

MODERN ENGLISH COMPOSITION AND PRECIS WRITING

By
MARGARET J. MILLER

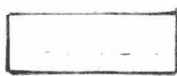


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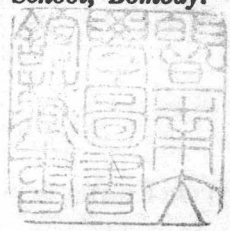
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AND PRECIS WRITING

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CONTENTS

PART ONE

COMPOSITION

	PAGE
Chapter I	
<i>ORIGIN OF WORDS</i>	1
Chapter II	
<i>PREFIXES</i>	4
Chapter III	
<i>SUFFIXES</i>	10
Chapter IV	
<i>SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS</i>	16
Chapter V	
<i>IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS</i>	20
Chapter VI	
<i>PUNCTUATION</i>	22
Chapter VII	
<i>FIGURES OF SPEECH</i>	27
Chapter VIII	
<i>COMPOSITION</i>	36
Clear Pictures	36
Sentence Construction	39
The Paragraph	43
The Atmosphere of the Paragraph	45
The Essay	47
The Conclusion	50
The Body of the Essay	52
ANSWERS TO EXERCISES	54

PART TWO

PRECIS WRITING

Precis Writing	69
Passages for Precis	81

Part I

COMPOSITION

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF WORDS

Words are the materials from which a composition is built. It is therefore essential that the writer should understand the fine distinctions between words, and be able to choose those which most exactly convey his meaning.

English is derived from two main sources—Anglo-Saxon and Latin. The Latin was introduced, through French, at the time of the Norman Conquest (1066). At this time, the majority of the Saxon nobles were killed, and their places taken by Normans, but the Saxon peasants remained on the land and cultivated it. Therefore the vocabulary which dealt with simple, homely things associated with peasant life remained Saxon, but words dealing with legal or administrative affairs or abstract ideas were of French origin.

Examples:

	<i>Saxon</i>	<i>Latin (or Greek).</i>
Nouns.	Father (and all other family words.)	Primate
	Cow (and all other domestic animals.)	Chancellor
	Cottage	Legislation
	Bed	Aspirant
	Hand	Statute
	Wood	Ambition
	Field	Eminence
		Assurance
		Justiciary
Verbs.	Chop	Meditate
	Plough	Persuade
	Dig	Magnify
	Cook	Encourage
	Sweep	Execute

You will notice that the Saxon word is usually shorter and simpler than the Latin one. There are certain suffixes, (or endings) which reveal at once that a word is of Latin origin, e.g.,

-ation,	-ary,	-ance,	-ant,	in nouns, and
-ate,	-ize,	-age		in verbs.

If you are writing of simple, everyday things, try to use a vocabulary which is chiefly Saxon; if your subject is *abstract*, *philosophical*, or *theoretical*, you will need more Latin words.

(Note that the three words in italics in the last sentence are themselves all of Latin origin.)

Here are two passages which illustrate the difference of effect: Saxon words predominate in the first, Latin in the second.

1. So they worked away at the rock and planted it, and smoothed the sand down round it till the tide began to turn.

"Now, then" they all cried at once, "we must come away home or the tide will leave us dry. We have mended all the broken seaweed, and put all the rock pools in order, that nobody will see where the storm swept in last week."

That is the reason why the rock pools are always so neat and clean,—because the Water Babies come in shore after every storm, and sweep them out and comb them down, and put them all to rights again.

2. The conspirators, hearing of his departure, immediately concluded that their design was betrayed. They flew to arms before their schemes were ripe for execution, and before the arrival of the Danes, in whose aid they placed their chief confidence. The Earl of Hereford was checked by Walter de Lacy, a great baron in those parts, who, supported by the Bishop of Worcester and the Abbot of Evesham, raised some forces, and prevented the Earl from passing the Severn or advancing into the heart of the kingdom. The Earl of Norfolk was defeated at Fagadun, near Cambridge, by Odo, the Regent, assisted by Richard de Bienfaite and William de Warenne, two justiciaries.

EXERCISES

Change the vocabulary from Latin to Saxon, thereby simplifying the style of the passage. Use your dictionaries to help with the meanings.

1. Unloose the quadruped from the vehicle, stabulate him, give him nutritious aliment; and when the orient of the morning appears above the horizon, I will award you pecuniary compensation for your amiable hospitality.
2. Go and endeavour to instil into your venerable female ancestor the art of imbibing by suction the product of the domesticated fowl.
3. It is undeniably to be deprecated that while many of our compatriots are unable to procure a modicum of nutrition, an unenlightened plutocracy may enjoy a maximum of luxurious indulgence. Surely this is an unwarrantable blemish on our much flaunted democratic institutions.
4. Due to the prevailing inadequacy of the means of transport, it has been found impracticable to effect the desired transfers of sections of the population between the scheduled areas.
5. Adduce the equine quadruped
To element aquatic,
Ingurgitation, it is said,
Must still be automatic.
6. Scintillate, scintillate, diminutive asteroid!

CHAPTER II

PREFIXES

The central, or main part of a word is called the *root*. Changes of meaning can be made by adding different *prefixes* (syllables at the beginning) or *suffixes* (syllables at the end).

A prefix usually changes the meaning of a word, a suffix changes its grammatical function.

e.g. employ — verb
employment — noun
unemployment — noun of opposite meaning.

Here is a list of the most common prefixes and their meanings.

SAXON

- be* a prefix extending and intensifying the meaning.
e.g. come, become
girt, begirt
grudge, begrudge
- for* (a) a prefix strengthening the meaning
e.g. lorn (lonely) forlorn (very lonely)
(b) a prefix of contradiction
e.g. bid, forbid
swear, forswear
- fore* a prefix indicating something happening before-hand.
e.g. foretell, — to tell in advance
foresight
foretaste
- un* a contradictory prefix.
e.g. true, untrue
usual, unusual

LATIN

- a, ab, abs.* — away from
e.g. avert, — to turn away from
abduct, — to lead away from
abstract, — to draw away from
- a, an* — without
e.g. atheist, — without God
apathy, — without feeling
anarchy, — without rule

- ad, at* — towards
(before another consonant, the *d* often changes, and doubles the consonant)
e.g. attract, — to draw towards
advert, — to turn towards
- ante* — before
e.g. antedate, — to date beforehand
antecedent — happening before
- anti* — against
e.g. anti-aircraft
(NOTE:—in the word *anticipate*, the prefix is really *ante*, but the vowel has been attracted by the following *i* and changed to match it.)
- amphi* or *ambi* — both
e.g. amphitheatre — with seats on both sides.
ambidextrous, — able to use both hands
amphibious, — able to live both on land and in water
- arch* — chief
e.g. archangel, — chief angel
archbishop, — chief bishop
- auto* — self
e.g. automobile, — moving by itself
autobiography — written by oneself
- bene* — good
e.g. benevolent, — well-wishing
benefit, — something bringing good
benediction, — blessing, (literally—a good word.)
- bi* — two
e.g. bisect, — to cut in two
biped, — having two legs
bicycle, — having two wheels
- circum* — round
e.g. circumscribe, — to write round, or enclose
circulate, — to carry, or send round.
- cata* — down
e.g. catastrophe, — downfall
cataract, — a moving down

<i>contra</i>	— against	
	e.g. contradict,	— to speak against, to say the opposite
	contravene,	— to go against (laws)
<i>di</i>	— two	
	e.g. dilemma,	— choice of two difficulties
	diphthong,	— two letters made into one
<i>dia</i>	— through	
	e.g. diameter,	— measurement through
	dialogue,	— (literally) talking through or throughout
<i>epi</i>	— upon	
	e.g. epidemic,	— a disease falling upon people
	epitaph,	— written upon a tombstone
	epidermis,	— the skin upon the inner skin
<i>eu or ev</i>	good	
	e.g. eulogy,	— praise, good words
	evangelist,	— the bringer of good tidings
<i>extra</i>	— outside	
	e.g. extraordinary,	— outside the ordinary run
	extramural,	— outside the walls
<i>hemi</i>	— half	
	e.g. hemisphere,	— half a sphere
<i>hexa</i>	— six	
	e.g. hexagon,	— a six-sided figure
<i>hepta</i>	— seven	
	e.g. heptagon,	— a seven-sided figure
	heptarchy,	— a collection of seven kingdoms
<i>homo</i>	— the same	
	e.g. homonym,	— the same name
	homogeneous,	— of the same kind
<i>hyper</i>	— beyond	
	e.g. hyperbole,	— description going beyond the facts
	hyper-sensitive	— sensitive beyond ordinary limits
<i>hypo</i>	— under	
	e.g. hypocrite,	— a person speaking under pretence
	hypotenuse,	— a line under a right-angle
	hypodermic,	— under the skin

<i>in</i>	—	(a) in, into	
	e.g.	inspect, induce,	— to look into — to lead into
	—	(b) not	
	e.g.	inaccurate, inconvenient, inefficient,	— not accurate — not convenient — not efficient
<i>inter</i>	—	among	
	e.g.	international, interrupt, introduce,	— among nations — to break in among — to lead among
	—	bad	
	e.g.	malevolent,	— wishing harm
<i>meta</i>	—	change	
	e.g.	metaphor, metabolism,	— a change of expression — a change of substance
	—	one	
	e.g.	monoplane, monotone,	— having one plane — on one tone
<i>ob</i>	—	out	
	e.g.	obliterate, obsolete,	— to wipe out — out of date
	—	all	
	e.g.	omniscient, omnipotent,	— knowing all — all powerful
<i>pan</i>	—	all	
	e.g.	pantheon, panoply, panorama,	— temple of all the gods — complete armour — scene visible on all sides
<i>penta</i>	—	five	
	e.g.	pentagon, Pentateuch,	— five-sided figure — the first five books of the Bible
<i>peri</i>	—	around	
	e.g.	perimeter, periphrasis,	— the measurement around — a roundabout expression
<i>per</i>	—	through	
	e.g.	perspire, perspicacious,	— to breathe through — seeing through something

<i>para</i>	— aside or beside	
	e.g. paradox,	— something apparently aside from the truth
	paragraph,	— with something written beside
	(This refers to the old custom of putting the sign ¶ in the margin beside each new paragraph.)	
	paraphrase,	— one expression to set beside another
<i>philo</i>	— love of	
	e.g. philosophy,	— love of wisdom
	bibliophile (here used as a suffix	— a lover of books.)
<i>poly</i>	— many	
	e.g. polyglot,	— speaking many tongues
	polygon,	— a figure with many sides
	polytechnic,	— teaching many subjects
<i>pre</i>	— before	
	e.g. precedent,	— going before
	pre-natal,	— before birth
<i>pro</i>	— before	
	e.g. prologue,	— spoken before
	prophet,	— a man who knows beforehand
	programme,	— description written before-
<i>pseudo</i>	— false	
	e.g. pseudonym,	— a false name
	pseudo-politician,	— a false or pretence politician
<i>retro</i>	— backwark	
	e.g. retrograde,	— going backward
	retrospect,	— looking backward
<i>quasi</i>	— almost	
	e.g. quasi-human,	— almost human
<i>sub</i>	— under	
	e.g. submarine,	— under the sea
	subterranean,	— under the earth
<i>sym</i>	— together	
	e.g. sympathy,	— a feeling with, or together
	symphony,	— many sounds together

<i>tele</i>	—	afar		
	e.g.	telegraph,	—	written from far
<i>tri</i>	—	three		
	e.g.	triangle,	—	having three angles
		tricycle,	—	having three wheels
<i>trans</i>	—	across		
	e.g.	transport,	—	carrying across
<i>vice</i>	—	instead of		
	e.g.	viceroy,	—	instead of the king
		vice-captain,	—	instead of the captain

CHAPTER III

SUFFIXES

Suffixes are used more frequently to change the parts of speech than to change the meaning. The following list will show how they work.

- able or ible— to form an adjective indicating “able to,” or “concerned with”
 - e.g. profitable — concerned with profit edible — able to be eaten
- acious — to form an adjective indicating “characterised by,” “full of”
 - e.g. audacious — full of audacity mendacious — full of mendacity
- acity — to form an abstract noun of quality
 - e.g. sagacity, perspicacity
- acy — to form an abstract noun of quality
 - e.g. lunacy
- age — to form a noun
 - (a) with a collective idea
 - e.g. assemblage
 - (b) a place
 - e.g. vicarage, cellarage
 - (c) a condition
 - e.g. tutelage, bondage
 - (d) an institution
 - e.g. orphanage
 - (e) the cost of something
 - e.g. postage
- al or -ial — to form an adjective indicating “pertaining to”
 - e.g. adjectival, phenomenal, parochial
- ality — to form an abstract noun with the idea of quality
 - e.g. finality, commonality
- an, -ean, -ian— to form
 - (a) an adjective indicating “belonging to” or “engaged in”
 - e.g. herculean
 - (b) a noun with a similar sense
 - e.g. artisan
- ance, or -ence, -ancy — to form an abstract noun of quality, action, or process

- e.g. abstinence, impertinence, constancy
- ant or -ent** (a) to form adjectives
e.g. constant, indignant
- (b) to form a noun denoting agent or instrument.
e.g. informant, agent, instrument
- ar** — to form adjectives indicating "pertaining to,"
"of a kind"
- e.g. linear, peculiar
- ar, -er, -or** — to form nouns denoting agent or person concerned
- e.g. registrar, assessor, farmer
- ard** — to form a noun indicating a person who does something discreditable
- e.g. drunkard
- arian** — to form adjectives and nouns denoting a member of a sect, or a person of a certain age
- e.g. vegetarian, octogenarian
- ary** — to form
- (a) adjectives indicating "pertaining to," "of a kind"
e.g. imaginary
- (b) nouns indicating "one belonging to" or "engaged in"
e.g. visionary, beneficiary
- ate** — to form
- (a) nouns of office or state
e.g. magnate
- (b) adjectives made from past participles
e.g. designate
- (c) a common verb suffix for verbs of Latin origin
e.g. originate, exterminate
- ation** — to form abstract nouns from Latin verbs in -ate
- e.g. subjugation, extermination
- ative** — to form adjectives from Latin verbs
- e.g. superlative, argumentative
- bility** — to form abstract nouns from adjectives in -able, -ible
- e.g. capability, adaptability
- cide** — to form nouns with a sense of "killer"
- e.g. homicide, parricide

- cy — to form abstract nouns
e.g. regency
- dom — to form nouns expressing state, condition, rank, domain
e.g. freedom, officialdom, kingdom
- ee — to form nouns denoting persons affected by the action of a verb
e.g. employee, payee
- eer — to form nouns denoting a person concerned
e.g. profiteer, seer
- en — to form
 - (a) adjectives, usually denoting material
e.g. woollen, silken, wooden
 - (b) verbs from adjectives and nouns
e.g. lighten, embolden
- eous — to form adjectives indicating "of the nature of"
e.g. igneous, beauteous
- er, -ier — to form nouns indicating trade or profession
e.g. farmer, baker, financier
- ern — to form adjectives
e.g. southern, northern
- ery -ry — to form nouns indicating
 - (a) a class of goods
e.g. drapery, gunnery
 - (b) a condition
e.g. outlawry, penury
 - (c) a place for keeping something
e.g. brewery
 - (d) conduct
e.g. foolery
 - (e) abstract noun formed from a noun connected with a person
e.g. witchery, popery
- ess — to form nouns in the feminine
e.g. authoress, mistress
- eth, -th — to form nouns indicating fractions
e.g. seventh, fortieth
- etic — to form adjectives indicating possession of certain powers or functions
e.g. magnetic, synthetic