

Improving Your English

中学生英语读物精选

第二辑

主 编 何兆熊

副主编 戴炜华

张彦斌



上海外语教育出版社

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外教社

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前言

常 常有人问我们学英语难不难,对于这个问题,我们的回答是既不难也难。说不难,是因为语言是人天生的能力,正常人生来就具有掌握语言的能力,掌握语言应该是人人都能办得到的事;说难,是因为我们想掌握的是一门外语,是一种在我们的生活环境中并非每时每刻都在使用的陌生的语言。这就是外语和母语的根区别,也就是为什么掌握好一门外语这么不容易。那么,怎样才能克服这个困难,尽可能快、尽可能好地学好外语呢?回答是两个字:实践。语言不是一套死的符号,语言存在于使用之中。掌握一门外语,意味着能听、说、读、写这种语言。这四种基本语言技能的培养只有一个途径,那就是实践,大量的实践,也就是多听、多说、多读、多写。我们选编这一套名为 *Improving Your English* (《中学生英语读物精选》) 的读物的目的就是给广大中学生以及其他众多的英语学习者提供更多的英语阅读材料。

许多人的成功经验证明,大量阅读是培养英语能力、提高英语水平的一种重要、有效的途径。但由于种种原因,目前我国大、中学生的英语阅读量都比较小。除了每册教科书里那篇幅很有限的十来篇课文外,学生几乎不再读一点什么别的东西。当然,客观上要找到适合他们阅读的课外阅读材料也不很容易。我们编辑的这一套《中学生英语读物精选》就是为了给广大的具有高中以上英语程度的英语学习者和爱好者提供适合他们程度和口味的阅读材料。

Improving Your English (《中学生英语读物精选》) 所收入的所有阅读材料都是出自英美作者之手的原文,只有必要时才在个别地方作了细小改动,所以所有材料的语言文字是地道的。文篇的体裁和题材十分多样,有记叙文,也有说明文,有寓言故事,也有科普知识,有名人小传,也有报刊摘选,有地理历史知识,也有风土人情简述。我们希

望这些形式、内容多样的文章能激发读者的兴趣,既能达到提高英语阅读能力的目的,又能通过阅读学会用英语来吸取信息,拓宽自己的知识面。每篇阅读材料的字数都在500个词左右,对文中的某些单词,我们按该词在文章中出现的上下文给出词义和词性,并根据《英语发音词典(第13版)》的音标体系标出了发音(习惯使用13版以前音标体系的学习者,可参看书后所附的音标表);对文中的某些语言难点,我们作了注释,以减少读者阅读时的阻力,提高兴趣和信心。每一辑里的文章大体上按照由浅到深的顺序编排。

阅读,不论是用母语还是用外语,目的都是为了获取信息。我们希望广大读者在使用这套阅读材料的过程中,能感受到用英语看书的乐趣,在不知不觉中提高自己的英语阅读能力,同时又扩大了自己的知识视野,真正有所得益。

编者

2000年3月于上海

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The Post Office

We know that in early times messengers carried letters from place to place. In Europe, however, it was not until the fifteenth century that¹ a regular system of taking letters between towns was started. The messengers travelled on horseback, and fresh horses were kept ready at different places along the main roads where the messengers stopped. Each of these stopping-places was known as a post and today we still keep the name post office.

In the old days, such postal deliveries were only for important people. The messengers would sometimes carry letters for ordinary citizens, but the charges for doing this were very high and the messengers were often careless. People began to ask for an easier and cheaper way of sending their letters and so, in the seventeenth century in Britain, a service was started for everyone. At first this postal service carried letters only between a few very busy towns, but year by year it grew larger and better.

More countries began to provide postal services for everyone. Today every country has its post office, and these services play an important part in the life of us all. If there were no post offices, we would find it difficult to keep in touch with our friends at a distance.² Shopkeepers and other businessmen would find it very expensive to order and to receive goods.

The chief post office of a country is usually in the capital city and it has branches in towns and even in small villages. The post offices of the world help each other so that³ letters can be sent to and from every land. Letters can now be sent by post for delivery in almost any villages anywhere.

Letters were once taken throughout the whole of their journey by messengers, but such arrangements were changed long ago. In Britain the postman now delivers the mail from the nearest post office. When he has only a short distance to go, the postman may walk or ride a bicycle. In quite a number of cities of the world, some postmen walk but vans are also used for delivering letters.

New Words and Phrases

- | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------|------|------------|
| 1 | deliver | / dɪ'lɪvə / | v. | 送递 |
| | delivery | / dɪ'lɪvəri / | n. | 送递 |
| 2 | play an important part in | | | 在……方面起重要作用 |
| 3 | keep in touch with | | | 保持接触, 保持联系 |
| 4 | shopkeeper | / 'ʃɒp,ki:pə / | n. | 店主 |
| 5 | expensive | / ɪk'spensɪv / | adj. | 贵的 |
| 6 | van | / væn / | n. | 厢式货车 |

Notes

- 1 ... it was not until ... that 直到……才……。
又如:

It was not until yesterday that I knew I had been accepted by the club.

直到昨天我才知道俱乐部已经接纳了我。

- 2 If there were no post offices, we would find it difficult to keep in touch with our friends at a distance. 如果没有了邮局,

我们与远方的朋友保持联系就会发生困难。

这个句子用的是虚拟语气,表明所假设的情况与现实不符。从句中谓
语用一般过去时,主句中用“would + 动词原形”。

it 是先行代词,真正宾语 to keep in touch with our friends at a
distance,放在宾语补足语的后面。

又如:

I find it impossible to finish the work in one hour.

我发现在一个小时里要完成这件工作是不可能的。

3 so that 是连接词,这里引导结果状语从句。

Comprehension

I. Decide which of the following is the best answer:

1. Which of the following statements about messengers in the 15th century is true?
 - A. They had to change horses on their journey.
 - B. They had to report to various post offices on their journey.
 - C. They had to exchange messages with other messengers on their journey.
 - D. They had to stop to rest at post offices on their journey.
2. In the old days messengers delivered messages for _____.
 - A. ordinary citizens only
 - B. officials only
 - C. both rich and poor people alike
 - D. important and rich people
3. What statement is NOT mentioned in the passage about what would happen if there were no post offices?
 - A. It would be very difficult to keep in touch with one's friends in other places.
 - B. To order and receive goods, shopkeepers would pay

- high charges.
- C. Postmen would walk for delivering letters.
- D. To order and receive goods, businessmen would pay high charges.
4. Which of the following statements about postal services is NOT true?
- A. Modern postal services were first started in Britain.
- B. America was the first country to start a postal service for everyone.
- C. The chief post office of a country is generally found in its capital city.
- D. Letters can be delivered internally and internationally for everyone.
5. According to the passage, what makes it possible that letters can be sent to and from every land?
- A. The post offices of the world help each other.
- B. The postmen use vans for delivering letters.
- C. Messengers take letters throughout the whole of their journey.
- D. The United Nations lead the post offices of the world.
- II. Complete with an appropriate word each of the following sentences which in fact sums up the general idea of a paragraph of the passage:
1. *Paragraph 1*
- In old times, m_____ carried letters on horsebacks throughout the whole of their journey.
2. *Paragraph 2*
- B_____ was the first country to start a postal service for everyone.
3. *Paragraph 3*
- Now, the postal services play an important part in people's l_____
4. *Paragraph 4*

Now the post offices in the world work together for
d_____ letters.

5. *Paragraph 5*

Postmen usually deliver the mail from the n_____ post
office.

UNIT

2

Introductions

1. Professor: Mr. Lusting, I would like to¹ introduce you to Dr. Johns, director of the language Institute. Dr. Johns, this is Mr. Lusting, the academic adviser from Bamum College.
- Mr. Lusting: How do you do, Dr. Johns?
- Dr. Johns: It's a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Lusting. I'm glad that we finally have the occasion to meet.
2. Friend: I'd like you to meet my friend, Nancy Pipkin. Nancy, this is my brother, Jack.
- Nancy: Hi, Jack. Nice to meet you.
- Jack: Hi, Nancy.
3. Friend: Hi, George, have you met Bill?
- George: No, I haven't. Hi, Bill.
- Bill: Hi! How ya doing?

What do you notice about the above three introductions? Why is the style of language in all three different? These introductions are typical examples of American introductions which range from formal to informal. Although Americans tend to use informal language as seen in the second and third introductions², there are situations where formal introductions are needed. When meeting a president of a university, it is proper to say,

“How do you do?” Likewise, someone, who is your age³ or younger would probably say, “It’s nice to meet you.” rather than “How do you do?”

In the first introduction the speakers use longer sentences, titles (Dr., Mr.), and formal words and phrases (“I would like to introduce you to...”, “How do you do?” and “It’s a pleasure to meet you”). The relationship between the speakers in the first introduction is a formal one. The next two introductions, which are more informal, use reduced words and sentences and simpler language. “It’s nice to meet you.” becomes “Nice to meet you.” “How are you doing?” becomes “How ya doing?” A very informal introduction does not use titles or last names⁴.

Right after introductions are made, there is usually a period of time in which impersonal or small subjects are discussed. This type of conversation, called “small talk”, is important because it often helps to keep conversations going and it can lead into interesting discussions. Usually speakers begin small talks with such questions as: “Do you live in this area?”, “How do you like living here?” or “What are you studying?” It is also common for people to ask, “What do you do?” which means “What is your job?” but it is uncommon and considered impolite to ask, “How much money do you make?” or “How much does your house cost?” Other questions such as “Are you married?” or “How old are you?” (to an adult) are generally considered too personal for initial meetings⁵.

New Words and Phrases

- | | | | |
|------------|--------------|------|-----|
| 1 academic | /ˌækəˈdemɪk/ | adj. | 学术的 |
| 2 occasion | /əˈkeɪʒən/ | n. | 场合 |
| 3 style | /stɑɪl/ | n. | 风格 |
| 4 typical | /ˈtɪpɪkəl/ | adj. | 典型的 |

5	range (from...to)	/ˈreɪndʒ/	v.	(在某一范围内)变动,变化
6	formal	/ˈfɔ:məl/	adj.	正式的,正规的
7	likewise	/ˈlaɪkwaɪz/	adv.	同样地
8	relationship	/rɪˈleɪʃənʃɪp/	n.	关系
9	impersonal	/ɪmˈpɜ:sənəl/	adj.	非个人的
10	adult	/ˈædʌlt/	n.	成年人
11	initial	/ɪˈnɪʃəl/	adj.	最初的

Notes

- 1 I would like to 我希望,我很想

“I would like to + 动词”比直接说“I want to + 动词”客气得多,也正规得多。比较:

I would like to invite you to my home.

我很想邀请你到我家里来。

I want to invite you to my home.

我要邀请你到我家里来。

第二段会话中的 I'd like 是 I would like 的口语化的形式,用于较为不正式的场合。

- 2 as seen in the second and third introductions 见于第二、第三种介绍中。

as seen... 可以理解为 as is seen..., 定语从句。

- 3 who is your age 他年龄与你相仿

相当于 who is of your age。

- 4 last name 姓

first name 名

- 5 initial meetings 最初几次见面

meeting 在本文中是指“会面,见面”,不是“会议”。

Comprehension

- I. Decide which of the following is the best answer:

1. What decides the choice of formal and informal styles of language in introductions?
 - A. Situations.
 - B. Relationships between speakers.
 - C. Both A and B.
 - D. Not mentioned in the passage.
2. After introductions, people often talk _____.
 - A. on political topics
 - B. on small topics
 - C. on social topics
 - D. on personal topics
3. Which of the following questions is NOT suitable in initial meetings?
 - A. Do you live near the university?
 - B. What are you studying?
 - C. How much do you earn every month?
 - D. Are you American?
4. Which is the most probable reason for not asking personal questions in initial meetings?
 - A. The person being asked may not feel happy to answer them.
 - B. The person being asked may not know their answers.
 - C. The person being asked may feel shy to give answers.
 - D. The person being asked may not want to continue the conversations.
5. What style of language do Americans tend to use?
 - A. Formal style.
 - B. Informal style.
 - C. Personal style.
 - D. Impolite style.

II. Judge whether the following statements are True (T) or False (F):

- () 1. *Hi, George, have you met Bill?* belongs to formal

language.

- () 2. In the three conversations given in the passage, thesecond one is less formal than the first one, but more formal than the third one.
- () 3. It may not be impolite to ask a child *How old is he or she?*
- () 4. Small talks refer to topics on marriage, income, age, etc.
- () 5. In the passage, the writer says that British people speak more formal English than Americans.