

English for Academic Uses

A Writing Workbook

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English for Academic Uses: A Writing Workbook

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The English Language Institute of the American University

For our parents, with love and appreciation

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Preface

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

English for Academic Uses: A Writing Workbook is based on four theoretical assumptions about the nature of language learning.

1. Language is discourse. Continually asking language learners to suspend disbelief while they manipulate structures in artificial and disconnected contexts is failing to provide them with the tools they will need in situations requiring natural language use.

2. The rules of grammar and the rules of language use are separate and inseparable at the same time. Students must acquire both if they are to be effective communicators in the target language. Teaching one at the expense of the other may permanently handicap the student's growth in the target language.

3. Generally speaking, high intermediate students have studied grammar rules extensively. They have filled in myriad blanks and combined numerous sentences, but they may never have been able to apply this theoretical knowledge in their free writing. Transferring the student's knowledge of grammar to free writing requires reinforcement and refinement of basic syntactical patterns; at the same time, the student must produce increasingly less guided approximations of free writing in meaningful contexts. Ensuring that subsequent free writing is as

sophisticated as possible also usually requires an expansion of syntactic repertoire and explicit training in appropriate basic writing strategies.

4. Student motivation is a critical factor in the success of any language training. Accordingly, language training materials should be designed so that they closely match students' cognitive and interest levels as well as their goal(s) for language study.

PURPOSE AND DESIGN

The purpose of *English for Academic Uses: A Writing Workbook* is to prepare ESL students to do academic work in English. It is designed for the high intermediate high school, college-bound, or university level student who has solid basic grammar skills but who needs direction in the development and refinement of more sophisticated language skills. Primarily a grammar-based writing workbook, it also includes work in reading academic prose and in acquiring and polishing several other academic skills.

There are eight units, each built around an academic theme. Although the themes include potentially technical fields such as economics and public administration, they are written on a subtechnical level, assuming little or no prerequisite knowledge on the part of the student. A unit's theme provides the context for most of its exercises.

Each unit also focuses on a skill or syntactic pattern important in academic English. Three units are devoted specifically to the skills of outlining, paraphrasing, and proofreading. The other five units deal with the use of modals and of nominal, adjectival, adverbial, and conditional structures. Within the syntactically based units, general academic skills including defining unfamiliar words from context, outlining, summarizing, and paraphrasing are reinforced. Additionally, skills appropriate to the structure in question, (e.g., writing definitions with adjective clauses or restating an author's ideas with noun clauses) are presented.

While the design of each skills unit is dictated by the nature of the skill being taught, a syntactically based unit generally follows the following design pattern.

1. **CHART.** A chart or inventory of the functions and forms of the pattern.
2. **CONTEXTUAL DEFINING EXERCISES.** Potentially troublesome vocabulary contained in the unit, the meanings to be guessed through context exercises. (Whenever possible, the students are taught to use the structure of the unit as a tool in their contextual defining strategy.)
3. **READING PASSAGE.** A five- to six-paragraph passage which introduces the theme of the unit and contains examples of the featured pattern.
4. **IDENTIFICATION EXERCISE.** A chance for students to go back to the reading passage and identify the examples of the pattern contained therein.
5. **READING ANALYSIS.** Questions that prompt the student to examine the organization and meaning of the reading passage.

6. **OUTLINING EXERCISE.** A chance for students to reinforce outlining skills by outlining the reading passage. The outline will be the basis for a summary of the passage that they will write later.
7. **GRAMMAR STUDY.** Explanations of syntactic rules.
8. **SENTENCE EXERCISE(S).** Manipulation of syntax on the sentence level. (These have been used when including multiple examples of the pattern in a piece of discourse would be too artificial.)
9. **STRUCTURED PARAGRAPH EXERCISE(S).** Manipulation exercises (combinations, dehydrated sentences, etc.) for the points explained in the Grammar Notes. These exercises are presented within connected discourse.
10. **USE NOTE(S).** Explanations of the way the structure is used in academic writing. These notes are followed by specific exercises practicing each use.
11. **FINAL EXERCISES.** Unstructured writing exercises based on the structure and theme of the unit. These include the summary of the Reading Passage and two or more other assignments designed to give the students further practice in transferring their new skills to writing and speaking.

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING

Realistic and appropriate use of academic language is the focus and goal of this text; as a result, the teacher should feel free to use the materials as they best suit the particular needs of the student population. Nonetheless, a few comments based on the experiences of teachers who have used the text might be helpful.

1. This text is not intended to be used exclusively as either a grammar or a rhetoric book. It does not just drill grammar points, nor does it dwell on styles of paragraph development. Rather, the book should be used to review and expand grammar and to improve basic writing skills such as topic sentence development.

2. Skills units, particularly the first (outlining) and the last (proofreading), do not need to be taught as units. In fact, breaking them up and using them at sequenced intervals throughout the semester is suggested. For example, after teaching relative clauses, one might go over sentence fragments to forestall the writing of fragments consisting of only a relative clause. On the other hand, with a class of students who generally do not make mistakes in subject-verb agreement, for example, the section of the final unit dealing with this problem might be assigned only to the individual students who need work in this area.

3. Syntactically based units, on the other hand, do work best if presented as entire units, for they give the student a broad picture of the pattern and its uses. Although it is possible, or even desirable, to skip exercises which the class does not need, it is not recommended that exercises central to the context of the unit (e.g., the Reading Passage) be skipped, because the students could find themselves in a contextual vacuum in later exercises.

4. The unit themes are meant to be more than topics for the exercises. Many topics can be used as the basis for class discussions and oral reports. Students

should be encouraged to use the patterns they are studying when they are appropriate in such oral activities.

5. Many ESL students find that a major obstacle in their academic work is an inadequate reading vocabulary. To prepare them for reading sophisticated material, the vocabulary in the Reading Passages and other exercises has not been completely simplified. The potentially most troublesome items are in the Contextual Defining Exercises so that students will have at least some passive knowledge when they encounter them later on. Additional vocabulary exercises are found in Appendix C. These exercises can be assigned to individuals in the class who have need of them, or they can be done by the entire class. Unlike the Contextual Defining Exercises, the vocabulary exercises in the appendix are intended to broaden the student's active vocabulary. Special care has been taken to ensure that all vocabulary items are potentially very useful in any academic context. In spite of these two measures, there may be other lexical items which individuals will find difficult. Students should consistently be encouraged to use a good English-English dictionary independently, and frequent comprehension checks by the teacher in class are recommended.

6. Most students have never used a discourse-based text before, so they may find the exercises unfamiliar and difficult at first. The teacher may want to do some of the exercises as a group activity in the beginning until students feel more secure on their own.

7. The teacher should look for every opportunity to reinforce the skills taught in this book. Students can be asked to outline and summarize structured paragraph or fill-in exercises. When teachers want to check comprehension of difficult sentences or paragraphs, students can be asked to paraphrase these sentences rather than simply define words. Lectures relating to the unit theme can be given as outlining/note-taking exercises, and imitation "essay test questions" can be asked after the lecture. Anaphoric devices and other reading hints can be highlighted in every exercise. In other words, each exercise can and should be used for more than its stated goals.

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UNIT 1

Outlining

THEME: Government

In your academic coursework in English you may often read articles or chapters in textbooks that seem very complicated and difficult to understand. Similarly, in your writing you may often have many ideas and points to make that must be organized in order to be effectively presented. Knowing how to outline is a valuable skill in both situations.

There are two types of outlining techniques. The first one, *passive outlining*, consists of recognizing the main ideas and the supporting details in something you read or listen to. The second, *active outlining*, consists of organizing and classifying your ideas before you start to write. In both types of outlining techniques, the concept of creating a *skeleton* is basic. In *passive outlining*, you *identify* the skeleton, or basic framework, of an author's ideas; in *active outlining*, you *prepare and organize* your basic framework of ideas before you write.

There are two basic skills involved in any type of outlining. First, you must recognize categories and be able to group similar ideas and/or objects together. Second, you must distinguish between main ideas and details within the general categories you have identified.

When you write an outline, it is a good idea to write a central idea sentence for your whole outline at the beginning. This central idea should always be written as a complete sentence because it will serve as a guide for your entire outline. Each time you want to add a new point to your outline, you should reread your central

idea sentence and be sure that the idea you want to add is really related to your main idea. After you have written this central idea, you should add your other important ideas and their supporting points. An example of outline form follows. Notice the types of letters and numbers used to indicate main and supporting ideas. Notice also that the most important ideas go closest to the margin. Supporting ideas are placed under main ideas and are indented. Expanding ideas are placed under supporting ideas and are indented still further.

TITLE (Optional)

Central Idea: _____

I Main idea (topic)

A Supporting idea (subtopic)

B Supporting idea

1 Expanding idea, detail or example

2 Expanding idea, detail or example

II Main idea

A Supporting idea

1 Expanding idea, detail or example

2 Expanding idea, detail or example

B Supporting idea

This is typical outline form. The central idea is the point to which everything in the composition refers. The main ideas are used to prove the central idea. They usually become the *topic sentences* (main idea sentences) of paragraphs in the composition. In an outline, main ideas are listed with Roman numerals. Other ideas support or prove the main ideas and become the body of a paragraph in a composition. They are listed with capital letters and Arabic numerals. Notice that there must be at least two of each type of idea—two main ideas, two supporting ideas and so on.

There are two types of outlines: *topic outlines* and *sentence outlines*. When you write topic outlines, you do not write complete sentences. Instead, you write words or phrases that should have similar grammatical patterns. Topic outlines are used to outline something that you have read or listened to, and sometimes to plan compositions that you are going to write. The following is an example of a topic outline.

WINTER IN WASHINGTON

Central Idea Although the weather is not pleasant in Washington in the winter, people can participate in a variety of enjoyable activities then

I Unpleasant weather

- A Very windy
- B Frequently snowy

II Enjoyable winter activities

- A Ice skating in the city
- B Sking in the surrounding countryside

The second kind of outline is a sentence outline. Some people think that this type of outline is more helpful for planning compositions because you express your ideas completely. Sentence outlines are not usually used for outlining when you read because they take a long time to write. The following is an example of a sentence outline.

WINTER IN WASHINGTON

Central Idea Although the weather is not pleasant in Washington in the winter, people can participate in a variety of enjoyable activities then

I The weather is unpleasant

- A It is very windy
- B It snows often

II Many people enjoy winter sports

- A In the city, people ice skate in the parks
- B In the surrounding countryside, people ski

Outlining Skills Note: Recognizing categories and distinguishing between main ideas and details within the categories you establish are basic outlining skills.

CLASSIFICATION EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to give you practice in classifying information. The following is a grocery list for a family of three people: a young husband and wife and their one-year-old baby. The family also has a dog. Both parents work outside the home

milk (2 gallons)	cookies	frozen pizza
bread (2 loaves)	soap	spaghetti
eggs	dog food	jar of spaghetti sauce
chicken	baby food	lettuce
orange juice	paper diapers	tomatoes
cheese	pipe tobacco	salad dressing
carrots	soda	breakfast cereal
coffee	mustard	plastic sandwich bags
sandwich meat	razor blades	dried beans
sugar	bubble bath	maskara
		potatoes

Like many other kinds of information, this list can be grouped into many different categories, depending on which features you use to define the categories you set up. (Teacher note. This should be done as a group exercise on the blackboard to point out the importance of defining major categories and then classifying appropriately.)

Write the appropriate items from the list that fall into each of the groups in Classification A and B. Be prepared to defend your choices

Classification A: Divide the list into two groups.

Group I: Perishable goods

Group II: Nonperishable goods

Classification B: Divide the list into two groups

Group I: Essential goods

Group II: Luxury goods

USE NOTE

Outlining can be helpful in organizing the notes you take from lectures

OUTLINING EXERCISE I

Imagine that you were absent from your class in Nutrition one day and you borrowed a classmate's notes on the lecture. The lecture was about the importance of the four basic food groups in a well-balanced diet. Unfortunately for you, your classmate did not take very well-organized notes. This is what they look like

Crucial to include foods from four basic food groups in daily diet (to be well-nourished)

1. meat/fish/poultry/eggs group (protein)
2. bread/cereal group (full of energy)
3. milk group (calcium)
4. fruits and vegetables (vitamins and minerals)
 - rice
 - chicken
 - spinach (vitamin A)
 - yoghurt
 - cheese
 - bananas (potassium)
 - whole wheat bread
 - red meat (beef, lamb, pork)

Arrange these ideas in a well-organized outline that you can later use in your studying. The first category has been done for you

Central Idea: It is crucial to include foods from the four basic food groups in one's daily diet in order to be well-nourished.

I Meat/fish/poultry/eggs group

- A Rich in protein
- B. Examples of food in this group
 - 1 Red meat (beef, lamb, pork)
 - 2 Chicken

II

- A
- B
 - 1
 - 2

III

- A
- B
 - 1
 - 2.