

# Writing Skills

Bridge  
Certificate

A problem-solving approach

Teacher's Book

Norman Coe and Robin Rycroft

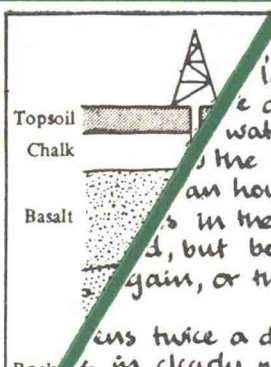
**CTIONS**

decided to come to AN

in some de relatively easy to drill  
y to be though a layer of chalk, we  
chall be hough a layer of chalk, we  
lt. At the er of hard basalt. At this  
and the drilling head, and as a  
arrier was slower. As we carried on  
qu had to stop frequently to  
over heating.

ds the oil towards the oil was  
cks or pebbles or pebbles or pebbles,  
e ground was ground was ground was  
we could we could not, we could not  
for long, and for long, and for long, and

ever enough even through even  
diddling bit diddling bit didd drilling bit did  
waidence, waidence, waidence, and with  
we finally we finally we finally reached  
ed drillinted drilling drilling.



Topsoil  
Chalk  
Basalt  
Rock

the mains electricity left. Turn it to ON, and  
e down in the ON position  
water supply, turn on  
the sink in the bath  
an hour to come through  
s in the outhouse be  
d, but be careful to sh  
gain, or the wood qu  
ation Centre.

**BOYS ROW**

**AMAZON**

ins twice a day, morning  
e in clearly marked  
pebbles collect the bowls from  
one part bread, one p  
the previous day, and  
and in the afternoon  
n't forget to collect the  
, and enjoy them, too  
leaving the farm on

has just returned from a six-  
expedition in which he and  
other young men, all from  
Peribury, attempted to row up the  
amazon. Unfortunately, the expedi-  
tion was not completely success-  
since their boats were wrecked  
some very difficult rapids. The wron-  
theless, they had a fascinating  
and Barry looks very fit. Have to  
him if he had felt afraid of choose to

Yours fa

Cambridge University Press

# Writing Skills

A problem-solving approach  
for upper-intermediate and  
more advanced students

Teacher's Book

*Norman Coe and Robin Rycroft*

Cambridge University Press  
Cambridge  
London New York New Rochelle  
Melbourne Sydney

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA  
296 Beaconsfield Parade, Middle Park, Melbourne 3206, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1983

First published 1983

Printed in Great Britain  
at the University Press, Cambridge

ISBN 0 521 28143 1 Teacher's Book

ISBN 0 521 28142 3 Student's Book

## Copyright

The law allows a reader to make a single copy of part of a book for purposes of private study. It does not allow the copying of entire books or the making of multiple copies of extracts. Written permission for any such copying must always be obtained from the publisher in advance.

**Writing Skills  
Teacher's Book**

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1
Aims	1
Level and progression	1
Learners' problems in writing	2
Approach	2
Group work	3
<b>Types of exercise</b>	5
Punctuation	5
Scrambled sentences	6
Linking words and attitude words	8
Reporting words	9
Paragraphs	10
Selection and ordering	11
Text comparison	12
Text based on a conversation or on visual information	13
Other types of exercise	14
<b>Key to exercises</b>	15
1 Informal letters	15
2 Formal letters I	19
3 Formal letters II	21
4 Reports	24
5 Brochures and guides	27
6 Articles	29
7 Instructions	32
8 Writing a story	34
9 Business letters and memos	36

# Introduction

---

## AIMS

---

*Writing Skills* aims to help foreign learners of English to improve their writing of letters, stories, and other texts. Speaking is usually a spontaneous activity, but writing is a deliberate, conscious process, which can and should be planned and organised. The various exercises in *Writing Skills* are designed to make learners aware of what a well-written text is, and how it is different from a series of poorly connected sentences. Having become conscious of the differences, the learners then have the opportunity to practise the skills that are needed in order to write well.

Teachers should note that *Writing Skills* concentrates on the skills that are specific to the *writing* of English. There are other aspects of language, such as vocabulary and grammar, that are common to all uses of language. These aspects are important to writing, of course, but they are not *specific* to writing. Although the activities in this book will clearly provide students with practice in vocabulary and grammar, this is not the main aim of the material.

---

## LEVEL AND PROGRESSION

---

*Writing Skills* is for learners who have studied about 400–500 hours of English and are approaching the level of the Cambridge First Certificate in English examination. The skills practised here will be useful as preparation for this examination, as well as for other examinations where writing is important.

*Writing Skills* is a source book, not a course book. In other words, the material does not progress in difficulty from Unit 1 through to Unit 9, and learners do not need to have done the earlier exercises before doing the later ones. Rather the book provides learners and their teachers with material that can be exploited to suit their particular needs. For example, if punctuation is a particularly weak point for a group of learners, then they can work through all the exercises on punctuation without doing the other exercises in the various units.

---

## LEARNERS' PROBLEMS IN WRITING

---

Here are some of the main reasons why a learner's writing may be difficult to understand or defective in some other way:

- a) The sentences may not have clear punctuation: there may be commas and full stops without any good reason, or there may be no punctuation where there should be some. This is dealt with mainly in the **Punctuation** exercises (see page 5).
- b) The ideas may not have been presented in an order that easily makes sense to the reader. This is treated in the exercises on **Scrambled sentences** (see page 6) and also in the **Selection and ordering** exercises (see page 11).
- c) The relation between the ideas may not be clear because of the absence, or inappropriate use, of linking words and phrases, such as *although*, *for example*, *lastly*, *on the other hand*, and so on. This question is covered in the exercises on **Linking words** (see page 8).
- d) The writer's attitude to what he or she is writing may not be clear: is he or she describing, suggesting or criticising something? This problem is taken up in the exercises on **Attitude words** (see page 8), and also to some extent in the exercises on **Reporting words** (see page 9).
- e) The ideas may not be grouped together into distinct paragraphs, or the learner may begin practically every sentence on a new line. Again, a paragraph – or a longer text – may not begin with an introduction that starts the reader in the right direction; similarly, the paragraph – or text – may not end appropriately. All of these problems are dealt with in the exercises on **Paragraphs** (see page 10).
- f) A text may contain ideas that are not really relevant to what the writer wants to express, or the writer may find it difficult to think of enough ideas. This is considered in the exercises on **Selection and ordering** (see page 11).

While it is useful to work on all these different aspects of writing in distinct exercises, it is also important that learners should have practice in combining the separate skills in one complete, well-written text. Opportunities for this will be found in the exercises on **Text comparison** (see page 12), **Text based on a conversation** (see page 13), and **Text based on visual information** (see page 13). In addition there are suggestions for further writing activities given in **Ideas for further practice** at the end of each unit.

---

## APPROACH

---

In a word our approach is: learning by doing. There are various reasons for this. First, learners generally find that doing something (i.e. being relatively active) is more interesting than being told about it (i.e. being relatively passive.) Second, if learners come to understand through using their own resources to solve problems, then their understanding will probably be

more thorough, and they are more likely to retain what they have learnt. Third, it is only when learners put something into practice that any incorrect or imperfect learning is revealed, and it is revealed both to the learners themselves and to the teacher. Our experience is, then, that learning by doing is more interesting and more efficient.

Teachers should note that in some cases the stated purpose of an activity is not its only purpose. For instance, the stated aim of the **Scrambled sentences** exercises is to work out the original order of the sentences. However, in order to carry this out, the learners will have to concentrate on the meaning and function of devices that join sentences into texts. In this case, the process is in fact a more important aim than the product.

---

## GROUP WORK

---

Closely connected with our approach is our belief in group work. Our instructions for each exercise invariably propose that the task, or at least the first part of it, should be attempted by a number of learners working together in a group. This is because a group of learners will – between them – usually have the knowledge and the skills needed to do the exercises.

It is also worth noting that an individual learner's ability to organise his ideas in writing is often independent of his general language level. Some otherwise successful language learners may have a poor sense of organisation, and vice versa. However, when several learners work in a group and pool their abilities, then together they will normally be able to contribute all the elements necessary to produce clear writing. This pooling of abilities, and the discussion that arises during the exercise, will gradually strengthen every individual's skill in writing English.

We would like to point out that group work does not normally end with the students being given the right answer by the teacher. The process of arguing your way to the right answer can be continued even after the small group task is completed. One such way is for someone to write the various suggestions on the board, and the class can then discuss the differences, (see **Scrambled sentences: How**, page 6). A second way is to join each group with one or two others, making a smaller number of larger groups, and these larger groups can simultaneously discuss the different solutions represented in the group, (see **Linking words/Attitude words: How**, page 8). A third possibility is to split up the original groups and form others of the same size. For example, if there were four original groups:

ABC DEF GHIJ KLM,

then the new groups could be:

AGL BDHM CEI FJK.

Incidentally, the teacher does not need to organise this in detail. The instructions need simply be: 'Get into new groups of three or four in a way that no one else in your new group is from your old group.' With a bit of practice – and shuffling of chairs – the learners will do the rest.



# UNITS

## TYPES OF EXERCISES

	Punctuation	Scrambled sentences	Linking words	Attitude words	Reporting words	Paragraphs	Selection and ordering	Text comparison	Text based on a conversation	Text based on visual information	Other	Ideas for further practice
1. Informal letters	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	-	1.7	1.8	1.9	-	1.10
2. Formal letters I	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	-	2.5	2.6	2.7	-	2.8	-	2.9
3. Formal letters II	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	-	3.9	3.10	3.11
4. Reports	4.1	4.2	4.3	-	-	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	-	4.9
5. Brochures and guides	5.1	5.2	5.3	-	-	5.4	5.5	5.6	-	5.7	-	5.8
6. Articles	6.1	6.2	6.3	-	-	6.4	6.5	-	6.6	6.7	6.8	6.9
7. Instructions	7.1	7.2	-	-	7.3	7.4	-	7.5	-	7.6	-	7.7
8. Stories	8.1	8.2	8.3	-	8.4	8.5	-	8.6	8.7	8.8	-	8.9
9. Business correspondence	9.1	9.2	9.3	-	9.4	9.5	-	9.6	-	9.7	-	9.8

# Types of exercise

Every unit contains a wide variety of exercises and activities, but there is no fixed pattern running through all the units. Instead of allowing a rigid framework to dictate the final shape of the units, we have taken a more pragmatic line. In the first place, the exercises that we originally wrote to a large extent grew naturally out of the unit theme (Letters, Reports, etc.). Those original exercises were then tried out at many schools in several different countries. The feedback from these trials allowed us to improve or reject unsatisfactory exercises, and we have kept a range of the best exercises for each unit, though not the same range for all of them.

The nine units contain from seven to eleven different exercises, as can be seen from the chart on the opposite page. In discussing the different types of exercise below, we have provided the following:

Under the heading **What** there is a description of what each exercise type consists of.

Under the heading **How** there are suggestions as to how each type of exercise can be approached in the classroom.

Under the heading **Why** we explain the reason for each exercise-type within the overall objective of learning to write better.

Under the heading **Which** we list all the exercises of each type that are to be found throughout the material.

---

## PUNCTUATION

---

**What** The punctuation exercises cover uses of all the main punctuation marks (full stops, commas, and so on), as well as capital letters and apostrophes.

**How** In groups of two or three, learners first study given models which in many cases are contrasted with incorrect forms or forms that have different meanings. These models are followed by examples where the learners – sometimes in groups, sometimes working individually – have to use the punctuation marks in question.

**Why** Badly punctuated writing is usually difficult to understand, as well as giving a slovenly impression. In English many uses of punctuation give a clear indication of the sense of the passage, and so learners should be encouraged to use it properly.

**Which** There are nine exercises of this type:

- 1.1 Capital letters
- 2.1 Apostrophes
- 3.1 Commas in non-defining relative clauses, contrasted with defining relative clauses
- 4.1 Places where punctuation is not used
- 5.1 Full stops, semicolons and commas
- 6.1 Colons and semicolons
- 7.1 Commas and full stops in extended writing
- 8.1 Inverted commas for speech
- 9.1 Mixed punctuation

---

## SCRAMBLED SENTENCES

---

**What** A text has been separated into its component sentences; these appear in the exercise in random order. Learners must try to recompose the text, i.e. they must decide on the correct order of the sentences. Certain words and phrases have been underlined or printed in bold type to draw attention to the part they play in joining the original text together. (Words and phrases that join sentences into texts are sometimes called 'textual devices'.)

These exercises are relatively easy, but they are interesting, and they give the learners a good general idea of what makes a text different from an unconnected string of sentences.

**How** It is a great help to photocopy the text, making one copy for each group. The copies should be cut into strips, each strip having one sentence. (This makes it easy to make different arrangements and to read them.) Working in groups of two or three, the learners should read the texts, paying particular attention to the words and phrases underlined. Each group then works out the best order through discussion. When the groups have reached a conclusion, their suggested orders should be compared. The teacher, or one of the learners, can (without comment at this point) write the orders suggested by the various groups on the board, producing columns that can then be compared, for example:

Group	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	d	d	d	d	d
	f	f	f	f	f
	e	b	b	e	b
	j	e	h	j	e
	b	j	e	b	j
	h	h	j	h	h
	g	c	c	c	c
	c	i	i	i	i
	i	a	a	a	a
	a	g	g	g	g

(The correct answer, let us suppose, is that reached by groups 2 and 5.) The teacher can mark the sequences that all the groups have in common and which are in fact correct like this:

Group	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	d	d	d	d	d
	f	f	f	f	f
	e	b	b	e	b
	j	e	h	j	e
	b	j	e	b	j
	h	h	j	h	h
	g	c	c	c	c
	c	i	i	i	i
	i	a	a	a	a
	a	g	g	g	g

The teacher can now ask the learners to give their reasons for and against those sequences where there are differences. If necessary, the teacher can point out what it is in the text that gives the clue to the right order, which often means referring again to the words underlined. On the whole the learners should argue their way to the correct solution rather than simply be told what it is.

**Why** As with many classroom activities, the stated aim of the exercise, i.e. to find the right order of the sentences, is not its only purpose. As well as providing an opportunity for group work and for class discussion, this kind of exercise helps learners to see for themselves the importance of the 'textual devices', (though this term, of

course, need not be used.) Moreover, by discussing the various differences, the learners will gradually find out exactly how these textual devices operate. For this reason the discussion should not be passed over by the teacher simply telling the learners what the right answer is.

**Which** There are nine exercises of this type:  
1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.2, 5.2, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2 and 9.2.

---

## LINKING WORDS AND ATTITUDE WORDS

---

For our purposes we define a *linking word* as a word or phrase which shows the logical relation between sentences or between clauses. For example:

The most important oil-exporting countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, are concentrated in a small geographical area, **namely** the Middle East. There are, **however**, several other important exporters of crude oil in other parts of the world.

Here the words in bold type are linking words.

An *attitude word*, on the other hand, is a word or phrase that shows the writer's attitude to what he is writing. For example:

Obviously, if the scandal became public knowledge, some officials would have to resign, and **personally**, I don't think that would be such a bad thing.

Here the words in bold type are attitude words.

**What** The linking or attitude words have been removed from a text and learners must supply a suitable word to fill the blank, either by choosing from a given list or thinking of a word themselves.

**How** Working in groups of two or three, learners should try to complete the exercise, deciding which is the most appropriate word or phrase. When each group has finished, the conclusions (and differences) can be discussed by the whole class, using a procedure similar to the one described in *Scrambled sentences: How*, page 6. Alternatively, each group can join with one or two other groups, and these larger groups can compare their answers. When these two phases are completed, the remaining problems can be taken up for discussion in the whole class.

**Why** While we realise – here and elsewhere – that it is not easy for teachers to resist the temptation to 'give the right answer and get on with it', we would insist that the discussion about the right answer is a very important part of the learning process. During the discussion the learners are concentrating on the reasons why a word is appropriate in a particular context, and this is exactly what we want them to be thinking about. Obviously it matters which word is chosen, but it is just as important that learners become aware that there are good and bad

reasons for their choices. In using exercises of this type, it is our experience that there is a positive transfer when learners are set freer writing tasks.

**Which** There are eight *Linking words* exercises:  
1.3, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3, 5.3, 6.3, 8.3 and 9.3.  
There are three *Attitude words* exercises:  
1.4, 2.4 and 3.4.

---

## REPORTING WORDS

---

**What** Learners first compare two reported speech versions of something given as direct speech. In each case, one is a strictly mechanical conversion, and the other is more realistic. Learners then have to report other examples of direct speech, choosing from a given list of reporting words. Finally, learners have to produce their own examples to illustrate the use of certain reporting words.

**How** As usual, learners share their ideas and knowledge in solving the initial problem and producing suitable sentences. Discussion as to why such and such an alternative was chosen is again an essential part of the exercise. The initial group work leads on to individual application.

**Why** In each case, the two given models are – in some sense – both correct, and this will often lead to a discussion that is more wide-ranging than simply which is the more suitable. The fact is that – with the lamentable exception of some classroom exercises and some exams – the reporting of speech is never an automatic application of strict rules (e.g. present tenses become past tenses, and so on). Rather the reporter, taking into account various aspects of the situation, chooses a reporting word to give the feeling of the message and his attitude towards it, e.g. *demand, suggest, warn, urge*. Obviously, different reporters will choose different ways of reporting the same speech. For example, a suspect says to a policeman: 'I'm innocent.' Later the suspect might report: 'I insisted that I was innocent', while the policeman might choose to say: 'He claimed he was innocent.'

Consequently textbooks cannot use mechanical exercises to help learners to use reporting words and reported speech properly. The exercises in this book are designed to:

- a) broaden the range of reporting words that learners use (i.e. not simply *say, tell* and *ask* every time), and
- b) make learners aware that the reporting of speech is not an automatic process, but rather they should think about the circumstances of each case and choose a reporting word accordingly.

**Which** There are five exercises of this type:  
1.5, 3.5, 7.3, 8.4 and 9.4.

---

## PARAGRAPHS

---

**What** We have tried to show that well-written paragraphs make a written text easier to understand. Each paragraph should have a first sentence that introduces the rest of the paragraph, and a final sentence that summarises or properly concludes it. At the level of an extended text (say, a letter) the first paragraph should outline the main points of the letter, and the last paragraph should round it off.

As in the case of *Linking words* and *Attitude words*, these exercises are of various types, including:

- a) choosing the most appropriate answer from a list,
- b) making up a suitable answer to fill a blank, and
- c) writing the rest of the text, given a leading sentence or paragraph.

**How** Again learners should work in groups, one member of each group acting as secretary; the findings of the groups should be discussed. It is essential, of course, that the sentence or paragraph that has been chosen or written should be appropriate to the rest of the text in both content and style. In discussing the suggestions, it is important that learners should again express their reasons for their preferences so that all the learners gradually become more aware of what makes one possibility preferable to another. A similar procedure to that suggested in *Scrambled sentences: How*, page 6, or in *Linking words and attitude words: How*, page 8, could be adopted to allow groups to compare their answers.

**Why** In general, if a text is divided into well-written paragraphs, it will be easier to read. More particularly, rapid and efficient reading is only possible if the text has been written to allow for this. It should be possible for a reader to skim through a long passage by reading the first paragraph, then the first sentence of each successive paragraph, and the final paragraph. This should give the reader an overall idea of what the text contains, so it is important to use first sentences to introduce the topic, and it is preferable to use final sentences to sum up. Our various exercises on *Paragraphs* aim to show learners how this can be done.

*Note:* We accept, of course, that there are more ways of organising paragraphs and passages than the one used here. However, as with vocabulary and grammar, the native user of the language can allow himself a wider range and greater latitude in his choice of expression; the foreign learner, on the other hand, needs to achieve mastery of a smaller, but generally serviceable, range of possibilities.

**Which** There are nine exercises on paragraphs:  
1.6, 2.5, 3.6, 4.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.4, 8.5 and 9.5.

---

## SELECTION AND ORDERING

---

**What** These exercises give instructions for a written text – a letter, an article, and so on – together with a long list of ideas for possible inclusion. Working in groups, learners choose the most relevant ideas from the list and reject the others. When each group has made its selection, the next step is to group the ideas so as to provide the contents for a number of paragraphs, each one dealing with one aspect of the subject. Groups must also decide on the best order for the paragraphs. Finally, learners should exploit this preparation in writing the complete text.

**How** Each member of the group should first read through the list silently, making a note of the ideas he or she would include. Then the group should work through the list, marking off all the ideas where everyone agrees, and noting those ideas where there is disagreement. The disputed ideas should be discussed and, although the time allowed for this may be limited, the discussion should not be passed over.

At the stage of grouping sentences into paragraphs, the task can again be first attempted individually and silently, and later the group can compare their suggestions. At the end of the planning, and before the learners write the final text, groups can exchange their conclusions for the sake of comparison. But there is no reason to insist that all the plans must be rigidly the same.

In two cases there is an opportunity for practising a preliminary stage: the groups have to make up their own lists of ideas. The groups should be given a fixed time to produce as long a list as possible. It is important at this stage that *all* ideas are noted down; a group secretary should make notes, and there should be a minimum of discussion. Now, starting from the lists that they themselves have generated, groups can go through the steps outlined above. (Although only two exercises have been provided with this added opportunity, other topics – chosen by the learners or by the teacher – could well be treated in the same way.)

*Note:* Working through every step of either version of this exercise will take a great deal of class time. Although the time would probably be well spent, teachers might choose to limit the class time devoted to this either by restricting the task to one or two of the steps, or by setting some of the steps for homework. For instance, for one homework learners could read through the items and make a preliminary choice. In the subsequent lesson they could work in groups up to the point of planning the final passage. Then, again for homework, each learner could write his or her version based on this preparation.

**Why** First, let us look at the task based on a given list. What one person considers relevant, another may consider irrelevant; again, the same fact may be relevant in one circumstance, but not in another. These exercises are designed to make learners aware of what



makes something relevant by forcing them to consider not only *what* they are writing, but also *why* they are writing and *to whom*. Let us emphasise that there is no one indisputable answer in all cases. Although some items in the lists will be quickly accepted or rejected by everybody, others will lead to disagreement. It is most important that these items should be discussed, so that arguments can be produced and evaluated. It is only when people are forced to defend their view that they will realise the implications of what relevance is.

Now let us turn to the reasons for asking learners to generate their own lists. In the first place, it is an enjoyable activity, for learners are seldom allowed the freedom to say anything that comes into their heads. But further, it is essential that the creative element in writing should be stimulated. In our experience, where learners are not given opportunities like this, they often complain that they can't write compositions because they haven't got anything to say. This kind of exercise is designed to train learners to open their minds in order to generate enough material for possible inclusion in their writing.

The two versions of this exercise show the learners that there is a difference between having an idea and choosing to use it. If learners can learn to generate a lot of ideas, and also learn to discriminate relevant ideas from less relevant ones, then they will have a solid base for anything that they decide to write.

**Which** There are five exercises of this type:  
2.6, 3.7, 4.5, 5.5 and 6.5.

---

## TEXT COMPARISON

---

**What** Two passages have been written on the same subject. One of them is badly written, and the other is well written. Learners must read the two passages, and decide which one they prefer, and why. Learners are then asked either to rewrite the passage they did not like, or to write a third passage based on additional information.

Teachers should note that there are no mistakes of vocabulary or grammar (sentence structure) in any of the passages; the faults are textual ones.

**How** Working in groups of two or three, learners should first read the two passages silently, and then compare their views with each other. They should ask themselves (a) which of the two is easier to follow, and (b) what are the specific differences that make one preferable to the other. One member of the group should act as secretary, making a list of the features mentioned by the group. After a suitable time, each group should make a brief report to the rest of the class. As we have suggested with other exercises, time should be allowed for any differences of opinion to be resolved. The teacher should try to limit his or her contributions to asking questions rather than to giving answers.

After the discussion, learners should complete the second part of the task,