Handbook and other sources and strategies to promote their professional writing competence during their studies so that as they complete the Directed Essay, the Independent Study, or the Portfolio, they might express their proficiency and expertise as professionals and feel a greater sense of control and satisfaction in their writing skills.

## Types of Writing

As a Bank Street student, you are asked to write in several different formats. Each enables you to think and express your thinking in different ways. Over the course of your studies at Bank Street, you should take note of the kinds of writing you experience as well as those you do not.

The different writing experiences include, but are not limited to, the following:

- personal reflection on one's own learning process through journal writing;
- objective description of observed individuals, groups, or events;
- analysis and interpretation of observed experience, and of research and theoretical studies;

- critical reviews of the literature in a variety of disciplines related to education;
- reporting on original research and inquiry.

The Graduate School Writing Assistance Program provides individual tutors for matriculated students who have significant difficulties with written assignments and integrative masters projects. Students must be referred by a course instructor or advisor. There is no cost to the student, who must commit to meeting weekly with his or her tutor. Tutors are Bank Street Graduate School alumni who have been trained to work with adults. If you struggle with writing, please let your course instructor or advisor know, and she or he will assess your writing to determine if a referral is warranted. For more information, email Rena Rice, director of the program, at [renarice@bankstreet.edu](mailto:renarice@bankstreet.edu).

## The Process of Writing an Essay

One type of writing of particular importance is essay writing. Faculty have found that many students need to reconsider this more formal means for communicating ideas. We have divided this section into three parts: (1) preparation for writing; (2) the process of writing; and (3) self-editing, which occurs after writing. Never truly sequential, writers move back and forth across these components of the writing process.

Your main goal in writing is to communicate your thoughts on a particular topic effectively to someone else so that you will be clearly understood. Keeping this goal in mind will help you to focus on your audience. While most graduate school papers are written according to instructor requirements, and therefore the faculty are an important audience to consider, there are other audiences. For example, reflective journals are written for you to read and learn from. Curricular materials are for other teachers and educators.

### Preparation for Writing

Goals	Activities
1. Become comfortable with the material of the topic so that you can use and discuss the main ideas.	Read and take notes. Actively think about the material; form opinions. Think about how the ideas can be used.
2. Decide on a topic. If assigned a topic, be sure you understand the question and know how to answer it.	Think about ideas that are connected in the readings, in your own experience, in your interests. Keep your topic specific and limited rather than broad and general.
3. Begin to organize your ideas about the topic.	Cluster or brainstorm ideas to get thoughts out quickly in brief phrases. See what ideas go together. Check to see if your topic is too broad.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Activities</b>
4. Develop a purpose and thesis statement. It should state what you want the essay to accomplish.	Write a purpose statement which shows you have taken a stand in relation to the topic. To develop the topic into a thesis, design a specific, purposeful argument. You should have a single, unambiguous sentence which expresses the central argument or idea of the paper.
5. Organize your ideas. (If you are writing a long paper, you can work on each section separately to keep the work manageable.)	After developing a cluster of related ideas, put them in outline form. It is important for these ideas to develop into a clear, logical order. Take out material which does not contribute to building the argument point by point.

## Process of Writing

Goals	Activities
1. Help your writing start to flow.	Now that you are ready to begin writing, you may want to freewrite, to write without editing. This helps to get the ideas on paper. It does not help with organization.
2. Consider your audience.	Your tone, style, and method of presentation must be appropriate for your audience. Imagine you are writing for someone who deserves the clearest, most interesting writing you can create. Do not lose sight of your audience along the way. This means you should continue to provide background information and transitions as you write.
3. Stay on the topic and cover the major points.	If you find you are missing needed information, go back to your notes and/or rethink your ideas. Look at the statement of purpose. Each part of the paper should bring you closer to your thesis statement.
4. Shape the paragraphs.	Be sure each paragraph develops one main idea and that each idea is supported with specific facts, examples, and evidence.
5. Keep your reader on track. Be sure your essay shows clear development from one idea to the next.	Use transitions between sections, between paragraphs, and within paragraphs. Use staging to point the way to the reader.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Activities</b>
6. Check to see if you need to include counter arguments.	Briefly develop any obvious arguments opposing your ideas. Show how the opposing arguments are not valid.
7. Introduce the essay.	Now is the time to go back and write a clear introduction. Write an attention-grabbing introduction and lead-in. The introduction includes a statement of your main point, the thesis.
8. Conclude the essay.	Write a conclusion that includes analytic statements on the significance of your main points.

## Self-editing

Editing one's own writing is the exciting process of ensuring that what one means is clearly presented. Editing is the reflection and refinement of what you have written. Good writing relies on good self-editing. Of course, not only should you edit your own work, but, like many writers, you will want to rely on the input of a helpful, supportive critic who is willing to read and react to your writing.

The time to focus on critical editing is after writing the first draft. Editing is a process of reshaping and refining. Self-editing skills require attention to every facet of the written work as you examine critically what you have written from the smallest detail to the broader structure. As in the actual process of writing, as you edit, keep your audience in mind.

The process of self-editing involves asking and answering a series of questions about your essay:

### Questions about content

- Have I represented various views about the topic?
- Have I represented key scholars in the field? Do they support my arguments?
- Have I related the literature to my own teaching experience?
- Does the paper represent my own, well-argued view of the topic?

Questions about organization

- Will the reader be able to follow the structure?
- Will the reader know my thesis by the end of the introduction?
- Have I used headings where needed to indicate the structure?
- Are there sufficient transitions between the major parts, and between paragraphs and within paragraphs, so that the reader will understand the relationships between and among the parts of the paper?

Questions about style

- Does my own voice come through?
- Does the paper carry an argument or theme throughout the whole?

Questions about citation style

- Have I adhered to one style and used it consistently? (Bank Street requires students to use the APA method of citation; see the last section of this handbook.)
- Does my paper properly represent the authors and scholars I am citing?
- When quoting, have I used passages that fit the rest of my paper?
- Is there a balance between references to others and my own argument?

Questions about paragraphs and sentences

- Does each paragraph refer to and follow from prior paragraphs?
- Is there one topic in each paragraph?
- Are all sentences complete?
- Are sentences grammatically sensible?
- Do subjects and verbs agree?

Questions about details (e.g., spelling, punctuation)

- Have I used the spell check?
- Have I used appropriate punctuation, especially commas, semi- colons, and colons?

## A Guide for Faculty Comments on Student Writing

Each course instructor has his or her own method for reading, commenting on, and engaging students in feedback about student papers. Often, of course, it is the instructor who is the main audience, and you should keep that in mind as you write and self-edit. It may help to know the kinds of questions course instructors have as they read and react to student papers.

It is also important to remember that all instructors make both positive and negative comments about student papers. You should try to understand what the instructor meant by all his or her comments so you can take them into account in your future writing. Bank Street instructors are quite willing to talk with you if you have questions about comments on your papers that you do not understand or think are not valid.

Regarding content, the instructor may ask:

- Has the student communicated a good understanding of the assignment, a sound reading of the material?
- Does the student understand theoretical concepts accurately, and are they clearly expressed?
- Has the student integrated an understanding of theory with insight into the practical applications and implications of the theory?
- Does the student portray her or his own thinking?
- Has the student left out important points?
- Does the student examine the implications of the solutions being proposed?
- When supporting a particular thesis or proposing solutions to problems, does the student take into account and fully analyze valid arguments against those solutions?

Regarding presentation and organization:

- Are general ideas supported with illustration, example, anecdote, close observation, or reference to the literature?
- Are specific examples drawn into a broader statement about the educational significance, showing reflection and integration?
- Does each paragraph or section develop a particular point or main idea

that is clearly expressed?

- Does the student state the topic or thesis of the paper clearly?
- Are the main points developed logically point by point, building an argument?

Regarding grammatical details:

- If a student has written a paper with significant grammatical errors, have I made the problem clear to the student in my comments? Are there significant spelling problems?

## Using APA Style

The following explanations from the American Psychological Association will guide you in setting up reference lists, bibliographies, and citations in the text of your work. If you are accustomed to using another style sheet, you will find some striking differences between APA style and the others with which you may be familiar. Most notably, in the APA style sheet, capitalization in the title of an article, chapter, or book follows the same rules as capitalization in a common sentence. According to most other style sheets, each important word in any title should be capitalized. In APA style, capitalization of each important word applies only to the titles of journals.

The following definitions are in keeping with APA style:

- **A reference list** appears on a separate page at the end of an article. Titled “References,” it documents books and articles actually used in the preparation of an article or essay and provides the information necessary to identify and retrieve each source. The writer should include only the sources that were used in the research and preparation of the article.
- **A bibliography** cites works used for background or for further reading. Often a bibliography is annotated; that is, it includes a brief objective description of the article or book.
- **A reference citation** in the text, in preference to footnotes, briefly identifies the source of information for readers, and enables readers to locate the source in the alphabetical reference list at the end of an article.

Content footnotes are discouraged because they are distracting to the reader, and because important information merits inclusion in the text.

## General Format of the Paper

- Use one-inch margins, with one inch at the top and the bottom.
- Paginate (number the pages) on the top right corner of the paper.
- Double space throughout.
- Indent paragraphs using the tab key, and do not leave a larger space between paragraphs. Note that flush left text with wide space between paragraphs is not APA style.
- Use the “hanging indent” for your reference list, indenting one tab space. (See Reference Lists and Bibliographies, page 16.)
- Always italicize titles instead of underlining.
- Do NOT use a running head.

**Headings and subheadings.** There are five levels of headings and subheadings in APA style:

**Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading** (level 1)

**Flush Left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading** (level 2)

**Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.** This is level 3, and your text begins after the period.

**Indented, boldface, italicized lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.** This is level 4, and your text begins after the period.

*Indented italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.* This is level 5, and your text begins after the period.

Headings with the same value should be in the same style. The number of headings will depend on your paper. Always begin with level one, and proceed to level two, etc.

## Citing References in the Body of the Paper<sup>1</sup>

Each time you quote a source directly, paraphrase an idea, or refer to something that another person said or wrote, identify the original source by inserting the author's last name and the date within the text of your paper. Each source you cite must also appear in the reference list at the end of your paper.

These arguments against standardized education (Duckworth, 1986) explore science as a process of discovery.

Give page numbers for direct quotations. Note that any sentence punctuation comes after the closing parenthesis.

As Dewey (1938) noted, the educational continuum was united by this "connectedness in growth" (p. 75).

If the author's name is used in the text, only the date needs to be inside parentheses. When both the author and the date are used in the citation, separate them with a comma. If the author's last name and the date both happen to appear in the text, there is no need to give further reference.<sup>2</sup>

Duckworth (1986) discussed this.

In 1986, Duckworth argued...

You need to include the year only once when referring to a particular study within a paragraph as long as the study will not be confused with other studies.

In her study of how individuals learn about density, Duckworth (1986) makes a critical case...

Duckworth also found...

When referring to a particular part of a source, give the page number, chapter, figure, or table at the appropriate place in the text. Abbreviate page but not chapter.

(Meyers & Jackson, 1991, p. 78)

(Johnson, 1990, chapter 5)

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.). See the Publication Manual for further explanations and examples.

<sup>2</sup> Do include the year in all parenthetical citations.

When a work has more than two authors and fewer than six, cite all the authors the first time the reference occurs; subsequently, only the last name of the first author followed by “et al.” and the year. If there are six or more authors, cite only the first author and replace the rest with the abbreviation “et al.”

Marra, Jacobson, Hardy, Krance, and Center (1982)... [first citation]  
Marra et al. (1982)... [subsequent citations]

When citing two authors in the text, join their names by the word “and.” In parenthetical material, in tables, and in the reference list, join the names by an ampersand (&):

As Keisel and Drapewski (1990) demonstrated...  
As has been shown (Keisel & Drapewski, 1990)...

If you are referring to a source cited by another author, use the following form:

Ainsworth’s study (as cited in Kagan, 1984) demonstrated...

Note: Be sure to list Kagan’s work, not Ainsworth’s, in your reference list, since you found the information in Kagan.

## Reference Lists and Bibliographies

**General style requirements.** Your reference list or bibliography should always be on a separate sheet at the end of your paper; it should be titled References [centered] or Bibliography. If there is only one reference, the page should be titled Reference. List all sources alphabetically by the author’s last name. The first line of a bibliography or reference list is flush with the left margin; all subsequent lines are indented one tab space (i.e., “hanging indent”). In MS Word use CTRL + T on a PC or COMMAND + T on a MAC.

**Authors.** List the author’s last name first, comma, then the author’s initial(s). With two or more authors, separate each author’s name with a comma and use an ampersand (&) before the last author. If the work has no author, list the title first. Write the full name of a corporate author.

**Date of publication.** Give the year the work was copyrighted.

**Periodicals.** Periodical example:

Radens, E. C., & Schwimmer, S. (1990). Thinking together: The value of discussion in the five-year-old's classroom. *Thought and Practice: The Journal of the Graduate School of Bank Street College of Education*, 2(2), 16-26.

**Article title.** The title is written as a sentence would be: only the first word is capitalized, as are any proper names and any word following a colon. The title has no quotation marks around it, nor is it italicized (or underlined):

Looking beyond test scores: An approach to reading assessment.

**Journal title and publication information.** A journal title is written in full with all the important words capitalized. The title is italicized:

*Thought and Practice: The Journal of the Graduate School of Bank Street College of Education*, 2(2), 16-26.

Italicize the volume number. Do not use "Vol." before the number. If, and only if, each issue begins on page 1, give the issue number in parentheses immediately after the volume numbers, but do not italicize it. Give inclusive page numbers. Use "pp." before the page numbers in references to newspapers and magazines, but not in references to journal articles.

**Examples of how to list periodicals in reference lists and bibliographies.** Journal article:

Meirer, D. (1992). Reinventing teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 93, 594-609.

Journal article, two authors, journal paginated by issue:

Brinton, B., & Fujiki, M. (1993). Communication skills and community integration in adults with mild to moderate retardation. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 13(3), 9-19.

**Authors or editors.** List the author by last name first, then initial(s). To refer to an edited book, put the editors' names first and enclose the abbreviation "Ed." or "Eds." in parentheses after the last editor.

Tate, G., & Corbett, E. P. J. (Eds.). (1988). *The writing teacher's sourcebook* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

**Books.** The title is written as a sentence would be. Only the first word is capitalized, as are any proper names and any word following a colon. The book title is italicized.

*Cognitive development* (2nd ed.).

Other information necessary for identification and retrieval (e.g., 2nd ed. or Vol. 4) goes in parentheses right after the title without any period or comma separating this information from the title.

**Publication information.** Write the name of the city, followed by the two-letter state abbreviation. If two or more cities are listed on the copyright page, give the first one. After a colon, give the publisher's name. Omit terms such as Publishing Company, Publishers, Co., or Inc. However, do include Books and Press.

Examples:

New York: NY: Fireside Books.

Hillside, NJ: Earlbaum.

Cincinnati, OH: McLaughlin Brown.

Washington, DC: Democratic Press.

If the book was published outside the U.S., spell out the city and country.

When a group author, organization, or government agency is also the publisher, follow this form:

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

**Examples of how to list books in reference lists and bibliographies  
book, third edition, Jr. in name:**

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (1979). *The elements of style* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Macmillan.

**Edited book:**

Wing, L. (Ed.). (1976). *Early childhood autism: Clinical, educational and social aspects* (2nd ed.). Oxford, UK: Pergamon.

**Referring to an article or chapter in an edited book:**

Yarrow, L. J., & Messer, D. J. (1983). Motivation and cognition in infancy. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Origins of intelligence: Infancy and early childhood* (2nd ed., pp. 451-478). New York, NY: Plenum.

With two or more names, use an ampersand (&) before the last name. Identify the editor by the abbreviation "Ed." in parentheses after the surname. To identify a translator, use "Trans." Give initials and surnames for all editors, regardless of the number of editors. When an editor's name is not in the author position, write the first name initial(s) first, then last name (note the placement of M. Lewis in the example above). When referring to a specific section of an edited book, use the abbreviation for page or chapter.

**Unpublished master's thesis and doctoral dissertation:**

Chasky, I. (1997). *Gender issues in first graders' dramatic play* (Unpublished master's thesis). Bank Street College of Education, New York, NY.

Lee, R. (1996). *Co-constructing meaning and knowledge: A case study of a teachers' research collaborative* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign.

Brewer, M. (2013). *Late effects of childhood cancer: Implications for child life specialists* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from <http://bank.waldo.kohalibrary.com/>

**Research report from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC).** ERIC example:

Howe, R. W., & Kasten, M. (1992). *Students at risk in mathematics: Prevention and recovery in elementary schools*. Retrieved from ERIC database (ED 350175).

Note: Give the ERIC number in parentheses at the end of the entry.

## How to Cite Web Sources

**Citing references in the body of the paper.** Follow the author/date format as you would for a print resource. If you are citing a direct quote and there is no page number, use the name of the chapter or heading where the quote appears.

**Reference lists and bibliographies.** Provide as much of the following information as possible, including any volume or issue numbers for online periodicals:

Author's name. (date of publication or last revision). Title of document. Title of Complete Work. Volume (issue), pages. Retrieved month, day, year from <http://put.url.here>

**Website as a whole.** If you are referring to a website in its entirety, just refer to the name and address of the website in the text of your paper. There is no need for a reference list entry.

The Bank Street Bookstore is a wonderful website for finding that perfect children's book (<http://www.bankstreetbooks.com/>).

### Part of a website:

Raimondo, J. & Cohen, E. (1999). Art safari: An adventure in looking, for children and adults. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.  
Retrieved from <http://www.moma.org/interactives/artsafari/>

**Part of a website, no author.** Since there is no author, the title moves to the author position. Include the retrieval date and the section's web address. Do not italicize the title.

IAN Research Findings: Regression. (2012). Retrieved July 14, 2012, from <http://www.autismspeaks.org/news/news-item/ian-researchfindings-regression>.

In your text, cite the first few words of the title and use double quotation marks ("IAN Research Findings," 2012).

### Online version of a print journal:

Brookhart, S. M. (2008). Feedback that fits [Electronic version]. *Educational Leadership*, 65(4), 54-59. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/>

**Online journal only:**

Yerrick, R., & Johnson, J. (2009). Meeting the needs of middle grade science learners through pedagogical and technological intervention. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 9(3). Retrieved from <http://www.citejournal.org/>

**Citing articles from electronic databases.** Include the author(s), year, title of the article, journal name, volume (issue), page number(s), DOI or give the URL for the journal's homepage. There is no need to include retrieval date or database name.

A DOI (digital object identifier) is a unique alphanumeric string which acts as a document's persistent link to its location on the Internet. For more on DOI visit Crossref and doi.org.

Author, A. A. (year). Title of article. *Title of periodical*, xx, pp-pp. doi: xx.xxxxxxxx or Retrieved from <http://www.xxxxxxx>

**Article with a DOI:**

Hambly, C., & Fombonne, E. (2012). The impact of bilingual environments on language development in children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal Of Autism & Developmental Disorders*, 42(7), 1342-1352. doi:10.1007/s10803-011-1365-z

**Article without a DOI:**

Zelden, C. L. (1999). From rights to resources: The southern federal district courts and the transformation of civil rights in education, 1968-1974. *Akron Law Review*, 39(471). <http://www.uakron.edu/law/lawreview/>

**Newspapers:**

Goodnough, A. (1999, November 10). Helping city schools bring a taste of the arts to students. *The New York Times*, p. B15.

## More Tips on APA Style

Bank Street College Library website:

<http://bankstreet.edu/library/research-tools/apa-bank-street/>

OWL Purdue online Writing Lab:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Call# 808.027 A512p6



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