

山西省留学人员科研项目

大学英语 写作与欣赏

College English
Writing & Appreciation

赵锐 / 著



外文出版社
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Introduction

Why Learn to Write?

Among the four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, writing has always been neglected by students and teachers. Teachers and students spend less time and energy in teaching or learning writing skills. Yet this attitude is totally a mistake. The importance of writing can never be overestimated.

It's true that composing a competent piece of writing is a demanding, challenging, and sometimes tedious task, and it makes us feel anxious and uncomfortable. Then why should we learn to write? Does learning the skill worth all the discomfort? Some students may immediately say that if they don't learn to write they cannot pass various examinations, or they cannot get a good job. This is a practical yet one-sided view. The importance of learning writing is much greater than just passing the examination.

The process of writing will teach us some important lessons. First, we will learn how to communicate with our readers. Writing is a kind of communication between the writer and the reader. Through writing, we share our knowledge, thoughts and feelings with our readers. Learning to write helps us know how to organize our thoughts on a subject, put them down clearly on paper, back them up with facts, statistics, examples, reasons, expert opinions and other details. Besides, learning to write helps us to think and read critically. Critical means "skeptical," "exactng," "creative". Every day we inquire and reflect what we read and hear in order to arrive at the best possible judgment or decision. We need the capacity to organize ideas, to analyze,





refute, illuminate, explain and evaluate. Moreover, with the knowledge of writing, we will understand and appreciate an article better. We will read it critically, to see the author's motives and writing strategies, testing his own ideas, and arriving at new knowledge. Finally, writing essays will also help us improve our speaking and listening. Writing gives us practice in expressing ourselves clearly and logically. And knowing the organization of an essay and a paragraph, we can follow a speech and grasp the main idea more easily. In one word, learning to write can contribute to the improvement of our language skills and other abilities, let alone help us do well in college and get a good job.

About This Book

You may find various books on writing. Some books are written by famous linguists or professors of English. These books are well written and worth reading except for a few shortcomings. For instance, some books are written so professionally that they may be more suitable for researchers, some books are of a large size so that students are put off before reading, and the examples given in some books are difficult for the students to understand, let alone to appreciate. Of course, you may find some other books on writing, yet most of them are written by teachers of English to help students to pass various tests. Therefore patterns and formulas are provided for students to model or recite. These books are not really useful for students to improve their writing ability and their ability to appreciate different kinds of writing.

This book tends to offer beginning college writers an introduction to important writing techniques and strategies. It consists of two parts. The first part presents the basic principles of English rhetoric. Rhetoric has two aspects: organization and style. Here you can find out the methods to gather information before writing, to organize the whole text, to develop your idea, to improve



sentences, and to revise and edit your essay. Exercises are designed to help you practice what you have learned. The second part focuses on appreciating different kinds of articles with the knowledge of writing. Some classic works in our college English textbooks are specially chosen and compiled in this part. The reason for this is that you are familiar with these texts yet may not know how to appreciate them. With the basic knowledge of writing you learn in this book, we are sure that you can appreciate and understand the text better.

Having learned from years of experience that students prefer practical approaches, I have tried to avoid jargon of professional linguists or researchers when offering advice or explaining rules, principles, and techniques. Besides, I have tried to provide examples that are easy for you to understand and follow. Easy-to-understand language, practical approach, typical examples and well-designed exercises, all these will guarantee the improvement of your writing. If you read carefully and do all the exercises and practices thoughtfully, you will find the task of writing much, much easier and reading more and more enjoyable.

How to Practice Writing?

The skill of writing is like a muscle: the more you use it, the stronger it gets. If you never write, your writing muscle will shrivel up. Here I'll suggest several effective ways of exercising your writing skill.

1. Keeping a diary

The diary is a notebook in which you pour out heart about everything and nothing. Keeping a diary will benefit you a lot. On one hand, it is a very good way to practice your writing skills. And when writing topics, you can also use your diary as a source of ideas. On the other hand, writing about your feelings or experiences or dreams can help you learn to understand yourself better.



Here are a few suggestions for keeping a journal:

- *Writing regularly.* Keep a diary regularly, even if you have nothing special to say. If you get in the habit of writing regularly, you'll find something to say about even a boring day.
- *Don't worry about grammar or spelling.* Write from your heart. Don't edit your entries, and don't think you have to be in a cheery mood. If you're upset or angry about something, use the diary to get it off your chest. Just write about anything that's on your mind.
- *Keep your diary handy at all times.* Keep your diary with you so you can pick it up whenever you get the urge to write.
- *Date your entries.* Dating your diary entries will help you remember when you made them. You'll have fun looking back at specific events that happened during the year. You'll also be able to watch your writing skills grow over the passing months and years.

2. Writing a summary

A summary is a brief restatement of the essential and the original thought of a longer composition. Therefore, instead of putting your own feelings and emotions in the summary, you should only focus on those aspects that are relevant to the theme of the original.

Learning to write a summary is of great use. First of all, summary writing is what our modern society requires us of doing. Be it in a business body or in a government department setting, the ability to grasp quickly and accurately what is read, or heard, and to reproduce it in a clear and concise way is of great value to people. Second, summary writing helps composition writing. You can learn from the article you have read the use of words and expressions. And you are also trained to express your thoughts clearly, concisely and effectively. Third, summary writing is also helpful in improving reading comprehension.





Only after reading carefully and fully understanding what you have read, can you summarize the main points of the article.

When writing a summary, you should follow the following steps. First, read the passage through carefully and get the gist of it. Make sure that you are clear about the main idea of the passage. You may decide on the title and the thesis statement of the summary, and even write down the topic sentence. After this, jot down in brief notes the main points. Then follow the logical order of the original passage and write a summary. The summary is usually about one-third to one-fourth as long as the original passage.

3. Accumulating words and expressions

Some students may have difficulty finding words to express themselves. It's understandable since anyway we are learning to use a foreign language to express ourselves. Yet trying to enlarge vocabulary through mechanical memorizing proves strenuous and inefficient. The truth is many students can't use the words they have memorized in their writing. Here I'll suggest an efficient way to help you accumulate expressions.

After reading an article, pick out some words and expressions you are interested in, then write a short paragraph by using the words and expressions. In this way you add the good expressions in your own vocabulary list. Keep reviewing the passages you have written down, and you will find your wording more appropriate and idiomatic. For example, you read the following report about David Beckham in a newspaper (abridged):

2004 was the worst year of David Beckham's career, on and off the pitch. He's no longer a certain starter for his club, and if he carries on in his current form for England he could lose his place.

Beckham had his first full season at Manchester United in 1996. The





year he scored a goal from the halfway line, made his England debut got the nickname "Goldenballs".

The young man was destined for fame and fortune. During the next eight years he lived up to his potential. At the same time he thrived of commercialism and relentless media exposure.

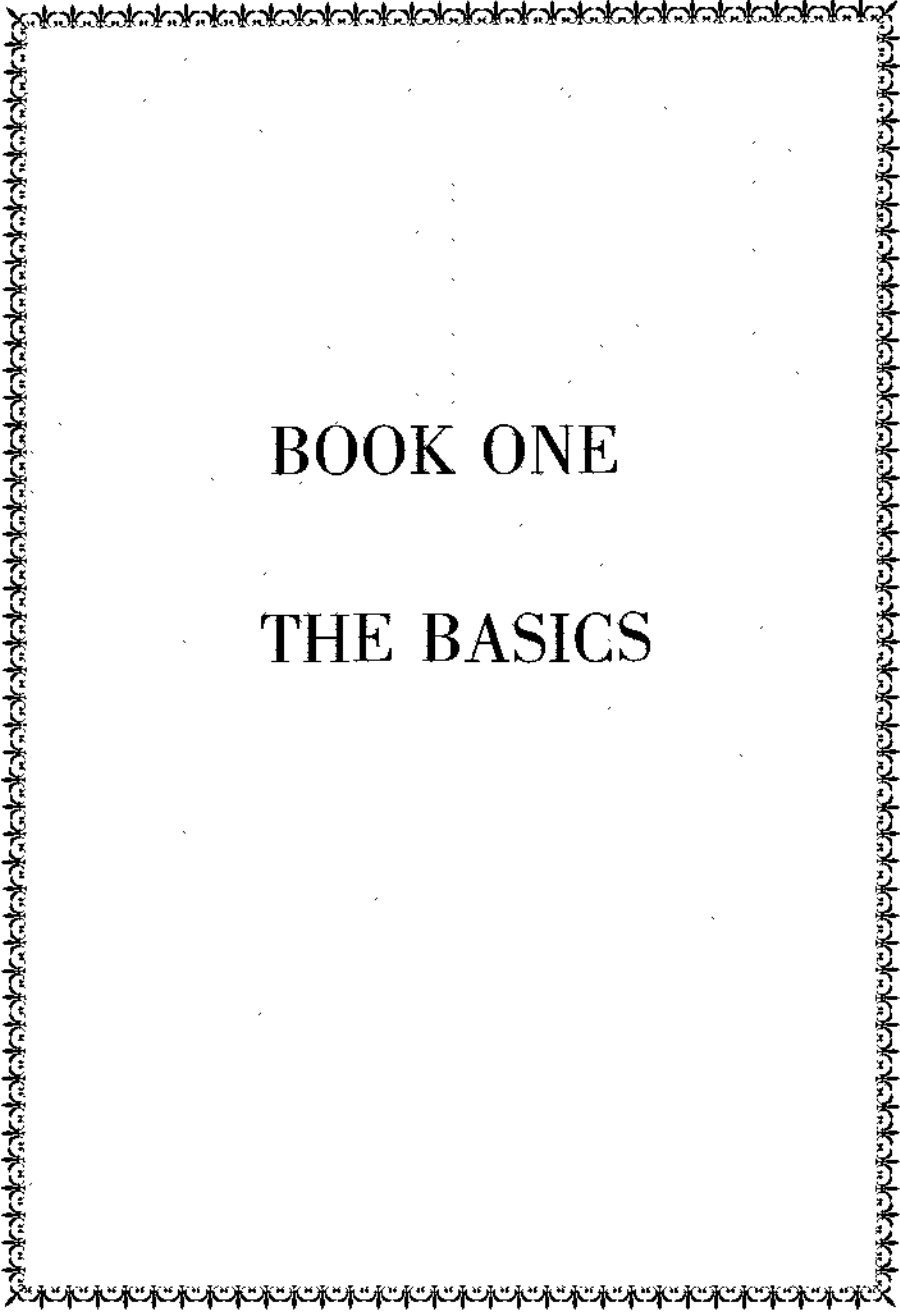
But last year, things turned sour. He became an unworthy footballer, a wayward husband and a faded celebrity. His loss of form means his place in Real Madrid team is in danger. If that happens, Beckham's England place will be in danger. He may be captain now, but will he even be in the team in Germany 2006?

Beckham's task this year is to start again. It is a long time since anyone in Spain called him "Goldenballs". The papers have been calling him "Forrest Gump", a man who ran and ran, like a headless chicken, but got nowhere.

After reading this report, maybe you are interested in the following words and expressions: *Real Madrid. pitch. starter, a faded celebrity. wayward. Forest Gump. things turned sour.* Write them down on your notebook and then compose a short paragraph (as is written below) with the reference of the report. In this way you accumulate useful expressions and learn to use them in your own writing.

Example:

Beckham now serves in the Real Madrid. During the eight years before 2004, he was at the peak of his career. But last year, 2004, things turned sour. That year was the worst year of his career on and off the pitch. He's no longer a certain starter for his club, and he was said to be a wayward husband and a faded celebrity. The papers called him "Forrest Gump", a man who ran and ran, like a headless chicken, but got nowhere.

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BOOK ONE

THE BASICS



PART ONE THE PREWRITING STAGE

Chapter 1 Writers at Work

1.1 Secrets for Writing Well

Some people think that writing is a bit mysterious activity at which only a few people can succeed. In fact it's not. Writing is a craft which can be learned by almost any literate person willing to invest time and energy.

Secrets for Writing Well:

- You can write well if you invest the time, keeping study and practice.
- A good writer gathers material through observing, reading, experiencing, and etc.
- A good writer often works with others.
- Nearly all good writing is the result of much revision.
- Knowing the rules of grammar won't make anyone a good writer, but learning the convention is important.

1.2 The Process of Writing

Researchers have studied writers' writing process and learned that writers go through different stages in producing their work. These stages include prewriting / planning, drafting, revising and editing. Prewriting is the stage in which you gather information about a subject. This process is extremely important because it is during this stage that the necessary groundwork is laid for completing a successful piece of work. The second stage begins when you



clarify your writing purpose and decide on a preliminary central idea. You may write one or more drafts in this stage, perhaps rethinking your goals and strategies as you work. After you have finished your draft, you should reread what you've written and revise it, perhaps two or three times. Keep your audience and your purpose clearly in mind, make certain that your main idea or thesis is clear and appropriately introduced, that you have organized and developed your ideas fully and in a logical and coherent way, and that you have concluded your essay effectively. At the same time, you may locate and revise awkward or incomplete sentences. The last stage—editing, a chance to polish your revised draft, is devoted largely to locating and correcting errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word choice and sentence structure.

After you have practiced writing in a process, moving through each of the stages, you will see your “final product” improve! If you attack a writing task in a systematic way, as we have described here, you will also improve your ability to judge your own writing. You may even find the process more exciting, for it will help you see writing as a voyage of discovery. Each stage will reveal more and more about your subject and gradually help you focus on exactly what you want to say about it.

Of course, writing will not always take you in a straight line from start to finish, from information gathering to final product. You may have to double back to gather more information, to eliminate facts and ideas that are no longer important to your project, or to focus on aspects of your subject that need clarifying. Anyway, the four stages are important in writing. Following them usually mean you are developing skill as a writer and as a thinker.



1.3 The Writing Situation

Every time you write anything other than a personal journal, you're engaged in a writing situation that involves other people; that is, you are writing to somebody and for some purpose. So you must keep in mind your audience and your purpose of writing.

1.3.1 Audience Awareness

When we speak or write, we certainly have listeners or readers. When we speak, we are helped by such additional signals as the tone of our voice, our gestures, our facial expressions, and so on. Also, if the persons we are speaking to don't understand what we are saying, they can let us know: "I don't understand what you mean." Or "Could you explain the part about...?" When we write, we don't have so many chances to be clear about our message because we probably won't be there when our message is read. Therefore, in our writing, we should be aware of our audience, the people who will read what we have written. An audience will have certain expectations about the way in which a message should be conveyed. To disappoint these expectations might lessen the effect of what is being said. So first we should know what the readers need. The following are some hints you will find helpful:

1. Understand readers' needs

- Context: a link between what they read and their own knowledge and experiences.
- Predictability: an understanding of the writer's purpose and how it is being achieved.
- Information: the specific facts, examples, and other details that make



the subject clear, concrete, interesting, and convincing.

- Respect: a sense that the writer respects their values and beliefs, their background, and their intelligence.
- Credibility: a sense that the writer has enough knowledge about or experience with the topic to be believable.
- Clarity and correctness: writing free of unnecessary stumbling blocks and mistakes.

2. Analyze your audience

In writing, you should be aware of your audience, the people who will read what you have written. Audience are various. You may have one or more audience; you may have friends or strangers as your audience; your audience may be your roommates or teachers; they may be of different ages; they may hold different religious belief ... Analyzing your audience will help you to decide how much background information you need to provide, whether you can use specialized terminology, whether readers need to be persuaded to accept your ideas, what details you will choose and what kind of tone you can adopt.

The following are some questions you should ask yourself before you begin to write:

1) About the audience:

- *Who are they?*
- *How well do I know them?*
- *How old are they?*
- *How much education do they have?*
- *What positions or occupations do they hold?*
- *What attitudes and values do they have?*

