



Teaching Writing in the MLL

For this workshop login to the "Writing Workshop" workgroup with the city name of the computer you're using.

John d - 3/22/02

INTRODUCTION We will look at technical and curricular aspects of teaching writing in the MLL. Most writing teachers use the labs only as word processors. They offer much more. There are writing tools and resources that can provide supplementary instruction and reinforcement for lessons students aren't otherwise internalizing through process writing. Untapped Web resources, in particular, provide sources for research, ideas for papers and positions, and limitless models of native writing.

CURRICULAR RESOURCES

Writing Tools

Microsoft Word (same features available in AW)

Dictionary (spell check): To spell check a document in Word, click on the icon in the toolbar or choose **Spelling** from the **Tools** menu. Students should understand that not every suspect word is wrong (e.g., proper nouns) and that not every inappropriate word is found (e.g., *to* for *two* or *too*).



Thesaurus: From the **Tools** menu > **Language** > **Thesaurus**. You might decide not to let your students use this tool, but it gives them ideas for alternative words. Use it in conjunction with a dictionary.

Grammar Checker: We purposely omitted the Microsoft Word Grammar Checker from the Word 98 installations in the lab. I ran some text through a MS grammar checker a few year ago and found that 9 out of 10 of the "errors" it found would not be seen as errors to a writing teacher (such as identifying *any* use of the passive voice as undesirable). It is far more dangerous than a spell checker or Thesaurus in giving a student a false sense of his writing being correct or idiomatic (or incorrect, as the example with the passive voice indicates).

Writing Resources

Writers Resources program (Harcourt): This program serves as a writing handbook and workbook. Request this application in the MLL as you would any other application. There are three main sections, each offering concise reference-type instruction followed by practice sets with feedback:

Skills explains grammar and punctuation skills and uses practices and exercise sets to show how these rules apply to writing.

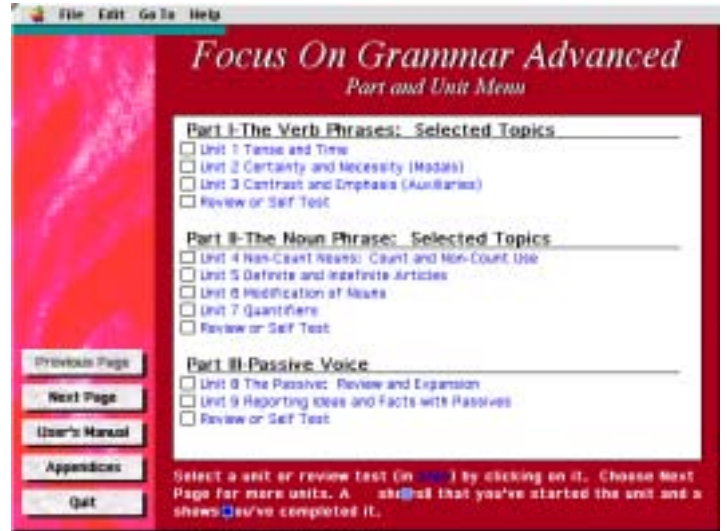
Writing Elements explores the correct forms and structures of sentences, paragraphs, and essays along with the correct and most effective language to convey ideas.

Rhetorical Patterns covers the eight traditional organizational patterns as well as how to write a summary, analysis and argumentative paragraph and essay.

TIP
The reference and practice software might be introduced by you in class at some point, but you need not regularly take up valuable class time with students working with these programs—which are thought of as tutors, i.e., used in the absence of a teacher. Instead, assign the work as homework or let students know that they can login to your writing class setup during the Open Lab hours and work through lessons you assign as needed. These programs represent additional resources for teaching writing, not a replacement for the teacher.

Focus on Grammar: We have four different levels of FoG: Basic, Intermediate, High-Intermediate, and Advanced. Request *one level* (at a time) be added to your class setup. Assign activities for reinforcement or to provide a new teaching approach as needed. Students will likely have different needs. This program facilitates students working only on the areas that they need, that is, as diagnosed by the teacher for each individual student.

Grammar Dimensions: Similar to FoG but sporting a different interface and offering less content. One may offer a more effective approach than the other teaching a particular point. All levels are combined in the one program and are color coded.



The main menu of Focus on Grammar (Advanced), showing one of several pages of contents.



The main menu of Grammar Dimensions, where you see the first screen of contents. In subsequent screens, you can choose the level for the chosen activity.

www.bu.edu/celop/ml1/startup/

Web: The following sites are accessible from the MLL Students' page (below), the default home page for browsers in the labs. Many of the links are found in the pop-up boxes. If you use other pages for your class that you think would be useful to other teachers, please let me know and I will add them to this page.

News and information: National Public Radio, Lexis/Nexis, speeches database, *Boston Globe** (via Boston.com)

Research: Encyclopedia Britannica, Dictionaries (7, incl. *OED*), CIA World Factbook, search engines (8), medical help, research writing

Class links: NiceNet, CELOP teachers' Web sites, MLL Teachers' Resources page

Business: ABI/INFORM Global, NASDAQ, NYSE, Yellow Pages, business writing, business articles



* Note that the *Globe* offers the content from today's and yesterday's papers online. Articles from papers older than that can be retrieved via Nexis for no charge.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS



Applications used in writing classes

Microsoft Word. Using Word is more desirable than using AppleWorks because (1) most students have already used it, and (2) they can work on their files at home (on their PCs) and at CELOP without changing the file format. It also has sophisticated tables that AppleWorks does not.

Saving: Use **File > Save**, not **Save As...**, to save documents the first and subsequent times. Use the keyboard shortcut **Apple-S** as that encourages frequent saves. Save as soon as the title is typed and after every sentence is typed. That way you won't lose anything, or much, in case of a crash or network problem.



If you look at a student's monitor and his Word document has "Document1" at the top of the window, then he has not yet saved. Saving is *incremental*; do it as you work, not when you're done. Don't change the saving location ("path") from the default location (in the User's folder).

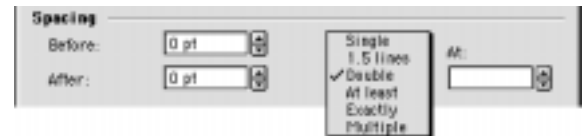
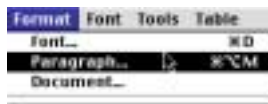


This document is not saved. Save it immediately!

Invisibles: For *your* sake, have students turn on invisibles, which reveal the formatting used, such as tabs, spaces, paragraph returns, alignment, page breaks, etc. These do not print. Otherwise, you will not see the formatting errors that students inevitably make. Use the toolbar button (at right).



Line spacing: Students should write papers in the manuscript format: double-spaced, 12pt font, **bold** and *italics* as needed but no other font or size variations. Name and title (date optional) should be at the top. To double space a paper: select all of it (**Apple-A**), go to the **Format** menu (at left), choose **Paragraph... > Spacing**, change pop-up to **Double** (above).



Alignment: Left alignment is the default setting. Students need to be shown how to center text, for example, a title, without using spaces or tabs. Simply click in a line, or select the paragraph, and click on the center alignment tool on the toolbar. New paragraph indents should be done using the Tab key, not spaces. Double-spacing should be done with line spacing (above) not hard returns at the end of each line.

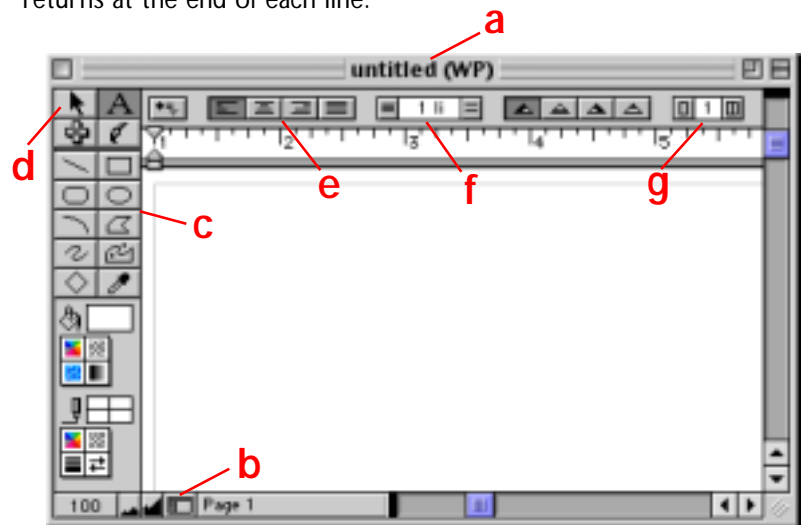


Alignment buttons on toolbar: left, center, right, full justification.

AppleWorks. The word processor is one of several excellent programs in this suite (the drawing, painting, database, and spreadsheets are also easy to use). For pictures combined with text, the AW word processor is easier to use than Word. AW also has some of its formatting tools more readily available, e.g., line spacing, case change, incremental font size change.



N.B. Be aware that the **enter** key on the numeric keypad (bottom right corner) serves as the page break in AW. If a student uses it instead of the **return** key in the alpha keypad, he will enter a page break. A notebook resting on the **enter** key may enter dozens of page breaks, all of which will print as pages.



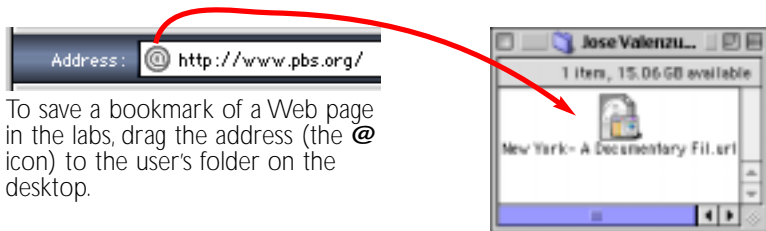
The AppleWorks window for a word processing document. Notice the "untitled" at the top (a), indicating that it has not been saved yet. The show toolbar icon on the bottom (b) displays the object (drawing) tools, at left (c). Click on the object tool (arrow (d)) before pasting a copied picture so that it "floats" instead of being constrained as a line character (then choose **Text Wrap...** from the **Options** menu). The text formatting toolbar, on top, offers easy access to text alignment (e) line spacing (f), and columns (g).

Internet Explorer. Use the Web browser for research. Rather than printing pages, students should select and copy text from a Web page and paste into their paper (with attribution, of course). They can also save a page, or a whole site, as a *Web archive*, which encapsulates a site into one file for later viewing offline (only available in IE for the Mac). They can save this just as they would a file into their documents folder for later browsing. Do this at home to browse or read a text-intensive site offline.

Bookmarks can also be saved by dragging the bookmark icon from the location line (URL) to the student's folder (right).



Saving a page as a Web archive (.waf) in IE.



To save a bookmark of a Web page in the labs, drag the address (the @ icon) to the user's folder on the desktop.

A bookmark file in a student's folder. Double-click on one to launch IE and go to that page.

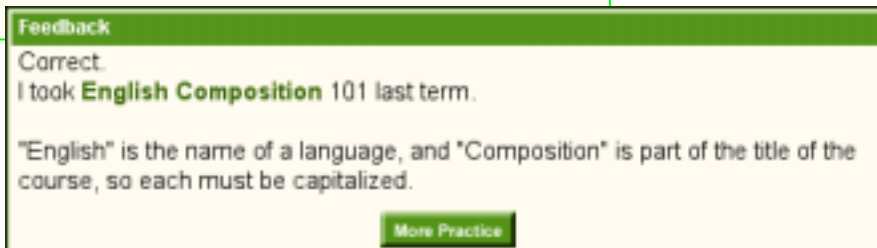
Writer's Resources. This Harcourt program runs off our NT server. After launching it, the student types his name in and arrives at the main menu. There are numerous examples and practice sets for each skill or point.

Practice Set 3: Question 1 of 5

Identify any words that should be capitalized. Click each word to capitalize it. When completed, click OK to check your answer. If nothing needs to be capitalized, click OK.

I took English Composition 101 last term.

Practice sets (above) follow handbook-like rules and explanations and offer several chances to fix the sentence. Feedback (right) is provided for correct or incorrect answers.

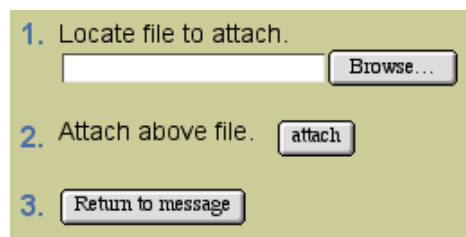


Working on a paper at home and at CELOP

As a practical matter, I suggest that students print copies of their drafts out at CELOP, edit these at home *with a pencil*, then enter the edits on their file in the MLL. Otherwise, if they believe that they are not “writing” unless they’re at a computer, they can attach the Word file to an E-mail message to themselves with their Web-based E-mail account and retrieve the same file through their E-mail account from home. We do *not* use floppy disks in the labs.

If students are using a word processor at home other than Word, they should save in the Rich Text Format (RTF). Documents created with “Word for Microsoft Works” or “Lotus Notes” can *not* be opened by Word or AW on a Mac or PC. These must be saved as RTF.

Save File as Type: **Rich Text Format**



Attaching a file to a message in Web mail. Transfer files between home and work or home and school by E-mailing it to yourself (with your Web-based E-mail account) as an attachment. The file must first be saved locally—on the hard drive or an inserted floppy disk of the computer you’re working at.