

沈玉如 主编

# 英语写作教程

# ENGLISH WRITING COURSE



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# 前 言

## 编写背景及原则

英语写作在整个英语学习中的重要性不言自明,但也是最难提高的一项语言技能,因而成了很多老师不愿教、学生不愿学的一门课程。究其原因,除了英语写作技能培养自身的特点和多重影响因素之外,缺乏一部具有广泛指导意义,同时具有一定针对性且具有较强的可操作性的理想教材也是一个不可忽视的主要因素。

基于这个认识,我们结合多年的英语写作教学经验,集思广益,博采众长,本着“循序渐进、读写结合、学以致用”的编写原则,努力打造一部符合我国国情、与我国绝大部分英语专业学生实际英语水平相适应的英语写作教材,激发学生写作的愿望与创作的激情。

《英语写作教程》就是这样一部教材。该教材旨在学习词、句的相关概念以及段落写作、短文写作和应用文写作的方法和技巧,帮助学生打下坚实的英语写作基础,了解谋篇布局的常用方法,熟悉常见的写作技巧和常见文体写作,增强学生应用英语进行交际的能力。

《英语写作教程》的主要读者对象为大学英语专业低年级学生和普通本科非英语专业学生,对其他英文学习者和工作者而言,也不乏为一部指导性的参考用书。

### 教材结构

本书分为四大部分。

第一部分首先对英语写作作了一个简单介绍,如为什么需要写作、如何才能写好英语作文等,然后具体描述了英语写作中的遣词、造句及常见句子问题。

第二部分主要介绍了英语段落结构、有效段落具备的特征及展开段落的常见方法。

第三部分主要描述了英语短文写作的过程及篇章结构,讨论了四种文体的写作:记叙文、描述文、说明文和议论文。

第四部分主要指导学生如何写概要、读书报告、书信、履历、个人陈述、便条、职场电邮、通知等。

### 教材特色

1. 浅显易懂。本书虽然用英语写成,但知识与技能的讲解“深入浅出、环环相扣”,且尽可能使用常用却不失规范的词语和简洁明了的表达方式,让读者读后能了然于心,抓住重点。

2. 注重实践。在讲授英语写作基本理论时,始终把动笔操练放在首位。提供的练习适时、适量、针对性强、可操作性强、难易有致,既让学生每练必有所得,尽快内化所学知识,也给老师选择自由,根据教学实际进行取舍。

3. 读写结合。本书提供的范文丰富、地道、内容健康,大多与我国学生学习生活密切相关或能引起他们的共鸣,对范文的分析详略得当,有益于提高学生的英语思维能力和综合素养。

4. 内容新颖。本书除讲解普通的写作知识及技巧以外,还较详细地介绍了英语中的七类词汇、词汇的意义及十余种常用信件的写作方法和技巧,增加了个人陈述、职场电邮等非常实用,但国内许多写作教材未曾涉及的内容。

在编写过程中,我们参考了国内外大量的文献资料(含网络资料)。在此,谨向这些文献资料的作者(网站)表示我们诚挚的谢意,并恳请包括这些作者在内的专家和读者提出宝贵意见!

作为四川省“高等教育质量工程”建设项目(川教函[2011]659号),《英语写作教程》的编写得到了乐山师范学院相关部门和外国语学院领导和老师的大力支持与帮助,武汉大学外国语学院的邓郦鸣教授也提出了宝贵的修改建议,在此一并表示感谢。

编著者

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## Part One Basic Knowledge About English Writing

In Part One, we are going to introduce some basic knowledge about English writing, including a general introduction to English writing, diction, building of sentences, so as to help readers recognize the importance of writing and prepare themselves for writing.

# Chapter 1

## Ⓔ A General Introduction to English Writing Ⓔ

Why do we write? What does writing do? What is good writing like? How can we write well? These questions will be answered in the following.

---

### I

## Why We Write

---

As to why we write, opinions vary from scholar to scholar. For instance, John Galsworthy (1867-1933), an English novelist and playwright, and the Nobel laureate in Literature in 1932, once said, “As a man lives and thinks, so will he write.” George Orwell lists in his book *Why I Write* (1946) “four great motives for writing”: sheer egoism—a desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death, to get your own back on grown-ups in childhood, etc.; aesthetic enthusiasm—the desire to make one’s writing look and sound good, having “pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story”; historical impulse—the desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity; for a political purpose—a desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other

people’s idea of the kind of society that they should strive after. In his opinion, the four motives exist in every writer, but in different proportions, which vary from time to time.

But we are inclined to accept the opinions of Elaine P. Maimon and Janice H. Peritz (2003) about why we write:

First, writing aids memory. From shopping lists to class notes to ideas for later development, writing things down helps us get things done. We just write down our ideas—in any form or order—so that we won’t forget them. Once our preliminary ideas are down on paper, we can shape what is there and cross out what we don’t want.

Second, writing sharpens observation. When we record what we see, hear, taste, smell, and feel, we increase the powers of our senses.

Third, writing clarifies thought. Writing and then carefully reading our own early drafts helps us pinpoint what we really want to say. It is often the case that the last paragraph of a first draft becomes the first paragraph of the next draft.

Fourth, writing uncovers connections. Suppose we are reading a novel or a poem. If we write down our responses (answers) to particular questions about a character, or an image, we will not only learn more about the novel or poem, but also more about ourselves.

What’s more, writing strengthens argument. Suppose we are trying to persuade others of something we believe. If we write down questions that those who disagree with us might ask and then answer these questions, we are more likely to achieve our purpose.

In a word, by writing, one is able to store his or her thoughts, so to speak; to be read and to be had once again, in the future, by the author or another. When an author’s thoughts are “uncanned” through reading, they will only be truly duplicated in the reader’s mind, if, in the first place, the author had properly expressed his thoughts in his writings.

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## II

# What Writing Does

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Writing is a way of communicating a message in language intelligible to a seemingly absent audience for a purpose.

In reality, every piece of writing has a purpose, even if it is to express the writer’s emotions as he or she writes a private diary entry. But most teachers of composition agree that the purposes of writing for others can be reduced to the following three:

- the aesthetic aim—to entertain or please the reader by making the subject enjoyable;

- the informative aim—to inform or instruct the reader by conveying or explaining the meaning of certain information;
- the persuasive aim—to persuade the reader by convincing him or her to follow a certain course of action.

But of the three main purposes, the last two are the most prominent and practical in our academic life.

## **2.1** Writing to inform a reader

*Informative writing* seeks to give information and, frequently to explain it. Informative writing, including reports of observations, ideas, scientific data, facts, statistics, etc., focuses on the subject being discussed. It can be found in textbooks, encyclopedias, technical and business reports, books of nonfiction, newspapers, and magazines.

When we write a piece of informative writing, we are expected to offer that information with a minimum of bias, and to present the information completely and clearly. The material has to be accurate and should be verifiable by additional reading, talking with others, or personal experience.

The following passage is a piece of successful informative writing because it informs the general reading public who might be interested in the subject about young elephants learning to avoid humans.

In 1914 in what is now Addo Park in South Africa, a hunter by the name of Pretorius was asked to exterminate a herd of 140 elephants. He killed all but 20, and those survivors became so cunning at evading him that he was forced to abandon the hunt. The area became a preserve in 1930, and the elephants have been protected ever since. Nevertheless, elephants now four generations removed from those Pretorius hunted remain shy and strangely nocturnal. Young elephants evidently learn from the adults' trumpeting alarm calls to avoid humans.

—Carol Grant Gould, “Out of the Mouths of Beasts”

## **2.2** Writing to persuade a reader

*Persuasive writing* seeks to convince the reader about a matter of opinion. This writing is sometimes called argumentative because it argues a position.

Different from informative writing, persuasive writing focuses on the reader and seeks to change the reader's mind, or to bring the reader's point of view closer to the writer's. Examples of persuasive writing include editorials, letters to the editor, reviews, business

or research proposals, opinion-essays in magazines, and books that argue a point of view.

To be persuasive, we must offer convincing support for our point of view, and our reasoning must be logical and sensible and clearly arranged.

The passage below is a piece of successful persuasive writing because it persuades the reader, a person who thinks that math ability or disability has biological basis, that math ability or disability is not related to gender. The first sentence summarizes the point of view to be argued for in the rest of the paragraph. To convince the reader to agree with the point of view, the writer offers a sufficient number of logical reasons.

The search for some biological basis for math ability or disability is fraught with logical and experimental difficulties. Since not all math under-achievers are women, and not all women are mathematics-avoidant, poor performance in math is unlikely to be due to some genetic or hormonal difference between the sexes. Moreover, no amount of research so far has unearthed a “mathematical competency” in some tangible, measurable substance in the body. Since “masculinity” cannot be injected into women to test whether or not it improves their mathematics, the theories that attribute such ability to genes or hormones must depend for their proof on circumstantial evidence. So long as about 7 percent of the Ph. D’s in mathematics are earned by women, we have to conclude either that these women have genes, hormones, and brain organization different from those of the rest of us, or that certain positive experiences in their lives have largely undone the negative fact that they are female, or both.

—Sheila Tobias,  *Overcoming Math Anxiety* 



## What Good Writing Is Like

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It is difficult, if not downright impossible, to provide a checklist for good writing. However, we tend to think of writing in terms of four main areas: content, organization, style, and mechanics. Although breaking writing down into components like this is somewhat arbitrary and subjective, it can be helpful for identifying areas of strength or weakness. When editing our own writing and when evaluating our peers’, we had better keep these categories in mind and try to focus our comments on improvements in specific areas.

Content is, quite simply, what we have to say; the clarity and interest of our central idea, the strength and appropriateness of our support, the depth of our insights into the topic. The best writing contains an exciting and clearly stated central idea(thesis) with detailed and convincing support. It provides fresh insights or is inventive in its approach.

Organization is the construction of our paper at the paragraph and overall level, inclu-



ding elements such as paragraph unity and development, logical progression of ideas, and the effectiveness of the introduction and conclusion. Good organization will give the reader the sense of being taken on a journey starting with an engaging title and introduction, moving through a clear argument toward convincing and memorable conclusion. Weaker organization will leave the reader less sure where the essay is headed either at the local level (because of poorly developed paragraphs) or the global level (because of confusing progression, ineffective transitions, or weak introduction/conclusion).

Style comprises issues of sentence structure and variety, tone, and word choice. Stylistic preferences are often individual and subjective, but successful styles share certain characteristics. Clarity of both syntax and diction is essential, especially in academic writing. Generally, good writing employs varied sentence structures and vocabulary to maintain interest (but don't sacrifice clarity for variety). Maintaining a consistent and appropriate tone for the purposes of the essay is also important.

Mechanics includes grammar and punctuation, spelling, and correct application of appropriate conventions (such as documentation). Although command of mechanics does not in itself make for good writing, such command is essential if we want our writing to be taken seriously.

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## IV

# How We Write Well

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### **4.1** Getting familiar with the writing process

Experience tells us that the process of writing usually involves several stages. Though most of us do not have a clear idea of the particular process by which our writing is created, we all follow certain patterns without reflecting on them.

Generally speaking, the steps we take are likely to include what takes place before we begin to write, what goes on while we are writing and what happens once we have got to the end. We call these stages prewriting, writing and rewriting, or planning, drafting and revising. In each stage we have different things to do: In the prewriting stage, we need to have a clear idea of our purpose and of the reader we are writing for, choose a theme, think about what to write and how to write, make an outline, consider language and format to be used, and find an excellent beginning to attract the reader; in the writing stage,

we organize and write down the ideas in our mind; in the rewriting stage we polish our writing—checking for spelling and grammatical mistakes, adopting the reader’s point of view and looking critically at what has been written, reviewing the writing at a number of levels and paying attention to the variation of sentences employed.

Although each stage has its main focus, none is completely free of elements of the other two. Besides, writers in practice do not simply move smoothly from one stage to the next. Instead, they move backwards and forwards, planning, drafting and revising at each stage.

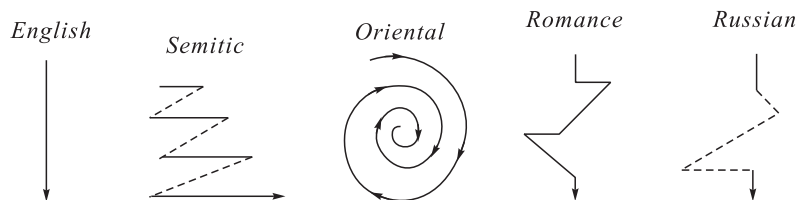
(For more information about the writing process, see “Essay Writing Process” on page 136.)

## 4.2 Following the English thought pattern

Communication is the goal of writing. We write to inform, entertain, or persuade others. What we care much in the first place is how to make the readers understand us. But how to express ourselves effectively can be different from person to person, and from nation to nation. We must realize that the words in one language do not fit together in the same way as the words of another language do. More importantly, the ideas offered by words do not fit together in the same way from language to language. These differences exist because each nation has its special way of thinking. And how a person thinks largely determines how he speaks or writes. So to write well in English, we should follow the English thought pattern.

To cultivate our English thought pattern, we non-English speakers should first understand how the English-speaking people usually arrange their ideas.

The following diagram put forward by Robert B. Kaplan can well illustrate the differences between the English thought pattern and some other national thought patterns in paragraph development.



From the diagram, we can see clearly that we Chinese have a circling pattern. We would like to beat about the bush when we speak or write, worrying that a direct true-to-fact speech might make others feel unhappy or cause trouble. We would turn and turn from unrelated material to ideas of minor importance and at last make the point.