


国际出版与传播英语系列教材

# 新媒体写作 简明英语教程

孟静宜/编 著

A Concise Course in  
New Media Writing

 中国人民大学出版社

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人类进入到了 21 世纪，全球化的飓风吹遍了世界的各个角落，作为“地球村”的公民，我们日益感受到了空间距离的缩小，昔日远隔重洋的距离，在网络时代缩短到了鼠标的一次点击。

要适应全球化时代的需求，人才培养的国际化已经成为了一种趋势。教育部发布的数据显示，2015 年，共有来自 202 个国家和地区的近 40 万外国留学人员在我国 31 个省、自治区、直辖市的 811 所高等学校、科研院所和其他教学机构中学习。截至 2015 年底，改革开放后我国累计出国留学人数已经达到 404.21 万人。随着来华留学生人数以及我国高校学生出国交流学习人数的不断增长，教育部门越来越意识到全英文教学和双语教学对于提高我国高等教育国际化水平的重要意义。2001 年，教育部颁发的《关于加强高等学校本科教学工作提高教学质量的若干意见》中明确提出本科教育要创造条件使用英语等外语进行公共课和专业课教学。

课程国际化是我国高校和境外高校开展全面和深入合作交流的重要保障。传播学作为一个学科形成于 20 世纪上半叶的美国，而且许多重要的理论也来源于欧美，所以很多内容更适于用英文表达，这也构成了出版传播类课程英文或双语授课的必要性和可能性。但是在英文授课的实践中，我们发现目前适合中国学生学习的出版与传播类的英文教材缺乏，并已经成为英文或双语授课的瓶颈。为了更好地推动和开展出版与传播课程的全英文或双语授课，提高出版与传播课程的国际化水平，我们组织力量编写了这一套“国际出版与传播英语系列教材”。

“国际出版与传播英语系列教材”共包括八部，分别为：《传播学简明英语教程》《跨文化传播简明英语教程》《新媒体写作简明英语教程》《出版理论与实务简明英语教程》《版权管理简明英语教程》《出版历史与文化简明英语教程》《当代出版产业简明英语教程》《国际出版管理简明英语教程》。

本套教材的编著者均为多年从事出版与传播类全英文教学的一线教师，本套教材凝结着他们多年的教学经验和专业素养。教材力求深入浅出、循序渐进、简明实用、科学系统。这套教材的适用对象为传播、出版或相关传媒类专业本科生、研究生，以及留学生，本套教材也可以作为外语类专业学生的专业英语教材使用，同时也可以作为我国出版传媒产业及相关产业专业人士的业务参考书。

身处文化全球化、人才培养国际化的时代，能在课程国际化方面发挥一定的积极作用，为国际化人才的培养尽一点力是我们的最大心愿。希望教材的使用者和各界人士多提宝贵的意见和建议，帮助我们进一步改进和完善。

编者谨识 2016 年 10 月  
于北京印刷学院

# Foreword 前言

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新媒体写作是主体以新兴媒体为写作载体，在网络、移动等虚拟平台上进行互动式的写作行为和活动过程。本书为传播学（国际出版与传播）专业学生提供了内容适合、难度相当的英文版本学习资料。

本书用新媒体的理论与视角阐释了新媒体写作的特征、功能特点和写作要素等内容。编者挑选 16 篇节选文章，分别按照部分及主体归类。全书共 8 个单元，每个单元有两篇文章。从基础的写作技能入手，讲解了研究、观察、采访、引用等搜集信息的方法。诠释了在新媒体下出现的新型文本写作，包含新闻写作、博客交互式写作和手机短信写作。展示近年来新媒体写作研究的最新成果，力求体现当今现代意识和新媒体精神。每篇文章后附有文中出现的专有名词与概念的注释、词汇表以及练习题。

本书的顺利完成，得到了众多同事、亲人、朋友的大力支持。尤其感谢孙万军教授、陈凤兰教授和吕静薇副教授为我提供的无私帮助和珍贵建议。感谢刘洪超、王玉凤、孟兆光、郑桂兰、石锐、刘振英、王艳华理解我、支持我、帮助我，保证本书编写工作的顺利完成。感谢王瑛、李智尧、霍连平、刘冬这几位年轻人帮助我整理资料和校对文稿。

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孟静宜

2017 年 2 月 27 日于北京大兴

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# Part One

## Guidelines for Good Writing

# Chapter 1

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## Understanding Today's Audiences

### Section A Reaching Audiences

---

Think about your day. How did you get and send information as you moved through your day? You are **bombarded** by media messages from news sites, Facebook, Blogs, WeChat, e-mail, and text friends. On your digital devices, you face many choices about what to read, view, and access. You, like the average person, are blocking or tossing out messages judged irrelevant, unclear, or uninteresting. At the same time, you are selecting information sources such as fashion blogs or celebrity tweets.

Ours is a sound **byte** world, where much information comes in the form of headlines—hundreds of them every minute. The careful writer will offer the audience words and phrases that stand out and link more in-depth information. The fact of any message lies in good writing **crafted** in a style that will capture a busy, active audience.

People today have an **insatiable** desire to be informed about events, such as **devastating tornadoes** in the Midwest, the deaths of celebrities, or how college teams fare in national **tournaments**. People in an uncertain and changing world are looking for information that keeps them safe and saves them money. Today's audiences also seek relief from economic and military tensions around the world and turn to media for entertainment and information about leisure activities.

Some people enjoy the analysis and discussion of events found on online independent sites and blogs. Others turn to Twitter feeds, Facebook fan pages, or text message from relatives and friends. Overall, audiences want and need information that will help them cope with—or escape from—everyday life. How do writers get through the clutter of today's

lifestyles and the **glut** of media messages? How do they reach waiting audiences? They do it with good writing. Audiences will not stick with messages that are confusing, incoherent, or unbelievable. Writers today must craft messages that attract and hold people with their content and structure. Messages today must be simple, clear, accurate, and relevant and often are emotionally compelling.

Before they are printed, posted, broadcast, aired, or distributed, messages are written. Communicators have to write first, regardless of what medium or technology they use. All communicators must write a message before it is sent to its intended audience. Once writers let go of a message, they have little control over whether the audience pays attention. Although the message might arrive, it might be crowded out, deleted, ignored, or overlooked.

A variety of obstacles exist between writers and their audiences:

## Media and Information Overload

Social media has overrun the world. Facebook connects your friends, LinkedIn networks your jobs and Twitter embodies your insightful and **mundane** thoughts (for better or worse). Slashdot, Digg and Reddit have made news social, while traditional news sites have **embraced** services like Disqus to bring discussion to their articles. Quora and Stack Exchange crowd source answers for your deepest questions and Amazon has made a commerce community through product reviews.

But there's a massive elephant in the room. Facebook, in its attempt "to make the world more open and connected," seems to instead make people more unhappy and less satisfied. Twitter is a **lightning rod** for criticism, a land of **vapid** and meaningless **tweets**. Even marketers question if social media is just a huge waste of time in the face of enormous valuations of social media **behemoths**.

Most social media outlets do not promote meaningful, timely discussion. They focus **myopically** on the information of the moment—the news—and in turn **inundate** their users with irrelevant information while **sacrificing** the time needed to contemplate and form meaningful, **nuanced** opinions.

Most news comes in the form of **chronological** feeds. Newspapers, magazines and journals release current news on a regular basis. Television and radio broadcast the news live as it occurs. Online services like Reddit and Twitter list trending topics, and Facebook feeds display your friends' news in real time.

But the 24-hour news cycle guarantees that no topic, no matter how important, survives

any of these institutions beyond a few weeks. We need to **compartmentalize** information through feeds because there is just too much information to process at any given time. As the pace of news has accelerated, so has the rate at which people consume news. News feeds filter out the noise, **consolidating** information the world considers important. Yet, according to a Pew poll, not a single news audience is well-informed about current events.

Feeds do not prevent information overflow; in many cases, they **exacerbate** it. We need new paradigms of consuming and discussing the news, not because we need to understand everything that's going on, but because accepting that we can't comprehend everything allows us to focus on what we do know.

This is not to say persistent information doesn't exist on the web. Online **encyclopedias** like Wikipedia, journal databases like JSTOR and LexisNexis, and the Wayback Machine serve important roles in data archiving. And search engines like Google allow people not only to view the latest information but to search for information on a topical, rather than chronological basis. Yet none of these are social in nature; they serve as research tools, not as forums for discussion. Understanding and working with the **ephemerality** of news has real consequences. So, the next time you hear that social media is worthless, think again—it's a reflection of society itself, and there's a lot of work to be done in making discussion count.

## Diversity of Audience

The use of a single term, such as “audience,” to refer to all those who are witnessing a performance has the power to suggest that an audience is in some sense a single, **homogeneous** entity. However, it has long been recognized that members of an audience might significantly differ from each other in ways relevant to the performance they are witnessing. Indeed, on occasion, they have considered the **heterogeneity** of the audience as a dramatic topic in its own right. For example, different members of the audience to the play in *Hamlet* interpret it in very different ways. The society continues to grow increasingly diverse in terms of racial or ethnic makeup, sexual orientation, socio-economic structure, and so on. Media writers must constantly work to keep up with changes in audience as well as in audience needs and interests.

Getting used to the **novelty** of an experience is inevitable but it can be very dangerous for one's writing. Leaving aside other considerations where a sense of wonder aids the writing process in today's digital age, failure to remember the diversity of your audiences and their backgrounds can take away important nuances from your writing and prevent

it from reaching its potential for audiences. But here is a **paradox**. As a writer you must be comfortable showing who you are or where you're coming from or what your own concerns are, because there is nothing so boring as a colourless, **generic** piece of writing. The writer's identity remains important in digital spaces while the potential audience's identity needs to be given more of a free range than earlier in our digital age. As far as the audiences are concerned, the writer can neither assume they are just like them or the opposite of who they are. One way of developing depth in one's writing is to always maintain nuances whereby one is able to appeal to and address a vast range of readers, keeping in mind that they may span the entire **spectrum** of the whole range of exactly same to completely different and everything in between. Even if one is addressing a **niche** audience, the Internet has unlocked a huge potential readership so that we are able to reach people we may not have been able to reach before. We may find like-mindedness in unlikely places despite the fact that those people may eat a different **cuisine** or dress in a different way. In fact, it is quite possible that you may find someone at the other end of the globe who understands what you're trying to say far better than someone who is right here. So why not welcome them as audiences?

Yet, as we keep those other audiences in mind, we might need to do a few things differently in our compositions. Because of the vast geographical and cultural differences of people reading our works, we must examine our assumptions before putting them out there and either explain them or defend them but not assume they are truths universally acknowledged. Conveying background information about common events, beliefs or social mores are crucial for understanding. Too much information may lead to boredom while too little will make some audiences scratch their heads. Biases and perspectives not obvious to the writer may need to be clarified.

Idioms and turns of phrase may not get across the global divide. It's not just the colourful phrases accepted in the Standard English of some countries such as "break a leg" or "tell me about it" that has potential for misinterpretation. There can be local turns of phrase originating perhaps in a misuse of language (such as "I **freaked out** all night" meaning "I partied all night" in Bangalore—something I recently encountered and am still not too sure of—part of a lingo not standard in Indian English) that can be puzzling. Yet, getting rid of all idioms from a piece will surely **herald** the death of language and composition and everything writers stand for.

Details we mention in our writing might also suffer a change in significance as its travels

the Internet. Someone I describe as dark-skinned may not be visualized in the same way by the reader from another geographical location. My descriptions of heat or cold in a bitter winter in the temperate zone may be felt differently by an audience reading in the tropics. My description of an exotic flower may not be exotic at all to the audiences while an **analogy** I provide to explain something may simply have to be guessed at by whoever is reading my piece.

Perhaps some of these changes and miscommunications are inevitable. In our global world, perhaps some of these gaps in understanding will give rise to new kinds of sense perceptions through language. Perhaps the world will come so close together soon that we will all **delve** into the same sources and methods of understanding. But until then, we might be better off being aware of differences and informing our writing based on a sense of the diversity of our audiences.

## Section B Knowing Audiences

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Imagine that you recently had a car accident and you were partially responsible. If you had to write and tell your parents about the accident, what might you say? Imagine how you might tell the story differently if you were telling your friends about what happened. How might this version be different from the one you tell the insurance company? What details would you emphasize? Are there some details you might tell your friends that you might not emphasize or even mention at all in your letter to your parents or the insurance company? Would the order in which you told the various details be different? As you can see, this illustrates the way that we customize our writing to appeal to a specific audience.

Assignments are often designed with a particular audience in mind. For example, if you are writing a business or legal **memo**, your intended audience is probably people with whom you work, perhaps your boss or your co-workers. If you are writing a proposal of some sort, the intended audience may be a professional but not someone with whom you are intimately **acquainted**. Just as what you say to your parents and friends might be different than what you say to the insurance company, what and how you report information may vary depending on the audience.



## Why Is My Audience Important?

Knowing your audience helps you to make decisions about what information you should include, how you should arrange that information, and what kind of supporting details will be necessary for the reader to understand what you are presenting. It also influences the tone and structure of the document. To develop and present an effective argument, you need to be able to appeal to and address your audience.

When writing an academic paper, try to remember that your instructor is not the only member of your audience. Although the instructor is often the only person who will read the finished product, **customizing** a paper to his or her level of knowledge can run the risk of leaving out important information, since many instructors know far more about your topic than the average reader would. In addition, omitting information that your instructor already knows can result in a weak or unbalanced paper.

However, if you assume that your reader is less knowledgeable than you, you are likely to provide more details and better explanations, which usually results in a much stronger paper. While it is important to consider your instructor's needs when writing your paper, especially if he or she specifies particular requirements that you must meet, you should consider whether there is a specific intended audience for your assignment. This part is designed to help you to understand the importance of audience and determine what your audience needs to know to follow your ideas.

To effectively plan your assignment, you need to figure out who your audience is and what specific needs they might have. The best place to begin is your assignment handout. Look to see if your instructor specified an intended audience. If not, you might ask your instructor if there is a particular intended reader for the assignment. Common audiences include the following:

**Generalized group of readers:** Sometimes your audience is just a generalized group of readers. For example, your assignment might specify something like this: "Assume that your classmates are your audience." Generally, this means that your readers are college educated and know about as much (or as little) as you do on the subject. These readers will need you to provide some background information, as well as examples and illustrations to help them to understand what you are presenting.

**Professionals in the field:** Sometimes your assignment might require you to address people within a particular field or profession. For example, a business assignment might specify the audience as other business professionals in the field. Likewise, for a legal memo, your



readers might be a group of legal experts. If your readers are professional peers, you can assume they know the **jargon** and **terminology** common to that field. These readers may also expect you to write in the style and vocabulary that is common to the field or discipline. If your writing is designed for people with whom you work, you might be able to assume that they are also knowledgeable about the particular project or topic you are writing about.

**The larger academic community:** If you are writing an academic research paper, chances are that you are writing for an academic community, similar to the readers of professional, **peer-reviewed** journals in your field. These readers will expect that your writing will conform to the conventions of this particular field. It's often helpful to look at the language and style that experts in the field use when writing for these kinds of journals, so pay special attention to this as you research. These readers will expect you to **cite** known experts in the field (this shows that you are well-read and have done your homework) and to contribute something new to the established body of knowledge.

Once you know who you are writing to or for, you can begin to consider the best way to address your audience and customize the paper to meet their needs. Below are some things to consider:

**What is the relationship between the writer and the reader?** If you are in a position of authority over your readers, as might be the case if you are writing some sort of employment memo, your tone might be more instructive and **authoritative**. However, if you are writing to someone with more power than you, such as your boss, your tone should be more formal and polite. You would make suggestions rather than issue directives, for example. Always be polite and respectful to a reader!

**How much does the reader know?** Does the reader have more knowledge or less knowledge than you? Are they familiar with the jargon or terminology of this specific discipline, or will you need to define terms? Do they have the background knowledge (including the history of the topic or issue) necessary to understand your topic, or will you need to provide background information? You might also consider what information you can leave out. You want to make sure you provide all the information the reader needs, but you don't want to **bog down** the reader with information he or she already knows.

**Is the audience likely to agree or disagree with you?** It's important to think about this before you begin writing, so you can write in a way that appeals to your audience. Sometimes you will be addressing an audience that agrees with you, so you'll be emphasizing why their point of view is a productive or beneficial one, and perhaps arguing in favor of a course of