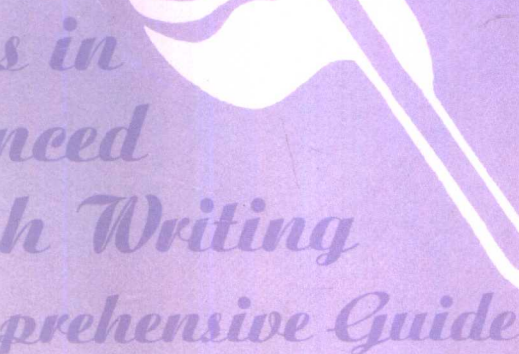


SUCCESS IN ADVANCED ENGLISH WRITING

A Comprehensive Guide

高级英语写作指南

Shouhua Qi 祁寿华 [旅美]



*Success in
Advanced
English Writing
A Comprehensive Guide*

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电子邮箱: bookinfo@sflap.com.cn

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Preface

One of the oddest things about writing a book, so I have discovered, is that you write the first thing in a book — the preface — the last. But I have been looking forward to it all these months while working on the other chapters. The actual writing of the preface not only signifies the near completion of a big challenging project, but also gives me an opportunity to introduce it to you personally.

Though I started to work on this book just a few days before Christmas 1997, my story with English began back in my elementary school years. In the early summer of 1966, after going through a battery of exams, I (a third-grader then) failed to make it to the prestigious Nanjing Foreign Languages School. Even today I do not know why. Perhaps I did not show any sign of linguistic talent; perhaps skinny as I was then, I did not look like a kid who had the promise of one day blossoming into a handsome diplomat representing the People's Republic of China in the midst of foreign dignitaries; or perhaps the school somehow sensed that my father, the principal of a high school, would soon be labeled a "capitalist-roader," be locked up in a dark little room in the back of

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the school yard, and would not be “liberated” until several years later. During my high school days, English was the least favorite subject of mine. All I can remember today is one slogan (though my young and pretty English teachers drilled us hard enough): “Power grows out of the gun barrel.” Yet, to my own amazement, when I went to college in that historical year of 1977, I was to major in English, out of all the exciting possibilities. From then on, however, my little story with English can be characterized as — well, “lived happily ever after.” I must confess, though, that I have since felt tempted — now and then — by the siren songs of other more lucrative professions. But I have resisted the temptations and remained faithful.

I feel fortunate that I have had some of the best teachers while learning English. However, at the more advanced stages of my learning, and during the years I was teaching English in colleges in China, I felt keenly the absence of one important tool: a good advanced composition book written specifically for Chinese learners of English. Handbooks by American or British scholars, while useful in their own ways, were not designed to meet the special needs of Chinese learners. I sometimes wonder — even today — how I learnt to write without the benefit of a good advanced English composition textbook, which was grounded in sound theory and pedagogy and designed to meet the needs of learners like me.

One morning some months ago, while brushing my teeth, I looked in the mirror: I saw someone who had spent a big part of his life being a student (both in China and the United States); who had taught college-level writing courses (to both native and non-native speakers

of English) for many years; who had had extensive course work in composition theory and pedagogy; and who had written and published quite a bit in English, too (both fictional and non-fictional). Something hit me then, even before I finished washing up: Am I destined to do something about the gap? The fruit of that morning's sudden whim (plus some exaggerated sense of mission) is *Success in Advanced English Writing: A Comprehensive Guide*, presented to you now in its modest entirety.

Guiding Principles and Organization

Success in Advanced English Writing: A Comprehensive Guide is grounded in the following basic theoretical and pedagogical understandings:

- Writing is not a mere skill, but a complex intellectual and social process; it is a powerful tool for thinking, learning, discovering, and communicating.
- Writing is a fundamental method of inquiry, analysis, and problem solving; as such, it involves a variety of modes of inquiry: critical reading, critical thinking, researching, synthesizing, and drawing viable conclusions;
- Good writing involves consciously engaging in the whole writing process, from invention, planning and drafting, to revision, editing and proofreading, with a keen awareness of the dynamic interaction between and among subject, audience, and purpose in the rhetorical situation.

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In accordance with these guiding principles, the book is organized into seven parts. Part I, "Warming Up," serves as an introduction to the whole book. It tries to establish the conceptual basis of the book by discussing the following topics: the importance of writing; the criteria of good writing; writing as a social act, and writing as a dynamic process.

Part II, "Strategies for Inventing, Reading, Thinking, and Researching" has a chapter on inventing, critical reading, critical thinking, and researching, respectively. These chapters offer strategies you can employ to engage in the dynamic process of writing more consciously, methodically, and productively.

From Part III to Part VI, the book discusses strategies for various writing situations: Part III focusing on descriptive and narrative writings; Part IV on informative and explanatory writings; Part V on persuasive and argumentative writings; and Part VI on other writing situations. Each chapter begins with a general discussion, proceeds to sample writings, explanation on key features, which then are followed by step-by-step instructions for the whole writing process: invention, planning and drafting, revision, and editing and proofreading.

Part VII, "Strategies for Revision and Editing," has five chapters. The first two on essay development and essay organization, respectively, are designed to assist in macro-revision; the next two chapters on sentence development and word choice are to assist in micro-revision; and the last chapter on punctuation and mechanics is to assist in editing and proofreading, the last stage in the whole writing process.



Noticeable Features

- *Readings*: The book claims a collection of some 40 sample essays, which are evenly distributed from Chapter 4 to Chapter 17. These sample essays cover a whole range of topics and are written in different styles. In addition to serving as models, they are provided to help you generate ideas for critical thinking, discussion, and writing.
- *Examples and Exercise*: Exercises are abundant throughout the book, particularly from chapters 1 – 6 and 21 – 24. These exercises give you ample opportunities to reflect upon the readings and to practice what you have just learnt so as to link conceptual understanding with practical application. Numerous examples are also provided to help illustrate the concepts and ideas being discussed.
- *Key Features*: The key features of each kind of writing are discussed and summarized in Chapters 7–20 — for your convenience — with reference to sample writings collected in the book.
- *Writing Assignments*: The “It’s Your Turn to Write” section in Chapters 7–17 suggests many writing topics — gleaned from the exciting social, economic, and cultural life of present-day China — and offers a step-by-step guidance through the whole writing process.
- *Two Books in One*: This book can be used both as a *text-book* and as a *handbook*: you get two in one. As a text-book, it can be used in an advanced college English writing course for systematic instruction, or by anyone who is interested in improving his or her abilities to communicate in written English. Because of its comprehensive coverage and abundant materials, this book can also serve as a



source or reference book.

- *Chinese Characteristics*: From conceptual discussions, examples and exercises, topics suggested for writing, to writing assignments with step-by-step instructions, this book is written to meet the specific needs of Chinese learners of English.

To The Professor

Suggested Course Plans

With the comprehensive coverage and abundance of materials provided, *Success in Advanced Composition* can easily be used as the sole or main textbook for a single-semester or a two-semester advanced English writing course. (A semester long writing course is assumed to be a 3-credit course, which meets 3 hours per week and lasts about 18 weeks.) I suggest that such a, for both a single-semester and a two-semester plan, should be organized from the more personal and reflective (descriptive and narrative) writings to the more public and transactional (informative/explanatory, persuasive/argumentative) writings. You should be flexible, though, and adjust the amount of work, speed, breadth, and depth of the course according to the proficiency levels and the needs of your students as well as your own preferences.

Single-Semester Plan

Week 1	General Introduction: Chpts. 1–3
Week 2	Project 1: Describing Events or People (Chpts. 7 or 8)
Week 3	Project 1: (continued), Describing (a section in Chpt. 21; optional)

- Week 4 Project 2: Writing Profiles (Chpt. 9), Field Research (a section in Chpt. 6)
- Week 5 Project 2: (continued), Narrating (a section in Chpt. 21; optional)
- Week 6 Project 3: Writing to Inform or Explain *How* (Chpt. 10 or Chpt. 11)
- Week 7 Project 3: (continued), Classifying (a section in Chpt. 21; optional)
- Week 8 Project 4: Writing to Explain *What* (Chpt. 12), Defining and Exemplifying (sections in Chpt. 21; optional)
- Week 9 Project 4: (continued), Library Research (a section in Chpt. 6)
- Week 10 Project 5: Writing to Argue (Chpt. 13)
- Week 11 Project 5: (continued), Critical reading (Chpt. 4)
- Week 12 Project 5: (continued), Critical Thinking (Chpt. 5)
- Week 13 Project 6: Writing to Propose or Analyze or Evaluate (Chpt. 14, or 15, or 16)
- Week 14 Project 6: (continued), Comparing and Contrasting (sections in Chpt. 21; optional)
- Week 15 Project 6: (continued), Essay Organization (Chpt. 22)
- Week 16 Project 7: Writing Research Papers (Chpt. 17), Using and Acknowledging Sources (a section in Chpt. 6)
- Week 17 Project 7: (continued), Sentence Development (Chpt. 23)
- Week 18 Project 7: (continued), Word Choice (Chpt. 24)

Two-Semester Plan

First Semester

- Week 1 General Introduction (Chpts. 1–2)
- Week 2 Invention and Planning (Chpt. 3)
- Week 3 Project 1: Describing Events (Chpt. 7)
- Week 4 Project 1: (continued), Narrating (a section in Chpt. 21)
- Week 5 Project 2: Describing People (Chpt. 8)
- Week 6 Project 2: (continued), Describing (a section in Chpt. 21)
- Week 7 Project 3: Writing Profiles (Chpt. 9)
- Week 8 Project 3: (continued), Field Research (a section in Chpt. 6)
- Week 9 Project 4: Writing to Inform (Chpt. 10)
- Week 10 Project 4: (continued), Classifying (a section in Chpt. 21)
- Week 11 Project 5: Writing to Explain *How* (Chpt. 11)
- Week 12 Project 5: (continued), Exemplifying (a section in Chpt. 2)
- Week 13 Project 6: Writing to Explain *What* (Chpt. 12)
- Week 14 Project 6: (continued), Library Research (a section in Chpt. 6)
- Week 15 Project 6: (continued), Using and Acknowledging Sources (sections in Chpt. 6)
- Week 16 Project 6: (continued), Defining (a section in Chpt. 21)
- Week 17 Taking Essay Exams (Chpt. 18)
- Week 18 Wrap-up

Second Semester

- Week 1 Project 1: Writing to Argue (Chpt. 13)
- Week 2 Project 1: (continued), Critical reading (Chpt. 4)

- Week 3 Project 1: (continued), Inductive Reasoning (a section in Chpt. 5)
- Week 4 Project 2: Writing to Propose (Chpt. 14)
- Week 5 Project 2: (continued), Comparing and Contrasting (a section in Chpt. 21)
- Week 6 Project 2: (continued), Deductive Reasoning (a section in Chpt. 5)
- Week 7 Project 3: Writing to Analyze (Chpt. 15)
- Week 8 Project 3: (continued), Analyzing (a section in Chpt. 21)
- Week 9 Project 3: (continued), Fallacies (a section in Chpt. 5)
- Week 10 Project 4: Writing to Evaluate (Chpt. 16)
- Week 11 Project 4: (continued), Essay Organization (Chpt. 22)
- Week 12 Project 4: (continued), Developing Mature Sentences (a section in Chpt. 23)
- Week 13 Project 5: Writing Research Papers (Chpt. 17)
- Week 14 Project 5: (continued), Avoiding Sentence Errors (a section in Chpt. 23)
- Week 15 Project 5: (continued), Sentence Development (Chpt. 23)
- Week 16 Writing for Business Purpose (Chpt. 19), Levels of Diction (a section in Chpt. 24)
- Week 17 Writing for Application Purpose (Chpt. 20), Figures of Speech (a section in Chpt. 24)
- Week 18 Wrap-up

Suggested Teaching Methods

Whether you are new to the trade or a veteran in the classroom, you certainly have your own teaching philosophies and preferred teaching methods. The following tips may or may not work for you. The most important thing is to find an ap-

proach that works the best for you and can produce the most learning in the classroom.

The First Few Days

The first day of the class is very important. This is the time for you to set the tone and the standard for the rest of the semester. If it fits your own style and comfort level, you may want to establish a relaxed, fun (if possible) but professional environment in the classroom where you and the students can work together to ensure the maximal amount of learning. After (or before) a brief introduction of the course (including the requirements, expectations, and policies), you can have students work in pairs or small groups, interviewing each other and then introducing each other to the class. If it is impossible to do any writing in class on the first day, at least give students a writing assignment as homework to get them started. When the class meets the second day, be sure to collect the work and credit the students for the *quality* of their work. With the right tone and standard set, you are on your way to a successful semester.

Teacher as Facilitator

As a teacher in the writing classroom, your role is not only to guide students in the writing process by offering them directions and strategies, but also to find ways to establish an intellectually stimulating environment in which students actively seek learning on their own. You can do so by engaging them in intellectually provocative or imaginatively challenging issues taken from the social, economic, cultural, and technological life of present-day China. In this new role as both teacher and facilitator, you will encourage students to search for their own voice in expressing themselves — in

English — about issues they care about, both in class discussions and in writing assignments. Practically, it means that you will not lecture all the way through a class, that you will encourage students to participate in learning by speaking up and expressing their views in class, and that you are not the final authority on everything under discussion. Are you ready to play this more challenging role? You will find out soon that *Success in Advanced Writing* is designed to make it possible for you to succeed in this new role.

Collaborative Work

One way to fulfill your role as a facilitator of learning is to give frequent group assignments for students to do either in or outside of class. You can have students form small groups (about three students per group) to share their writings (by giving feedback to each other) and to perform other small group assignments (writing a report on a reading, doing a class presentation, or carrying out field or library research). Such group activities should be organized earlier in the semester to set the right tone and be evaluated, credited, and counted toward the course grade. Research shows that writing is a social as well as intellectual act and that writing is best learnt in a social setting. Evaluation and Grading

You may have established your own system of evaluating and grading students' writings. However, you may also find the following suggestions useful and want to give them a try. They are based on the assumption that evaluations and grades are meant not only to award or penalize, but more importantly, to lead to motivated efforts to improve and to learn more.

- Response should be given throughout the writing pro-

cess, from invention, planning, drafting, revision, to editing and proofreading.

- Response should be given in consideration of the rhetorical context of the writing assignment and/or the student's writing: its subject, intended audience, and purpose.
- Response at earlier stages of the writing process should focus on more important issues (treatment of subject, research, organization, and so forth); response on grammar, usage, and mechanics should be reserved to the time for editing and proofreading.
- *Response should be selective, focusing on one or two major areas instead of overwhelming and hence discouraging students with too much advice or "negative" comments.*
- *Learn to praise the good points and to give clear suggestions for productive revision.*
- *Grading should be based on clear criteria (depth, insight, organization, readability, and correctness in grammar and usage — in order of decreasing importance) and should be accompanied with a brief but clear evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for improvement.*

Journal Assignments

Journal writing gives students more opportunities to practice writing in different ways. In addition, journal entries could provide useful material to be incorporated into more formal writings. You can assign journal writing activities for both in and outside of class. You can ask students to freewrite or brainstorm on a topic; to summarize and comment on a reading assignment; to respond to questions; and to reflect on their own reading and writing experiences. To motivate stu-

dents in journal writing, you should collect journal entries (regularly or occasionally), credit students for the quality of their work, and make sure that the credit counts toward the course grade.

To the Student and Other Users of the Book

If you are a college student taking an advanced English writing course, you should bear in mind the following:

- 1) There are no such things as ready, sure-fire formulas that a book or a professor can offer you, which you can apply without fail in all writing situations.
- 2) However, you can learn from this book and your professor many writing strategies that have proved useful and effective and that you can experiment with in different writing situations.
- 3) Learning happens the most when you, the student, play an active role in the whole learning process.

To the so-called self-taught learner of English or anyone who wants to improve his or her English writing abilities, I'd like to give the following additional advice:

- 1) You can follow the single-semester or the two-semester plan outlined above; thus, you will have a clear structure and a sense of direction while using the book.
- 2) You can also choose to use certain parts or chapters that cover topics and areas you are particularly interested in.
- 3) In either case, you should seek informed feedback (from

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professors of English, native-speakers, and so forth) on your work so you know whether you are “on the right track.”

If you — whether you are a professor, a student, or a self-taught learner — have any comments and suggestions about *Success in Advanced English Writing*, please send them to me via the publisher and I will consider them seriously when the time comes to revise the book for a later edition.

I'd like to conclude this part of the preface by saying “Welcome aboard!” to you and by presenting you a new motto: “Power grows out of language!” (created by giving a twist to a slogan cited earlier). I sincerely hope that this book will empower you in the way it is intended.

Acknowledgments

My experience in writing *Success in Advanced English Writing: A Comprehensive Guide* has convinced me more than ever that writing is a dynamic social as well as intellectual process. All the teachers I have had (ever since my elementary school days), the courses I took in composition theory and pedagogy, and even the many textbooks I have used in teaching college-level writing courses (the extent of my debt to these courses and textbooks is only partially reflected in the “Works Cited and Consulted” list at the end of this book), have influenced me to varying degrees. However, I am particularly indebted to the following friends and colleagues who have contributed to this book in many different ways.

The enthusiasm of longtime friends Dr. Guohua Chen of Beijing Foreign Languages University and Mr. Shirong Chen