A Guide to Effective Writing

英语写作进阶

Student's Book

学生用书

主 编 刘爱英

上海外语教育出版社
SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS
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主 编 刘爱英

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中国科学技术大学 图书馆藏

上海外语教育出版社

外教社 SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS

www.sflep.com

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语写作进阶/刘爱英主编；何征，李飒，何花编.
—上海：上海外语教育出版社，2018
ISBN 978-7-5446-5400-5

I. ①英… II. ①刘… ②何… ③李… ④何… III. ①英语—写作—高等学校—教材
IV. ①H319.36

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2018)第282290号

出版发行：上海外语教育出版社
（上海外国语大学内） 邮编：200083
电　　话：021-65425300（总机）
电子邮箱：bookinfo@sflep.com.cn
网　　址：http://www.sflep.com
责任编辑：王　奕

印　　刷：浙江临安曙光印务有限公司
开　　本：850×1168　1/16　印张 23.25　字数 511千字
版　　次：2018 年 12月第 1版　2018 年 12月第 1次印刷
印　　数：3 100 册

书　　号：ISBN 978-7-5446-5400-5/H
定　　价：68.00 元

本版图书如有印装质量问题，可向本社调换
质量服务热线：4008-213-263　电子邮箱：editorial@sflep.com

前　言

编写总则

在信息时代，英语写作作为一种交际行为，其重要性是毋庸置疑的。本教材的编者在长期的教学实践中发现，学生的写作兴趣、教材的选择、教学方法的运用、教学活动的设计、学生在教学活动中的主动性等因素均在不同程度上影响着写作能力的提高。为此，在教材的编写设计方面，作者希望达到以下目标：

1. 教材内容符合高等院校英语写作教学的要求，同时有助于包括成教、自考、专升本等多种教育类型中英语专业学生英语写作基础能力的培养和训练。
2. 教材涵盖措辞、句、段、章的基本概念和展开技巧，有助于学生系统地提高英语写作的能力。
3. 各单元内容由浅及深，层层推进，方便学生理解掌握与实践运用。
4. 教材行文语言难度符合学生的认知水平，体例样式生动耐读，有助于激发学生的写作兴趣。
5. 教材的范文及相关练习努力做到贴近大学生的校园生活和他们关心的话题，具有时代气息；难度适中，通俗易懂，易于仿写；语言材料的输入和输出相结合，自主学习与合作学习相结合；有助于启发学生思考，增强其逻辑思辨能力；有助于互动与反馈，便于学生之间进行沟通交流。

各单元主要板块内容的设计

1. 学习焦点导入(Lead-in)：通过互动式学习等生动的交际方式，引入各单元的学习重点，通过解决问题来激发学生深入学习的兴趣。
2. 范例学习(Sample Writing)：通过数目不等的范文，帮助学生打开思维，增加知识及语言输入。范文配有精当的注释，文后附有拓展思维的讨论题，以帮助学生强化对各单元学习焦点的认识。
3. 写作技巧(Writing Techniques)：在范例学习的基础上，对各单元涉及的具体写作技巧进行概括和总结，从理论上加强对学生写作实践的指导。
4. 课堂活动(In-class Activities)：把写作过程分解成具体的多个环节，分阶段进行实践和训练，通过构思、整理提纲、写作、修改、改写等各个环节的练习，帮助学生逐点、逐步解决写作中各个侧面、各种类型的难题。通过真实的语境和交际需要，借助脚手架式的、灵活多样的写作活动，方便学生实践并掌握写作技巧部分论及的具体的英语写作能力和技巧。

5. 课后练习(After-class Activities)：对课堂活动进行深度和广度两个维度上的拓展，通过各种类型的写作任务，加强学生独立从事英语写作进而达到交际目标的能力。

编者希望通过这本教材向学生传递这样一个信息：英语写作是一个生动有趣的过程，也是一个传达思想、实现创新的重要手段。

配套《练习参考答案》

出于方便教与学的考虑，本教材的配套图书《英语写作进阶练习参考答案》提供所有范文讨论题以及课堂活动和课后练习的参考答案，供教师与学生参考、使用。

致谢

本教材编写受**四川外国语大学教材建设基金**资助。在编写过程中，编者参考了大量的国内外文献，并以注释的形式对所引用的文献出处进行了说明。少数引用文字已在教学中使用多年，作者虽已努力，但仍无法追溯其来源，作者为此特向其原作者致歉，同时致以深深的敬意。美籍教师Timothy G. Hoffman校阅了全书的文稿，特此致谢。

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Contents

Unit 1 Diction ___ 1

Unit Objectives ___ 1

Part I Levels of Words ___ 2

Part II The Meaning of Words ___ 4

Part III General and Specific Words ___ 5

Part IV In-class Activities ___ 6

Part V After-class Activities ___ 8

Unit 2 The Sentence (1): Types of Sentences ___ 11

Unit Objectives ___ 11

Part I Complete Sentences ___ 11

Part II Simple, Compound, Complex and Compound-Complex Sentences ___ 12

Part III Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative and Exclamatory Sentences ___ 15

Part IV Loose, Periodic, and Balanced Sentences ___ 16

Part V Short and Long Sentences ___ 18

Part VI In-class Activities ___ 19

Part VII After-class Activities ___ 24

Unit 3 The Sentence (2): Effective Sentences ___ 28

Unit Objectives ___ 28

Part I Unity ___ 28

Part II Coherence ___ 29

Part III Conciseness ___ 31

Part IV Emphasis ___ 33

Part V Variety ___ 36

Part VI In-class Activities ___ 38

Part VII After-class Activities ___ 40

Unit 4 The Sentence (3): Common Errors ___ 44

Unit Objectives ___ 44

Part I Run-on Sentence ___ 44

Part II Sentence Fragment ___ 45

Part III Faulty Parallelism ___ 48

Part IV Misplaced Modifier ___ 49

Part V Dangling Modifier ___ 50

Part VI Ambiguous Pronoun Reference ___ 52

Part VII Faulty Shift ___ 53

Part VIII In-class Activities ___ 54

Part IX After-class Activities ___ 57

Unit 5 The Paragraph (1): The Structure of an Effective Paragraph ___ 62

Unit Objectives ___ 62

Part I Lead-in ___ 62

Part II Sample Writing: Defining the Paragraph ___ 63

Part III The Structure of a Well-organized Paragraph ___ 64

Part IV In-class Activities ___ 73

Part V After-class Activities ___ 76

Unit 6 The Paragraph (2): Qualities of a Good Paragraph ___ 80

Unit Objectives ___ 80

Part I Lead-in ___ 80

Part II Paragraph Unity ___ 81

Part III Paragraph Coherence ___ 84

Part IV In-class Activities ___ 94

Part V After-class Activities ___ 100

Unit 7 The Paragraph (3): Planning a Paragraph ___ 103

Unit Objectives ___ 103

Part I Lead-in ___ 103

Part II The Writing Process ___ 104

Part III Paragraph Planning ___ 105

Part IV In-class Activities ___ 116

Part V After-class Activities ___ 119

Unit 8 Developing Paragraphs by Time ___ *121*

Unit Objectives ___ *121*

Part I Lead-in ___ *121*

Part II Paragraphs Developed by Time ___ *122*

Part III Writing Techniques ___ *122*

Part IV Sample Writing ___ *124*

Part V In-class Activities ___ *126*

Part VI After-class Activities ___ *128*

Unit 9 Developing Paragraphs by Process ___ *129*

Unit Objectives ___ *129*

Part I Lead-in ___ *129*

Part II Paragraphs Developed by Process ___ *130*

Part III Writing Techniques ___ *130*

Part IV Sample Writing ___ *132*

Part V In-class Activities ___ *134*

Part VI After-class Activities ___ *137*

Unit 10 Developing Paragraphs by Example ___ *138*

Unit Objectives ___ *138*

Part I Lead-in ___ *138*

Part II Paragraphs Developed by Example ___ *139*

Part III Writing Techniques ___ *139*

Part IV Sample Writing ___ *141*

Part V In-class Activities ___ *144*

Part VI After-class Activities ___ *146*

Unit 11 Developing Paragraphs by Definition ___ *147*

Unit Objectives ___ *147*

Part I Lead-in ___ *147*

Part II Paragraphs Developed by Definition ___ *148*

Part III Writing Techniques ___ *148*

Part IV Sample Writing ___ *150*

Part V In-class Activities ___ *154*

Part VI After-class Activities ___ *155*

Unit 12 Developing Paragraphs by Comparison/Contrast ___ *156*

Unit Objectives ___ *156*

Part I Lead-in ___ *156*

Part II Paragraphs Developed by Comparison/Contrast ___ *157*

Part III Writing Techniques ___ *157*

Part IV Sample Writing ___ *160*

Part V In-class Activities ___ *164*

Part VI After-class Activities ___ *167*

Unit 13 Developing Paragraphs by Classification ___ *168*

Unit Objectives ___ *168*

Part I Lead-in ___ *168*

Part II Paragraphs Developed by Classification ___ *169*

Part III Writing Techniques ___ *169*

Part IV Sample Writing ___ *172*

Part V In-class Activities ___ *174*

Part VI After-class Activities ___ *176*

Unit 14 Developing Paragraphs by Cause-Effect ___ *177*

Unit Objectives ___ *177*

Part I Lead-in ___ *177*

Part II Paragraphs Developed by Cause-Effect ___ *177*

Part III Different Kinds of Cause-Effect Relationships ___ *178*

Part IV Writing Techniques ___ *179*

Part V Sample Writing ___ *181*

Part VI In-class Activities ___ *183*

Part VII After-class Activities ___ *186*

Unit 15 Developing Paragraphs by Space ___ *187*

Unit Objectives ___ *187*

Part I Lead-in ___ *187*

Part II Paragraphs Developed by Space ___ *188*

Part III Writing Techniques ___ *188*

Part IV Sample Writing ___ *190*

Part V In-class Activities 193
Part VI After-class Activities 194

Unit 16 From Paragraph to Essay 195
Unit Objectives 195
Part I Lead-in 195
Part II Essay Writing 196
Part III Writing Techniques 200
Part IV In-class Activities 215
Part V After-class Activities 218

Unit 17 Narration: Developing Essays by Time 219
Unit Objectives 219
Part I Lead-in 219
Part II Sample Writing: Telling about Happenings 220
Part III Writing Techniques 223
Part IV Transitional Devices 225
Part V In-class Activities 226
Part VI After-class Activities 230

Unit 18 Exposition: Developing Essays by Process 232
Unit Objectives 232
Part I Lead-in 232
Part II Sample Writing: Essays That Describe Steps in Processes 233
Part III Writing Techniques 237
Part IV Transitional Devices 238
Part V In-class Activities 239
Part VI After-class Activities 240

Unit 19 Exposition: Developing Essays by Example/Detail 242
Unit Objectives 242
Part I Lead-in 242
Part II Sample Writing: Essays That Cite Examples or Provide Details 243
Part III Writing Techniques 248
Part IV Transitional Devices 251

Part V In-class Activities ___ 252
Part VI After-class Activities ___ 256

Unit 20 Exposition: Developing Essays by Definition ___ 261
Unit Objectives ___ 261
Part I Lead-in ___ 261
Part II Sample Writing: Essays That Provide Definitions ___ 262
Part III Writing Techniques ___ 266
Part IV Transitional Devices ___ 268
Part V In-class Activities ___ 269
Part VI After-class Activities ___ 271

Unit 21 Exposition: Developing Essays by Comparison/Contrast ___ 274
Unit Objectives ___ 274
Part I Lead-in ___ 274
Part II Sample Writing: Essays That Show Similarities and Differences ___ 275
Part III Writing Techniques ___ 281
Part IV Transitional Devices ___ 284
Part V In-class Activities ___ 285
Part VI After-class Activities ___ 287

Unit 22 Exposition: Developing Essays by Classification ___ 290
Unit Objectives ___ 290
Part I Lead-in ___ 290
Part II Sample Writing: Essays That Classify Information ___ 291
Part III Writing Techniques ___ 296
Part IV Transitional Devices ___ 298
Part V In-class Activities ___ 299
Part VI After-class Activities ___ 302

Unit 23 Exposition: Developing Essays by Cause-Effect ___ 304
Unit Objectives ___ 304
Part I Lead-in ___ 304
Part II Sample Writing: Essays That Explain Cause-Effect Relationships ___ 305

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com

Part III Writing Techniques ___ *311*
Part IV Transitional Devices ___ *315*
Part V In-class Activities ___ *316*
Part VI After-class Activities ___ *319*

Unit 24 Description: Developing Essays by Space ___ *321*

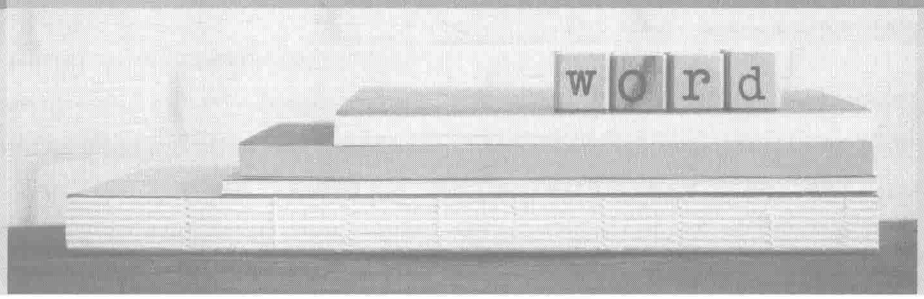
Unit Objectives ___ *321*
Part I Lead-in ___ *321*
Part II Sample Writing: Descriptive Essays That Use Concrete Sensory Details and Show Spatial Relationships ___ *322*
Part III Writing Techniques ___ *327*
Part IV Transitional Devices ___ *330*
Part V In-class Activities ___ *331*
Part VI After-class Activities ___ *333*

Unit 25 Argumentation ___ *336*

Unit Objectives ___ *336*
Part I Lead-in ___ *336*
Part II Argumentative Writing ___ *337*
Part III Major Strategies of Writing an Argumentative Essay ___ *337*
Part IV Sample Studies ___ *346*
Part V In-class Activities ___ *348*
Part VI After-class Activities ___ *351*

Appendix I Capitalization ___ *353*
Appendix II Punctuation ___ *354*
Appendix III Useful Tool Books ___ *356*
Appendix IV Useful Websites ___ *357*
References ___ *358*

Unit 1



Diction

UNIT OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit you will

1. be familiar with a basic knowledge of diction in English writing;
2. be able to classify the levels of English words from a stylistic point of view;
3. be familiar with the meaning of a word from two aspects: denotative and connotative; and
4. be able to distinguish general words from specific words.

Writing is a way to reach out to the world. When you write, you write to explore your ideas and feelings through words. A good choice of words can best allow you to communicate your thoughts to the readers. The difficulty in word choice is caused partially by the vast number of available English words, but even a large vocabulary stock can not guarantee your proper use of words in the writing. What you should do is to learn to use words that are most useful and most often used in communication.

To communicate your ideas precisely and effectively, you should choose the right words that are exact, fresh, vivid, and appropriate. A good choice of word is always made with reference to a particular sentence. A word that is perfectly appropriate to be used in a certain place may not be exact or appropriate in another place. It is the situation or context that helps to show a reader what you intend to express. To understand this distinction, you should study the basic knowledge of diction.

PART I LEVELS OF WORDS

Directions

Work in pairs to match words or phrases which express the same ideas in the following sentences, and then answer the questions that follow.

1a. The relationship between television and cinema grew increasingly symbiotic in the 1980s as television companies invested heavily in feature film making.

1b. TV and the movies got more and more dependent on each other in the 1980s as TV companies put a lot of money into making movies.

2a. The relative disadvantage of women with regard to their earnings and levels of asset ownership indicates that within classes there is extensive economic inequity based on gender.

2b. Women earn less than men and own less than men. Why is this so?

Questions:

1. Can you sense a shift in the underlined words in the above sentences? What is the shift?
2. How do the words that writers choose to express their ideas affect the text?

Sentences 1a and 1b, Sentences 2a and 2b say the same thing respectively but differ widely in the degree of formality. One of the reasons for the difference in formality between the sentences is the "words" the writer has chosen to express his point of view. The wording of the informal text is much more colloquial and conversational while the formal text creates a more academic tone by using a formal and specialized language. Informal language can make your academic content sound anecdotal and impressionistic. Therefore, formal language is often used in research, analysis and critical thinking.

Considering the stylistic difference, English words may be divided into four types: formal words, standard words, colloquial words and slang.

Formal words are also called learned words, advanced words or literary words. These words are more widely used by educated rather than by uneducated people, and are more likely to be used on formal occasions instead of informal occasions. They are, for the most part, used in written language and generally confined to the realm of serious textbooks, academic or technical works, and most essays written at university settings. For example, you would use formal words when you write a letter of application for a job.

Formal words tend to be impersonal and precise, and more specialized and complex than those employed in everyday speech.

Directions

Sample reading

The inequity in the distribution of wealth in Australia is yet another indicator of Australia's lack of egalitarianism. In 1995, 20% of the Australian population owned 72.2% of Australia's wealth with the top 50% owning 92.1%. Such a significant skew in the distribution of wealth indicates that, at least in terms of economics, there is an established class system in Australia. McGregor (1988) argues that Australian society can be categorized into three levels: the Upper, Middle and Working classes.

Work in pairs and discuss the following questions.

1. What is your general impression of the sample paragraph, formal or informal? Why?
2. What are the formal words in the sample paragraph? What effects do they have on writing?
3. What do you think of the other words?

The sentences in this paragraph are all long and carefully constructed. They contain several formal words, and specific sociological and social science terminology. One must, however, beware of excess. Formal writing can easily become incomprehensible because it is too convoluted or wordy.

Most of the words in the sample paragraph, however, are **standard words** which are commonly used every day and in all kinds of writing. They are familiar to the widest group of educated speakers and writers.

Directions

Work in pairs and fill in the blanks the standard word counterparts of the words listed.

awfully _____	mad _____	over with _____
kind of _____	sure _____	get it _____
movie _____	math _____	exam _____

The standard word counterparts of the words listed above are: awfully — very, mad — enthusiastic, over with — finished, kind of — slightly, sure — certainly, get it — understand, movie — cinema, math — mathematics, exam — examination.

Colloquial or **informal** words include words and expressions that are used in everyday spoken language and other informal situations. They are the kinds of words that people, educated or uneducated alike, use when they are talking together informally. Those words are considered to be characteristic of or only appropriate for casual, ordinary, familiar, or informal conversation rather than formal speech or writing. For example, many good writers use colloquial words for humor or for an informal and relaxed tone.

Slang are highly informal words and expressions that are not considered standard in

the speaker's language. They are more often met in speech than in writing, though writers of fiction often use slang expressions to mould or establish a character. *To split* is the slang counterpart of the more standard word *to leave*. Slang words may be vivid, cheerful, and interesting. However, they may, when used inappropriately, make the writer or speaker sound offensive or funny. For example,

> *On hearing that his grandmother had kicked the bucket, we wrote him a letter to express our deep sympathies.*

The sentence does not sound sympathetic because the slang expression *kick the bucket* might lower the dignity of formal or serious speech or writing. As slang often does not last long enough to have a clear and established meaning, it is not encouraged in college writing.

PART II THE MEANING OF WORDS

Directions

Read the following sentences and work in pairs to distinguish the italicized parts.

1. There are over 2,000 *vagrants* in the city.
2. There are over 2,000 *people with no fixed address* in the city.
3. There are over 2,000 *homeless* in the city.

All three of these expressions refer to exactly the same people, but they will invoke different associations in the reader's mind: A *vagrant* is a public nuisance while a *homeless* person is a worthy object of pity and charity. Presumably, someone writing an editorial in support of a new shelter would use the positive form, while someone writing an editorial in support of anti-loitering laws would use the negative form.

The difference of the above words indicates the two aspects of the meaning of a word: **denotative** and **connotative**. Denotation refers to the "literal," "obvious" or "commonsense" meaning of a word, the "dictionary definition." Words with similar denotations, however, may differ in connotation which refers to the associations or the emotional suggestions related to that word. The words *maxim*, *epigram*, *proverb*, *saw*, *saying*, and *motto*, for instance, all have roughly the same denotation. Because of their different connotations, however, *proverb* would be the appropriate word to use in reference to a saying from the Bible; *saw* in reference to the kind of wisdom handed down anonymously; *epigram* in reference to a witty statement.

Connotative associations or suggestions may be good or bad, and thus a word may have a **positive connotation** or a **negative connotation**. Denotations are generally neutral, whereas connotations may reflect feelings, attitudes and emotional overtones, and vary widely. Understanding the difference between denotation and connotation is important to understand definitions and how concepts are used.

For example, *famous* meaning "well-known" or "widely recognized" has a positive connotation, whereas *notorious* and *infamous* which have the same denotation as *famous* have quite negative connotation of "being known widely and usually unfavorably." Here, the word choice is not between denotations and connotations but between favorable and unfavorable connotations: *famous* conveys an approving attitude while *notorious* and *infamous* stand on the opposite side.

PART III GENERAL AND SPECIFIC WORDS

Directions

The following are general words. Work in pairs to give as many specific words as possible to each of them.

a good man:

_____

clothing:

_____

kitchen utensil:

_____

flower:

_____

It is easy to recognize the difference between general and specific words by looking at the exercise above. The **general words** name classes or groups; **specific words** name individual objects, or qualities that compose the group. Specific words are more concrete and informative than the general ones, and make the reader see, hear, or feel what the writer wishes to express.

Effective writing requires both general and specific words, but broadly speaking, specific words make a piece of writing more exact, vivid, colorful, and impressive to the reader. Study the following samples:

General *John has a good sense of humor.*

Specific *John loves to tell funny stories about his childhood and to play practical jokes on his friends.*

General *The math test was easy.*

Specific *The math test had only fifteen true-false questions, and all of the answers came from the first five pages of the book.*

General *In spring, the weather in Beijing can be very nasty.*

Specific *In spring, the wind may blow all day long. The air is then filled with fine dust which sometimes shuts out the sun. There is no escape from the fine dust. It gets into your eyes, your ears, your nostrils, and your hair, and penetrates through closed windows.*

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