

VOL. I

A COLLEGE ENGLISH WRITING COURSE

From Sentence to Paragraph

(Revised Edition)

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大学英语
写作教程

■ (修订本)

■ 上册

HENAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

河南大学出版社

大学英语写作教程

(修订本)

上册

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

大学英语写作教程 上册/麻保金等编. —2版
(修订本). —开封:河南大学出版社,1999.1.重印
高校教材
ISBN 7-81018-657-4

I. 大… I. 麻… III. 英语-写作-高等学校-教材 N. H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(1999)第 03204 号

河南大学出版社出版

(开封市明伦街 85 号)

河南大学出版社电脑照排

河南第一新华印刷厂印刷 河南省新华书店发行

1992 年 1 月第 1 版 1999 年 1 月第 8 次印刷

1999 年 1 月第 2 版(修订本)

开本:850×1168 1/32 印张:12.375

字数:403 千字 印数:48001—53000 册

定价:14.00 元

PREFACE

In preparing the present edition of *A COLLEGE ENGLISH WRITING COURSE*, we have not departed from the principles on which the earlier edition was based, but we have made a number of practical changes that we hope render the book a more effective teaching instrument for the instructor and a more useful textbook for the students. As for our practical changes, we have reorganized the book by omitting and adding certain materials. We have striven to keep primary concerns in the foreground by relegating secondary concerns to appendixes, where they are available for reference when that is deemed necessary or desirable.

A COLLEGE ENGLISH WRITING COURSE is purposely divided into two books that take the learner of English from sentence skills to writing the research paper. The two books combined form a comprehensive guide to the entire writing process, examining each skill in detail.

The first volume, *From Sentence to Paragraph*, is aimed at the beginning writing student. The task is a step-by-step process teaching skills basic to writing in the English language. Each chapter includes detailed descriptions of each skill involved in sentence and paragraph writing as well as examples and activities to practice those skills. Examples have been chosen and adapted to have relevance to the Chinese student so that he will find the subject matter interesting and helpful.

The second volume, *From Essay to Research Paper and Practical Writing*, is aimed at the advanced student. The task is seen as a step-by-step process beginning with less formal writing

and moving to more formal writing. One section in this volume is devoted to the difference between Chinese and western writing. Writing tends to represent the culture of its language. Therefore one cannot write in his own language and translate and expect it to be considered good writing. The student of a foreign language must learn how to be a good writer in that language. Recognizing the difference between the student's own language, in this case Chinese, and the foreign language, in this case English, can be very helpful. This volume explores this area with insight and sensitivity.

Included in the second volume is a unit on practical writing skills. The student will learn basic writing forms for note-taking and outlining which are important academic skills, as well as letter writing. Each of these skills is valuable to the English language learner and will be practical in meeting with current and future needs.

This book provides the basic teaching tool. The instructor should build his curriculum around this text and supplement tasks and instruction according to the needs of his particular students.

It is our hope that these two volumes will provide students and teachers with clear insight into English composition and will become a valuable part of, not only, their yearly set of text books, but also a part of their reference library far into the future.

As with any project of this size, we have many people to thank.

We express our gratitude to Prof. Miao Pujing, Dean of the Foreign Languages Institute of Henan University, who encour-

aged us to submit a proposal for this book.

We offer a heartfelt thank to Prof. Qin Yingjun, our editor. We could not have succeeded in our efforts without his patience, wit, and suggestions. We also want to thank the members of the Foreign Affairs Office of Henan University for their help.

We wish to thank our families and friends for their help and encouragement during our hours of writing.

And, last but not least, we say thank you to the users of the book whose response helped us shape these materials to meet their needs.

Ma Baojin M. A.

Chen Mingfa

Rebecca (Becky) Neufeld. M. A. , C. C. C.

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*Reading maketh a full man; conference a
ready man and writing an exact man.*

—Francis Bacon

The sentence is the basic unit of English language, and to be able to manage the sentence is essential for anyone who wishes to write effectively. Thus the effectiveness of the essay depends on the effectiveness of the paragraphs which organize it; the effectiveness of the paragraph depends on the effectiveness of the sentences which compose it. To help the students write clear, error-free sentences and develop correct writing style, this part, SENTENCE SKILLS, represents a special approach to the characteristics of effective sentences; unity, clarity, coherence and emphasis. Particular methods of gaining a good-quality sentence are discussed in this part.



SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Sentences are complete thoughts because they have subjects and verbs and because they require no other elements to complete their meaning. Structurally a sentence must be an independent unit, capable of standing alone. Dependent units, such as phrases, clauses, appositives and similar groups of words, are not sentences, and should not be written as sentences. When any one of these dependent units is punctuated with a capital letter at the beginning and a full stop (period, exclamation point, or question mark) at the end, it is called a sentence fragment.

Ineffective Sentence Fragments

Ineffective sentence fragments reflect incomplete or confused thinking. They can be a single word, a phrase, a subordinate clause or any other word group which violates the accepted subject-verb pattern.

Fragment: Then she went on nervously with her work.
Knitting. (single word used as sentence)

Revision: Then she went on nervously with her knitting.

Fragment: A dense forest humming with sounds of insects
and teeming with animal life. (phrase used as

sentence)

Revision; The dense forest hummed with sounds of insects and teemed with animal life.

Fragment; The next afternoon we came to the waterfall.

The most beautiful sight on our journey. (appositive phrase used as sentence)

Revision; The next afternoon we came to the waterfall, the most beautiful sight on our journey.

Fragment; He talked for fifty minutes without taking his eyes off his notes. Apparently not noticing that half the class was asleep. (participial phrase used as sentence)

Revision; He talked for fifty minutes without taking his eyes off his notes. Apparently he did not notice that half the class was asleep.

Fragment; I cite these examples to show you how interesting accounting can be. And to give you an idea of the kind of problems an accountant has to solve. (infinitive phrase used as sentence)

Revision; I cite these examples to show you how interesting accounting can be and to give you an idea of the kind of problems an accountant has to solve.

Fragment; You might think people would resent such a talkative boy, but they do not. The reason being Steve's poise and appearance. (absolute construction used as sentence)

Revision; You might think people would resent such a talkative boy but, because of Steve's poise and appearance, they do not.

Fragment; I thought she was dressed for a masquerade. But

soon changed my mind. (group of words without a subject used as sentence)

Revision: I thought she was dressed for a masquerade, but I soon changed my mind.

Fragment: He finally decided to leave school. Because he was utterly bored with his work and was failing all his courses. (subordinate clause used as sentence)

Revision: He finally decided to leave school because he was utterly bored with his work and was failing all his courses.

An ineffective sentence fragment, as we can see from the examples given above, is a fragmentary idea that needs to be finished or added to another idea. It is usually the result of ignorance or carelessness.

A sentence fragment can be corrected in various ways:

- 1) by joining it to another sentence;
- 2) by supplying a subject and a predicate;
- 3) by rewriting the passage in which it occurs.

A subordinate clause should not be written as a complete sentence.

If you remember that a subordinate clause usually begins with a connective that relates it to the main clause, you can guard against some types of fragments. For attributive clauses you can look for the relative pronouns "who," "which," and "that," and the relative adverbs "when," "where" and "why." For adverbial clauses you can look for the subordinating conjunctions "after," "although," "as if," "because," "before," "if," "since," "though," "unless," "when," "which" and "where." The example

below is a fragment.

After I learned the price of new cars. I decided to keep my old Lada.

A dependent statement cannot stand alone. It depends on another statement to complete the thought. "After I learned the price of new cars" is a dependent statement. It leaves us hanging. We expect to find out **what happened after** the writer learned the price of new cars in the same sentence. When a writer does not follow through and complete a thought, a fragment results. To correct the fragment, simply follow through and complete the thought:

After I learned the price of new cars, I decided to keep my old Lada.

Remember, then, that dependent statements by themselves are fragments. They must be attached to a statement that makes sense standing alone.

Fragment; If you have to drive on rocks and mud. You need a heavy-duty tire.

Revision; If you have to drive on rocks and mud, you need a heavy-duty tire.

Fragment; Bill asked for a loan. Which he promised to pay back in two weeks.

Revision; Bill asked for a loan which he promised to pay back in two weeks.

Another way of correcting a subordinate clause fragment is to eliminate the connective and rephrase the clause:

Fragment; After I learned the price of new cars. I decided to keep my old Lada.

Revision; I learned the price of new cars and decided to keep my old Lada.

Fragment; The man who talked for an hour not realizing everyone was bored.

Revision; The man who talked for an hour did not realize everyone was bored.

Or; The man talked for an hour, not realizing everyone was bored.

A verbal or prepositional phrase should not be used as a sentence.

If you carelessly write a verbal phrase or a prepositional phrase as a complete sentence, you may revise it by working the verbal or the prepositional phrase into the main clause or by restating the phrase to turn it into an independent clause with subject and predicate.

Fragment; I spent almost two hours on the phone yesterday.

Trying to find a garage to repair my car.

Revision; I spent almost two hours on the phone yesterday, trying to find a garage to repair my car.

Fragment; I plan on working overtime. To get this job finished. Otherwise, my boss may get angry at me.

Revision; I plan on working overtime to get this job finished. Otherwise, my boss may get angry at me.

Fragment; They plodded along the trail all day. Without a rest. Without stopping to eat what food they had.

Revision; Without a stop to rest or to eat what food they had, they plodded along the trail all day.

Or; They plodded along the trail all day without a stop to rest or to eat what food they had.

Fragment; He looked forward to the study period at school.
It being the only time he could sit unbothered and

dream about his future.

Revision; He looked forward to the study period at school.

It was the only time he could sit unbothered and dream about his future.

Any verbless or subjectless fragment of a sentence, whether you can classify it or not, should not be allowed to stand as a sentence.

1) A verbless or subjectless fragment can be corrected by adding a subject or verb accordingly; by attaching the fragment to the sentence that comes before it or the sentence that comes after it, whichever makes sense; or by rewriting the fragment entirely.

Fragment; He walked over to the library. And took out the history book he needed.

Revision; He walked over to the library and took out the history book he needed.

Fragment; Sam received all kinds of junk mail. Then complained to the post office. Eventually, some of the mail stopped.

Revision; Sam received all kinds of junk mail. Then he complained to the post office. Eventually, some of the mail stopped.

Fragment; Just a lazy weekend vacation. No work. No worries. — That's what he promised me.

Revision; Just a lazy weekend vacation with no work or worries — that's what he promised me.

Or; What he promised me was a pleasant weekend vacation, with no work and no worries.

2) Added-detail fragments also lack a subject and a verb. They often begin with one of the following words;

for example, also, except, such as, including, especially, namely

An added-detail fragment can be corrected in one of the three ways below:

1) Attach the fragment to the complete thought that precedes it.

Fragment; He took courses in the humanities. Such as French Literature and the Russian Novel.

Revision; He took courses in the humanities, such as French Literature and the Russian Novel.

2) Add a subject and a verb to the fragment to make it a complete sentence.

Fragment; The class often starts late. For example, yesterday at a quarter past nine instead of at nine sharp. Today the class started at five after nine.

Revision; The class often starts late. For example, yesterday it began at a quarter past nine instead of at nine sharp. Today it started at five after nine.

3) Change words as necessary to make the fragment part of the sentence.

Fragment; He failed a number of courses before he earned his degree. Among them, English, Economics and General Biology.

Revision; Among the courses he failed before he earned his degree were English, Economics and General Biology.

Legitimate Sentence Fragments

There are also nonconforming patterns in writing and speech