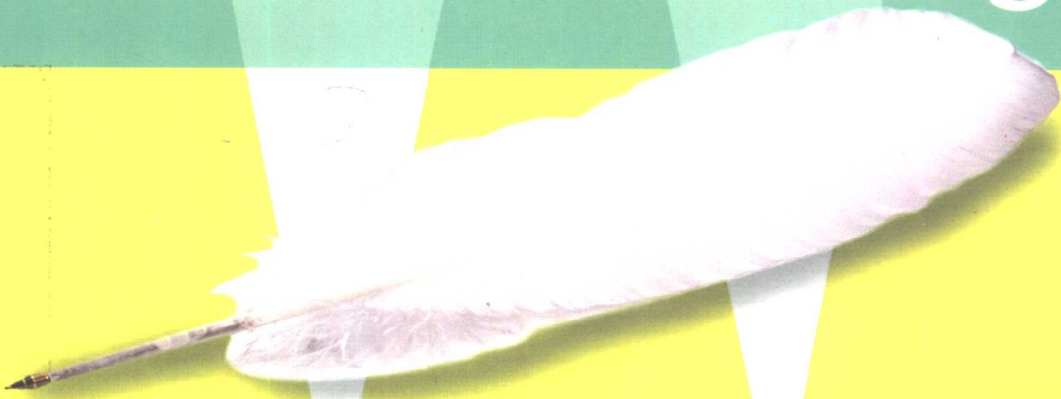Brian Devlin [澳]=著

英语论文写作

教程——基于国际标准的学术写作与发表

International Standards for Students' Writing

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International Standards
for Students' Writing

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内 容 简 介

本书是一本高级英语学术写作教程。作者在较短的篇幅里融会了国际通用的写作标准与分析，简明扼要地介绍了如何在国际标准的框架下写作论文并发表。

本书作者 Brian Devlin 是澳大利亚 Northern Territory University 大学的副教授，在美国哥伦比亚大学获得博士学位，具有较好的国际学术背景。本书的基础是 Devlin 博士在作为英语专家在清华大学外语系讲授"英语论文写作"课程期间的讲义。·

本书适合做英语专业研究生或本科生论文写作的教材，也可以作为其他专业硕士或博士研究生的英文写作参考书。

C 出版说明

本书属于高级英语学术写作教程。

本书在短小的篇幅里融会了国际通用的写作标准与分析，简明扼要地教授学生如何用英语写论文。

所谓国际标准，就是指国际水平，包括世界一流大学对论文的要求、主要专业组织和官方机构提出的出版规范、国际核心刊物的论文投稿标准、最权威的英语学者对英语所作的分析。

教材在一开始就创建了一套论文写作模式，各章节都运用了这一模式。这一模式的目的是指导学生可以从产生模糊的想法开始直到论文发表，怎样按照国际标准完成写作过程。

本书时代感强，简洁易懂，方便查询。作者在写作过程中，注意理论联系实际，理论讲授与学生论文范例结合紧密。书中例题多为清华大学研究生论文写作实例，容易引起读者的兴趣。

本书作者 Brian Devlin 博士是澳大利亚人，在美国哥伦比亚大学获得博士学位，有较好的国际学术背景，是撰写这样一本教材的较为合适的人选。Brian Devlin 博士作为英语专家在清华大学外语系讲授"英语论文写作"课程期间，我们向他约了这本书稿。本书就是在讲义的基础上写成的。

本书适合做英语专业研究生或本科生毕业论文写作的教材，也可作为其他专业研究或想用英语发表学术论文的研究者的参考书。

配合本书的使用，作者还专门开发了"高级学术写作网站 (http://202.108.223.107/bde/)"。该网站将定期更新。

Acronyms

AERA	American Educational Research Association
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
APA	American Psychological Association
CBE	Council of Biology Editors
IJSL	International Journal of the Sociology of Language
ISO	International Standards Organization
LGSWE	Longman grammar of spoken and written English
MLA	Modern Language Association
UCB	University of California–Berkeley

Acknowledgements

Table of contents

Introduction

What is the purpose of the book?

This book is a practical, hands-on guide for university students in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. It especially targets those who plan to continue their studies at an overseas university, and to publish in international refereed journals. While the focus of the book is on helping students with a number of advanced academic writing tasks, such as preparing research proposals, abstracts, theses and articles, the framework presented in the book can be applied to the preparation of term papers and reports as well. What makes the book different from other manuals is that it does not just depend on the writer's experience, which is reasonably extensive, nor does it just refer to other books, such as popular writing manuals, although these are plentiful and often quite useful. This book is based, as far as possible, on international requirements.

What is meant by international standards or requirements will be explained in more detail later. For now it will be sufficient to say that the standards that have been used as reference points for this book are those that are considered to be world class. These standards include: the requirements set by top universities, publishing guidelines developed by leading professional organisations and official agencies, the rules prescribed for authors by international refereed journals, standards authorised by the International Standards Organisation (ISO) and associated bodies, and analyses of international English published by the most highly regarded scholars. Popular manuals have been

consulted for comparative purposes on occasion, but the international standards chosen for this book are benchmarks that can be considered to be of the highest quality, and to be the most reputable.

A simple, logical framework has been introduced in this book with the aim of showing students how to develop a scholarly text, from the first rough idea through to publication, and how to do so, from the beginning, with the aim of meeting international standards. This framework has been applied to some students' work samples to show how these requirements can be met. For example, a case study referred to in Chapter 5 illustrates how the framework has been used to help a student writer during the early stages of preparing a research proposal.

This book has several other purposes besides introducing a framework that draws attention to relevant international standards. First, it sets out to emphasise the value of clarity in scholarly discussion. Next, it aims to show what is meant by evidence-based writing. Third, and this is possibly the most crucial goal, the book sets out to show how important it is for academic writers to put forward a clearly articulated position or thesis, which is then defended by means of well-reasoned arguments, backed up by supporting evidence.

Since the purpose of scholarly writing is to contribute new insights, solutions and ideas, student writers should aim to produce research papers that communicate ideas as simply, logically and clearly as possible. Some student writers wrongly imagine that they have to begin a major piece of scholarly writing by adopting a false voice, such as referring to oneself as "we" because "my professor told me it sounds better", or taking sections of text from others without due acknowledgement, which is plagiarising (or stealing). There is no need for a writer to sound windy, pompous or obscure, nor is it necessary, when writing as a scholar, to be untrue to oneself. An author is not required to write in a complicated way using big words that are barely understood. This is not what is called for when a student is asked to write an extended academic text. Students do not need to compose sentences that go on and on for half a page or more. Nor do they have to labour over long, bloated manuscripts. In fact, they do not need to write any more than is necessary. It is worth remembering that a printed scientific research paper is normally no more than six to eight pages long (Day, 1988, p. 129). It is through succinct, clearly expressed technical communication that scientists and other scholars add to the common store of human knowledge, and help to solve important problems. It should not be the aim of a scholar to write at unnecessary length or to conceal the truth, simply to sound impressive. Clarity, brevity and honesty should be the hallmarks of good scholarly writing.

This is the key to successful communication. Technical words, may be used, but these must be understandable to the audience. Well-understood technical terms can be used freely when students are writing for specialists; in that situation it is not necessary to explain what the technical words

mean. For a more general readership, though, it is necessary to introduce any technical terminology more deliberately, on each occasion defining any term which has a special meaning or significance. In a long piece of writing such as a thesis this is usually done in the introduction.

The third purpose of this book is to show what is meant by evidence-based writing. What is required when developing a thesis or research article that presents an analysis of the available evidence?   How can a writer ensure that his or her evidence is sound? How can a writer establish his or her credibility as an interpreter of the evidence in a way that satisfies the reader? How can a writer be convincing and persuasive without deliberately choosing to be biased? Should the aim be to *prove* a hypothesis or to *test* it? These are the sorts of questions that are tackled in this book.

It hardly needs to be said that research can be trivial, even pointless. Where researchers are seeking the answers to important and practical questions, however, their results will almost invariably be of interest to somebody (Devlin, 1989); what a writer has found out, therefore, needs to be written up clearly, accurately and well, so that it can be communicated to others in a timely way.

The final aim of this book is to stress the importance of persuasive argumentation in scholarly writing. It is not just the doctoral research student who is expected to put forward a proposition and to defend it. All scholarly writing can be understood as an exercise in argumentation. Some student writers put this thought out of their minds and imagine that the task of an essay or a report is simply to assemble some facts, descriptions and/or analyses on some topic or other. This is far too limited an understanding of what such texts are meant to do.

All scholarly writers, whether first-year students or doctoral candidates about to submit their dissertations (or theses), can benefit from the message strongly advocated in this book. They all need to know how to draw on available evidence to advance a point of view. The task of the scholarly writer is to establish a proposition clearly, to give it a context, to link it to what others have written, and to advance reasons why it should be accepted. A proposition or thesis is defended by constructing a plausible case, using reasonable arguments and well-defined terms. Opposing evidence is not ignored, but is factored into the argument, and in this way a robust scholarly case is built. It is in this sense that I consider research-based writing and scholarship to be about taking a position and defending it. This is true of an argumentative essay, and it is most certainly true of a doctoral dissertation, where the candidate is expected to advance a proposition that is significant and original, and to be able to defend it successfully. The student writer who grasps this principle and applies it in his or her scholarly work is well on the way to producing research papers that are persuasive, because they have been constructed following a strong chain of reasoning.

So, at the risk of labouring the point, I am emphasising at the outset that this book is not just

about meeting standards, however valuable and necessary that may be. The book tries to strip away some of the mystique surrounding scholarly and scientific writing. The crucially important skill that the student writer must develop is the ability to propose a point of view, and to marshall evidence in support of that position, with the aim of persuading an audience of intelligent peers. Guidelines, rules, requirements and so on are all important, for they constrain the scope and format of the documents that can be produced by the degree candidate, but it is good argumentation that it is at the heart of the scholarly enterprise. This previous sentence can be regarded as this book's thesis statement.

Will this book be relevant for you?

This book is based on an Advanced Academic Writing (AAW) course that was taught at Tsinghua University, Beijing, in Semester 1, 2002. However, it is likely to be useful for other university students in China as well, whether or not they are English majors. The book's intended readers are Chinese students who are strongly interested in studying and publishing overseas, as they are the ones who are interested in aiming for the highest international standards in their scholarly writing.

The need for a book of this kind became apparent after the author had begun teaching the AAW class. Many students said that the course had been really helpful in clarifying what they needed to do given that the process of writing a paper had been a bit like "groping in the dark". Others said: "We have never had this kind of training before. The ideas you are presenting are very useful for us. Where can we read more about this?" The framework outlined in this book summarises the approach that was adopted. What makes it important, however, rather than merely useful, is that it is based on relevant international standards.

This book then is intended to be a practical aid that can supplement the advanced writing class taught at Tsinghua, although it can be used by university teachers as the basis for other semester-long courses or for intensive training programs run over a week or two. The book can be studied by university students who are looking for a self-study guide to scholarly writing in general and an introduction to four types of academic texts in particular: research proposals, abstracts, theses and articles.

The key terms explained

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Abstract

An *abstract* is a brief summary, usually not more than 200 words long, that includes the thesis statement and findings that are outlined in a longer document. There are two different kinds of abstracts according to Markel (1984, pp. 239-241). A *descriptive abstract*, now somewhat out of favour, simply describes what a report, article or thesis is about and what methods were used. It does not include the results or conclusions. An *informative abstract*, on the other hand, summarises the key information contained in a larger document and will typically include these elements:

- identifying information (the name of the document, the writer and the writer's institution);
- the thesis statement; and
- the key findings.

Most of the abstract will be devoted to summarising the important findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Normally written after a larger document has been completed, the content of an abstract and its level of difficulty will vary, depending on the target audience. For example, an abstract written to complement a technical article will be written for readers who are familiar both with the subject matter and with the technical language used. In that case the writer can prepare an abstract that refers to advanced concepts and freely uses the technical terms from that field (Markel, 1984).

Abstracts may be written for many purposes including summarising research findings, presenting the results of a survey in brief, summarising an article or thesis, or even a chapter-in a thesis.

Proposal

A *proposal outline* or *initial proposal* is a brief sketch, perhaps two or three pages long, of the research a student proposes to do. The fuller or more elaborated version of a proposal will generally include these elements: the applicant's identity and contact details, a descriptive title, a summary of the intended work (including the problem to be investigated), a critical synopsis of the literature, a timetable (indicating the sequence of work), some discussion about the goal of the project, an itemised list of requirements (facilities, equipment and materials) and a budget (Ebel, Bliefert & Russey, 1987). The term "research proposal", as it is used in this book, includes thesis proposals

and proposals for research grants, although it isn't much concerned with the latter.

Research article

A short scholarly report prepared for a peer-reviewed publication, the research article generally conforms to this four-part structure: Introduction, Method, Results and Discussion. Its usual purpose is to communicate research findings.

Thesis

This term has several meanings. In the United States, it generally refers to a long report, based on a substantial research project, which is submitted either as part of a master's degree or an undergraduate honours program. In Australia and Britain it is also the term used for the long paper that is submitted for a doctoral degree. Throughout the English-speaking world the term "thesis" also has the general meaning of a proposition that is argued. This is the sense in which it is used when we talk about a thesis statement. In the United States "dissertation" is the term that is used to refer to a long doctoral paper, or what would be called a thesis in Britain or Australia.

Genre

For our purposes it will be sufficient to define "genre" as a text type that is written for a particular audience, context and purpose. There are some conventional formats available to guide a student in organising a scholarly genre such as a research proposal or thesis, but these should not be treated as rigid containers with inflexibly labeled components that cannot be varied. The formats are not fixed, but will vary depending on who the student is writing for, with what aim, on what subject, and in what context.

This book is primarily concerned with four types of academic texts or genres: proposals, theses, abstracts and research articles. These various genres differ in length and the way they are organised. At one end of the scale there is the abstract, which requires a writer to sift through a large body of information in order to extract key points which are then succinctly summarised or included as is. At the other end there is the research thesis, an extended text which draws on a range of skills; these include the ability to make connections between established theory and the author's findings as well as the ability to select appropriate data, which are then condensed, displayed and analysed. However, what the two have in common is that they are underpinned (or should be underpinned) by a thesis: a key proposition that is advanced and defended.

The ABC-ISP Framework

The framework presented in this book has been given a name, an acronym really, that should be easy to remember: ABC-ISP. The "A" stands for Analyse, to remind student writers of the need to think in an analytical way about who they are writing for, on which topic and for what purpose. "B" represents Brainstorm. The aim of this stage is to encourage students to come up with lots of ideas and to try them out before they start writing, rather than just rejecting various possibilities because they seem silly or wrong. "C" is the first letter of Convince: to remind students of the need to construct good arguments, based on believable evidence, that set out to convince the reader of something. The "I" stands for "Improve: to emphasise the importance of improving the clarity of one's writing through careful revising and editing". "S" refers to Standardise, and is a reminder of the need to use high quality benchmarks (such as international publishing guidelines) as reference points to guide the development of an extended text. The aim is to show student writers how important it is to base their work on reputable international standards. Finally, the "P" stands for Publish, the last link in the chain of communication.

The ABC-ISP framework has been presented as a table so that its skeletal structure can be revealed at a glance, but setting it out in this way creates the misleading impression that it comprises stages that are sequential, linear and discrete. This is not in fact the case. Many of the processes involved in writing are repetitive or iterative. It is constantly necessary for the writer to cycle back and to rethink, redo, and re-assemble what has previously been written. Nevertheless, the framework is a kind of road map that can be consulted by students as a guide. It can also be used by supervisors as a reminder of what they need to focus on as mentors, when working with students. An overview of the framework is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1   The six-stage ABC-ISP framework for developing extended academic texts to an international standard

Steps	Main points
Analyse the writing situation	Identify the main elements of the writing situation: in particular, the audience, the purpose and the topic

Steps	Main points
Brainstorm ideas, then plan the content	Clarify the concepts:
	Map the ideas to see how they relate
	Outline them to put them in sequence
	Select a key problem to investigate
	State the main thesis in one sentence
	List the five key words
	Define the most important terms
	Draft the initial ideas:
	Start writing
Convince others by developing sound arguments	Prepare the case:
	Set out the claims
	Present evidence to support each claim
	Make sure that the evidence is warranted
	Eliminate faulty logic (or fallacies)
	Test the ideas in discussion with others
Improve the clarity of your writing through revising and editing	Revise (make global changes)
	Play with possibilities
	Draw attention to the main themes
	Put new information in its right place
	Develop a well-linked text
	Connect the text to a larger context
	Edit (make local changes)
	Correct any errors
Standardise the format	Select reputable international standards to use as benchmarks
Publish	Attain full membership in a chosen scholarly community:
	Acquire expert knowledge
	Avoid plagiarism (theft)
	Submit the work for peer review
	Publish!

This framework is currently being trialled with students at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

Each step in this framework is the topic of a separate chapter in this book, as can be seen in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2   The six-stage ABC–ISP framework and the structure of this book

Chapters in this book	Steps in the framework
Chapter 1: **Introduction** • What is the purpose of the book? • Will this book be relevant for you? • What is meant by "international standards?" • Some other key terms explained • About the author	
Chapter 2: **Analysing the writing situation** • Clarify who you are writing for, what you are writing about and why • Identify the audience • Identify the purpose • Identify the topic	Analyse the writing situation: Identify your audience, purpose and topic.
Chapter 3: **Brainstorming, planning and drafting** • Map the concepts to see how they relate • Outline the concepts to put them in sequence • Think of a working title • Select a key problem to investigate • What is the difference between a research problem and a topic? • Draft a one-sentence thesis statement • List four or five key words • Define the most important terms • Draft the initial ideas: Start writing	Brainstorm ideas, then plan the content
Chapter 4: **Convincing others: Developing evidence-based arguments** • Prepare your case • Set out the claims • Present evidence to support each claim • Explain why the evidence can be trusted • How can you make sure that the evidence is strong • Eliminate faulty logic (fallacies) • Test your ideas by discussing them with others	Convince others by developing sound arguments