

WRITING ACADEMIC ENGLISH

A Writing and Sentence
Structure Workbook for
International Students

ALICE OSHIMA
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WRITING ACADEMIC ENGLISH:
A WRITING AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE WORKBOOK
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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TO THE STUDENT

Good writing in English requires both good grammar and good organization. In this book, you will study both. You will learn selected* grammatical structures in order to perfect your grammar and improve your style. You will also learn to organize your thoughts in writing. At the end of the semester, you will know how to organize your ideas quickly and write about them clearly, and you will be able to write in the sophisticated*, mature style required in academic courses.

The *first part* of this book presents the basic principles* of English rhetoric*. Rhetoric has two aspects*: organization and style. English rhetoric is very different from the rhetoric of your native language. Good style in Chinese or Japanese is very different from good style in English; good organization in Arabic, Persian and Spanish is very different from good organization in English. Therefore, in order to write well in English, you must learn not only the rules of English grammar, but also the principles of English rhetoric. Learning the principles of rhetoric is just like learning the rules of grammar: first you must study them, then you must practice them.

The practice sections in this book will help you apply what you have learned about these basic principles of English rhetoric. There are also Writing Under Pressure exercises designed to help you organize your thoughts and write about them quickly. You will find this skill especially useful when taking essay examinations in your other courses.

The *second part* of this book presents some of the more difficult aspects of English grammar: verb tenses, active and passive voice, independent and dependent clauses, participial phrases, etc. Your goal in studying grammar should be to learn to use these structures in order to develop a more sophisticated writing style.

If you read carefully and do all of the exercises and practices thoughtfully, we guarantee* that your writing will improve. We also guarantee that you will find the task* of writing much, much easier.

Certain words in this book are marked with an asterisk (). Simple definitions for these words appear at the bottom of the page. These words include uncommon or technical words and words that were unfamiliar to students we have taught in the past. You may be unsure of other words as well. Try to "unlock" the meanings of these words by observing how they are used. If you still don't understand a word, look it up in your dictionary or ask your instructor for help.

selected: chosen
rhetoric: the art of writing

sophisticated: complex
aspects: parts

principles: rules
guarantee: promise

task: job, work

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Part **I**

WRITING A PARAGRAPH

WRITING A PARAGRAPH

Chapter 1

WHAT IS A PARAGRAPH? An Overview

A **paragraph** is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. A paragraph can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. The number of sentences is unimportant; however, the paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly.

The following model contains all of the elements of a good paragraph. Read it carefully two or three times and try to analyze its structure.

Model 1: Paragraph structure

Gold

- 1 Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics. First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion*. Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes. Gold never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever. For example, a Macedonian* coin remains as untarnished* today as the day it was minted twenty-three centuries ago. Another important characteristic of gold is its usefulness to industry and science. For many years, it has been used in hundreds of industrial applications. The most recent use of gold is in astronauts' suits. Astronauts wear gold-plated heat shields for protection outside the spaceship. In conclusion, gold is treasured not only for its beauty, but also for its utility.
- 5

THE THREE PARTS OF A PARAGRAPH

A paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

The **topic sentence** states the main idea of the paragraph. It not only names the topic of the paragraph, but it also limits the topic to one or two areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph. The specific area is called the controlling idea. Notice how the topic sentence of the model states both the topic and the controlling idea:

**Topic
Sentence**

(Topic)

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics.

(Controlling Idea)

corrosion: chemical damage
untarnished: unchanged in color

Macedonian: from an ancient Mediterranean culture

Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence. That is, they explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and quotations. Some of the supporting sentences that explain the topic sentence about gold are:

Supporting Sentences

*First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion.
For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three centuries ago.
Another important characteristic of gold is its utility in industry and science.
The most recent application of gold is in astronauts' suits.*

The **concluding sentence** signals the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important points to remember:

Concluding Sentence

In conclusion, gold is treasured not only for its beauty, but also for its utility.

TWO ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

In addition to the three structural parts of a paragraph, a good paragraph also has the elements of unity and coherence.

Unity

Unity means that you discuss only *one* main idea in a paragraph. The main idea is stated in the topic sentence, and then each and every supporting sentence develops that idea. If, for example, you announce in your topic sentence that you are going to discuss two important characteristics of gold, discuss only those. Do not discuss anything else such as the price of gold, the history of gold, or gold mining.

Coherence

Coherence means that your paragraph is easy to read and understand because (1) your supporting sentences are in some kind of logical order, and (2) your ideas are connected by the use of appropriate transition signals. For example, in the paragraph about gold, there are two main supporting ideas: gold is beautiful, and gold is useful. Each of these supporting ideas is discussed, one after the other, and an example is given for each one. This is one kind of logical order. Furthermore, the relationship between the ideas is clearly shown by using appropriate transition words and phrases such as "first of all," "the second important characteristic," "for example," and "in conclusion."

In summary, a well-written paragraph contains five elements: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, a concluding sentence, unity, and coherence. In the first section of this book, you will study and practice each of these elements.

THE ASSIGNMENT FORMAT

Below are instructions and a model of one possible format for the assignments you will prepare for this class. Your instructor may ask you to use this format, or s/he may have other requirements.

1. Use only 8½" × 11" lined, 3-hole notebook paper.
2. Write a title in the center of the top line.
3. Write the practice number, page number and practice name in the upper left-hand corner.

4. Write your name, the course number and date in the upper right-hand corner.
5. Leave one-inch margins on both sides of the page.
6. Indent the first line of every paragraph.*
7. Write on every other line.
8. Number your pages.
9. Write in ink.

Model 2: Assignment format

Practice number Page number Practice name	Practice 2, page 3 Unity	Student name English 001 3/24/--	Your name, the course number and date
	Gold		
Indent about one inch from the margin	Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics. First of all,		Title centered
Write on every other line	gold has a lustrous beauty which is resistant to corrosion. Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins and ornament- al purposes. Gold never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever. For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today		one-inch margin
one-inch margin			

Notice that the first line in the paragraph is indented—moved to the right. While the practice of indenting is changing, particularly in business letter writing, it is still the accepted practice in academic writing.

HOW TO WRITE A TITLE

Single paragraphs do not usually have titles. Giving your practice paragraphs titles, however, may help you to organize and limit your thoughts. For longer essays or reports, though, the use of titles (as you will see in this book) will become more necessary.

A title tells the reader what the topic of the paragraph is. It is usually a word or phrase, not a sentence. It should be brief, but not so brief that it doesn't tell the reader what to expect.

***INDENT** the first line of every paragraph. When typing, indent the first line 5 spaces. When writing by hand, indent the first line about one inch from the margin.

1. The first, last, and all important words in a title are capitalized. Prepositions and articles are not important words. Prepositions of more than five letters, however, may be capitalized. Articles that begin the title, of course, are capitalized.
2. The title is not underlined.
3. The title is not enclosed in quotation marks, nor is it ended with a period.

Example

My Greatest Culture Shock
How to Choose a Good Used Car
Inflation Affects Everybody
Backpacking in the Mountains
Writing Academic English
Riding the Subway in New York

The Topic Sentence

Every good paragraph has a topic sentence, which clearly states the topic and the controlling idea of the paragraph. It is a complete sentence. It is usually (but not always) the first sentence in the paragraph.

A topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It briefly indicates what the paragraph is going to discuss. For this reason, the topic sentence is a helpful guide to both the writer and the reader. The writer can see what information to include (and what information to exclude). The reader can see what the paragraph is going to be about and is therefore better prepared to understand it.

There are three important points to remember about the topic sentence:

A topic sentence is a *complete sentence*; that is, it contains a subject, a verb, and (usually) a complement.

The following are *not* complete sentences.

Driving on freeways.
The importance of gold.
How to register for college classes.

A topic sentence contains both a *topic* and a *controlling idea*. It names the topic and then limits the topic to a specific area to be discussed in the space of a single paragraph.

The following examples show how a topic sentence states both the topic and the controlling idea in a complete sentence.

Driving on freeways requires skill and alertness.
Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics.
Registering for college classes can be a frustrating experience for new students.

A topic sentence gives only the main idea; therefore, it is the most general statement in the paragraph. It does not give any specific details.

This is an example of a general statement that could serve as a topic sentence:

Good *The Arabic origin of many English words is not always obvious.*

This sentence, on the other hand, is too specific to serve as a topic sentence:

Too Specific *The slang expression "so long" (meaning goodbye) is probably a corruption of the Arabic "salaam."*

POSITION OF TOPIC SENTENCES

The topic sentence may be the first or last sentence in a paragraph. The topic sentence may also be the first *and* last sentence of the paragraph—"sandwich-style." A "sandwich-style" paragraph is especially helpful to your reader if the paragraph is very long. The second topic sentence in the "sandwich-style" paragraph also serves as a concluding sentence.

Study the following three paragraphs. Notice the different positions for the topic sentence in each. The topic sentences are underlined.

Model 2: Position of topic sentences

Hurricanes

Topic Sentence

Hurricanes, which are also called cyclones, exert tremendous power. These violent storms are often a hundred miles in diameter, and their winds can reach velocities* of seventy-five miles per hour or more. Furthermore, the strong winds and heavy rainfall that accompany them can completely destroy a small town in a couple of hours. The energy that is released by a hurricane in one day exceeds the total energy consumed by humankind throughout the world in one year.

Famous School "Failures"

Topic Sentence

Albert Einstein, one of the world's geniuses, failed his university entrance examinations on his first attempt. William Faulkner, one of America's noted writers, never finished college because he could not pass his English courses. Sir Winston Churchill, who is considered one of the masters of the English language, had to have special tutoring in English during elementary school. These few examples show that failure in school does not always predict failure in life.

Synonyms

Topic Sentence

Topic Sentence
(Conclusion)

Synonyms, words that have the same basic meaning, do not always have the same emotional meaning. For example, the words "stingy" and "frugal" both mean "careful with money." However, to call a person stingy is an insult, while the word frugal has a much more positive connotation*. Similarly, a person wants to be slender but not skinny, and aggressive, but not pushy. Therefore, you should be careful in choosing words because many so-called synonyms are not really synonymous at all.

velocities: speeds

connotation: implied meaning

Practice 1: Recognizing Topic Sentences

Remember, the topic sentence indicates the main idea of a paragraph and is the most general statement in the paragraph.

STEP 1 Decide which of the following sentences is the topic sentence of the paragraph.

STEP 2 Write TS on the line next to that sentence.

STEP 3 Decide what order the supporting sentences should be in and number them 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Paragraph 1

- _____ a. Next, add antifreeze to your windshield washer fluid; otherwise, the fluid will freeze and possibly break the container.
- _____ b. First, put on snow tires if you plan to drive on snowy, icy roads very often.
- _____ c. Driving in winter, especially on snowy, icy roads, can be less troublesome if you take a few simple precautions*.
- _____ d. Finally, it is also a good idea to carry tire chains, a can of spray to unfreeze door locks and a windshield scraper in your car when driving in winter weather.
- _____ e. Second, check the amount of antifreeze in your radiator and add more if necessary.

Paragraph 2

- _____ a. Furthermore, researchers are continuing to work on the development of an efficient, electrically powered automobile.
- _____ b. Researchers in the automobile industry are experimenting with different types of engines and fuels as alternatives to the conventional gasoline engines.
- _____ c. One new type of engine, which burns diesel oil instead of gasoline, has been available for several years.
- _____ d. Finally, several automobile manufacturers are experimenting with methanol, which is a mixture of gasoline and methyl alcohol, as an automobile fuel.
- _____ e. A second type is the gas turbine engine, which can use fuels made from gasoline, diesel oil, kerosene, other petroleum distillates*, or methanol.

precaution: advance action to prevent something

distillate: a substance obtained from another substance

Paragraph 3

- _____ a. Later on, people began to write on pieces of leather, which were rolled into scrolls.
- _____ b. In the earliest times, people carved or painted messages on rocks.
- _____ c. In the Middle Ages, heavy paper called parchment was used for writing; books were laboriously copied by hand.
- _____ d. With the invention of the printing press in the middle of the fifteenth century, the modern printing industry was born.
- _____ e. Some form of written communication has been used throughout the centuries.

Paragraph 4

- _____ a. If there had been a big storm on the day of a baby's birth, the baby might have been named Thunder Cloud.
- _____ b. American Indian names are very descriptive, for Indians were usually named for a physical attribute, for an occurrence in nature, or for an animal.
- _____ c. Grey Eagle, Red Dog, Big Bear, and Spotted Wolf are examples of Indians named after animals.
- _____ d. Indians with distinctive physical characteristics might be given such names as Big Foot or Crooked Leg.

Paragraph 5

- _____ a. For one thing, individual I.Q.* scores vary considerably.
- _____ b. Many experts also question whether I.Q. scores are related to intelligence.
- _____ c. Furthermore, most psychologists agree that intelligence tests are biased* in favor of middle-class children.
- _____ d. The validity* of standardized intelligence tests is being seriously questioned by educators and psychologists.
- _____ e. In fact, motivation* seems to be just as important as intelligence in determining a person's ability to learn.

I.Q.: Intelligence Quotient
motivation: desire

biased: prejudiced

validity: truth