实用英语写作教程

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前　言

随着我国改革开放的进一步发展,国际交流日益频繁,用英文输出的信息量呈几何级数增长。这对我国英语学习者的英语写作能力提出了新的挑战。切实提高英语书面表达能力成为适应社会发展的迫切需要。

在"听、说、读、写"四项基本技能中,写作能力是应用性强、涵盖综合知识面宽、训练难度大的项目。本书就是为了提高广大英语学习者的写作能力而编写的写作教程。

《实用英语写作教程》是一本综合性英语写作教材。该教材以大学英语专业本科生为主要对象,结合学生学习实际,针对写作难点,侧重英语写作的实用性而编写的,旨在循序渐进地帮助学生掌握英语写作方法。

《实用英语写作教程》由两部分组成。第一部分为英语写作的基本要素,包括常见的标点符号和英语单词的使用规则、写作前的构思、写作中遣词造句与篇章组合等内容。第二部分为实用写作,介绍了英语中常见的各类文体的写作格式和要求,如电子邮件、便条、总结、科技描述、论文摘要、书评等等,并列举了大量范例供学生参考。

本教材是编者多年从事大学英语写作教学和英语写作理论研究的成果。如果能对提高读者的英语写作能力有所帮助,编者将深感欣慰。由于编者水平有限,书中难免有错误和疏漏之处,恳请各位专家和读者不吝赐教。

编者

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Part One

The Basics of English Writing

Lesson One
How to Organize Your Thoughts

For many writers, getting started is the most difficult part. You may feel as though your thoughts are jumbled and that you go through your day jumping from one thing to the next with no logical transition, even many professionals undergo the same experience. Though many people fall into this routine, you can get yourself out of it and bring your thoughts to order. Techniques like writing out your thoughts, trimming down the amount of information your mind has to handle, and being rested enough to process it all can help tremendously to think in a logically organized way.

I. Tracking Your Thoughts

→》 1. Make a Chart

This can take the form of a pie graph that depicts the percent of time or energy that you spend on different thoughts. You could also create a timeline of your thoughts. Graphing your thoughts gives you a visual representation of what is currently going on in your mind, and helps you create goals to think in a more organized way.

For example, you could break thoughts into categories like worrying, sad, happy, stressed, and content. Each time you have a thought, decide which category it goes in and mark it down. At the end of the day, you can put the numbers into a pie chart and see what

percentage of your day each type of thought took up.

—>> 2. Record All of Your Thoughts

Instead of just graphing thoughts, you can keep track of your thoughts in real time by recording them. Use a voice recorder and speak your thoughts out loud. Just be sure that you are alone while you discuss your thoughts on recording.

For example, if you are driving in the car and thinking, you could have voice recorder on that allows you to talk out loud. Then you have a record of all of the thoughts that you had in the car.

—>> 3. Write Out Your Thoughts

Finally, writing down your thoughts is a tried and true way to keep track of them. Keep a journal or notebook that is used only for your thoughts. Review it every day, week, or month to monitor how organized and logical your thoughts are becoming.

You can choose to journal every thought, or only journal about certain thoughts. For example, you might create a journal to track all of the thoughts you have about your vacation plans.

—>> 4. Prioritize Your Thoughts

Regardless of how solid your focus might be, distraction is always waiting right around the corner. When your mind is presented with a new stimulus, it creates a new thought. You have to decide whether that thought is worth entertaining right now, or if you should keep doing what you were doing before. These priorities are what make your thoughts follow logical progressions.

An example of prioritization might be ignoring the television while you are trying to work. Even though the thought of the TV is present, it doesn't take precedent over your work.

II. Clear Your Mind

➔》 1. Meditate

Meditating can reduce stress and anxiety. You typically have up to 80,000 thoughts flow through your mind daily. Depending on your stress level, or your personal behavioral and characteristic make-up, you could have much more than that. When you meditate, you can learn how to master your own internal dialogue by eliminating what is not important, and putting more energy and focus into organizing what is needed and important. That frees your mind up to focus on the thoughts that are really important. Meditation also gives your mind a break from the constant stimuli that fills our society. You only need to meditate for 15 – 20 minutes per day to see benefits.

You can choose to meditate at any time of day, but most people tend to do a meditation first thing in the morning or right before bed. Try different times and see what works for you.

➔》 2. Release Negativity

Develop a habit of incorporating positive affirmations into your daily life. Affirmations are positive words or statements that when incorporated into a daily meditative practice can help you to reprogram your internal dialogue. When you reframe your thoughts in this way, your mind becomes a more constructive mental environment and this allows you to focus on what is important to you rather than what is not important.

➔》 3. Go Exercise

Exercise primes your brain for positivity and focus. These are the prerequisites to having logically organized thoughts. Even if you don't enjoy the gym, you could still benefit greatly from a regular walk or run. As long as you get out and exercise, you'll start to feel your mind

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handling things more effectively.

—》 4. Talk to Someone

Having someone to bounce your ideas off is crucial. Even just speaking to another person can help you to see any fallacies in your logic and improve your thought process. The other person can also offer you feedback and help you to see any unorganized or unclear thought patterns.

For example, say you have a big presentation coming up at work. Instead of going in with a jumble of notes and slides, show the presentation to a co-worker first and get some feedback. This will help you order the presentation logically.

—》 5. Break Information into Chunks

Large blocks of information can be broken down into smaller chunks that are easier to remember. This process is called chunking and helps to speed up your mental processes because it organizes your stored memories into logical patterns. You can use the same process to break complex ideas down into more logical pieces.

An example of chunking information would be memorizing a bank routing number. The long number is broken into smaller, easier to remember groups of numbers.

—》 6. Declutter Your Dormitory and/or Classroom

Being in a cluttered environment can make your brain feel claustrophobic. Set yourself up for logical, organized thinking by cleaning up and clearing out the space around you. You can even turn it into fun event by having a friend or family member help you decide what to keep and where to put things.

III. Getting Enough Rest

→» 1. Go to Bed at a Reasonable Time

Your body, and mind, follows patterns known as circadian rhythms. If you keep a consistent, healthy schedule, it will help your brain function optimally. This is important for keeping your thoughts organized and logical throughout your waking hours. There are two suggestions:

(1) Meditate before bed to help promote restful sleep.

(2) Exercising throughout the day will help make you ready for bed earlier in the evening.

→» 2. Aim for Seven to Eight Hours of Sleep

Aside from going to bed early, you also need to sleep late enough. The optimum amount of sleep (for most people) is between seven and eight hours. Not only does this give your brain the energy needed to think logically, sleep also helps your brain to consolidate thoughts into logical, organized memories.

Avoid things like large meals, alcohol, and caffeine late in the evenings. These can keep your body stimulated and awake at bedtime.

→» 3. Keep Your Room Quiet

Avoid having a television or radio playing in your room. If noise from outside is an issue, try to use heavy blinds to dampen the sound. A quiet, dark room promotes a restful night of sleep.

(1) A fan or other sound constant sound can help to block noises from outside the room.

(2) A fan will also keep the room cooler, which can aid in getting restful sleep.

4. Limit the Activities You Do in Bed

The more things your brain associates with the bed, the harder it will be to calm down and go to sleep. Keep things like televisions, computers, cell phones, and other distractions out of the bedroom. You will wind down faster and sleep better.

5. Take Breaks Through the Day

To avoid exhaustion and brain fog, you need to let your mind rest through the day. Recommendations vary from 15 minutes per day of down time to 15 minutes per hour. Take the amount of time that you need to keep your thoughts organized, and you will see a boost in your work and personal life.

Lesson Two
How to Choose Words

The English language contains over a half million words — quite a selection for you as a writer to choose from. When composing any form of writing in the English language, choosing the right words can easily leave your work more vibrant and energetic. Thus, which choice is the best? How do I choose? Is the choice so important?

Word choice can make an enormous difference in the quality of your writing for at least one obvious reason: if you substitute an incorrect or vague word for the right one, you risk being misunderstood. Ages ago Confucius noted the same point: "If language is incorrect, then what is said is not meant. If what is said is not meant, when what ought to be done remains undone." It isn't enough that you know what you mean, you must transfer your thoughts onto paper in the proper words so that others clearly understand your ideas.

To help you avoid possible paralysis from indecision over word choice, the following part offers some practical suggestions for selecting words that are not only accurate and appropriate but also memorable and persuasive.

I. Selecting the Correct Words

➔⟫ 1. Accuracy

(1) Unless I get a bank loan soon, I will be forced to lead an *immortal* life.

(2) She had dieted for so long that she has become *emancipated*.

(3) The young man was completely in *ah* of the actress's beauty.

The above examples share a common problem: each one contains an error in word choice. In each sentence, the italicized word is incorrect, causing the sentence to be nonsensical or silly. To avoid such confusion on word choice, check your words for accuracy. Select words whose precise meanings, usage, and spelling you know; consult your dictionary for any words whose definitions (or spellings) are fuzzy to you.

Here is a list of words that are often confused in writing. Use your dictionary to determine the meanings or usage of any word unfamiliar to you.

lead/led	choose/chose	to/two/too	cite/sight/site
affect/effect	council/counsel	there/their/they're	complement/compliment
who's/whose	precede/proceed	insure/ensure	farther/further
lay/lie	than/then	illusion/allusion	stationary/stationery
capitol/capital	principal/principle	accept/except	

—》 2. Preciseness

A precise word is fresh, clear, energetic, fair, and respectful. In general, precise words are the simplest ones you can use to get your meaning across.

Here are some suggestions for precise words:

(1) Replace or clarify general words. Balance general words with concrete, precise terms. Choose specific nouns and vivid verbs.

(2) Rewrite unprofessional expressions. Slang terms and cliches weaken your writing's authority, clarity and energy.

(3) Eliminate wordiness. Concise writing involves cutting unneeded words, irrelevant information and obvious statements.

Following are some examples of wordy versus concise words:

Table 1 – 1

Wordy	Concise	Wordy	Concise
advance forward	advance	at an early date	soon
a majority of	most	at the present time	now
ask the question	ask	both together	together
despite the fact	although	due to the fact that	because

→》 3. Accuracy：Idiomatic Phrases

Occasionally, you may have an essay returned to you with words marked "awkward diction" or "idiom". In English, as in all languages, we have word groupings that seem governed by no particular logic except the ever-popular "that's—the—way—we—say—it" rule. Many of these idiomatic expressions involve prepositions that novice writers sometimes confuse or misuse. Some common idiomatic errors and their corrected forms are listed below.

regardless to of	different than to from	relate with to
insight of into	must of have known	capable to of
similar with to	superior than to	aptitude toward for
comply to with	to in my opinion	prior than to
off of	meet to her standards	should of have

To avoid idiomatic errors, consult your dictionary and read your essay aloud; often your ears will catch mistakes in usage that your eyes have overlooked.

→》 4. Levels of Language

In addition to choosing the correct word, you should select words whose status is suited to your purpose. For convenience here, language has been classified into three categories, or levels, of usage：(1) colloquial, (2) informal, and (3) formal.