What’s in a handbook?

You’ll have to write in almost every course in college and in almost any job you do. That’s a fact. Nursing majors write, and so do nurses. Education majors write, and so do teachers. Your future instructors and employers will ask you to communicate clearly, and your handbook is designed to help you do exactly that, no matter what you end up writing.

Many people use a handbook as a reference to help them follow conventions for correct grammar and punctuation, and as a place to look up documentation rules for MLA style or APA style. Writing in Action has all that, but it has much more, too.

If you get familiar with Writing in Action, you’ll learn that it’s the fastest place to find solid answers to questions like

“How can I get started on a writing project?”

 “How can I write a good summary?”

“Is everyday one word, or two?”

A quick walk through the book can help you get comfortable using it.

Start with the Top Twenty on page 1. Andrea Lunsford, the author of this book, analyzed thousands of student writing projects, and she came up with the 20 issues teachers point out most often. Check the list—maybe you’ll see problems your teachers have identified in your writing. If so, you can find quick explanations and examples here.

Poke around in the other chapters in part 2, Writing, to see tips on getting started, on revising and editing, on presentations and design—and to find links to videos of student writers, activities for peer review, and a lot more in the integrated media at bedfordstmartins.com/easy.

The grammar, style, punctuation and mechanics chapters show you conventions for academic writing. The Language section explains that those conventions aren’t hard and fast rules and that sometimes you’ll need to make different choices to get your audience to respond the way you want them to.

If you grew up speaking more than one language, the section For Multilingual Writers has tips for you. Native English speakers can learn something from this section, too!

The research section will help you find other sources for your writing and make the most of them in appropriate and ethical ways. The documentation guidelines in Part 10 will help you cite your sources according to MLA, APA, Chicago, or CSE style.

In Chapter 21, a glossary of usage can answer quick questions about commonly confused words, like everyday and every day. (That’s right, sometimes it’s one word and sometimes it’s two—depending on what you mean.)

Think of Writing in Action as a tool designed to help you do well in college. The more you use it, the easier it will be to find the answers you’re looking for.