

上海市高等学校教育高地英语项目

英语语言学与教学丛书·写作教程系列

丛书主编 ◎ 蔡龙权

公文写作

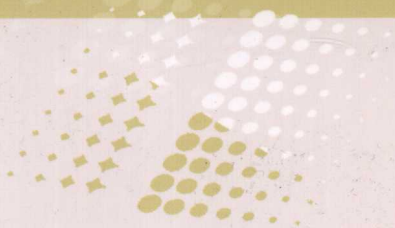
A Course
on Practical Writing

徐 桦◎编著

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英语语言学与教学丛书·写作教程系列

- 语法写作 A Writing Course on Sentence Skills
- 修辞写作 A Writing Course on Paragraph and Essay Development
- 公文写作 A Course on Practical Writing
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Foreword

Writing, as Francis Bacon says, makes one precise. This precision not only refers to what is overtly called speech, an entity right in front of one's naked eyes, but also to what stays covert, thinking, an ability of mind to breed out thoughts and to transfer them into linear words. It is not uncommon for one to be able to write in its general sense, but it is of particular difference if one wants to write precisely along with specific contents.

By content we are reminded of form, the coupled term opposite to and yet indicative of content, and together they relate our discussion to the two sides of writing and the coherence between content and form in achieving the intended effect. It goes beyond doubt that content is of prime importance since it is content that participants are most interested in and therefore is sincerely meant in delivery of communication. By contrast, form acts as an instrument that helps present content, resulting, as is commonly perceived, in a *status quo* secondary to content. Such a relation upholds that content determines form.

While content changes from discipline to discipline, it is expected that there are as many forms to follow suit but as a matter of fact not every content is well matched a form. This is not because writers are unable to concoct enough forms for various contents, but because it does not appear necessary when scientific inquiries are intended to reach at length an ultimate simplification by means of groups of categorical classifications. Generally, therefore, there are five types of writing: daily, journalistic, documentary, creative, and scientific.

To accomplish the coherence between content and form in writing involves such skills as wording and paragraphing, to put it another way, the arrangement of words, sentences, and the whole text. These skills look, in the first place of learning, especially in learning a foreign language, more linguistic than conceptual, for they have a lot to do with spelling, grammar, and fixed expression. Upon a second thought and with deep investigation, it is exposed that many failures in attaining these skills lie in erroneous or improper conceptualization with respect to cohering content and form. Accordingly, to learn to write has two implicitly interactive parts—speech and thought.

Then it is no longer necessary to ask the question “Which should be learned first”; rather it is significant to point out that to relate conceptualization to the learning of grammar and diction may do good to writing as a whole in which a form is selected by certain content and in return affects the representation of that content. The concern at issue is the sensibility to discover the relation and the sense to make use of the mind work, thinking.

But thinking without keeping good terms with content will be labor lost. Therefore, it is sufficiently meaningful to note the worth of reading as an adequate aid to writing. When the opinion that writing ability is not learned may sound going to extremes, the huge unknowing

intake of resourceful information and the vast witting imitation of verified exemplifications help lay the foundation of one's own voluntary writing upon request. Apparently thoughts come in unrelenting reaction to what is found intriguing; forms are shaped up after frequent contact with disciplined reading. On the other hand, practice in writing plays an indispensable role. It reinforces what is newly picked up, accommodates what is unfamiliar, exposes what remains for remediation, and directs what goes for polishing. Consequently, writing ability is further made up via reading and practicing.

I therefore recommend this set of books on writing to those who are interested in learning and teaching how to write in English at college level. These books are written by those who have had years of experience in teaching and researching writing and therefore know a lot about approaches to successful writing in terms of content-form coherence. The four books are internally chained up, with *A Writing Course on Sentence Skills* and *A Course on Practical Writing* intended for freshmen, *A Writing Course on Paragraph and Essay Development* and *A Course on Academic Writing* for sophomores, all being designed to help learners build up the fundamental skills concerning different contents in different forms so that they will find themselves better prepared to further their writing in use at the time of their junior and senior life.

So to write, my recommendation is made without reservation.

Dr. Cai Longquan
Professor and Dean
Foreign Languages College
Shanghai Normal University
July 16, 2007

Preface

Acknowledgements

Most prefaces end with acknowledgments, with which I would like to begin mine, because I find that the completion of this book would be impossible without the help from various aspects.

This course book is one part of the series *Writing in English* which in turn is a part of the advanced undergraduate ELT program of the Shanghai Higher Education. My appreciation first goes to Prof. Cai Longquan, the Dean of the Foreign Languages College of SHNU, who, as the chief-editor of the course books, has given considerable concern to the planning, organization and supervision for the completion of this book. My thanks also go to the publisher, Shanghai Scientific & Technical Publishers, who have made every effort for the perfection of this book.

The writing of this book is a part of the collective work of the teaching and research team on English composition, SHNU; this book is the result of numerous beneficial discussions of the team members. I greatly appreciate my colleagues' kindness and cooperativeness. My students are also a contributor to this book. Teaching them composition has filled me with enough experience and knowledge for writing this book. Many examples used in this book come from my lesson plans and teaching notes on which my students and I have worked for so many years that it has become hard to tell which work is done by whom.

I also find myself greatly indebted to the authors, publishers and others from whose works I have benefited in whatever forms, though I find it unable to trace the sources of all the material used.

Introduction of the book

Can you write clearly and effectively in English for daily communicative purposes? Do you know the most effective and appropriate formats and rules for daily correspondence—especial if your correspondent is international? People now tend to use more English in their daily life, and college students find greater need for learning to write in English for their daily communication. They may want to write English blog or emails, design their own English name cards, develop campus English social activities in which they may need to put up English notices or posters, send invitation cards or deliver English speeches. If they have English-speaking friends, they may also need to write informal English notes and letters. What is more, their ability to write in English affects their future career. From an application letter to a letter of complaint, excellent communication skills is critical to one's profession and living. Therefore, it pays greatly to learn to write effective communicative messages.

The targeted readers of this book are university English-majoring freshmen in the second semester. They are supposed to have already learned some basic writing skills concerning grammar and rhetoric, and now need to learn to write for some practical communication purposes.

However, in consideration of the freshmen's English language level and social experience, the contents to be learned in this book are carefully selected. Most of the contents are chosen for the campus use only or for students' personal needs at this stage of their life, which further ensures the usefulness of learning this book for students' actual life experiences. Besides, as many universities are already offering some business writing courses to their students in later academic years either as obligatory or as elective, professional trade writing is not included in this book, and most of the organization-to-organization correspondence is also excluded.

Suggestions on use

I certainly should have no advice for a user of this book, only gratitude. But it is perhaps only fair that I explain here in the preface what my intended way of using this book is so as to make it easy for other users to have their own alternatives.

This book is intended to be taught for one semester with two periods each week for the course. The following is the suggested course plan:

Week	Contents	Week	Contents
1 st	Unit 1. Diary & Journal writing	10 th	Unit 8. Pact & Rule
2 nd	Unit 2. Card writing	11 th	Unit 9. Public speech
3 rd	Unit 3. Resume & Autobiography	12 th	Unit 10. Teachers' comments
4 th	Unit 4. Transcripts/ Grade reports & Certificates	13 th	Unit 11. Personal letters 1. General points
5 th	Unit 5. Summary writing	14 th	2. Social letters (1)
6 th	Book report	15 th	Social letters (2)
7 th	Unit 6. Note writing	16 th	3. Business letters (1)
8 th	Invitation card	17 th	Business letters (2)
9 th	Unit 7. Notices & Signs	18 th	Revision

There are sufficient exercises following each unit. Answers to the more mechanical items are available at the end of the book. And students should be encouraged to work out their own more creative copies for other open assignments.

I would be pleased if any teacher and students find this book a help in learning writing for their daily practical communication. I am especially grateful to those who would point out areas where their experience can improve my efforts.

Xu Hua
August 6, 2007
Shanghai

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Unit One

Diary & Journal

1.1 Diary

1.1.1 Definition & Characteristics

A diary is a personal daily record of one's life. Diary writing usually involves the regularized recording of personal feelings and reflections on a topic.

A diary is characterized by the following points:

- **Personal:**

- A diary is usually regarded as a resource which helps one's growth of self-awareness and self-reliance. Diary writers reflect on their own life experience and future directions, which many writers do not want to share with others, because they simply regard their diary as a sign of personal growth.
- However, the tendency is obvious that more and more diary is written for public reading. Blog on the internet is an example. In this case, people write diary for personal pleasure, instead of merely a personal record.

(What is a blog? A blog is a website that displays the postings by a person; it usually has links to comments by the website viewers. Besides words, one can display photos, music and favorite websites in his or her blog — **a public diary**).

- **Flexible:**

- Diary can be adapted to a variety of writing experiences, both in form and content. There are no set rules for writing the diary, and the content, structure, and style are all left to the writer. (**Note:** Diary writers usually adopt a consistent way of writing.)

1.1.2 Language Features

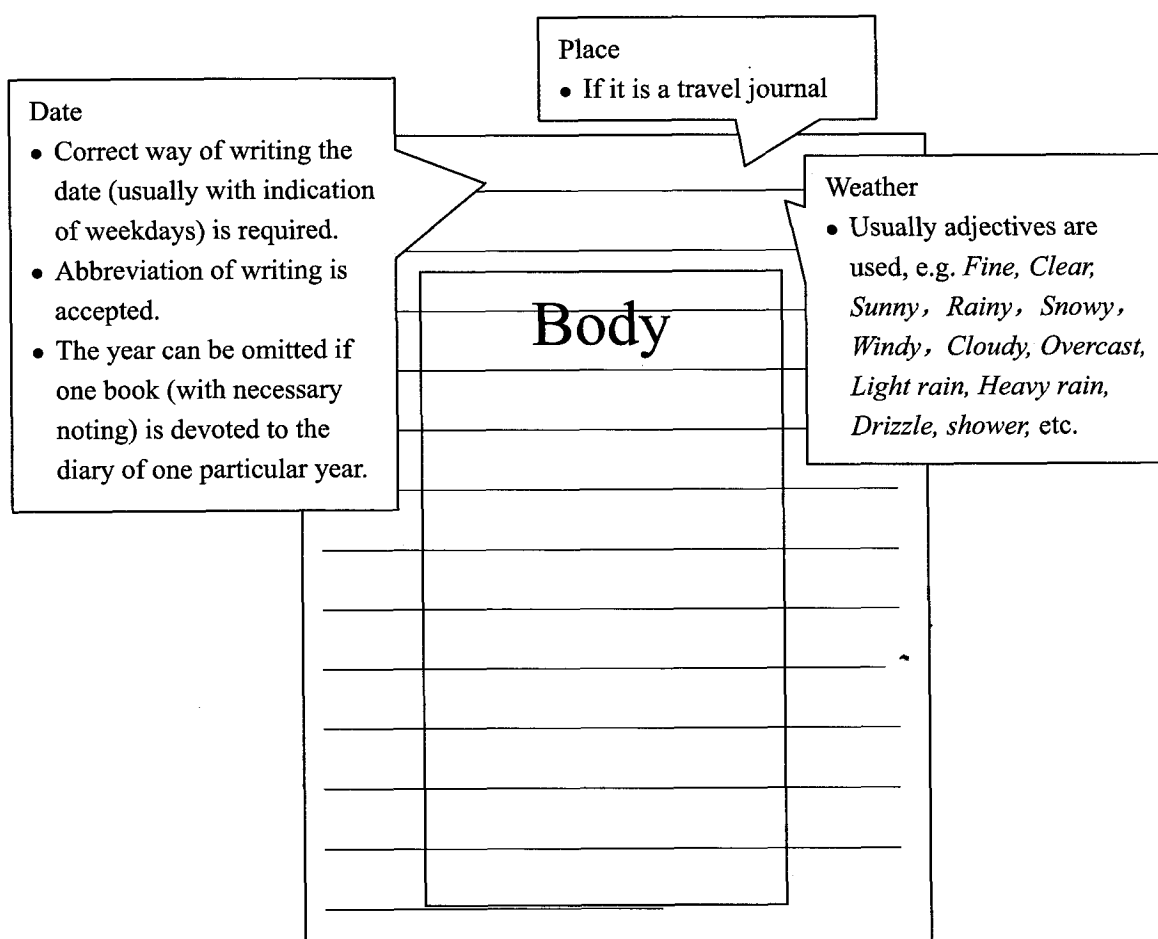
- Verbs in the past tense are used except for those indicating the general present situations or general truth.
- Ideas are arranged day to day in time order.
- Simple language, short sentences, and a casual style are used.
- The words "I" or "me" are used. (For personal reading, the frequent "I" sometimes can

be omitted.)

- For personal reading, diary is not strictly concerned with correct structure, e.g. paragraphs or full sentences; abbreviations or symbols are possible. But for the diary to be shared by others, understandable structures and language are required.
- Flexible types of writing may be adopted: narration, description, exposition or argumentation; possibly mixed types of writing are used.

1.1.3 Form

The following illustration shows the placement of the date, place, weather and body, the major components of diary.



1.1.4 Contents of the Body

What goes into a diary? One's thoughts, feelings, reactions, dreams, experiences and interests are the usual contents of one's diary.

- **Daily routine**

Example:

I had four classes in the morning and two in the afternoon. I was late for the first class in the morning and was criticized by the teacher. I did not like the teacher because he spoke to me rudely. Anyway, I really had to leave home much earlier because I had been late for the morning classes for three times.

Xiao Jun sent me a text message this afternoon, saying he would invite me to his birthday party this Saturday evening. I'm thinking of buying him a birthday present.

The Chinese football team lost the football match with the South Korean team. There was not any better performance than last time.

- **Narrative of an event**

Example:

We have just come back from a picnic!

Tired of our routine weekend activities, my parents decided to take us out on a picnic. We went by bike to a hillside near the foot of a waterfall. Though the sun was blazing, we did not set up our tent, because the green trees gave plenty of shade.

The water was rushing down noisily. But it seemed to be rather musical, different from the noise of traffic. I wondered how for many centuries the water had been running down the cliff and how powerful the torrents would become in a rainy season. Some birds had made their nests on the cliff and were flying about. What a pity that we had not brought our camera to take pictures of the beautiful sight!

We found a lot of smooth pebbles in the sand. When we felt thirsty, we drank directly from the brook. The water tasted especially cool, sweet and refreshing. That noon, we all ate much more than usual.

We left there around 3 p.m.

- **In memory of the day**

Example:

This day 10 years ago, Dad died in a car crash. Right before he died Mom and Dad got in an argument. Dad left to cool off, but he never came back. Mom and my older brother knew something was wrong. Then a call came. "Your husband has died in a car crash, Miss." It was hard for my mom and brother.

I looked over again at his pictures today. Those pictures show a lot his personality. Most of the time he smiled. There's a picture of him downstairs. I like it the best because he, my brother and me are together and he's holding me in his arms.

Most kids can play with a dad or a step dad. But I could never play with a dad! I hear lots of kids say "I hate my dad," when they're angry. But I say "you're lucky to have a dad, and be happy." A lot of kids can play games with their dad and catch. I have a wish I could play with my dad in all sports like baseball and basketball, and more, but that will never happen but I will keep on wishing.

If I could write to Dad I would write this:

Dear Dad,

*I'm 17 now and 1.75 meters tall. I am at a good high school and am preparing for the entrance exams for a university. How are you, Dad? Do you remember me?
P.S. Please don't forget none of us like mom, Jack, me, plus grandma.*

● Random thought

“Random thought” means you may write about any topic that occurs to you and interests you.

Example:

There was a debate just now on TV about what we as individuals can do to protect the environment. “How can we save and protect the earth?” This is really too big a question to answer, but I believe we ARE able to do something in our actual daily life to save the earth or to keep our earth clean.

For example, the earth has only so much fresh water for us to drink and use. So it's important not to waste water. You can help save water if you don't let the water run in the sink when you're not using it, and if you turn off the faucet firmly whenever you're finished.

When you don't let the faucet run and you make sure to turn it off firmly, you're helping to conserve water. To “conserve” means to use something carefully. It means to save and not to waste. There's an old saying that people use: “Waste not, want not.” That means, if we're careful not to waste what nature gives us, then we will have enough of what we need. But if we waste what nature gives us, then someday we may want something—like trees or fresh water—but be unable to find what we need.

What's important is that we start doing those things.

1.2 Journal

1.2.1 Definition

What is a journal? A journal (personal journal) is a continued series of writings made by a person in response to their life experiences and events.

Similarities to and differences from diary

- Diaries contain a description of daily events. A journal may include those descriptions, but it also contains reflections on what took place and expresses emotions and understandings about them. (It doesn't matter what you call your writing, either a diary or journal, as long as you see the distinction between these two ways of writing.)
- Journals allow more publicity than diary.
- Journals are more varied in form. Each journal is unique.
- Diary is written mostly for a personal record, while Journal writing can be a learning tool based on the ideas that students write to learn. Students use the journals to write about topics of personal interest, to note their observations, to imagine, to wonder and to connect new information with things they already know. Journals offer students the opportunity to reflect on their world and expand their awareness of what is happening in their lives. For many students journals become a rich source of ideas for writing. On the other hand, the journal can be used as a reference file to help the teacher monitor individual development and progress. Entries should not be evaluated as finished products. The evaluation of journals should emphasize the content.

1.2.2 Form & Language

As a journal is more varied in form, it may be a paragraph, a short essay, even a poem. Some people like to accompany their writing with pictures.

You may indicate the date of writing on the left top corner if necessary.

Paragraph-form example:

Plastic, Paper, or Cloth?

We have a big decision to make. We can use cloth, paper, or plastic bags. I choose cloth because paper uses trees, and plastic uses petroleum; so we should use cloth. Cloth bags are easy to take with you and use again and again. We need to keep our earth clean, so let's use cloth. Remember, recycle and reuse.

Essay-form example:

My Mother

Do you have someone who is great, spends time with you, cares for you, and is an important person? Well, I do, and she has black hair, brown eyes, and a caring touch. That's my mom.

My mom talks to me about many things. One of the things she talks to me about is what will happen when I grow up. She tells me what to do in case of an emergency. And one day I had a really bad day with my friends, and she told me what to do about it.

My mom and I spend a lot of time together. We play games, bake cookies, make necklaces, and draw doodle tricks. But our favorite thing to do is read. Our favorite book is If You Give a Mouse a Cookie.

Mom takes me shopping at the mall. We buy toys and clothes, and we eat at the café. We usually get Chinese food or go to a McDonald's restaurant. When we ride the escalator, my mom pretends to fall back and says, "My shoestring's stuck!"

My mom always laughs, and when she laughs she sounds like a hyena gone crazy! She doesn't laugh every day, but when she does, it's hilarious, and I have to laugh, too!

My mom is the greatest. I love how she jokes around. She is always fun no matter what, and she gives me great advice. My mom is more than a mom; she is like my best friend!

Poetry-form example:

MY BACKYARD

*My backyard breathes life!
The plants gather the sunlight with bending and reaching arms.
Trailing vines hold onto the fences with curling fingers.
The tall grasses and ferns dance around the garden.
A hummingbird rapidly flutters,
waving good morning as she drinks the nectar
from the shining smiles of colorful flower heads.
The wind whispers as she passes, telling me everything she has seen
as she softly lays down the seeds she has carried.*

The language of a journal is informal, but usually grammatical. Since writing journals are often a way of training writing, journal writers are encouraged to use standard English and to improve their writing constantly.

1.2.3 Contents

A variety of topics can be written in a journal. One of the biggest problems with writing journals is that some students use them simply as a way to record the day's events. They slip into the routine of writing diary entries without reflection or a real purpose.

In fact, there are several variations of journals that can be adapted to fit the needs of the classroom. For example:

- **Personal Journals**

These journals allow students the freedom to write about their feelings, opinions, expressions and about topics of personal interest. If they wish, students may share these entries with others.

- **Dialogue Journals**

Dialogue journals are conversations in writing. Most often the conversation is between the student and the teacher or classmates, regularly—daily, if possible or at least two or three times a week—over a period of one semester or an entire school year. These journals are interactive—the two conversation partners comment on one another's entries. Students may write as much as they choose on any topic. These conversations encourage students to express themselves in thoughtful and informal ways.

- **Reading Response Journals**

These journals are used to capture students' reactions to books and to track their reading. The entries might include questions, comparisons, evaluations, letters to characters, predictions and comments on style or mood.

- **Science Journals**

Science journals are a way to incorporate personal ideas with observation and interference. Students can express their opinions with every experiment. Students are encouraged to write questions about the process or outcomes of explorations. They can use drawings, diagrams, data charts and graphs. They may also learn to use sources of documents

Example 1

Personal journal example

Our Website

Our school has just made a new website for us. Now we can search for our scores on the internet. What's more, each class has its own webpage, which is made by students and has at least two news stories with pictures. Some student associations have their webpages too, such as our school magazine "See and Think", and our school TV channel. They are all made by ourselves. It's really a good stage for us to show our talents. I plan to make my contributions to the website.