

PREFACE

Audience and Purpose

The International Student's Guide to Writing a Research Paper is a reference for undergraduate students and students in ESL or bridge courses who may be undertaking a research paper project. This book was written in part as a response to the demand for an update of Lionel Menasche's book *Writing a Research Paper*. However, the project was motivated by our own experience trying to find a book that met our needs as teachers in an ESL program or in a first-year composition program where a research paper is required as part of the curriculum. Those familiar with *Writing a Research Paper* may recognize some of it as the seeds of this book; like *Writing a Research Paper*, teachers (or students on their own) can move through the writing process in stages to end up with a thorough and coherent research paper. This book has been conceived of as a handbook, meaning that the text is less dense, the explanations are designed for easy comprehension, and exercises are provided to develop students' skills. Each section also requires students to complete a discrete task called a **Building Block**. Here students apply the skills learned in that section to develop their own research paper. This step-by-step approach allows students to construct knowledge and become more familiar with the process (and recognize that, yes, there is actually a process), which makes the writing of a research paper a less intimidating task.

As with *Writing a Research Paper* and *The ESL Writer's Handbook*, teachers may choose to use this book as the main text or as a supplementary text in a writing course, or students may use this book on as a personal reference. This Guide is different from the *Handbook* in that it has a specific focus on composing a research paper and explains how to accomplish, in detail, each step of the process. The *Handbook* is a good guide to academic writing and offers discrete grammar explanations, but it does not offer language and practice for integrating outside sources and achieving coherence and cohesion. Therefore, it is possible that these two texts could be used in conjunction to provide a comprehensive background in and experience with academic writing.

Special Features

We have worked to make the information presented in the book as readable as possible:

- We use simple, direct language to make it easy to read for ESL students and for those who are new to the process of writing a research paper.
- We have avoided using long chunks of text, instead using more visual elements, such as charts of useful language, to make information easy to find.
- Most example writing is from work done by international students in an ESL program or a first-year writing class (with some adaptation for clarity) to encourage student writers.
- We provide examples to demonstrate each point that can act as clear models for students.
- We have included exercises to provide students opportunities to put the information they are reading about into practice.
- In addition to the examples and exercises for the various tasks and strategies provided in each section, we have included assignments called **Building Blocks** to go along with each step in the research process. These discrete tasks make the research process clear and allow students to build their own research paper step by step, making the process less daunting.
- We have included a section on responding to instructor feedback to provide students with the tools to read and understand comments and utilize them to improve their first draft.
- We have included a section that deals with how to construct sentences to create clear, coherent paragraphs. It does not provide grammar instruction so much as it addresses how writers can create sentences to express their meaning effectively.

Notes for the Teacher

Most of the ideas introduced in each section are supported by examples and exercises. The exercises ask students to practice the skills presented, but the work is not necessarily designed to be graded or related to the topic they have chosen for their own research paper. Rather, these exercises develop students' skills before they have to do the work on their own topic. As previously mentioned, assignments related to the students' own research paper development are called **Building Blocks**. These are presented throughout each section where they logically fit in the research paper process, after examples and practice exercises have provided the students with an understanding of the material, thereby lessening the cognitive demands required to understand and complete each task for students' own papers. The **Building Blocks** are intended to guide students step-by-step through the entire research paper writing process. Because of their discrete nature, they are easy to incorporate into the timeline of a course or can offer a structure for a semester-long course.

Note that we have chosen to use the term *source list* to refer to the list of sources that comes at the end of a research paper—known as **Reference List** in APA and **Works Cited** in MLA, or more commonly, as a Bibliography. We use this general term with the goal of avoiding confusion over the terminology used by any one particular style.

Note also that Section 6: Formatting Your Paper: Using Style Guides is organized in a unique way: below each source type, the APA and MLA citation form are both presented. This means that students can determine the type of source they have, look up that source type, and then see both the APA and MLA style for that type of source. This was done to allow students to more easily note the differences between the two styles.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to those of our students who generously gave permission to use their writing in this book so that others might learn from their example. We would also like to thank Kelly Sippell, who encouraged us to develop this project and showed us continuous support and enthusiasm. Most of all, we want to acknowledge the contributions of Lionel Menasche. He inspired us with his book *Writing a Research Paper* and brought us together to work on our previous project, *The ESL Writer's Handbook*. But most importantly, although he declined to work on this project with us, he has acted as a model for us to follow as we continue to develop professionally. Thank you, Lionel.