

大学英语写作

*WRITING
IN ENGLISH
FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS*

蒋津芝编著 湖北教育出版社



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前 言

《大学英语写作》是一本一般英语和科技英语综合的写作基础教材。全书分为两大部分，第一部分为一般写作，包括如何用英语写记叙文、说明文、论说文和书信等，考虑到学生初学英语写作，以练习写好文章段落为主。第二部分为一般科技写作，包括如何用英语写一般科普文字、简易科技论文及论文摘要，分别介绍各种文体的写作方法和特点。全书用英语编写，文字浅显易懂，举有许多写作范例，便于模仿。全书配有各种练习，附有常用短语及句型。

本书可供大专院校非英语专业大学生、研究生、一般科技工作者以及成人教学或自学之用。

本书在编写出版过程中得到武汉水利电力学院研究生部领导的热情关怀与支持。本书承武汉大学英语系潘耀琼教授审校。在武汉工作的加拿大籍教师 Elizabeth-Anne Malischewski 协助审稿。此外，还得到叶柏年、陈大雕、黄景洋和蒋欣同志的帮助。在此表示衷心的感谢。

由于编者水平有限，时间仓促，书中难免有缺点和错误，敬请批评指正。

编者

1986年4月

CONTENTS

I. IMPROVING SENTENCES	1
A. Improving sentences in meaning	1
B. Improving sentences in grammar.....	3
II. WRITING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS...	8
A. The meaning and organization of a paragraph	8
B. The writing of a summary	12
C. Unity and coherence	22
D. Movement from general to specific statements	26
III. NARRATIVE WRITING.....	30
A. The purpose for writing.....	30
B. Plan for a narrative paragraph.....	31
IV. EXPOSITORY WRITING	39
Methods of explanation	39
V. DESCRIPTIVE WRITING.....	56
A. The description of a person	56
B. The description of a thing.....	59
C. Describing by comparison and contrast	62
VI. ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING.....	75
A. Writing an argumentative paragraph ..	75
B. Expressing agreement and disagreement	77

VI. LETTER WRITING	87
A. Envelope form	87
B. One of the formal letter-forms	88
C. Letters of application	90
D. Letters of reference.....	97
E. Friendly letters	98
F. Résumé	100
G. Autobiographical paper.....	104
VII. TECHNICAL WRITING.....	106
A. Writing for the laypersons.....	106
B. Reports compared with general writing.....	110
C. Techniques of good technical descriptions	113
IX. WRITING THE ABSTRACT FOR A SCIENTIFIC PAPER.....	117
A. Types of abstracts.....	117
B. The contents of an abstract.....	118
X. LEARNING TO WRITE A SCIENTIFIC PAPER.....	123
A. Outline for a paper.....	123
B. The introduction to a paper.....	128
C. The body of a paper.....	131
D. The conclusion of a paper	134
BIBLIOGRAPHY	144

I

IMPROVING SENTENCES

A sentence is a group of meaningful words which expresses a sequence of complete thought. The sentence is the basic unit of writing. When you learn to write, you should learn how to write effective sentences first. Try to be alert to sentence-errors in order to write better sentences.

In writing effective sentences, we often have two problems: one is *meaning* and the other is *grammar*. So we must improve our sentences both in meaning and in grammar.

A. IMPROVING SENTENCES IN MEANING

In meaning we can improve sentences in three ways:

1. One way is to substitute more exact words for the words with general meaning.

For example:

John and Jack *ran*.

We can write:

John and Jack *were in a competition*.

or;

John and Jack *were in a race.*

or;

John and Jack *ran a race.*

These sentences suggest that they did not just run, but ran to see who was the best runner. They also suggest who was in the competition or race.

Substituting means replacing one word with another. You take out one word and you put in another word which is clearer and more precise.

2. Another way to make a sentence better is to eliminate unnecessary words.

Eliminating means taking the unnecessary words away and not putting anything back. When you write a sentence the first time you do not know some of words are not necessary in the sentence. When you reread your own writing, it suddenly seems that two or three words could say the same thing. It is enough to write it once. For example,

I shall meet you *at twelve o'clock noon.*

Twelve o'clock is noon, so you do not have to write it in two ways one after the other. We can write;

I shall meet you *at noon.*

or; I shall meet you *at twelve o'clock.*

So you eliminate the unnecessary words.

3. The third way of improving a sentence is by adding words.

We add words only if more information is needed to make a sentence meaningful.

For example,

John and Jack *had words*.

That is to say, 'John and Jack *had different opinion*'. So if you say, 'John and Jack *argued*', you have chosen a more exact word. If you say, 'John and Jack *argued because they did not agree with the arrangement*', that tells the reader not only they had different opinions, but why they had different opinions. Clearly, this means writing a much longer sentence.

Similarly, we may write:

Suzy has a garden.

or: *My elder sister, Suzy, has a garden.*

or: *Suzy has had a garden to work at.*

And we may have some other ways to improve a sentence in meaning. Here, we just learn some of them.

B. IMPROVING SENTENCES IN GRAMMAR

In grammar we can also improve sentences in three ways:

1. One way of improving sentence-grammar is by correcting the ungrammatical words.

Two of my sister's classmates cannot decide which profession to follow—*teachers, dentists, and lawyers.*

In this sentence *teachers, dentists, and lawyers* are people, not professions. So we must substitute *teaching, dentistry* and *law* for *teachers, dentists, and lawyers* respectively.

We can write:

Two of my sister's classmates cannot decide which profession to follow—*teaching, dentistry, or law.*

2. Another way to improve sentence-grammar is to eliminate repetition.

For example:

Where have you been at?

Would you like to know with what kind of people I associate with?

We should write,

Where have you been?

Would you like to know with what kind of people I associate?

3. The third way to improve is by adding words.

We add words because the omitted word or words are necessary grammatically.

For example:

I never have, and never will, understand the mechanism of a television set.

'I never have understand' is ungrammatical. So we must supply the necessary word, and write:

I never have understood, and never will understand the mechanism of a television set.

Similarly, we cannot write:

a. The blind boy needs someone to educate and care for him.

b. My English mark is always as high or higher than my French mark.

We should write:

a. The blind boy needs someone to educate him and care for him.

b. 1) My English mark is always as high as my French mark, or higher.

2) My English mark is always as high as or higher than my French mark.

EXERCISE 1

Clear away the excess.

1. Mrs. Floyd is a woman of about fifty years of age.
2. I am trying to find the career to which I am best suited for.
3. Vary your sentences in the ways in which you have studied in class.
4. The number of classrooms in the new high school will be double over that in the old building.
5. The reason yellow sodium vapor lights are being used on expressways is because they use less energy than white fluorescent lights.

EXERCISE 2

Improve the following sentences by adding words or by substituting a more accurate word or words for the italicized one.

1. Your friend *will* phone you.
2. *Two children* sat on the bench, crying.
3. There are *things* we are going to have to deal with in this decade.
4. Richard is a *bad* boy.
5. We must find out what steps are yet to be *done*.

EXERCISE 3

Decide what the writer was trying to say in each of the following sentences. Then choose precise words and express the writer's thought precisely:

1. Dad is going to analyze his baseball game and try to *improve* his defect.
2. My most serious problem is *good* handwriting.
3. Any defect in our appliances, *if reported* to the main office, will be greatly appreciated.
4. *December* 14 was a snowy, windy evening.
5. Try Our Cakes. None Like Them (Sign in a bakery window).

EXERCISE 4

Add the necessary word or words in each of the following sentences:

1. Jane says she has not and will not learn to play volleyball.
2. Samantha is as tall or taller than her mother.
3. I have never seen or spoken to him.
4. The speed of the new car is almost equal to the airplane.

II

WRITING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

In the chapter you are going to learn how to write paragraphs in English. First, it is necessary to understand the meaning and organization of a paragraph in English language.

A. THE MEANING AND ORGANIZATION OF A PARAGRAPH

1. How should we see a paragraph in English?

A paragraph is a group of sentences that develop an idea or thought together. It deals with one of many ideas developed in a composition and forms part of the whole composition.

For every piece of writing, there should be a short introduction to your subject. You have to think of what you want to write about. The best way is to start with a topic sentence, to make a statement and then to support it with details. Most paragraphs have three basic parts: a beginning, a body and an end. These three parts are often called

the introduction, the discussion and the conclusion. In the introduction, which may be simply the topic sentence, we should indicate what we talk about in the rest of a paragraph. In the discussion, we talk about the main idea stated in the introduction and present supporting details. In the conclusion we complete the discussion with a concluding sentence.

2 . What is a topic sentence?

A topic sentence is a brief statement of the topic or the subject of the paragraph. It expresses a main idea or theme which will govern the development of the paragraph. Every paragraph you write, whether it stands by itself or is a part of a large composition, should have its own topic sentence. The topic sentence gives your reader a general idea of what you want to say. Then you go on to develop and support your ideas with specific details, facts, and examples. A good, simple paragraph may have a concluding sentence which restates the main idea, only in a different way, and helps to tie the paragraph together.

Study the following paragraph. The first sentence in it introduced the subject- 'Autumn in Wuhan', and expressed the writer's view about the subject— 'Autumn is the nicest season of the year in Wuhan'. This statement was explained or developed through specific details. The writer concluded in the last

sentence the discussion and restated the theme set out at the beginning.

AUTUMN IN WUHAN

(*Topic sentence*) Autumn is the nicest season of the year in Wuhan. (*Discussion*) The weather in the autumn is very pleasant. The heat of the summer has retreated. The days are dry, a soft, gentle wind is blowing. School begins again, and we can meet our friends and study together. The winter freeze has not arrived. No snow! No cold! (*concluding sentence*) Indeed, everyone in this city enjoys autumn the most.

3 . How should we write a topic sentence?

When you write an expository or argumentative paragraph, it is often wise to start with a topic sentence, making clear what you are going to discuss. The main idea of a paragraph can be expressed in the first sentence and then used as a foundation on which to build the paragraph.

In a paragraph of narration or description the topic sentence is usually omitted. However, it is always possible to sum up a good paragraph in one sentence. A good topic sentence, like a good guide, gives accurate and complete information. There are three rules for writing a good topic sentence,

a. Do not choose too big an idea.

Bad — People often collect things. (too big)

Good — People often collect things, stamps, books
and records are fairly common.

Bad — My friend Steve is English. (much too wide)

Good — My friend Steve is not very mechanically
inclined.

b. Do not choose too small a subject.

Bad — My friend Steve weighs 16 stones. (too
narrow)

Good — My friend Steve is jolly, hardworking
and kind.

c. The topic sentence must state an opinion.

Bad — Mountain climbing is a good sport. (too
much to say, many reasons)

Good — Mountain climbing is a good sport because
it tests your bravery. (one reason for one
paragraph)

Bad — Compulsory education was an important
innovation in the 19th Century.

Good — Compulsory education was introduced in
the 19th Century to create a disciplined
work force. (one idea for one paragraph)

EXERCISE 5

Read the following passage and answer the ques-
tions.

WATER

A stream cuts both downward into its bed and sideways into its banks. As it cuts downward, the stream forms a deeper valley. The running water also cuts under the banks of the stream. This often causes the banks to fall into the stream, where they are broken up and carried away by the water. As the stream cuts sideways, it forms a wider valley. Many valleys have been formed by streams and rivers.

(from Jean N. Alley and Elaine B. Dohan)

LESSONS IN PARAGRAPHING)

1. Underline the topic sentence.
2. List two sentences in the paragraph that support the topic sentence.

B. THE WRITING OF A SUMMARY

A summary is a brief account giving the main points of a story. It is a passage boiled down so that the essence remains. The ability to get at the essence of a matter is an important skill. Summary-making helps to develop the ability to find and explain clearly the main idea of a paper or an article. Writing a summary is a way to start writing.

1. **Procedure for writing a summary**
 - a. Read the passage thoroughly to get the general