

# The Literacy Lifejacket

Southern Colorado Literacy Resource Center

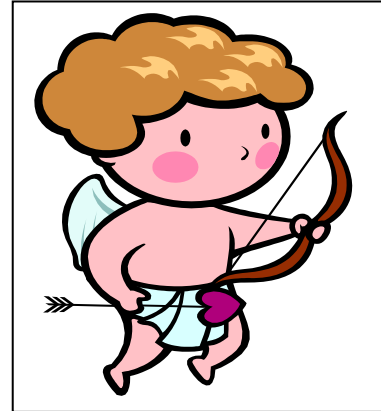
February 2005

## ACADEMIC WRITING FOR ESL OR AMERICAN STUDENTS AT DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS

Students who arrive in class, anxious to begin work on the writing portion of a GED, preparation for college entry, or Bridge levels in ESL are sometimes poorly prepared to succeed. One place to begin to remedy the situation is with the following books that are new to the SCLRC:

First Steps in Academic Writing (PE1478.H57 1995) is best suited to intermediate ESL students, since it opens by asking students to converse about their separate origins. However, its plain-spoken descriptions could be helpful with ABE/ASE students who missed basic skills. For example, the organization unit begins by explaining what a paragraph assignment paper should look like. By the end of the textbook, students are focused on stating reasons and using examples.

The next level of sophistication is represented by Introduction to Academic Writing (PE1408.072 1997), designed for intermediate ESL students. The book begins by covering skills required for writing about people (interviewing, organization,



## Team Building Exercises for Faculty and/or Staff

Last month, we discussed some of the values of creating teams out of working groups. A team is perfectly suited to jobs that are too big for any individual to handle efficiently alone and in which the subtasks are interdependent. Teamwork reinforces individual capabilities, allowing members to contribute different knowledge and skills to address the complexities of the problem. And, perhaps most importantly, teamwork creates participation and involvement, enhancing job satisfaction and responsibility for the members.

The first guideline in composing an effective team is to consider individuals whose styles and characteristics complement each other.

“**Diversity** helps to make a team strong and flexible.” Try to understand the different kinds of **communication styles** that people bring to group work and how each can contribute to the task. Finally, be sensitive to the different kinds and levels of motivation that each member brings to the group. **Dissimilar motivations** require the utilization of different strategies.

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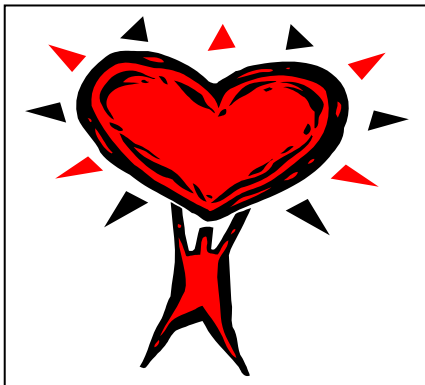
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grammar, sentence structure, and the writing process). Narration and description are covered in the succeeding units, and by Unit 4, the focus is on paragraph organization. The book eventually addresses the organization of essays, the logical division of ideas, and supporting an opinion. The material is well suited to American students, as well as to members of ESL classes.

The most demanding of the three writing texts is (PE1408.073 1998) Writing Academic English (third edition). The vocabulary is specifically designed for the college or college-bound student, whether in ESL or developmental English classes. Concepts such as “coherence” or “concrete support” might make the material difficult to handle for lower level students. The approach is process-oriented and includes instruction in the structure of paragraphs and essays plus sentence structure (with special emphasis on subordinated structures). Models are provided, as well as writing-under-pressure assignments, a list of correction symbols, interactive peer editing checklists, charts containing important teaching points, computer tips, and sample compositions to edit. Photographs that introduce each chapter depict some of the forms of written communication that have been used by diverse cultures throughout the evolution of civilization.

Both Writing Academic English and Introduction to Writing Academic English are accompanied by separate answer keys. All three of the texts are currently available for checkout. ◀



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Educators are often shocked to discover the huge amounts of money businesses can spend on team-building exercises. Executive boards may send group members rafting down the Colorado River or hiking into the Grand Canyon. Educational programs can take less dramatic steps that have similar goals.

Consider the size of your group, the time frame you have available, and your budget. You may want to use a large project that’s already facing the group for your activity, or—if creating a sense of comradery and interdependence is a paramount need—you may want to select a large community action project such as donating a day to Habitat for Humanity or serving a charity dinner. A task that involves stress—i.e. time constraints, physical demands, etc.—and cooperation will work best. You’ll want the group to spend time before the activity clarifying team goals (set them high and expect to fulfill them).

Both before and after the activity, the group should discuss those issues that prevent the team from reaching their goals effectively. Once the activity is complete, hold a de-briefing session. Have the group establish ways to work on eliminating their issues, removing the inhibitors, and enabling better productivity. Listening and accepting will be essential for improvement. ◀

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*SCLRC catalog:*  
[www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/adultSLRCtrinidad.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/adultSLRCtrinidad.htm)

(The catalog is also available in print upon request. Non-AEFLA programs may be required to pay cost.)

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