The time comes to stop planning and begin drafting. Advise your students that the
time to begin drafting is *before* they think they are ready to do so. Otherwise, the
planning activities—and they are attractive—will go on and on. Students, however,
must shape their lists into scratch or formal outlines and their focused freewrites
into drafts. They must trust that the process itself will take over and that the writing
will determine what needs to be written.

Because drafting, like all writing activities, is a learning-by-doing process, you
may wonder what to do in class while your students practice the drafting strategies
outlined in Chapter 3. Here are some suggestions:

• Spend class time working with your students’ drafts and outlines. Ask them to
bring their work to class to present in peer response groups; conduct
conferences or workshops on students’ scratch outlines, hypotheses, discovery
drafts, or descriptive outlines.

• Discuss the case study of Ellen Haack in some detail. In particular, you may
wish to ask students to identify the change in focus between the list on page 58
and the scratch outline on pages 59–60 and the change in focus between
Ellen’s discovery draft on pages 63–64 and the formal outline on pages 68–69.
What prompted these changes, and how effective are they?

• Demonstrate some of the drafting strategies in class. Together, for example,
your class might compose a descriptive outline of Ellen’s final draft as
preparation for composing their own outlines. Because students often have
trouble formulating the *does* statements, this in-class activity should prove
helpful. *Does* statements have to do with the function of a paragraph, such as
introducing, illustrating, explaining, developing, comparing, or supporting.

• Bring a draft of your own writing into class, and let students offer suggestions
to you so they may see you as a writer.
You may also want to offer a few additional comments on the strategies presented in this chapter. Just as Chapter 2 presented more planning strategies than a student is likely to use in a single essay, Chapter 3 presents more drafting strategies than any one writer is likely to use for a single essay. Students may find, for example, that they rarely compose formal outlines. Furthermore, the order in which the strategies are presented is only one possible sequence, not a lock-step formula. For example, students may wish to begin composing the body paragraphs of their discovery draft rather than starting with the introductory paragraph, or they may delay writing a thesis statement until after the third draft or write their hypothesis before their scratch outline.

Whether students compose the thesis statement early or late, the criteria for a good thesis statement (restricted, unified, and precise) are important concepts to communicate to your students. Because an effective thesis statement guides and shapes the drafting process, composing such a statement is an exercise in clarification.

THE SCRATCH OUTLINE
The scratch outline begins the search for an organizing principle. Drafting involves experiments in which the writer shifts recursively among various activities, generating ideas, testing various patterns of ideas, formulating potential hypotheses. As we see in the example of Ellen, the focus (“Good for me”) of her scratch outline and the categories in her outline emerge from her brainstorming list, and these decisions in turn result in more brainstorming. Later, her discovery draft prompts more planning and brainstorming and a new organizational pattern to express her hypothesis.

Many students may have never used a scratch outline as an impetus to drafting. In an extended example, the text describes the most common method of outlining, the one you will probably want to recommend to those who have not found their own systems. Nevertheless, some students may prefer clustering, flow charts, or some other patterning process. As long as the alternative methods of arrangement work for the writer, encourage their use. Some students may be unable to use such strategies as outlining. Therefore, the emphasis should be not on the specific task (outlining), but on the various options for facilitating the drafting of ideas.

DRAFTING A HYPOTHESIS
Presenting the scratch outline before the hypothesis prevents students from mistakenly seeing the scratch outline as a fixed road map. Of course, the two evolve
together. Writers can’t construct useful scratch outlines without having some sense of purpose, some inkling of a hypothesis. Nor can they have a real hypothesis until they have some sense of how the paper can be developed, a hint of an outline.

You may wish to ask students to draft several hypotheses as a way of testing alternate foci and variable wording. If they do draft multiple versions, they should save them for later references in their portfolio. Sometimes a writer goes back to an earlier hypothesis or finds that a new focus is really a synthesis of several earlier ideas.

**Exercises (p. 61)**

These questions are good for students to use in assessing their own material. They may want to look at how Ellen responded to the same questions, although her responses are only one way to answer the questions.

**THE DISCOVERY DRAFT**

The most valuable drafting tools presented in this chapter are the discovery draft and the descriptive outline. These two activities are used in concert with one another. Calling the first draft a discovery draft is really a way to emphasize the process of writing while the writer finds a purpose. It gives the first draft an experimental, adventurous flavor, like the downhill skiing of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher quote.

And like downhill skiing, initial drafts should be written with some speed and abandon. Although some students are tempted to craft and polish each sentence and paragraph as they go, this approach defeats the purpose of discovery drafts, which are meant to be malleable and even disposable. To encourage this type of drafting, propose that students limit themselves to perhaps thirty minutes for a three-page draft. Furthermore, suggest that they consider this kind of drafting as an extension of focused freewriting and that they actually shift into freewriting when they get stuck. Instead of spending time trying to come up with the right word, example, or explanation, students may use freewriting to “write through” this spot. Two other methods for getting through difficult points in the draft are making a bracketed note to come back later and work on the difficulty and shifting their writing to a conversational mode and discussing the problem: “What I really mean is. . . .”

To demonstrate discovery drafting and some of these strategies for getting through blocked moments, ask the class to compose such a draft collaboratively. A photograph from the book may serve as a prompt to such an essay. The class might
brainstorm a list, formulate a scratch outline and hypothesis, and then compose a brief draft.

THE DESCRIPTIVE OUTLINE

The descriptive outline is a method of evaluating the discovery draft. This evaluation allows students to assess the draft with the “fresh eye” May Sarton mentions in relation to her flower arrangements. The writer can more clearly see where the ideas are “too crowded,” “a little meager,” or so at odds with one another they threaten to “topple over.” Distinguishing between what a paragraph says and what it does promotes an understanding of the relationship between ideas and rhetorical purpose, between meaning and arrangement.

COMPOSING AN EFFECTIVE THESIS

Presenting the thesis statement as part of the discovery process, not as the beginning point for all drafting, mirrors the way most writers actually write. It helps the students’ drafting by allowing them to alter or abandon an idea or focus that is no longer working.

If you read many professionally written essays in class, the subject of the implied thesis is certain to come up. Although writers do not always express their thesis in single sentences, you can argue that good writers always have theses that could be so expressed. Thus, there is justification for composing thesis statements as guides to drafting even if one decides not to state the thesis explicitly in the final essay. And, of course, until the final draft, the thesis statement can always be changed. It is not uncommon for writers to discover that the whole essay is really about a central idea not expressed in the initial thesis statement. In that case, the writer simply rewrites the thesis to fit the content.

Exercises (p. 67)

1. The statement is not precise. Are high-fiber foods important to your diet or to your health? Are they “very important” in terms of disease prevention? Cardiovascular fitness?

2. This proposed thesis violates all three criteria. It makes two separate assertions. It is so unrestricted that the author could discuss either the
beginning and the end of the universe or the beginning and the end of a football game. Finally, its diction is imprecise: “beginning of things.”

3. Like the first, this statement is imprecise. Even if we knew what the American Dream was, we’d have to guess what the author means by the metaphorical “snows of yesteryear.” The author might mean either of the following:
   a. Social historians agree that the American Dream of nearly uniform affluence is unrealistic in today’s world.
   b. Social historians agree that the American ideal of rugged individualism is a longing for a mythical past.

4. This thesis is workable. Some students might feel that it lacks unity, but notice that the first assertion (about the gorilla’s image) is grammatically and rhetorically subordinate to the second, which is the actual thesis. This is really a thesis about the gentleness of gorillas.

5. This statement is neither unified nor precise. It makes two assertions, each of which would require proof: Fonda’s workout tapes have been successful, and this success proves that self-help videos are now a major consumer item. Moreover, each statement includes imprecision. What does the writer mean by “enormous success”: financial success? success in converting more people to daily workouts? The second statement is faulty in logic. It begs the question—that is, it assumes that self-help videos are now a major consumer item. Such an assertion needs to define major and offer statistical proof.

**PREPARING A FORMAL OUTLINE**

Two aspects of formal outlines are important to note: they are tools or means to an end, not ends in themselves; and they can be useful only if prior planning and drafting have taken place. Many students’ past difficulties with formal outlines may have been the result of constructing the outline before they had adequately developed their ideas. For some students, formal outlines may be most useful for long writing projects.

A comparison of Ellen’s scratch outline and formal outline illustrates how recursive planning and drafting work together to produce a clearly focused essay plan. To guide this class discussion, you might use the evaluation questions on pages 69–70. Additionally, a comparison of Ellen’s formal outline and final draft shows how the outline guided the production of her final draft.
DRAFTING ON YOUR COMPUTER

Encourage students to draft directly onto the computer. It will save them time and allow them to make changes more readily. However, advise them that they should always make a back-up disk and that they should save their drafts about every ten minutes (some computer programs have an automatic timer that will save material intermittently as they work). They should never walk away from their computers without having saved their work, even if they have typed in only a few words or sentences. Students cannot be reminded of this too many times. Deadlines don’t change because a computer disk goes bad or because a paper gets lost in the machine. (You might remind students that dogs no longer eat student papers but that computers sometimes do.)

Printing out drafts at intervals also provides a safeguard to loss of work. (It may not be much fun to type in an entire draft, but at least the work isn’t lost.) In addition, drafts need to be printed out and studied; papers cannot be written entirely at the computer. Reading hard copy is a different experience from reading on a computer screen. Mistakes become more apparent; undeveloped portions are more easily spotted. Sometimes, writers simply need to print out their work, get away from the computer, and sit down in a cafe with a cup of coffee to read through a draft. The process of writing on the computer is a back-and-forth process, from computer screen to hard copy and back again to the computer.

Each time a draft is printed out, it should be dated and placed in the student’s writing portfolio. This provides a history of the paper as it is being written and allows students to see how their work has progressed. In some instances, students might want to retrieve a portion of a draft that was earlier deleted; they may not have saved it in a special file on their computer. The hard copy does come in handy for drafts in progress.

You may want to suggest the following methods for drafting on the computer:

- Peer feedback on scratch outlines, hypotheses, and discovery drafts can be offered on the computer by using electronic mail or simply by asking students to trade seats, read the work on the screen, and enter their evaluations.
- Since you will probably allow students to do some drafting during class, this is a good time to walk around and offer individual feedback on student drafts in progress.
- Be sure to ask students to print out copies of their discovery drafts so that they and their peer readers can get a better sense of each draft’s overall organization and coherence. Students will be shaping the whole essay, and every part of the draft affects every other part.
• You may have access to outlining programs such as Think Tank or Frameworks that automatically provide indentation and numbering for outlines. If such programs are available, you may want students to try them. Nevertheless, students do not need special software to compose formal outlines on the computer. Computer-generated outlines, like computer-generated drafts, can easily be revised as the writer’s plan becomes refined.

• Two conferencing software programs widely used in composition classrooms are Realtime Writer (developed at Gallaudet University) and InterChange (developed at the University of Texas). Lester Faigley discusses these programs in his book *Fragments of Rationality.* Another software program used for writing instruction is QUILL.

**A FINAL WORD ABOUT DRAFTING**

This pep talk to the students about the frustrations of drafting is worth repeating in class and in conferences with students. Your pointing out the progress and development in students’ drafts and plans will send an even stronger message that this process is worthwhile.

**READINGS**

*“Comforting Thoughts,”* Calvin Trillin

Trillin’s essay describes two studies on the ways people cope with stress. Most remarkable about the essay is the seemingly simple way he manages to explain the study through the use of humor. The technique of talking to himself creates a dramatic situation in which the narrator raises questions about the studies while at the same time providing pure entertainment to the reader. Students may not even realize that they have learned something about stress management after reading the essay because the essay is so amusing.

**Discussion questions (p. 72).** Construct a descriptive outline of his essay. Then reread Trillin’s comments on page 7 about how he writes his humorous columns. To what extent does your descriptive outline conform to Trillin’s description of his drafting process?

Outline of “Comforting Thoughts”
1. a. A study in Meriden, Connecticut, indicated that talking to yourself is a legitimate way of working through stress; another study at Yale demonstrated that stress can be reduced in some people by exposing them to the aroma of certain desserts.
   b. Introduces topic of stress management.
2. a. The ten most popular methods of comforting yourself listed in the Meriden study did not include sniffing desserts.
   b. Introduces conflict and humor.
3–10. a. What the Yale researchers think is that a person is soothed through smell because of pleasant memories but perhaps not because my mother burned the cookies.
   b. Illustrates the first point about talking to yourself by doing it in the essay and sustains the humor by showing the narrator in an argument with himself.
11. a. The conversation with myself wasn’t very comforting, and as I was talking to myself about it, the baker came out.
   b. Argues with the hypothesis that talking to yourself is comforting and builds the humor.
12. a. Being with someone else was rated in the Meriden study for providing comfort, but I saw that it wouldn’t be fun being with the baker.
   b. Develops the humor and at the same time gives more information about the Meriden study.
13–15. a. I told the baker about the two therapies; the baker charged me $2.50.
   b. Further develops the humorous situation.
16–17. a. According to the research at Yale, certain odors contribute to relaxation by triggering alpha waves in the brain. The baker should be proud to be part of a study that confirms the research.
   b. Explains theory further and maintains humor.
18. a. Going for a walk finished tenth in the Meriden study.
   b. Introduces a new idea from the study and continues to build humor and drama.
19. a. The smell of spiced apple can stop panic attacks.
   b. Gives more detail from the study.
20. a. What are apples spiced with?
   b. Raises a question about the detail.
21. a. Walking, reading, watching TV, and prayer are also on the list.
   b. Develops detail of study and continues to develop humor.
22. a. I walked, recalled pleasant memories, thought about the Yale research.
   b. Concludes the essay.
Trillin reports that he worries “a lot about structure” in his reporting pieces and that he does what he calls “the vomit-out”: “I just start writing—to see how much I’ve got, how it might unfold, and what I’ve got to do to get through to the end.” Reading “Comforting Thoughts” and examining the descriptive outline reveal a quick-paced snatch of the persona’s inner reality, which conforms to the idea of “the vomit-out.” The piece appears to have been quickly written, with sudden and unexpected turns, much like what happens in conversation between people. Particularly as Trillin re-creates the persona’s conversation with himself, we see short sentences leading in different directions. As he muses over the Yale study, his “other” self asks, “What if his mother always burned the chocolate chip cookies?” This leads to a dialogue about “that black stuff” on the cookies and the persona’s defense of his mother. There is a sense here of the writer having “fiddle[d] along, polishing each paragraph, hoping something will tell me what to write next.”

This sense of discovery is suggested again in the baker episode and the conversation that ensues, and again at the spiced apple incident. Questions appear to simply pop out of the “other” self of the persona during the conversations, leading to new directions. Humor often rises in just this way: through impulsive responses in conversation. The experience of talking to oneself is convincingly re-created through Trillin’s careful attention to conversational prompts, which he probably experienced in his own mind as he created the persona, particularly because he tells us that when he begins his humorous pieces, he does not know exactly where they may end up.

“A Man with All Reasons,” Ellen Haack

This is the final draft form of Ellen’s essay, which students have had the advantage of viewing during the process of development.

Discussion questions (p. 73). Compare this draft with her formal outline on pages 68–69. In what ways do the divisions on her outline identify the paragraphs in her essay?

Ellen’s final essay clearly follows her formal outline. You might want to ask students in class to compare quickly the outline and the final draft. The outline reflects the order of ideas and relationships that structures the final essay. She begins with a description of Barry in the kitchen making granola, knowing that the ingredients are “good for him,” even though he doesn’t particularly like the messiness of it or the time needed to make it.
The second paragraph is not in the outline, but it does provide a transition to the next topical paragraph and does contain the thesis of the narrative. Haack extends the image of Barry in the kitchen into a metaphor for how he generally operates: “Barry moves through the world like he moves through the kitchen, carefully sorting everything into two categories.” The paragraph then rounds out the thesis: “Although he is attracted to the simplicity of this system, he often has difficulty explaining ‘what’s good for me.’” From here, however, students will readily identify the major units of development from Haack’s formal outline: yogurt and ice cream are problematic, Barry’s reading habits reveal his ability to “select good books” while at the same time showing his attraction to more popular literature and self-help books, Barry has difficulty choosing movies, and Barry has a curious attitude toward wine.

The narrative ends simply, with a conversation between Barry and his hospitalized friend, who has been served wine. Barry’s conversation and the surprise at seeing wine served in the hospital are not included in the formal outline.

“The Lean and Hungry Look,” Suzanne Britt Jordan

The Jordan essay follows a predictable, logical organization, which your students will find easy to outline. The essay contains two literary allusions. The first is to Caesar’s comment on Cassius (“Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look”) in Julius Caesar (Act 1, scene 2). Students may be familiar with it. The second, which is hidden in paragraph 6, is a play on a phrase in Browning’s “Pippa Passes.” Jordan tells us that the fat “know very well that God is not in his heaven and all is not right with the world.” This is a refutation of Pippa’s optimism:

The lark’s on the wing;
the snail’s on the thorn:
God’s in his heaven—
All’s right with the world!

Discussion questions (p. 75). State Jordan’s thesis and then construct a formal outline for her essay. What is her purpose in this essay?

Almost any sentence from the first paragraph might be called the thesis, although any one sentence in isolation is vague and lacks the criteria for a good thesis: that it be restricted, unified, and precise. In an expanded form, Jordan’s thesis is that thin people are less congenial than fat people because they are too energetic, too hard, too logical, and ultimately oppressive.
Outline of Thesis of “The Lean and Hungry Look”

I. Thin people are too energetic.
   A. They’ve always got to be doing.
      1. Give them a coffee break, and they’ll jog.
      2. On an evening off they fix the screen door or lick stamps.
      3. They say, “There aren’t enough hours in the day.”
   B. Fat people think the day is too long already.
   C. Thin people have speedy metabolisms that make them bustle.
      1. They nervously rub their hands together.
      2. They look for new problems to tackle.
   D. Easygoing fat people will put things off until tomorrow.

II. Thin people are psychologically hard.
   A. They don’t like gooey soft stuff.
      1. They don’t like hot-fudge sundaes.
      2. They are crunchy and dull, like carrots.
   B. They go straight to the heart of the matter.
      1. They want to face the truth.
      2. They say, “The key thing is . . . ”
   C. Fat people are nice, if not jolly.
      1. They are not neurotic, as some people say.
      2. They realistically see things as hazy and vague.

III. Thin people are too logical.
   A. They say, “If you consume more calories than you burn, you will gain weight. It’s that simple.”
   B. Fat people realize that life is illogical and unfair.
      1. They grin at the comment on gaining weight.
      2. They know that in a fair world they would be able to eat all the donuts they wanted.
   C. Thin people keep lists of logical statements that lead to happiness.
      1. “Get a grip on yourself.”
      2. “Cigarettes kill.”
      3. “Cholesterol clogs.”
      4. “Fit as a fiddle.”
      5. “Ducks in a row.”
      6. “Organize.”
      7. “Sound fiscal management.”
   D. Fat people don’t think such programs lead to happiness.
      1. They know happiness is elusive.
      2. They wouldn’t want regimented happiness.
3. They prefer cheesecake.
4. The story of the jigsaw puzzle shows how fat people play things by ear.

IV. Thin people are oppressive.
   A. Their perfectionism is a reproach to the fat.
      1. They sit on the edge of the sofa, neat as a pin, discussing rutabagas.
      2. Fat people remove their coats and shoes and put their feet on the coffee table.
   B. Thin people look down on other people.
      1. They like math and morality.
      2. They like to reason on human limitations.
      3. They have their acts together.
      4. They expound, diagnose, probe, prick.
   C. Fat people are convivial.
      1. They like you despite your faults.
      2. They excuse your failings.
      3. They sympathize with your problems.
      4. They help you.
      5. They gab, giggle, guffaw, etc.
      6. They will take you in.

It is obvious that Jordan’s thesis does not represent her purpose exactly; the essay is not a serious attack on thin people. But students may have trouble saying just what Jordan’s purpose is. Some will say that the purpose is to amuse the reader, which is not a bad answer but not a terribly good one either. Why amuse the reader on this subject rather than another? The real purpose is to define a type of person our culture consistently presents as an ideal—the thin, efficient, analytical, ambitious type—and to subject it to humorous criticism. Henry Fielding said that his purpose in Tom Jones was “to laugh mankind out of their favorite follies and vices.” In this short essay, Jordan takes on one type of folly.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Narrate: Students are always ready to write essays about things that bother them. What may be difficult for them is focusing on the one event that most reveals the maddening inconsistency. To help them find the one event and avoid talking about all behaviors or general events, you might ask them the following questions:
a. Describe the behavior or rule.

b. Under what conditions does the behavior generally occur?

c. Can you think of a specific time when the behavior or rule particularly bothered you?

d. What happened at that particular time?

e. Where were you, who were the other people involved, and what was the sequence of events?

Students might want to use this assignment as a way to write a humorous essay, such as Calvin Trillin does on the issue of stress management. This could lead to discussions on the most effective ways to change human behavior. (Nagging only makes people resentful, but laughing at a situation can help create new perspectives on old problems.)

2. Observe: This assignment could be connected to the first assignment on narration. Students might observe those behaviors or rules that “drive them nuts.” Stress that the behavior should be observed for an extended amount of time to avoid making generalizations that cannot be supported. For example, they may want to return to their lookout spot in the grocery store for three consecutive nights at the same time or at different times. Time, in fact, might become an issue in their observation. Do people tend to cut in line more at night than in the morning? Students will also have to decide what they want most to observe and then concentrate on that one behavior. What happens at the corner light, for example? Are they interested in how people dart across against the light? They may want to tabulate the number of people who do this in an hour and then categorize the people by age, gender, or race. What hypotheses can they come up with based on these data?

Finally, they must decide what they want to show in the essay, which will be intended as a newspaper column, perhaps for a school paper (the audience will be students and faculty) or for their hometown paper (you might ask them to do an audience analysis). Are they advocating a change of behavior, or are they simply trying to describe the human condition?

3. Investigate: This open-ended assignment (which could be used as a collaborative activity) focuses students on the idea of collecting as a hobby, allowing them to decide what constitutes “unusual,” and gives them the opportunity to decide whom to interview. They themselves may be collectors of some unusual item or members of a special-interest club, which would supply them with different persons to interview. The assignment gives students practice in planning and drafting an essay and asks them to concentrate on the following writing activities: defining and describing the

Copyright © Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.
collected item; investigating motivations for collecting; outlining the history of the collecting, both from an individual point of view and in a larger context of collecting in general; identifying patterns that can supply logical organization for the essay; assessing the quality of various collections and analyzing what constitutes a “good” collection of that particular item; and reporting findings to an audience of would-be collectors or enthusiasts.

4. Collaborate: Stress is something students know a lot about and something they discuss with each other informally, even if they do not call it stress. Giving them the opportunity to discuss stress in a writing and research context and formulate strategies for coping with it is personally as well as academically constructive. This assignment can teach students how to gather primary data through interviewing professionals (counselors, clergy) who see stress from a different point of view—that of helper. This gives students a different perspective on issues surrounding stress management. The idea of a manual provides students with a clear-cut purpose for the topic and some experience in technical writing as they attempt to format the information to aid a reader who is seeking specific information.

A good jumping-off point for their research is the Trillin article because the article not only delineates methods of dealing with stress, but also demonstrates the importance of humor. You might want to help students break down the various research strategies by first asking each group to draw up a list and noting by name or title the specific sources it will consult. The tasks can be broken down in the following way for each group: List names of specific persons you can interview from the various assistance centers (include also the women’s center, black students’ association, gay and lesbian groups). List the names of specific books or articles you can use as sources. Draft a questionnaire to distribute to students in your dorm or in the class. Students may talk in their groups about how to distribute the work for the assignment, then work together to draw up interview questions, revise the questionnaire, and peruse the books and articles. (You might want to advise them to limit the outside sources at this point because this is an assignment in synthesizing various types of sources to produce a useful manual.) Another issue students might consider is categories of stress: Do particular groups of people (race, gender, class) experience different kinds of stress, and do they express stress in different ways? Students could devise items for their questionnaire to address these issues.
5. Read: This assignment could be a way to expand assignment 4, in which students collaborate to produce a stress management manual. Students could continue to work collaboratively and expand their manual by providing essays that argue for various strategies. Each student in the group would choose the particular strategy that interests him or her the most. Students could devise follow-up questionnaires for other students who might be willing to participate in case studies, trying out the methods outlined and discussing which methods worked and which did not.

6. Respond: Students can use methods associated with “virtual reality,” in which they become the characters they are reading about to understand what motivates them. This involves “getting inside” the character’s mind, which in the case of the Trillin character is easily done because Trillin supplies internal conversation for the character. Students often complain that they are asked to write dry, “research” papers that do not allow them to “be creative.” This assignment shows a different way to approach research by asking students to imagine themselves in various situations. First they must identify what the issues are from Calvin Trillin’s column or Ellen Haack’s essay. Part of their research could be the descriptive or formal outlines they have produced while reading the essays. This approach helps students actually use the outlines as research, rather than simply draw up outlines as isolated exercises, and thereby see the relevance of doing the exercise. This is also an opportunity for students to play with a sense of humor as they imagine, perhaps, their worst nightmare date. Students may also draw on memory as a way to explore this assignment, making associations with their own experiences and the characters described; reassess their own reactions to an incident in the past; and describe what they might do differently now that they have thought about the behavior and what they learned from the readings.

7. Analyze: This assignment gives students the opportunity to study Ellen’s drafting process and question the choices she made about her writing. What is “taste”? Students will have to define this for themselves and then compare their own definition with what they understand Ellen’s definition to be. Trying to articulate this gives them important experience in arguing a point of view directly with a specific reader and in understanding assumptions that underlie definitions. They must imagine what Ellen might say to them in a conversation about her essay and her ideas. They must also be able to identify how rhetorical choices can change a piece of writing. What is the effect of telling stories about Barry in the final draft? How does the focus on individual
episodes, such as Barry cooking granola or falling asleep during *My Dinner with Andre*, allow Ellen to show how Barry rationalizes everything he does with the comment “It’s good for me”? How does the “story within the story”—the issue of taste and decision making—emerge from the detailed descriptions of specific incidents?

Is anything lost in the revision of Ellen’s earlier version, in which she discusses the issues of taste and “what’s good” in a series of stories that show Barry making decisions? Is it easier to get information about taste from the earlier version? This could lead to a discussion of how and why we read. For information retrieval? For entertainment? What expectations do students have for learning about particular topics? A recurring issue in all three readings is the issue of humor. In what way does humor help writers teach audiences about particular subjects? And, finally, students might consider what they most like to read. What happens when writers introduce real people into their essays?

8. Evaluate: Students might want to return to the formal outlines they constructed for Jordan’s essay. In addition, you might want them to draw up comparative lists of the charges Jordan makes against thin people and the evidence she cites in support of these charges. You might ask students to do this in groups and then compare or share their lists with the rest of the class. Students may be surprised when they look at the evidence side by side and discover that although the tone and spirit of the essay indicate a bias against thin people, the arguments she makes are more favorable to thin people than to fat people.

Jordan maintains that thin people “aren’t fun,” that “they’ve always got to be doing,” and that “they never learn the value of a hot-fudge sundae for easing tension.” Fat people don’t want to “do” but would rather sit, they like gooey food rather than crunchy carrots, and they dislike problem solving. What Jordan is actually saying is that fat people are lazy—not a very attractive or desirable trait. Thin people want to face truth, believe in logic, and spout off about health issues with such phrases as “Cholesterol kills” and “fit as a fiddle.” Thin people have “2,000 point plans for happiness,” while fat people do not want to face truth, prefer to muddle through rather than understand logic, and don’t want fitness programs. Thin people are energetic and tidy; fat people put their feet up on the coffee table. In short, they are slobs, despite their more attractive attributes of friendliness and conviviality: “Even if you’re irregular and have acne,” fat people will accept you. Students will readily note that the kinds of traits Jordan ascribes to both fat and thin can be easily attributed to either (in other words, if there are menacing thin people who are
“together,” mechanical, or condescending, there are also fat people with the same characteristics).

Jordan’s arguments, then, are not sound. Nevertheless, her article does raise important questions about the nature of supporting a thesis and making generalizations.

9. Argue: As the assignment suggests, much of the argument in Jordan’s essay deals with differences in psychological types. This assignment could be used as a sequel to assignment 8, or it could be used alone as an alternative approach to evaluating Jordan’s arguments. If, at the end of her essay, Jordan claims that fat people are “generous, giving, and gallant. They are gluttonous and goodly and great,” what are the attributes of thin people? Jordan states that thin people “go straight to the heart of the matter while fat people let things stay all blurry and hazy and vague.” You might ask if students have observed such differences between thin and fat people. Under what circumstances did they observe these differences? Students might tell stories of their own to support or refute Jordan’s arguments. Such stories might help students see that such generalizations can be turned around; in other words, arguing psychological differences based only on physical characteristics does not hold true in every case. Students might want to augment their research through the use of articles and books.

Using Jordan’s arguments to champion the cause of thin people over fat people can also help students become more aware of how to construct an argument that actually supports a thesis, as they become aware that Jordan’s arguments are more tongue-in-cheek than real. Students will, no doubt, pick up on the danger of arguing for such superficial differences as “thin” and “fat” and instead argue against categorizing people on the basis of one characteristic. In addition, the assignment could lead to a discussion on how Jordan actually presents an argument that attacks the bias in our society against fat people because most people would tend to argue in favor of thinness.

10. Argue: This essay presents an open-ended approach to a broad topic—taste—and gives students practice in arguing for an abstract concept, which they must first define for themselves within the context of their own interests. You can help them identify the area they want to explore by asking them the following questions:

a. What is “taste”? (Students might first write their own definition of it, then consult the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Miss Manners, and a sociological
explanation. They might want to trace the development of taste as defined in different cultures or periods.)

b. In what ways is taste manifested through behavior? Choose a particular area (clothing, food, movies, books), and explore taste in the context of this concrete area.

c. Given your explanation of what taste is and how it is exhibited, explain how children might be taught to recognize taste. How did you learn about taste?

As students think about taste and what constitutes it, they might also examine how culture, particularly the dominant culture of a society, plays a major role in defining taste. (For example, in Japanese culture slurping soup is considered a compliment to the host, while in this culture slurping soup is considered rude. What does this tell us about cross-cultural communication and first impressions?) Class, gender, and race also help determine taste. Students might want to delve further and examine how tastes change because of the influences of popular culture.

USING THE WRITING CENTER

Students are busy drafting and studying their drafts by constructing descriptive outlines. Many students want to see you, but you are unable to spend the kind of time you would like to spend with each writer. This is when you are wise to remember that the Writing Center is there to help you and your students. Your students can call or drop in at the Writing Center to arrange an appointment to work with a tutor. Many Writing Centers offer drop-in services on a first-come, first-served basis. Check with the director of your center to find out its policies and practices. You might also check to see what the limits are for tutoring; many centers’ policies allow up to a certain number of hours or sessions per week to make sure their services are available to everyone who needs them and to avoid encouraging too much dependence on tutors. Whatever the policies, however, Writing Centers offer adequate tutoring for each student who seeks it.

What happens at a tutoring session? Each Writing Center is different, but there are some universal practices that you can tell your students about to help prepare them if they are nervous about making an appointment. Remind your students that they need to bring their thinking-in-writing materials and drafts to the Writing Center when they work with tutors.
• The student writer probably will be asked to make an appointment to make sure a tutor is available when the student needs one.
• When the student arrives, she or he should sign in with a receptionist or “head tutor.”
• The head tutor will ask the student to fill out some paperwork, which will probably include name, information about the paper, the class it is for, and what the student hopes to accomplish in the tutoring session.
• The tutor will introduce herself or himself and probably go over the paperwork with the student to find out who the student is, what she or he wants to work on, and so on. This is the time for the student to let the tutor know if there is anything special the student wants to address, such as thesis statement, purpose, or descriptive outline.
• To get an overall sense of what the student is working on, the tutor will probably ask what the assignment is. The student should bring a copy of the assignment, if possible. The student can then talk about how she or he has interpreted the assignment or discuss difficulties in doing so. The instructor can help by supplying the Writing Center with a copy of the assignment and alerting the center to any special requirements regarding the assignment. Some centers have “referral forms” so instructors can write specific instructions for working with particular students or clarify issues about assignments.
• Finally, the tutor will ask the student to read the draft out loud. This step is particularly important for several reasons: the tutor can hear the writing in the student’s own voice, the student often catches mistakes by reading out loud, and asking the student to read establishes the fact of ownership: the draft belongs to the student, and it is the student who ultimately will decide what changes to make in the draft.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM

• In addition to producing collaboratively a descriptive outline of Ellen’s essay, the class might work in small groups to complete the exercise on page 67. Group instructions might read as follows:
  1. Choose someone in the group to act as recorder and note the group’s decisions about the suitability of each of the five thesis statements.
  2. Decide collaboratively whether the thesis statement is acceptable. If it is not, why not? Does the statement lack unity? Restriction? Precision?
3. For each statement that the group finds unacceptable, compose a more acceptable statement that meets the criteria set forth.

4. For each statement the group finds acceptable, write a brief defense explaining how the statement meets the criteria.

• Ask students to work in small groups (three or four students) to compose a letter to Suzanne Britt Jordan, either objecting to her insulting remarks about thin people or praising her support for fat people. To complete this task, the group will have to decide on an individual or a group authorial identity; for example, the author might be the manager of a weight reduction program who feels Jordan should neither encourage fatness nor put down thinness.

• Ask students to compose descriptive outlines of each other’s drafts. First, however, ask each writer to formulate a descriptive outline of his or her draft so that the writer can compare the outline with that of another peer reader.

• As students produce scratch outlines, hypotheses, or discovery drafts, ask them to work in pairs or groups to evaluate each other’s work. Here is a sample peer response sheet for evaluating a scratch outline that could also be used by each writer to self-evaluate:
Peer Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer respondent:</th>
<th>Writer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. What patterns of information do you see in this outline (narrative patterns, categories of things, comparisons, reasons)?
2. Compose several hypotheses suggested by this scratch outline.
3. Which pattern or hypothesis do you find most interesting? Why?

SOURCES AND ADDITIONAL REFERENCES


For an analysis on how students turn off their awareness of audience during the drafting process and turn it back on to edit, see Peter Elbow, “The Shifting Relationships Between Speech and Writing,” *College Composition and Communication* 36 (1984): 283–303.


Jane Zeni’s *Writinglands: Composing with Old and New Tools* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1990) offers advice on setting up collaborative writing environments where students compose both on computer and by hand.


Rick Monroe argues that although computers have a role to play in the composition classroom, teachers, not technology, must guide the curriculum. See *Writing and Thinking with Computers: A Practical and Progressive Approach* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993).