

**THE**  
**ESSENTIALS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR**

(for Chinese students)

by

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基本英文文法  
The Essentials of English  
Grammar  
for Chinese Students

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TO MY PARENTS

## 本書編輯主旨

英文文法原多枯燥無味，學者只知大量吞嚥，而未能選擇，更不能消化。殊不知英文讀本與英文文法如不能融匯貫通，學者雖廣讀熟背文法規律，終亦不克獲得應有之基本學識。惟將應用之字句與常識編入任何讀本或故事內，誠非易事，但編入文法習題內，則輕而易舉；且學者亦可因此而知英文與文法，乃有關係之科目。

本書以本國學生為主體，專為準備入大學（或為高三及大學一年級上期溫習課本）之用，僅以基本文法之原理為準則，由淺入深。習題辭句，則扼要而不相雷同，冀以引起學生之興趣。其內容將 Thorndike 氏四千字（教部規定中學生必讀）Subfreshmen Vocabulary From Michael West, Definition Vocabulary（金陵大學採用）及普通應用之成語或本國學生應習之英文字句，並參以“Good manners”之精義，編為教材，以求達到實際應用之主旨，而無囫圇吞棗之弊。

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# NOTES FOR STUDENTS

## Purpose:

Sixteen years of pleasant and inspiring work and fellowship with my faithful students and their earnest requests for my notes have made me write this little book on the "Essentials of English Grammar." It is my fervent hope that all my fellow students will use this as their notebook to review constantly the parts of grammar studied, and thus maintain our partnership throughout our years of further study or work with other groups of English students; that my research will extend to wider circles of eager and hard-working Chinese students who are seeking for a book on essentials of English grammar and the necessary vocabularies in preparing for college; that I may lay my notes open to all my students and sympathetic co-workers to solicit their sincere coöperation in making my experiment on "Essentials of English Grammar" truly practical and fruitful, either freely cutting off the old and lifeless branches or effectively grafting in new and better ones.

For us English is a foreign language, not only its words and expressions, but also its thought reflecting the social and local colors of life; therefore in studying English we should assume the attitude and spirit of little children beginning to learn—active, inquisitive, and solicitous about whatever we cannot understand or not do ourselves. So a Chinese student begins to study English. He has to start right from the very beginning, listening attentively to every

expression of his teacher, imitating him closely, and whenever there is a chance for him to practise what he has learned he does it, even if people ridicule the blunders he makes. Like a baby learning to walk, the more he stumbles, the greater progress will he gain in walking.

In the process of language learning, the four primary skills—hearing, understanding, thinking or recollecting and talking,—should come before the three secondary skills—reading, writing and speaking. The success of the latter is wholly dependent upon the former; therefore a student whose mother tongue is other than English must start to learn English by hearing; he makes use of all sorts of chances to hear English, in class, through radio, from plays or addresses etc; he never wastes his time in mentally interpreting English into Chinese and then Chinese into English again; in his mind he has only words or the pictures of the objects or the ideas they represent. There is no intervention of Chinese to block the direct and quick path of learning English. In short, he understands and recollects in terms of English only.

As the student listens to correct speaking, he follows it in his mind. Whenever he comes across any word or phrase he has mispronounced or misused, he checks it and jots it down in a separate notebook to be repeated accurately and persistently many times until a stronger bond is formed to counteract the former incorrect bond.

One may understand English perfectly well, but this does not mean he can speak English equally well. In fact, if he never practises speaking or fails to have enough practice, he is bound to find it very unnatural to express his thoughts when he is called upon to deliver them verbally.

Speaking English does not come from listening, reading, and writing English; it comes from actually speaking it; certainly the former will help it, but they cannot take its place in the process of learning. In order to widen the field in learning to speak, students should have plenty of practice both in class and outside the class. Every ten or fifteen minutes or after each paragraph or even after the whole story, the student had better lift up his head and reproduce what he has read in his own words. When he does not know how to express himself, he refers to the book. If possible, he talks aloud so as to hear his own enunciation of different words and at the same time to exercise his vocal organs.

Memory work is a great aid to facilitate speaking correctly, but begin with only simple and practical passages, and be definitely sure of correct pronunciation and the tone of expression before memorizing, for when a habit is formed, it is hard to break. Always thoroughly understand the meaning and relation of facts in the passage memorized; never force yourself to remember the order of words artificially. In reading the passage over a number of times, the words will naturally and easily flow out in their right order. Memory work is not a drudgery; it is an enjoyment and a recreation. It is the best, the quickest, and the easiest way to learn to speak. Any standard book on conversation will be helpful for hearing and speaking. Students may mutually help each other by alternately reading questions from a book and afterwards comparing the answers with the book or vice versa, by giving out answers for the right questions. Professor Kennard's "Thinking in English," Books I and II, may be used for such drill. Try to make all the answers



and questions complete unless the omission of words is clearly understood.

Like all other skills, reading comes from practice gradually but surely. Studying a daily assignment, understanding its meaning and looking up all the new words in the dictionary do not insure reading skill. It makes reading easier, but it does not and cannot produce skill, for reading skill comes only from reading itself. Velocity or the speed of reading is directly proportional to the frequency or the number of times a passage is read. Skill in reading is both intellectual and visual. A student ought not to read individual words one after another; he had better read groups of words together, sensing their meaning and relationship. Reading is not photographing; if it is a picture at all, it is a moving picture meaningful, consecutive, and living; it glides along naturally, and rapidly. Visual organs are to be so trained that all their movements are automatically faster and faster as skill is developed through practice into habits. Students may use a looking-glass to test out the rapidity of the motion of their eyes. They like hands and feet, can be drilled for speed. Students, therefore, must read widely; besides textbooks, they must have plenty of outside reading, easy and simple kinds to begin with. Gradually they choose harder and harder books to read, but it will be never too easy nor too hard for them to understand. Their purpose to have outside reading is not merely to know facts or stories; they read in order to get more English knowledge. The first time they should quickly glance through the whole book for acquaintance only; the second time they read more in detail to obtain familiarity, and the third time they read it for mastery. Thus, they live and breathe with the story.

Its words and ways of expression become their own. Gradually and very naturally the reading grows easier for them and the context helps to throw light upon the understanding of the new words and new expressions in the book. The more times they read the story, the less need they have for a dictionary. The best way to choose a book is to get advice from the teacher, or the student may decide on one for himself by reading a few pages; if a page requires one fifth of his time spent for the reading of that page to look up words in a dictionary or stop to analyze the difficult passages, the book is decidedly too hard for him, and he had better change it for an easier one; but if a page has no new word and the construction of the sentences are too simple and monotonously too tiresome to ensure him any progress in English, the book is definitely too easy, and he had better change it for a harder one. In short, every book he chooses ought to guide him a step further in his English studying adventure.

He welcomes and smiles at all necessary hardships; he carefully checks all difficult passages, cheerfully and triumphantly overcomes them for growth. From the words and phrases learned or looked up, he chooses a list of practical ones and makes notes of them; every day he carefully picks out a certain number of new words and idiomatic expressions from any English materials he comes into contact with; he never allows himself to cram his mind with individual words in a dictionary form, but he recollects them in direct relation to their source. Studying vocabulary is not memorizing each mile-stone on the roadside but recognizing or recalling the beautiful scenery or familiar incidents encountered on the way. It is not a hideous task; it is a real pleasure trip and a happy occasion of home-coming. A pocket notebook or

loose-leaf cards of pocket size with vocabulary and idioms are his always ready companions in his leisure; even a few minutes at a stretch in a waiting-room or at any intermission are worth while, for he is well aware that the permanency of one's memory of any vocabulary depends upon the number of times it is studied and reviewed and an allocation of long periods simply to study vocabulary or idioms will call forth inevitable headache and indigestion. To reinforce stability and practicability of any vocabulary or idioms, he needs to watch very keenly the uses of the same words and idioms in other writings, and try to use them a number of times. He never studies more vocabulary and idioms than his power of memory allows.

Writing and speaking are dependent upon each other. If a student speaks correctly, he can naturally write correctly; but in writing he has more time to think, organize and correct his sentences properly. Correct writing is a strong pedestal of effective speaking; without it, speaking is apt to be wordy and crude; on the other hand, writing without speaking is rightly likened to a would-be-swimmer acquiring his skill only on the shore; the minute he plunges into the pool, he is hopelessly lost because he is too excited to make any adjustment. So suffers a student whose writing and speaking are unbalanced.

The acid test of successful reading is the ability to reproduce it in the reader's own words; full concentration is required to make out a general outline of the main points of the reading; then proceed to write them freely; read over the writing a few times. Every time chop off unnecessary elements and make the whole piece grammatically sound. Remember every sentence must have a subject and a pred-

icate, expressed or understood. After an authoritative checking, rewrite and study it until the right habits are formed. Improvement thus gained is true, gradual and deeply grounded.

For anything he experiences, he tries all ways and means to learn its English expression: he listens to different talks, reads books and papers on various subjects, and even recites them aloud to himself; so his daily and constant association and drills with facts will support his knowledge of English. In short, he studies English for his own use, not for grades nor for decoration; he treads along on sure ground and grows steadily from the bottom up.

Know your teachers. They are not unnatural people with wide knowledge, unable to understand their students and never sympathetic as most of the students think. But really they are all very human, quite generous, and exceedingly sympathetic, always ready and eager to help every single one of their students! Thoughtful questions and questions arising from faithful study are very encouraging and comforting to teachers; no matter how busy they are, they will most willingly find time to help their students, but on the other hand thoughtless questions and questions resulting from laziness and habits of indifference, dependence, and noncooperation will be exceedingly annoying and boring. They will be overlooked and rejected completely.

# A DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS.

## Purpose:

In sixteen years of teaching I have experienced a growing desire to talk or compare notes with my colleagues and other English teachers in seeking a right way to instruct and guide our students. We may not find the way all at once, but we can at least get on the right track and gradually reach our goal.

Constant requests and inspiration from many of my friends and students have encouraged me to write this little book on *The Essentials of English Grammar*. The purpose of this manuscript is to help the students to have a firm and essential groundwork for all careful and intelligent study of English language. Any suggestion and advice will be most welcome and deeply appreciated.

## Materials:

Most of the materials have grown out of my daily work in the classroom. The book is arranged in such a way and with the hope that students studying a language other than their own mother tongue may have an easy and clear comprehension of the basic facts about building good sentences and forming habits of correct speaking and writing.

To meet this need, confusing rules, grammatical puzzles and minor exceptions are all omitted. But the indispensable

principles vital to the positive and creative work of our students are simplified and clarified at the outset, so as to give them a shortcut. Exercises will give them opportunity to concentrate their minds on the minimum essentials. For the high school graduates privileged or not to enter college or for senior high school third year students, or even the first term in college, this book will serve as a general review either with teachers or alone.

It is almost impossible to grade the lessons according to their importance and readiness of the students. Though I have arbitrarily arranged them in chapters, it does not mean that this order has to be strictly followed. Sections may be omitted or added as needs require; however the chapters on Articles, Direct and Indirect Discourse, Capital Letters and Punctuation and A Few points on Good Form in Writing, though placed at the end, had better be referred to from time to time as occasion and the needs of the students arise. The chapter on Letter Writing is put there for reference when necessity demands. A high school graduate ought to be able to write letters; besides it is a helpful and interesting practice for any language student.

The acquired vocabulary of Professor Thorndike's List of 4,000 words, accepted by our Ministry of Education as a minimum requirement of our high school graduates, together with the Subfreshmen Vocabulary from Michael West's Definition Vocabulary are woven into the exercises to humanize our materials and uses of grammar. Common words, idiomatic expressions, and valuable proverbs foreign to our Chinese students are carefully chosen for them.

Procedure:

Rules are rarely applied as pure rules, but they are introduced to the class one or a few at a time as their good friends and aids—simple, interesting and living as stories. They may be given at the start of every new lesson or as the need springs up from the exercises. A thorough, persistent and cooperative teacher will never find grammar uninteresting and unproductive.

Before any exercise is done in writing, it is better to go over it orally with the class several times with necessary explanations to establish acceptable language habits. Mental drill is the best shortcut to the mastery of any language, and in order to produce habits of mind or the command of language, a student must try to express his own thoughts and not merely avoid mistakes in form. Knowledge associated with environment and thought will reinforce habits. Since students are apt to listen to words rather than for sense, a good teacher of English is likened to a good teacher of music in that he tries to get his students away from separate notes at the earliest possible moment and to direct their attention to a meaningful phrase, a sentence or even a whole category.

Provide equal and ample chances in class for each student to practice freely hearing, speaking and sometimes writing. A competent teacher never uses hit-and-miss methods; he looks to his class for sources of information; he talks very little, but supervises a great deal. He never allows a cut-and-dried program to intervene between himself and the immediate requirements of his students. He is not a time-serving pieceworker, nor a mere listener, nor a recorder of grades only. He keenly discriminates what is truly essential for students, what is approved usage, or what

is trivial and plainly academic. He observes sharply and records carefully the individual difficulties of his students and clears them up as they come along through personal or group conferences—grouping students according to the principles they violate; thereupon he is able to teach the principles in direct relation to students' own usage.

For general or class-wide mistakes, a good teacher will pay immediate attention by writing and correcting them on the board with his students or in any other way possible, so that errors once made will never be made again.

The teacher may give out to different students different words or phrases which students are apt to make mistakes in the use of; ask them to make sentences and write them on slips of paper. As they are finished, the teacher or one or two students should copy the sentences on the board. When these are done, the whole class should start together to correct the sentences. As they are corrected on the board, the students likewise should copy the corrections intelligibly in their own notebooks. Or, ask several students to tell a story orally; each student says a few sentences. As they are telling the story, the teacher or a student should write quickly on the board; then the whole class and the teacher correct the sentences together by simply using the signs to indicate mistakes made; as "T" for mistake in tense and "Agr" for mistakes in agreements etc. After this is done, the teacher should call on different students to read the sentences aloud in the correct way. A few minutes of careful practice will help to fix indelibly in the minds of students the correct usage of grammar, thus laying great emphasis on the prevention of common errors. Thus he is a teacher in the real sense of the word.



Keep every one in the class alert and responsive to what is going on in the class by asking students other than the one reciting what mistakes the latter makes and how to correct them; by requiring the students to repeat or summarize what the teacher instructs; by refusing to answer the same question twice unless they do not understand the answer. In the beginning of the class period devote a few minutes to review what was learned the previous day; then give out a definite assignment for the next recitation; always reserve some minutes for the students to ask questions and near the close of the class period, ask students to condense what they have learned that day either verbally or on the board in outline form; so leaving the classroom, the students will feel certain that they have a new enterprise in knowledge. As for lazy students and those who are absent for no better reason than playing truant, check them right at the start by definitely pointing out their negligence and by requiring them to make up the work missed in writing papers outside the class or sometimes during the class period. A persistent practice of this sort will eradicate laziness, indifference and constant absence from class.

To widen the field of grammar practice, an outside reading assignment may be given once in two weeks or even once a month; or a five-minute current events report in class every day. Either the teacher or one of the students will write the news reported on the board and the class or volunteers, with necessary help from the teacher, will assist in correcting the mistakes. For a book or a story report the whole class may be divided into two groups—each chooses its representative or nominates one by drawing lots to give