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PART ONE: Meet *Writer's Help*

► Introduction

When students turn to popular Web sites and search engines for writing help, they often find a vast, unvetted pool of sites, only some of which are reliable. Evaluating hundreds of search results takes time; out of desperation, students often pick what's at the top. Shouldn't they have a resource that understands what they're looking for, gives them trusted content to work with, and lets them return to their writing quickly? *Writer's Help* is the answer to that question.

We talked to 1,600 college students from across the country to discover what questions they have about writing, how they search for help, and how a handbook could better respond to their needs. We also talked to hundreds of instructors to learn what challenges they face when using handbooks, and how their students look for help. *Writer's Help* is the handbook they told us they need.

It lives online because your students do. It responds to searches by students who may—or may not—know composition terminology. Search results are targeted—grouped into small, smart, useful categories. And students get reliable, class-tested advice from our best-selling Hacker handbooks. Additional help—exercises, glosses, charts, and models—is just a click away. Users who are familiar with the Hacker family will recognize the consistent and friendly tone, direct approach, and examples that teach. *Writer's Help* gives class-tested, proven advice.

Writer's Help goes a long way to meeting the needs of your classroom, and it can be customized for an even better fit. You and your students can annotate content with notes and highlighting. All users can customize search by tagging. As an instructor, you can add your own content to *Writer's Help*. And you can assign students to complete exercises, work through a revision checklist, or read an entire section for homework.

Want to know more about how you and your students can make the most of *Writer's Help*? This instructor's manual explains features and tools in Part I. In Part II, you'll find suggested activities for integrating the handbook into your course.

► Getting started

Getting access

Are you registered? If so, great! Just go to writershelp.com and log in.

If you need to register, follow these simple steps:

1. Go to writershelp.com.
2. Click on “Request instructor access” on the right side of the screen
3. Complete the short registration form.

Within 24 hours, you’ll get an e-mail confirming that you have access. Just log in at writershelp.com to get started.

Using search

You and your students can get into *Writer’s Help* quickly by searching. To begin, type a search term in the box in the center panel (Fig. 1), and click on the “search” button. Searches can take many forms. Here are just a few ways they can be expressed:

- as a single word, such as fragment
- as a phrase, such as MLA paper format
- as a question, such as Does a period go inside the quotation marks?

Search results will display in the left panel. Results are sorted into topic categories that can be expanded or collapsed. The number in parentheses shows how many results are in each category. Clicking on search results launches new content in the center panel.

The *Writer’s Help* search was built to accommodate expert and nonexpert terminology. It should therefore generate helpful results for most student queries,

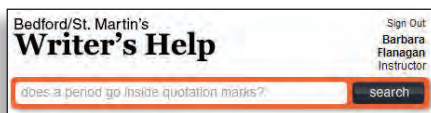


Fig. 1. Search box.

even if students don’t know exactly how to refer to what they’re looking for.

Students who have trouble conducting a successful search, however, may benefit from the following suggestions:

- Try another search. If you can’t think of a particular term, try to describe the problem. If you can’t remember “thesis,” for example, try typing main idea or main point.
- Try a suggestion from the search tips on the *Writer’s Help* home page.
- Return to the home page to check your instructor’s recommended tags for ideas.
- Click on a Related Search term at the end of a search results list.

It might also help to point students to the table of contents. Seeing everything that’s available can help students identify what they’re looking for. And they can check out the *Writer’s Help* index which, like the search, accommodates both hand-book terminology and student-friendly terms.

Using tags to save, share, and assign content

Tagging allows you and your students to save and share useful pages. For example, when students find helpful pages they want to bookmark, they can tag the pages using their own terms. All they have to do is click the “add tag” button in the upper right corner of the page they want to save (Fig. 2). They then enter

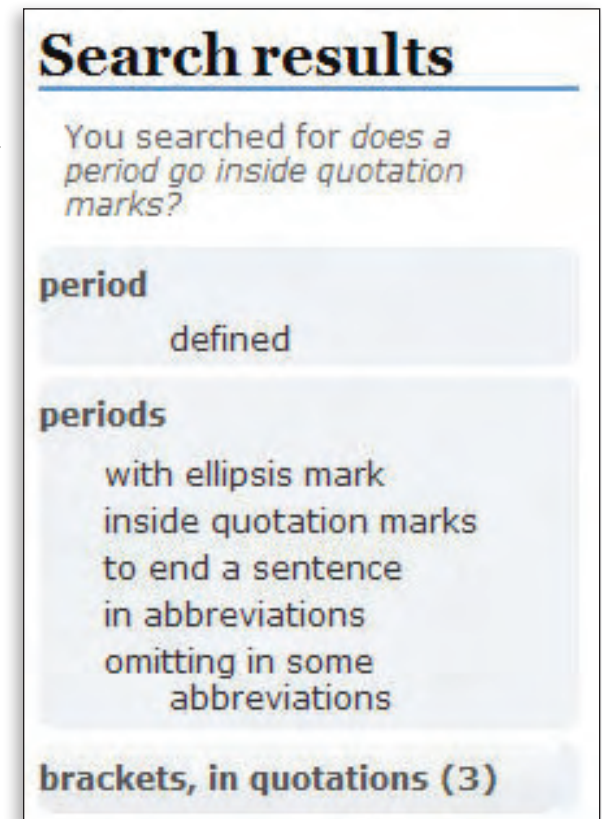


Fig. 2. Search results appear in left

the term they want to associate with the page and click “save.” (To apply a tag to surrounding pages as well, they can check the box for “Tag the whole section.”)

Many students are familiar with tagging on sites like Flickr and Facebook, so they’ll be quick to understand that tags in *Writer’s Help* can be used to rename a single page or to group pages together. A student might, for example, apply the tag analysis paper to a series of pages that will help her complete her analysis of a class reading. She can then easily access her collection of pages by conducting a search on the tag (tagged results always appear first in the list of search results) or by opening the right panel and selecting the “Tags and Tools” tab.

Student tags can be personal or shared with the class. Instructor tags are always shared. When you create a tag by clicking on the “add tag” button on any content page or pop-up window, you can either recommend or assign tags to your class. Recommended tags appear in the right panel. Students can view them in the “Your Class” tab.

PART TWO: Using *Writer’s Help* in class

► Assessing classroom resources and needs

Writer’s Help is a student-friendly Web site loaded with advice and models students can count on. It can help students improve their writing—if they use it. In Chapters x-xx, you’ll find tips and activities for encouraging students to include *Writer’s Help* in their planning, drafting, writing, revising, research, and documentation. This section covers a few things to consider when planning activities that integrate *Writer’s Help*.

You might find yourself in one of four situations:

1. Your classroom has a computer, an Internet connection, and a projector. Your students do not have Internet access in the classroom.
2. You have a computer and projector, and some or all of your students have computers with Internet connections.
3. You are teaching online, so all communication takes place via computers.
4. You have no connectivity in your classroom.

This section offers some specific suggestions about how you can integrate *Writer’s Help* in each of those teaching situations. But first, a few points that apply to all situations.

Using *Writer’s Help* to attain your teaching goals

A primary instructional goal is to help students become comfortable with *Writer’s Help* so they can use it productively on their own (Fig. 3). It is worthwhile to spend some class time exploring the features and content. If you can’t give your class a live demonstration, you can direct your students to the student walkthrough and remind them to review the *Student’s Guide to Writer’s Help*. (Both resources are available on the log-in page at writershelp.com under “Get Started.”)

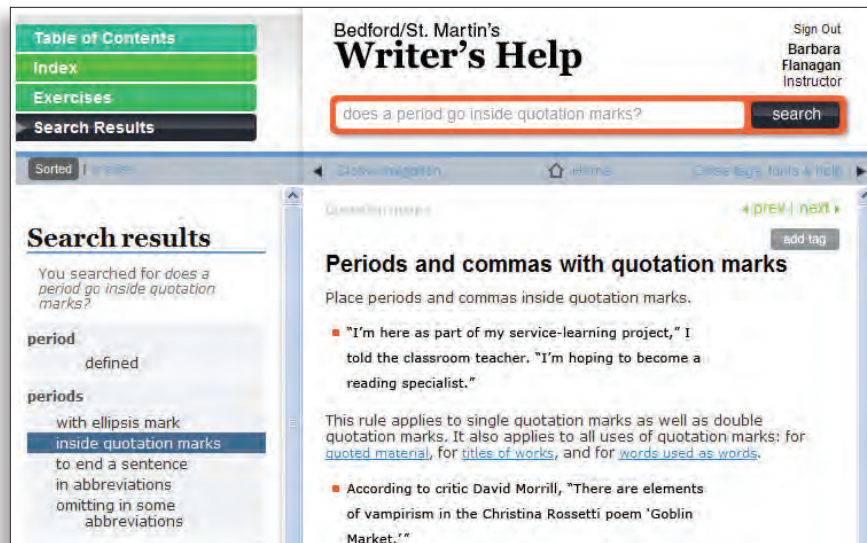


Fig. 3. Clicking on results in left panel brings up content in center panel.

Early in the term, you might show students how to log in and bookmark the site in a browser. Walk through the table of contents with your students, take a look at the index, and offer some suggestions for searching. Move and resize windows on your desktop, so students get some notion of flexibility. Challenge students to ask questions about writing or language that they think might be answered by *Writer's Help*, and have them suggest ways of navigating to that information. Show how to tag content or highlight it or place a note on a page. Students may not remember exactly where tools are or how to use them, but these class activities will show them what is possible and help them use *Writer's Help* on their own.

In addition to showing students how to use *Writer's Help*, explain why you're asking them to work with this reference. Good writers use reliable references—they need to look up rules for punctuation, grammar, style, and documentation. They need to be able to trust the information they find. Students can conduct general Internet searches, but they'll have to sort through thousands of results to figure out what is relevant and reliable. *Writer's Help* will save students time and effort by giving them targeted advice they can trust.

Making the most of *Writer's Help* in your teaching environment

If you have a computer with an Internet connection and a projector but your students do not have Internet access, you can use the advice, examples, model texts, and exercises to support lessons, and you can conduct searches in class to answer questions or enrich discussion. As you discuss a writing assignment, for example, you might ask students, What are some techniques you use to generate ideas? Students might say “brainstorming” or “freewriting.” Then ask how they might use *Writer's Help* to find additional strategies. Start by searching on terms they've already named and ask them to suggest additional search terms, such as “getting ideas” or “invention.” (You can conduct these searches or invite students to take turns at the computer.) A search on such terms will lead to rich advice, with specific invention strategies that the class can then try out. A lesson like this shows students the value of *Writer's Help* while they develop common terms and understanding of practices such as invention or prewriting (clustering, freewriting, listing, and so on). If students work through a lesson like this with a real essay assignment, they will leave class with some notes to get them started.

As a final example of how to use *Writer's Help* with a computer and a projector, suppose you ask your students to develop an annotated bibliography in MLA style as a start to a research paper. Before class, you can tag sections of the handbook as you prepare your presentation/discussion. You might want to tag content pointing to the following resources:

- using databases to find journal articles
- evaluating sources for credibility
- creating an annotated bibliography
- the directory to MLA works cited models
- a sample annotated bibliography in MLA style written by a student

If you teach in a computer classroom or your students can bring their own laptops, you can use the activities in the previous section, but you can also give students more control. When a question arises in class, for example, you can ask students to find an answer in *Writer's Help*. (When only some of the students have a laptop, you can ask groups of students to find an answer to a

question.) Or if you notice while grading drafts that many of your students make the same errors, you might ask the class to focus on one particular example of a common error and find the discussion or rule in *Writer's Help* that will help them revise. If it's more useful for students to focus on their own drafts, you might ask them to be prepared to present one of their own revisions to the class—showing how they got from your comments to relevant advice in *Writer's Help* and applied a solution to their own writing.

► Integrating *Writer's Help*

The previous chapter discussed several possible teaching contexts in which you may be using *Writer's Help*. Whether you are teaching an online course, a face-to-face course in a technology-enabled classroom, or a face-to-face course with no online access, the following activities are useful for teaching writing with *Writer's Help*. They are flexible enough to adapt to most teaching situations. Almost all of them suggest a collaborative component; however, you may choose to assign the activities to be completed individually. Each activity also suggests a sequence of steps, but you should feel free to resequence or add steps to support your goals.

Activity 1.

UNDERSTANDING ASSIGNMENTS

Learning objective

To help students prepare for a specific writing assignment.

Class activity

Distribute a writing assignment. Break the class into groups of two or three for this activity. Students can conduct the searches in their groups (if they have access in the classroom) or you can perform the searches for the whole class and have students use the information from the searches to complete the activities in their groups.

Session 1

1. Type assignments into the search bar and select the pop-up “Understanding an assignment” from your search results.
2. Using the guidelines in the chart, each group of students should identify (1) the purpose of the assignment and (2) the how or why questions that the assignment asks them to respond to.

Session 2

3. Ask each group to identify at least three key terms in the assignment. Have you asked them to analyze a text? Use MLA style? Compare two items? Proofread?
4. Once students have identified at least three terms, ask them to use one of those terms to search for information related to those terms

in *Writer's Help*.

5. When they find useful advice and models, have them tag those pages for future reference.

Suggested searches: *assignments*. Other searches will be suggested by language the assignment itself (*argument, analysis, MLA, comparison, etc.*).

Follow-up

If students do not have access in class, they can do steps 4 and 5 for homework. All students can do the following for homework:

- Conduct searches in *Writer's Help* for the other two key terms they identified in class.
- Tag useful pages for future reference.

You can spend a few minutes in the next class session looking at and discussing the students' tags.

Variations

If students do not have access in class, you can project the searches from your computer and have students use the information from the searches to complete the activities in their groups.

PART THREE: Glossary of features

Add a page A summary of a work's contents. An abstract usually appears at the beginning of a scholarly or technical article. Databases and indexes often contain abstracts that can help you decide whether an article is relevant for your purposes.

Assign A list of sources that gives the publication information and a short description — or annotation — for each source. Each annotation is generally three to seven sentences long. In some bibliographies, the annotation merely describes the content and scope of the source; in others, the annotation also evaluates the source's reliability, currency, and relevance to a researcher's purpose.

Exercises A computer program that stores bibliographic references and notes in a personal database and that can automatically format bibliographies, reference lists, or lists of works cited based on a particular documentation style (MLA, APA, Chicago, CSE, for example). Such programs may generate inaccurate or incomplete citations, so writers should proofread all results.