



普通高等教育“十一五”国家级规划教材

新世纪高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材（修订版）

总主编 戴炜栋

英语交际实用写作

*Reaching People Through
Communication*

张世耘 编著

第2版

Second Edition



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我国英语专业本科教学与学科建设,伴随着我国改革开放的步伐,得到了长足的发展和提升。回顾这30多年英语专业教学改革和发展的历程,无论是英语专业教学大纲的制订、颁布、实施和修订,还是四、八级考试的开发与推行,以及多项英语教学改革项目的开拓,无不是围绕英语专业的学科建设和人才培养而进行的,正如《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》提出的英语专业的培养目标,即培养“具有扎实的英语语言基础和广博的文化知识并能熟练地运用英语在外事、教育、经贸、文化、科技、军事等部门从事翻译、教学、管理、研究等工作的复合型英语人才。”为促进英语专业本科建设的发展和教学质量的提高,外语专业教学指导委员会还实施了“新世纪教育质量改革工程”,包括推行“十五”、“十一五”国家级教材规划和外语专业国家精品课程评审,从各个教学环节加强对外语教学质量的宏观监控,从而确保为我国的经济建设输送大量的优秀人才。

跨入新世纪,英语专业的建设面临新的形势和任务:经济全球化、科技一体化、文化多元化、信息网络化的发展趋势加快,世界各国之间的竞争日趋激烈,这对我国英语专业本科教学理念和培养目标提出了新的挑战;大学英语教学改革如火如荼;数字化、网络化等多媒体教学辅助手段在外语教学中广泛应用和不断发展;英语专业本科生教育的改革和学科建设也呈现出多样化的趋势,翻译专业、商务英语专业相继诞生——这些变化和发展无疑对英语专业的学科定位、人才培养以及教材建设提出了新的、更高的要求。

上海外语教育出版社(简称外教社)在新世纪之初约请了全国30余所著名高校百余位英语教育专家,对面向新世纪的英语专业本科生教材建设进行了深入、全面、广泛和具有前瞻性的研讨,成功地推出了理念新颖、特色明显、体系完备的“新世纪高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材”,并被列入“十五”国家级规划教材,以其前瞻性、先进性和创新性等特点受到全国众多使用院校的广泛好评。

面对快速发展的英语专业本科教育,如何保证专业的教学质量,培养具有国际视野和创新能力的英语专业人才,是国家、社会、高校教师共同关注的问题,也是教材编撰者和教材出版者关心和重视的问题。

作为教学改革的一个重要组成部分,优质教材的编写和出版对学科建设的推动和人才培养的作用是有目共睹的。外教社为满足教学和学科发展的需要,与教材编写者们一起,力图全方位、大幅度修订并扩充原有的“新世纪高等院校英语专业本科生系列教材”,以打造英语专业教材建设完整的学科体系。为此,外教社邀请了全国几十所知名高校40余位著名英语教育专家,根据英语专业学科发展的新趋势,围绕梳理现有课程、优化教材品种和结构、改进教学方法和手段、强化学生自主学习能力的培养、有效提高教学质量等问题开展了专题研究,并在教材编写与出版中予以体现。

修订后的教材仍保持原有的专业技能、专业知识、文化知识和相关专业四大板块,品种包括基础技能、语言学、文学、文化、人文科学、测试、教学法等,总数逾200种,几乎涵盖了当前我国高校英语专业所开设的全部课程,并充分考虑到我国英语教育的地区差异和不同院校英语专业的特点,提供更多的选择。教材编写深入浅出,内容反映了各个学科领域的最新研究成果;在编写宗旨上,除了帮助学生打下扎实的语言基本功外,着力培养学生分析问题、解决问题的能力,提高学生的思辨能力和人文、科学素养,培养健康向上的人生观,使学生真正成为我国新时代所需要的英语专门人才。

系列教材修订版编写委员会仍由我国英语界的知名专家学者组成,其中多数是在各个领域颇有建树的专家,不少是高等学校外语专业教学指导委员会的委员,总体上代表了中国英语教育的发展方向 and 水平。

系列教材完整的学科体系、先进的编写理念、权威的编者队伍,再次得到教育部的认可,荣列“普通高等教育‘十一五’国家级规划教材”。我深信,这套教材一定会促进学生语言技能、专业知识、学科素养和创新能力的培养,填补现行教材某些空白,为培养高素质的英语专业人才奠定坚实的基础。

戴炜栋

教育部高校外语专业教学指导委员会主任委员
国务院学位委员会外语学科评议组组长

本教材适用课程将英语专业通常开设的写作课扩展到文字交际的多种实用功能领域,从而帮助教材使用者学习和掌握相关基本写作知识和技能。

本教材包括3个部分:

第一部分:便笺(便条,备忘录,传真短函,电子邮件等)

第二部分:私人信函

第三部分:公务/商务函电

每部分包括数个以交际功能领域划分的学习单元,如:请求、感谢、邀请、致歉等。全书共36个单元,可供一个学年36周使用。

每个单元同时包括以下部分:

- (1)概述
- (2)范文一简评
- (3)常用表达方式
- (4)场景写作练习
- (5)英文写作规则
- (6)写作规则强化练习
- (7)交互活动

本教材在采用交际法语言习得模式的同时,保留并结合传统写作课教学对文法、句法等问题的重视,以弥补交际法在教学实际操作中可能出现的偏差。具体来说,交际法以学生已掌握的语言基本技能为训练前提,强调语言场景和环境对语言交际的影响,侧重于语言交际行为的功用性、语境恰当性等。而在目前我国的外语习得环境下,学生对英语基本结构和规则的知识尚有缺陷,需要在写作训练时不断学习、规范。因此,本教材在每一个交际功能单元后附有一个英语写作基本规则训练单元,专门讨论中国学生应该掌握而往往不够了解的英语写作基本规范和原则,并辅以强化练习及部分答案。相信英语写作基本规则教学成分与交际功能法两者结合可使不同侧重的习得方法有所互补。

本教材除了对一般交际功能进行训练外,对不同场景和交际对象适用何种文体、口吻等也有所关注。同时就这方面对具体范文作出评价,并在部分课堂交互活动中提出讨论问题,以引导学生对交际中使用恰当文体的重视。此外,本教材对一些英语文化在写作中的影响也有概括性评述,以使学生避免在文字交际活动中因文化差异而导致的不恰当的语言交际行为。

另外,本教材在公务/商务应用文部分还对相关基本商务知识做了必要解释,以使学生在商务交际主要功能领域的写作技能时,对相关基本知识有一个初步的了解。在公务/商务交际部分,本教材在有限的单元中,试图包括最基本的商务交际功能领域,如商务询价、报价、定货、确认、付款等,以较浓缩的方式让学生初步掌握基本商务活动和商务文体。

为使学生参与课堂讨论,每一单元包含交互活动,并提出问题供课堂或小组讨论,或讨论并协作完成一些英语写作规则的练习。教师可根据具体情况和条件对交互活动进行扩展或增减讨论题目。

本教材可用于英语专业本科生应用文写作课程,也可供英语自学者自学使用。同时,从事不同工作的人员,在需要使用英文进行交际时,也可学习或参照本教材提供的各交际功能领域的英文实例和相关规则。

书中部分范例参考了以下英语国家亲友的通信实例,特此致谢:Maryo Ewell, Dr. Peter Ewell, Professor George Sibley, Dr. Marla Lowenthal, Dr. Diane Harvey, Danny Xu, Lana Zhou, Shuang Pan。

本教材得到北京大学外语学院立项帮助。本教材的责任编辑十分认真负责,并提出了宝贵的意见和建议,在此一并致谢。

本书的修订版对原文内容做出增删和订正,并专门解释了英国英语和美国英语的一些差异。在修订过程中,Maryo Ewell和George Sibley仔细阅读了本书并提出了中肯的意见,在此我对他们的帮助表示由衷感谢。

张世耘
2010年9月

As the title indicates, this text is put together to help you learn to communicate with people in the real world.

Then, who are the “people” you are writing to, within the purview of this text? They are your family, friends, co-workers, customers, business associates, and others who directly interact with you in private and work contexts.

And how do you perceive yourself, when writing to people? This question must sound odd to you. Of course, you are always what you are, writing or not writing. Suppose I’m being a bit unreasonable and press on. To get rid of me, you might reply grudgingly, “OK, you win. I’m so-and-so, a student, who happens to be writing.” And you’re right in a sense — when you see yourself as the ONLY “actor” in this act of writing. Now, try to envision a specific act of communication as it works in the real world where other factors — if not also ACTORS — play a part. And you will probably see yourself alternating between varied personal and social roles, writing as a student, a son or daughter, a customer, or an applicant for a job opening or a scholarship. In addition, you may even switch your roles writing to the same person — for example, from the role of a helper responding to a request to the role of a help seeker making a request. Thus, to be an effective communicator, you must “play your role” right and learn how to communicate accordingly.

What is the “real world”? Here I refer to real-life situations where you must communicate to another person for a genuine purpose, rather than fulfill your internal need of self-expression on paper. In this real world of communication, you make invitations, give information, offer congratulations, express appreciation, and so on.

In learning to write English as a foreign language in China, I admit, you must remain on the outside of the home culture of English — a life-world other than your own. This cross-cultural dislocation necessarily creates some difficulties for you. First, you may be unaware of certain cultural conventions that also shape the way people communicate. Moreover, having experienced few genuine communication acts in real-life situations, you may find yourself untrained to employ your linguistic or rhetorical skills appropriately to “act out” such communications in English.

However, these less than ideal conditions should not discourage you from working toward excellence in English communication. Rather, they point to the need for you to look for ways to overcome them. Ultimately, you are learning to write English, not just to meet the bottom line requirement: writing intelligible texts of English, but to perform various functions and to reach people through communication.

This current text is designed to meet your need to write English for private or transactional purposes in the real world of communication. It helps you understand and practice formats, styles, and tones appropriate to different individuals and in varied writing situations.

Given the limitations inherent in learning a foreign language, where do you start and how? Like in most other areas of social behavior, you can start learning to write properly by observing how others do. This is exactly where this book may help you by providing communication samples between individuals or organizations in a wide range of functional areas. By studying these models and the commentaries on them and by practicing, you can learn how to communicate effectively in English in everyday interpersonal and work circumstances.

To give your writing maximum impact, you will also have to follow accepted rules for good writing. Each unit in this text is supplemented with the section **Guide to Good Writing** — a selection of rules — to meet

your needs as a student of English as a foreign language. **Reinforcement Exercise** that follows **Guide to Good Writing** helps you understand and apply these rules.

With this textbook, you can work — with an instructor or without one — on a variety of real-world communication tasks, encompassed in three general categories:

Quick Messages (Notes, Memos, Faxes, and E-mails) in Part I

Personal Correspondence in Part II

Business Correspondence in Part III

The three parts are subdivided into 36 units, each covering a specific functional area:

Part I: Quick messages

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Requests | 4. Apologies |
| 2. Arrangements | 5. Notices |
| 3. Explanations | 6. Instructions |

Part II: Personal Correspondence

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 7. Requests and Inquiries | 17. Greetings |
| 8. Replies to Requests | 18. Introductions |
| 9. Invitations | 19. Instructions |
| 10. Acceptances | 20. Sharing of Experiences |
| 11. Refusals | 21. Resumes |
| 12. Arrangements | 22. Cover Letters/Applications |
| 13. Apologies | 23. Describing People and Places |
| 14. Thanks | 24. Describing Routine Life |
| 15. Congratulations | 25. Narrating Events and Incidents |
| 16. Sympathies | |

Part III: Business Correspondence

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 26. Requests, Inquiries, and Replies | 32. Congratulations |
| 27. Orders and Order Cancellations | 33. Invitations |
| 28. Apologies | 34. Greetings |
| 29. Acknowledgements | 35. Announcements and Notices |
| 30. Acceptances | 36. Instructions |
| 31. Refusals | |

Each unit in this text contains seven sections:

Preview

It summarizes the basic components, typical text structure, and other points of importance in the text type.

Models and Commentaries

Models are provided for you to study and follow in your practice; Commentaries highlight points of importance that may otherwise go unnoticed in some of these model texts.

Useful Expressions

Some useful expressions are listed for your practice.

Practice

It provides a number of situational tasks for your practice.

Guide to Good Writing

Guide to Good Writing is a selection of rules for writing English. You can discuss these rules with your instructor in class. **Guide to Good Writing** in the 36 units includes the following subjects:

1. Using Ellipsis Correctly (1.5)
2. Understanding Culture (2.5)
3. Understanding Styles (3.4)
4. Avoiding the Passive Voice (4.5)
5. Using Strong Words (5.5)
6. Avoiding Wordiness (6.5)
7. Guidelines for Writing Letters (7.5)
8. Typical Message Pattern in Personal Correspondence (8.5)
9. Addressing the Envelope Correctly (9.5(1))
10. Using Postscripts Sparingly (9.5(2))
11. Using Titles Correctly (10.5)
12. Varying Your Sentences (11.5)
13. Structuring Your Sentences for Desired Emphasis (12.5)
14. Emphasizing Principal Ideas (13.5)
15. Improving Choppy Sentences (14.5)
16. Writing Effective Paragraphs (15.5)
17. Organizing Your Thoughts for Readability (16.5)
18. Supplying Specifics (A)(B) (17.5)(18.5)
19. Selecting and Organizing Details to Achieve Your Purpose (19.5)
20. Using Adverbs and Adjectives Sparingly (20.5)
21. Using the Colon to Advantage (21.5)
22. Using the Dash to Advantage (22.5)
23. Avoiding Comma Splices and Fused Sentences (23.5)
24. Using the Comma Correctly (A)(B) (24.5)(25.5)
25. Understanding Business Letter Styles (26.5)
26. Typical Message Pattern in Business Correspondence (27.5)
27. “You” Perspective (28.5)
28. Structuring Your Writing for Impact (A): Headings (29.5)
29. Structuring Your Writing for Impact (B): Bullets and Numbers (30.5)
30. Using Capitals Correctly (31.5)
31. Using Numbers Correctly (32.5)
32. Avoiding Misplaced Modifiers (33.5)
33. Using Abbreviations Correctly (34.5)
34. Using the Semicolon Correctly (35.5)
35. Documenting Sources (36.5)

Reinforcement Exercise

Reinforcement Exercise completes the section **Guide to Good Writing**. A key to the numbered exercises and some lettered exercises is provided at the back of the text.

Teamwork

Finally, the **Teamwork** section allows you to interact with others in class by exchanging views.

Introduction 导言	Words and Beyond P-2			
	Envisioning Your Reader — “It Takes Two to Tango” P-3			
Introduction 导言	Establishing Your Purpose — Whisk, Pause, or Cross? P-4			
	Meeting the Writing Situation — Toward a Matching Partnership P-6			
Part I Quick Messages (Notes, Memos, Faxes, and E-mails) 第一部分 便笺(便条/备忘录/传真/电子邮件)	Introduction to Quick Messages (便笺导语)			
		.1 Preview (简介)	.2 Models and Commentaries (范文-简评)	.3 Useful Expressions (常见表达方式)
	1 Requests (请求) P-8	P22	P27	P27
	2 Arrangements (安排事宜) P-9	P31	P35	P35
	3 Explanations (解释) P-10	P39	P41	P41
	4 Apologies (致歉) P-11	P46	P48	P48
	5 Notices (通知) P-12	P52	P55	P55
	6 Instructions (指示/说明) P-13	P58	P60	P60
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	7 Requests and Inquiries (请求及问询) P-14	P68	P72	P72
	8 Replies to Requests (回复请求) P-15	P75	P78	P78
	9 Invitations (邀请) P-16	P82	P86	P86
	10 Acceptances (接受邀请) P-17	P91	P93	P93
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	12 Arrangements (安排事宜) P-19	P102	P105	P105
	13 Apologies (致歉) P-20	P109	P111	P111
	14 Thanks (致谢) P-21	P116	P120	P120
	15 Congratulations (祝贺) P-22	P123	P126	P126
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.4 Practice (情景写作练习)	.5 Guide to Good Writing (英文写作规则)	.6 Reinforcement Exercise (英文写作规则强化练习)	.7 Teamwork (互动练习)
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	Understanding Culture P36		P38
	(3.4) Understanding Styles P42	(3.5) P43	(3.6) P45
	Avoiding the Passive Voice P49	P50	P51
	Using Strong Words P56		P57
	Avoiding Wordiness P61	P62	P64
	Guidelines for Writing Letters P73	P73	P74
	Typical Message Pattern in Personal Correspondence P79	P80	P81
	(1) Addressing the Envelope Correctly P87 (2) Using Postscripts Sparingly P89	P88	P90
	Using Titles Correctly P93	P94	P95
	Varying Your Sentences P99	P100	P101
	Structuring Your Sentences for Desired Emphasis P106	P107	P108
	Emphasizing Principal Ideas P112	P113	P115
	Improving Choppy Sentences P120	P121	P122
	Writing Effective Paragraphs P126	P127	P130
	Organizing Your Thoughts for Readability P135	P136	P138
	Supplying Specifics (A) P144	P145	P145

Part II Personal Correspondence 第二部分 私人信函		.1 Preview (简介)	.2 Models and Commentaries (范文 - 简评)	.3 Useful Expressions (常见表达方式)
	18 Introductions (介绍信)	P146		P152
	19 Instructions (指示/说明)	P156		P158
	20 Sharing of Experiences (讲述经历)	P162		P165
	21 Resumes (简历)	P168		P173
	22 Cover Letters/Applications (申请)	P179		P181
	23 Describing People and Places (描述人物/地点)	P186		P190
	24 Describing Routine Life (描述日常活动)	P195		P200
	25 Narrating Events and Incidents (描述事件)	P203		P206
Part III Business Correspondence 第三部分 商务信函	Introduction to Business Correspondence (商务信函导语)			
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	29 Acknowledgements (确认)	P257		P265
	30 Acceptances (接受/同意)	P270		P275
	31 Refusals (拒绝)	P281		P285
	32 Congratulations (祝贺)	P288		P291
	33 Invitations (邀请)	P295		P300
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	36 Instructions (指示/说明)	P322		P327
	Appendix A (附录 1) Key to Reinforcement Exercise (写作规则强化练习答案)		Appendix B (附录 2) U. S. Postal Abbreviations (美国邮政缩写)	

.4 Practice (情景写作练习)	.5 Guide to Good Writing (英文写作规则)	.6 Reinforcement Exercise (英文写作规则强化练习)	.7 Teamwork (互动练习)
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	Using the Comma Correctly (A) P200	P202	P202
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	Typical Message Pattern in Business Correspondence P244	P246	P246
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	Structuring Your Writing for Impact (B): Bullets and Numbers P276	P280	P280
	Using Capitals Correctly P286	P287	P287
	Using Numbers Correctly P292	P294	P294
	Avoiding Misplaced Modifiers P301	P303	P303
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Appendix C (附录3) Sample Recommendation Letters (推荐信)		Selected List of Works Consulted (参考文献) P342	

Words and Beyond

When you write, you create a text. You may think it's your solitary performance with words, to be presented to your reader only at a later time. The temporal sequence of communication in writing might mislead you into a false conclusion: Word-assembling alone commands your attention. Indeed, in writing a research paper, your primary tasks are generating ideas and putting them into words — conventions for writing such papers, taken for granted by the reading community, leave little room for individual innovation in form or style. Presumably, readers of a research paper seek information in it and no more. Likewise, in preparing a business agreement, often partially ready-made in legalese, all you have to do is phrase precisely the terms and conditions agreed on by the parties to the agreement: few people would look in a legal document for other messages language is capable of carrying — friendliness, sincerity, gratitude, anxiety, and the like — beyond the legal sense of the words. In creative writing, your words can take on a life of their own to your readers — whatever message your readers may read into them is no longer your business.

Obviously, you scarcely need inspect closely each individual reader's personal characteristics, planning and working out such writing. A research paper is intended for readers knowledgeable about the subject and interested in reading it; a business agreement sets forth the terms for the transaction agreed upon by the signatory parties and, in case of dispute, supplies a legal basis for review by lawyers and judges. In both cases language clarity is probably the sole criterion for good writing. A literary work has a less definable audience and appeals to common or universal human sentiments. Each crafted for a group of readers whose collective needs overshadow their individual idiosyncrasies, these types of writing share a distinct feature — an impersonal relationship between the writer and the reader.

It does not follow of course that when you write impersonally, you can disregard your reader. Quite on the contrary, successful writers never fail to appreciate the reading habits and needs of their target audience. To communicate successfully about a science subject, you must plan and write only after making sound assumptions about your intended readers — their interest, knowledge, and attitude. Similarly, in drafting a business document you cannot ignore the conventions of the business and legal community. Even when you write fiction or poetry, you often intend it to be read by an audience other than yourself.

Envisioning Your Reader — “It Takes Two to Tango”

The impersonal quality in some text types may sometimes dull your sense of your reader's “presence”; however, when writing to an individual, you single out a partner — your reader — always for a move that takes both of you to make. Just observe how you use language to interact with different individuals in your day-to-day interpersonal exchanges. Isn't it true that what you say and do not say and how you say it may make a difference with this or that individual? Communication success or breakdown often hinges on which words to which person. This becomes most obvious in speech when you can measure the effects of your words by watching your listener's reactions. In writing, however, you have to let your words “speak for themselves”

without your presence, but the seeming absence of “face-to-face” contact does not take away the writer-reader interaction between individuals. When you start writing a genuine letter to a real person, you instantly enter into a personal writing-reading relationship with your reader — before the reading takes place — and the way you write determines how this relationship works out.

In real communication situations people do react to a text individually and relate their feelings, ideas, and attitudes about it to the writer. For instance, a sincere letter of apology may emotionally move the reader into making a more friendly response to the writer, but an arrogantly-worded application seeking a job may get rejected out of hand without being given due consideration — the personality perceived rather than qualifications presented is rejected.

To bring your reader into your writing process, you must look beyond the narrow confines of your words’ literal meaning to see how communication is shaped in private or work contexts. When you write to a specific reader, you mean to inform, get things done, or draw an anticipated response. Although acceptable sentence construction and diction can ensure an intelligible text, to communicate with a real reader — not just ANY reader — requires more. You may write appropriately to an individual in one communication context but not so to the same individual in another. Nor can you guarantee you get similar responses or reactions from two different individuals in a similar writing situation. Thus, to communicate successfully with a real person, you must write from an understanding of this person.

Experience is often our initial guide in interactive communication. Just look at the way we behave, speaking to others in a social gathering, for example. Often, you catch yourself speaking not entirely like your usual and more comfortable self — with good reason, though. On some occasions you don’t want to act or speak too differently from others to distance yourself from them, or you simply want to engage your audience by saying what you believe to be more engaging to the audience or more appropriate to the occasion. You will fare quite well, provided you learn fast by constantly adjusting to verbal and other signals you receive — this adjustment process depends not only on language exchanged, but also on extra-linguistic expressions or body language perceived. Think about how you speak with your friends and family, and you will probably similarly conclude that your speech manner even varies with them, depending on when, where, and for what reason you speak to them. Important as the adjustment process is, you may not always be aware of it and needn’t be. Your audience plus the situation where you find yourself largely shapes your speech variations.

When you write to communicate, however, the person-to-person interactive dimension to communication is “unseen” and thus may escape your attention. You do not see your reader. You do not hear a word in response. You cannot smile to be friendly, nor make reassuring eye contacts. And you are not even sure that your words will “speak” as intended. The written message is all there is that you can work on to induce the anticipated reaction from your reader.

In working out each communication task, you must envision your absent reader. Now let’s see how it works. Here is the situation: You want to write to a government official to make a complaint.

First, you know that a government official’s work schedule is demanding, and not every letter passes office screening and reaches her. You also understand that if your letter does get to her, she is unlikely to allow much time for it. So you should plan your letter within one page because a shorter letter to a stranger is more likely to get read. Nor do you want her to skim up and down trying to hunt from murky verbiage for the key points you want to bring to her attention immediately. Therefore you must use plain and direct language and cut all unnecessary frills. You may also want to structure your message for a pleasant visual impact.

Secondly, if you don't know this official personally, the appropriate style you will adopt for this letter should be a formal one, especially when the matter you are to write about is a serious one. This style helps to convey your seriousness about it and your courtesy addressing a person in this official capacity. What happens to the more casual, conversational style of yours when you write to your friends? You must drop it, because it is unsuited for this particular recipient.

Yes, you may also want to put in a word or so to thank her for her time as there must be piles of letters sitting on her desk awaiting her attention. With your friends or someone whose work is less demanding, this form of courtesy is unnecessary.

However, when you write a complaint to your colleagues, friends, or family, an undue level of formality, for example, would make you sound odd or angrier than you actually are or as if writing not as a colleague, a friend or family but as a stranger. Generally, on the formal end of the communication spectrum, you must strictly observe applicable rhetorical and social conventions — while towards the other end, you can ease up on them.

Whatever a writing task may be, ultimately how your reader reacts measures how far you have succeeded in accomplishing that task. But how do you get the desired response from your reader? Above all, you must understand your reader. Of course, you often understand who and what your reader is — you may even know the person well. In general, the more you understand correctly a person's needs and interests in a writing situation, the more you know how to meet them to make your anticipated reaction happen.

Here is what you can do for a start. When you decide to write to a particular person, you should try to ask yourself questions like: "What are this person's specific needs in these circumstances?" "How best can I meet them?" "What is this person's attitude about it?" "How will this person most likely feel about the way I word this message?" In short, each person you write to is a unique individual, and you should write to appeal to your reader — with her special character in mind.

For instance, your use of the taboo slang "piss off" is all right to your friend Joe and may give your writing the right punch for the occasion, but it may sound too frivolous and even unlike you to your friend Simon. To be honest, we don't exactly behave consistently with different people in our varied personal and social roles. This inconsistency of behavior is not only natural but also ensures successful interpersonal relations — because each person we interact with is a unique combination of traits and conditions. Moreover, even with your buddy Joe, you may reconsider your usual choice of words, when the subject of communication and the circumstances change.

How about people you write to but don't know well or at all? However unique each of us may be, we are also alike in many ways. Most of us would respond negatively to unreasonable demands and would probably agree about what constitutes unreasonableness in a typical situation. This universal element in human behavior may guide us in communication. When you don't know your reader personally, just imagine how you would react in the reader's situation and write accordingly. Always put yourself in the shoes of your reader and start from there to determine how best your writing will impact or interest your reader from her point of view.

Establishing Your Purpose — Whisk, Pause, or Cross?

Each time you write to communicate, you need to discover your purpose for it. Indeed, no writing is without a purpose. Your purpose may be to work out your emotions on paper, to be self-expressive, or to fulfil the requirements of school. In genuine communications, your purpose