COLLEGE ENGLISH

Creative Writing

Book 4
Student's Book
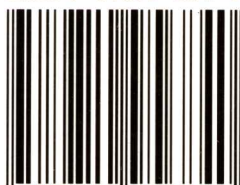
Dr. Christopher Green

大学英语创意写作

第四册

学生用书

The *College English Creative Writing* series is aimed at helping students develop the writing skills and language competence necessary for their tertiary studies and other writing needs. The series systematically analyses English texts covering a wide range of topics and text types at the sentence, paragraph and text levels, and provides comprehensive notes about the grammar, punctuation and vocabulary items commonly used. The series also encourages students to be creative, to be aware of intercultural aspects of using English, and to be able to express their own thoughts and feelings when writing. The *College English Creative Writing* series complements the series of *College English Creative Communication* and the *College English Creative Reading* series.

Special Features of Book Four

Carefully selecting approprite topics and text types

Raising students' awareness of foreign cultures and different formats in writing

Enhancing students' understanding of the mechanism of the English language by providing well-constructed exercises

Analysing authentic written texts in different formats

Training students to proofread and edit their writing

In-depth notes on expressions and formats

Variety of extracts and passages to maximize students' exposure to different text types

Expanding students' creativity by providing contextualized writing tasks on a wide range of topics for various authentic purposes

MACMILLAN

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MACMILLAN

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College English Creative Writing (4)

CHAPTER ONE

Principles of Business Communication
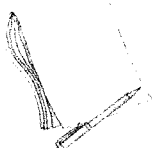
IMPROVING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Task 1

Business documents are written to get things done. They are read by busy people and this means that documents need always to be concise and clear. They also need to be correct in terms of grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling. The '3 Cs' (conciseness, clarity and correctness) are very important, and Task 1 below gives you the opportunity to learn more about these — and other — features of effective business writing. Read the text below in order to answer these questions:

1. What three essential features should workplace communication have?
2. Why does workplace communication need to have these features?
3. How can a clear and concise style be achieved?

Effective Business Communication

As with any form of communication, the most important factors in business communication are purpose and audience. Academic communication, for example, communicates information and arguments between students and staff in academic settings. Journalistic communication informs and sometimes persuades large sections of the general public about events in the world. Workplace communication gets things done between staff in workplace situations.

The first basic rule of workplace communication, whether spoken or written, is that it needs to be as long as necessary and as short as possible. This rule applies equally well to letters, memos, reports, e-mails, resumes, meetings, and telephone conversations. Busy business people do not appreciate wordiness and require communication which is clear and concise.

A clear and concise style is achieved by choosing appropriate language for the purpose. For example, in academic communication the following sentence is perfectly acceptable:

> *There are a number of reasons to account for the recent decline in America's economy.*

But an effective workplace communicator would need to say:

> *America's economy has declined recently due to ....*

In letters, the effective workplace communicator will avoid wordy and clumsy phrases such as:

> *... the above-mentioned/captioned post/product/service.*

and will instead write:

> *... this post/product/service.*

It is important to remember that this concise style needs to be balanced by politeness. Workplace communication should not be abrupt. Indeed, politeness is essential for good working relationships. Politeness is achieved by making sure that letters, memos, phone calls etc. all have the right tone. The tone should neither be too boastful, nor too modest. For example:

> *I have great pleasure in introducing you to our company's newest and most wonderful product ...*

and

> *I should be most obliged if you would give some of your precious time to consider our company's newest product ...*

are both unacceptable. A neutral expression such as:

> *I would like to introduce our company's newest product ...*

is more appropriate.

A final and very important feature of effective business communication is its language accuracy.

In most companies, a letter is considered to be 'unmailable' if it contains even a single error in formatting, spelling, punctuation, or grammar. So, careful and detailed editing and proofreading of a written document is essential. Employers and colleagues will form a negative impression of a person's abilities and attitudes if he/she uses incorrect language in workplace communication.

Effective written workplace communication, then, needs to show:
* a style which is clear and concise

* a tone which is polite but not overly modest
* a presentation which contains no errors of format and language

If any of these features are not present, the communication will not be effective, which can only be bad for business.
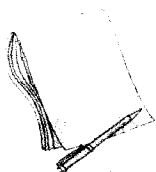
DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

Workplace writing: informative and persuasive types

There are two general types of workplace documents, those that try to either:

* **inform** the reader about a product or service
  (Key facts or figures, how to use the product or service, or frequently asked questions. The aim is to *improve understanding.*)

or

* **persuade** the reader that this product or service is a good one and worth buying.
  (The aim is to *stimulate emotions and develop enthusiasm.*)

The workplace writer chooses **content** and **language** which will best achieve their aim.

Task 2

Look at the two texts below. Which one aims to help the reader understand the product or service and its effects (i.e. is informative), and which tries to sell the product or service (i.e. is persuasive)?

Text A

DO YOU WANT TO BE FIT AND HEALTHY?

Then you should try

SLIMTONE

— the fantastic fat-burning medicine —

Slimtone is a delicious tonic drink that burns fat and provides energy — all at the same time. There's no need to suffer exhausting exercise sessions or pay expensive slimming clinic fees. We deliver your course of Slimtone to you directly, avoiding expensive retailers. Order Slimtone now and take advantage of our great introductory offer:

a 20% discount on your first month's supply of Slimtone

Contact us at <u>slimtone@org.uk</u> for details

Text B

Dr. Jim Jones's Advice Page

The benefits of weight loss

Losing just 10% of your body weight — and keeping it off — starts to bring significant health benefits to people who are overweight. It can help:

- Reduce raised blood pressure and cholesterol levels, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke and can also lower the need for medication.
- Reduce the risk of developing non-insulin dependent diabetes. If you have diabetes, weight loss could improve your diabetes control and reduce the need for medication.
- Reduce the strain on the joints, improve back and joint pain and improve mobility.
- Improve asthma and can reduce the need for medication. Your lungs start to function better and breathlessness is reduced.
- Improve mood and self-esteem.

More at <u>drjimj@org.uk</u>

Task 3

Complete the table below to compare and contrast informative and persuasive writing.

Features	Informative writing	Persuasive writing
Content	Provides unbiased advice	Promotes a product or service
Format	Information provided concisely in bullet point form	Information presented attractively to sell a particular product or service
Language: use of 'you' and 'we'		
Language: use of positive adjectives		

Workplace writing: tone and style

The terms *tone* and *style* were mentioned in the text you read for Task 1. The text explained that style in business communication should be clear and the tone should be polite. Task 4 below will help you to understand the importance of appropriate tone and style in business communication.

Task 4

The memos below were written by a Managing Director to a Security Supervisor. Which one achieves an appropriate tone and style? How does it do this?

Memo A

Memorandum

To: John Jones (Security Supervisor)
From: David Smith (Managing Director)
Date: June 19 200x
Subject: Night security in the warehouse

I was checking round the warehouse last night and noticed that two doors had been left open.

Since Bill left last week, it's up to you to make sure that the doors are closed at 6.00 every night.

PLEASE PLEASE be more careful in future — otherwise we're going to get a lot of stuff ripped off and the insurance won't pay us if the problem's due to our carelessness.

If you've got any problems about this, give me a call.

Thanks a lot.

Memo B

Memorandum

To: John Jones (Security Supervisor)
From: David Smith (Managing Director)
Date: June 19 200x
Subject: Night security in the warehouse

It has come to my attention that two doors were left open in the warehouse after 6.00 pm last night.

I want to remind you that as we do not have a night security guard at present, it is your responsibility to ensure that doors and windows are locked.

It is essential that we take all possible precautions against theft. If we do not do this, our insurance becomes invalid.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the temporary security arrangements.

EXPANDING YOUR CREATIVITY

Levels of formality

Business communication, then, needs to have appropriate style, tone, format and language. The style should always be concise, but the level of formality depends on the situation or topic and the status

of the people sending and receiving the communication:

Bottom-up communication
To a superior = more formal
Top-down communication
From a superior = more formal
Sideways communication
To and from people of same rank = less formal

Task 5 below will help you to understand that how we express ourselves depends mainly on the audience and the purpose of our communication.

Task 5

Read the following mini-texts and complete the table. Follow the example.

1. Right, I'll see you at 7.00, then. Let's eat out. Good idea? OK. Right. Bye, darling. See you later.
2. Why not visit Hong Kong, Asia's world city, where busy street markets huddle among the soaring skyscrapers and East meets West in an explosion of colour and energy?
3. Place the device in a cool location out of direct sunlight. Connect to power source and press power switch to 'on'.
4. Today, I'm going to talk about how to study at university. I'll focus on time management and how to maximize time spent studying. I'll be happy to answer questions at the end of my talk.
5. This article sets out to investigate the effect of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) on student's motivation to learn a second or foreign language. Data were gathered by questionnaire survey and by face-to-face interviews with subjects.

Text	Audience	Purpose	Channel	Level of formality (formal, neutral, informal)
1	Probably partner	To arrange the timing of the evening meal	Probably telephone	Informal
2				

3				
4				
5				

Chapter Two

Writing Memos

IMPROVING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Memo writing guidelines

A memo (more formally, *memorandum* or plural *memoranda*) is an administrative document. It

- is used only for communication within a company, i.e. it is an intra-company document and is not used for inter-company communication
- may be distributed **top-down** (from superiors to subordinates) or **bottom-up** (from subordinates to superiors)
- deals with a single topic
- names its sender(s) and recipient(s) clearly
- has short, easily readable paragraphs
- may have sub-headings and numbered sub-sections
- may be distributed electronically or in hard copy

Top-down and bottom-up memos

Look now at the two memos. The first one is an example of top-down company communication. It was written by the Managing Director of the company and was distributed to all company employees.

The second memo is an example of bottom-up communication. A committee representing staff is requesting the help of the Office Manager to ban smoking from the office building.

Memo 1

General Electronics Corporation

MEMORANDUM

To: All company employees
From: George Kline, Managing Director
Date: 12 November, 200x
Subject: Fire drill regulations: a reminder

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1. Purpose

Following the recent fire drill, I want to remind you all of the correct procedures to be followed in drills or in the event of a real fire.

2. Evacuation procedures

- When the fire alarm bell sounds, leave your office as quickly as possible.
- Do not stop to pick up personal or work-related items.
- Proceed to the ground floor using the stairs and not the lifts or escalators.

3. Roll call

- On reaching the ground floor, go to your department's designated gathering area.
- Respond to your departmental Safety Officer's roll call.
- Do not make drills an excuse to take a longer break than is strictly necessary.

4. Company safety

The company has an excellent safety record and I urge all of you to play your part in maintaining this high standard. I look forward to participating in a more successful drill next time.

Memo 2

MEMORANDUM

To: Cindy Fan, Office Manager
From: K.Y. Jones, Chair, Staff Liaison Committee
Date: 1 May, 200x
Subject: Smoking in the office building

Purpose
The Staff Liaison Committee would like to draw your attention to the issue of smoking in the office building.

Background
A number of staff members have reported persistent respiratory illnesses while others believe that cigarette smoke in the company's offices is unpleasant. Recently, the Staff Liaison Committee discussed this issue and voted by a majority of 19 to 18 to propose banning cigarette smoking in the company's offices.

Advantages of a ban
The staff in favour of banning smoking believe that the overall comfort and health of staff would improve if this change were to happen. The creation of a smoke-free zone would also reduce illness and staff absenteeism and, ultimately, increase company productivity.

Request
The Staff Liaison Committee would like you to consider this issue and the possibility of banning smoking in the company's offices.
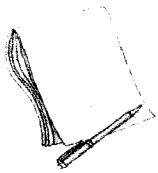
DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

Choosing the right language

Memo 1 reminds staff to improve their performance in fire drills. To do this the writer issues instructions in the form of imperative structures. These structures begin with the bare infinitive form of a verb (*do + verb/do not + verb*). Look at the examples:

1. ***Do not stop*** *to pick up personal or work-related items.*
2. ***Proceed*** *to the ground floor using the stairs and not the lifts or escalators.*

In the final paragraph, the writer ends on a positive note:

The company has an excellent safety record and I urge all of you to play your part in maintaining this high standard. I look forward to participating in a more successful drill next time.

The language selected to write the memo gives it a rather harsh and authoritarian tone. This is acceptable, however, since the memo is for top-down transmission and the Managing Director is urging all staff to improve their performance in fire drills.

Memo 2 requests the Office Manager to consider banning smoking in the company's offices. The writer uses phrases with *would + like + to infinitive* to make polite requests:

*The Staff Liaison Committee **would like to draw** your attention to the issue of smoking in the office building.*

The writer also uses a conditional sentence to present the likely results of banning smoking:

*The staff in favour of banning smoking believe that the overall comfort and health of staff **would improve if this change were to happen**.*

This language is appropriate because the memo is bottom-up and approval is needed for banning smoking in the company's offices.

Thinking about purpose and audience

Using the right language is not only a question of selecting correct vocabulary and grammar. Speakers and writers also need to take into account:

- **who** they are addressing (the audience)
- **why** they are speaking or writing (the purpose)
- **how** they are communicating (the method, such as telephone, e-mail or memo, etc.)

These factors will determine the level of formality (see Chapter One) used, e.g. in addressing a close friend the writer/speaker will use contractions, personal pronouns and informal vocabulary.

Increasing and reducing distance between sender and recipient

Using formal language increases the 'social distance' between a sender and a recipient. Informal language reduces this distance. The language features below show how to express different degrees of formality.