

Welcome to Writing in the Social Sciences!

Cristie Cowles Charles

Average Reading Time: 9 Minutes

When we decided to create a new textbook about writing in the social sciences, we made one major goal: that it *not* be boring. (We hope you agree!) So we chose this interactive online venue with cool tech we thought you'd enjoy: videos *inside* the textbook, lots of images and graphics, embedded quiz and discussion questions, and even live links so you don't have to leave the textbook to go to a web page. Plus, you can read it anywhere: on a computer, tablet, and even your phone!



My majestic office view. #nofilter (Image by the author.)

But more importantly, we tried to talk to you like people. We know a lot of textbooks can sound dry and boring and far away, but we wanted to teach you like you're sitting right there in front of us. So we've added stories and analogies that come from our lives and connect to experiences that you'll relate to. Because, you know, we're people, too. And isn't that why you're going into the social sciences? Because you dig people? So much so that you want to study them?

So to help you reach your goals, we're going to give you a window into the world of good writing. Here's the actual view from my office window as I write this. Can you believe those mountains? We're going to be your guides as we climb the proverbial mountains of good writing to get the skills and knowledge you need to succeed as writers (cue song from *The Sound of Music*). We hope you'll do like our motto here at Brigham Young University:

Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve

We promise that if you'll work hard in this course, your efforts will pay off. You'll emerge from this journey stronger and with a broader vision of how you can influence the world as a better writer, a better social scientist, and a better person.

Sincerely,

Cristie Cowles Charles, Editor

Check Out the Tech

Here's some of the cool tech you'll encounter in this book.

Embedded Videos

Videos are embedded into the text so you can just click on them without leaving the textbook and watch them there with no ads—yet the creators still get to count your click for their statistics. Here's a cool three-minute video about why these young men from inner-city Chicago choose to write. Try watching it by clicking directly on it.

Note: If you ever want to watch a video outside of the textbook itself, look at the bottom right corner and you'll see a link for *Vimeo* or *YouTube* that you can click on. Or the video's URL will also be listed directly under the video.

https://youtu.be/Fxh5Umdgxi0?si=BJ_jbq2mJdTrtSuR

Embedded Websites

We'll always provide the actual URL address for websites, but even better, we'll often put them in an iframe, which allows you to access everything without leaving the textbook. Convenient!

Try checking out this website below for the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). The good people at Purdue University have spent years compiling resources for college writers, so you can find answers to almost any writing question such as *How do headings work in APA format?* or *What are some good transition words?* Scroll down and try browsing through the sections or searching for a topic.

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

Hint: I always ask my students to bookmark [this Transitions Words page](#) that lists good transition words by function—it comes in handy in most writing situations. This is also an example of a regular hyperlink that's not an iframe.

Chapter Questions

Throughout the book are questions that ask you to think about what you're reading or try out some writing techniques. Your teacher might assign you to do these for credit, but even if not, they can help you practice what you're learning.

Average Reading Time

At the beginning of every chapter we've included the average time it takes readers to read the whole chapter. This includes the time it takes to watch videos but doesn't include any writing activities, discussion questions, or quizzes. Students find this really helps them plan their time.

End-of-Chapter Surveys

How often do you get to tell textbook authors what you think? Now you can. And we can take it—we really want to know what you liked and didn't like or what was confusing or helpful so we can revise it. (Hey, if we talk the talk of seeking feedback, we should walk the walk, right?)

Please be sure to take the surveys at the end of each chapter so we can improve our own writing. It's for posterity!

Spoiler Alerts

Previewing a book is a good way to get a feel for it and anticipate what's coming. We've divided this textbook into three main units: Writing Tools, Academic Audiences, and General Audiences.

UNIT 1: WRITING TOOLS

In **Unit 1: Writing Tools**, you'll get help understanding how writing in the Social Sciences differs from other types of writing and learn the tools you need to get your message across.

In **Chapter 1: Writing in the Social Sciences**, we'll talk about how writers in the social sciences are part of a discourse community whose style, forms, and vocabulary you'll need to learn. **Chapter 2: Writing Tools** deals with the rhetorical strategies you learned in your first-year writing class and how we'll build on those strategies in this course. **Chapter 3: Writing Processes** addresses the steps involved in creating a piece of writing and how best to approach a writing assignment. **Chapter 4: Grammar & Mechanics** will review the most important grammar, spelling, and punctuation concepts that will convince your audience that you know what you're talking about. In **Chapter 5: Style**, we'll delve into the nuances of language that can take your writing from good to great. And finally, in **Chapter 6: Design**, you'll learn elements of design and how to use images, fonts, color, and other tools to best get your message across.

UNIT 2: ACADEMIC AUDIENCES

In **Unit 2: Academic Audiences**, we'll focus on what writing is like in scholarly settings and how to create some of the most useful types of documents.

In **Chapter 7: Writing for Academic Audiences**, we'll discuss how best to write formally for an academic audience and what is valued in an academic discourse community. **Chapter 8: Finding and Evaluating Sources** will help you see how research and evidence are the main currencies of academia and will teach you how to find and analyze sources using online databases and other tools. **Chapter 9: Discussing and Citing Sources** deals with the best ways to talk about your sources (summary, paraphrase, and quotation) and how to give credit to others' work (using APA Format)—an essential skill that can also keep you out of trouble. In **Chapter 10: What Is a Literature Review?**, you'll learn the definition of a literature review, how it differs from a typical research paper, and how literature reviews are used in the social sciences.

Chapter 11: How to Plan a Literature Review will go through the first steps for writing a literature review: taking good notes, structuring, and outlining. **Chapter 12: How to Write a Literature Review** follows with the final steps for creating a literature review: drafting, writing an abstract, and revising. And finally, **Chapter 13: Proposals** will cover the best ways to formally ask for anything—especially money for research and other projects.

UNIT 3: GENERAL AUDIENCES

The final unit, **Unit 3: General Audiences**, will deal with how to write for less academic, more general audiences and will also cover different types of public writing.

To that end, **Chapter 14: Writing for General Audiences** will cover strategies for getting your message across to a general audience and explain how that differs from academic writing. **Chapter 15: Job and Graduate School Applications** will delve into some specific genres for applying for jobs (such as resumes, cover letters, and online profiles) and graduate schools (CVs and personal statements). In **Chapter 16: Public Texts**, you'll learn strategies for writing other genres such as memos, emails, social media posts, blog posts, infographics, and opinion editorials. And finally, **Chapter 17: Presentations** will take you through the steps to creating a killer presentation—whether it be a traditional oral presentation or a poster presentation.

We believe this (hopefully not boring) textbook will give you the skills you need to succeed in your future at the university, in your career, and in life.



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Cristie Cowles Charles teaches writing and literature courses at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. She enjoys sparking a love for writing in her students—or at least a love for having had written (it's always worth it in the end, right?). She thinks pumpkin pie counts as a vegetable, is married to a super hot mechanical engineering and neuroscience professor (yes, they exist), and adores her five magnificent children.

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