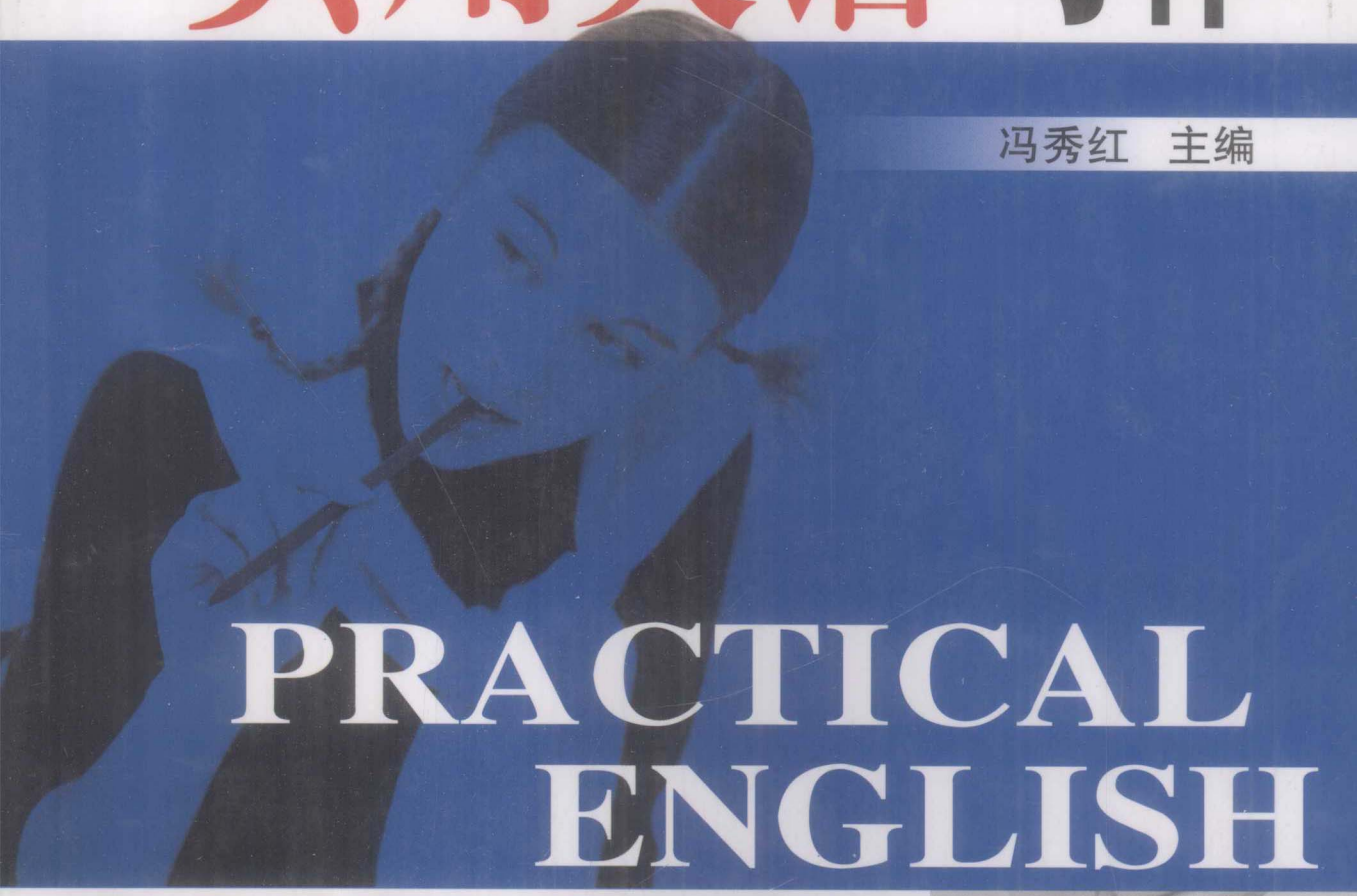
实用英语写作

冯秀红 主编



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实用英语写作

主　编　冯秀红

副主编　姜英俊　王若梅　贺　瑄

编　者　（排名不分先后）

李　苑　孙全军　秦莉丽

颜　君　华　楠

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内 容 提 要

本书根据《高职高专教育英语课程教学基本要求》，结合学生实际，针对写作难点，循序渐进地帮助学生掌握英语写作方法。本书共分为三部分。第一部分为基础写作，内容包括词的选择、句子的写作、段落和篇章的构成及展开方法、四种基本文体的写作模式等等。第二部分为实用写作，包括各类信函的写作方法、简历、申请、通知等应用文体的写作格式和要求，并列举了大量范例供学生模仿。第三部分则介绍了目前主要英语类考试如应用能力测试（又称三级）、四六级、雅思中写作的要求，讲解了方法、注意事项等。本书综合性极强，对学生通过考试有很大的指导意义。

本书选材大多来自国内外专家的专著和最新出版的书籍或刊物，内容新颖、生动有趣，语言地道易于模仿。适合各类高职高专学生使用，也可供从事相关工作、想提高英语写作水平或通过测试的读者使用。

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前 言

2003 年 12 月教育部颁布了《大学英语课程教学要求》(试行),对学生英文写作能力的一般要求为:"能完成一般性的写作任务,能描述个人经历、观感、情感和发生的事件等,能写常见的应用文,能就一般性的话题或提纲在半小时内写出 120 词的短文,内容基本完整,用词恰当,语意连贯。掌握基本的写作技能。"研究证明,写作能力是人的认识能力、思考能力和文字运用能力的综合反映,因而是训练难度最大的课程。本书就是为帮助广大英语学习者提高英语写作能力而撰写的。

《实用英语写作》以《大学英语教学大纲》和《大学英语考试大纲》为依据,强调英文写作的实践性和实用性。全书分为三大部分:第一部分为基础写作,内容包括词的选择、句子的写作、段落和篇章的构成及展开方法、四种基本文体的写作模式等等。第二部分为实用写作,包括各类信函的写作方法、简历、申请、通知等应用文体的写作格式和要求,并列举了大量范例供学生模仿。第三部分则介绍了目前主要英语类考试如应用能力测试(又称三级)、四六级、雅思中写作的要求,讲解了方法、注意事项等。本书是一本综合性的教材,对于想提高英文写作水平或通过测试的读者有很大的帮助。

本书结合学生写作实际中的问题,循序渐进地指导读者掌握写作方法,通过大量实践提高英文写作能力。本书选材大多来自国内外专家的专著和最新出版的书籍或刊物,内容新颖、生动有趣,语言地道、易于模仿。

本书的成功出版得到了东南大学出版社的大力支持!我们首先要感谢责任编辑为该书的出版付出的劳动,我们还要感谢东南大学出版社的全体编辑,他们在选题和内容编排方面,提出了许多宝贵意见。由于时间仓促,学识有限,书中定有不妥之处,望读者不吝赐教。

编者

2008 年 5 月于南京

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Chapter 1 Vocabulary

Diction means the choice of words. Mark Twain once said the difference between the right word and the almost-right word is as great as that between lighting and the lighting bug(精确用词和大体准确用词之间的差异犹如闪电与萤火虫的不同). The editor in the preface to the book *The Right Word at the Right Time* expressed that "Using the right word at the right time is rather like wearing appropriate clothing for the occasion: it is a courtesy(礼貌) to others, and a favor to yourself—a matter of presenting yourself well in the eyes of the world." There are over half a million words in the English language, many of which are synonyms(同义词). So to use words appropriately in English writing makes a big challenge to learners, especially to those foreign language learners. A basic knowledge of diction may be of help to them. This chapter is to deal with levels of diction: formal and informal, abstract and concrete, and general and specific. It also includes how to appreciate the connotative(含义) as well as denotative(本义) meanings of words. To the end, some confusing words are listed for the students' reference.

1.1 Levels of Words(词的类型)

In terms of formality, English words can be categorized as formal(正式的), informal(一般的) and colloquial(口语的). Formal words or technical words are words used by people of special professions or fields, on special occasions or for special purposes. Among these are political, legal, scientific, technical, business and literary(文学) words. They are used only in formal writing like articles, documents, research papers, manuals and in public speaking. Many of them contain three or over three syllables, they are commonly of Greek or Latin origin. The following *thank-you letter* is written in the formal diction.

Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to discuss my application and credentials with you. I enjoyed meeting you and other senior executive officers and I trust that my experience in market analysis will prove useful in helping your company expand your market share among the competitors. I look forward to hearing form you soon.

The informal words are used in everyday conversation and in informal writing like personal letters, diaries and stories. Because of this, they are called common words.

Here are examples of the first and second kinds of words:

Informal	**Formal**
same	identical
speech	oration
learned	erudite
stiff	rigid
try	endeavor
piece	fragment

In the first row are common words and in the second formal words. It can be seen at a glance that difference between these two types of words is very important, for their presence or absence has much to do with style.

There is another type of words which are mainly used in informal or familiar conversation. They seldom appear in formal writing. They are usually short words of one or two syllables and most of them are of Saxon origin. They are colloquial words.

I've got all the right stuff for them at ATM South, Bob, and I wouldn't be surprised if I get another call from them soon. They must be nuts if they pass me up. Oh, I need this job badly. Wish me luck!

Here the words "I've—" "nuts"(疯子)"pass up"(错过)are all colloquial words.

Of course, the formality or informality of words is not absolute, but relative. What matters here is you should be aware of the different levels and choose words appropriate to the context of your writing, and you mustn't mix different levels of diction together or it will make your writing a neither-fish-nor-fowl(不伦不类)flavor.

On hearing that his father had kicked the bucket, we wrote him a letter of condolence.

听说他父亲翘辫子了(kicked the bucket),我们写了一封吊唁信。显然"kicked the bucket"(翘辫子,死亡)此处运用不当。

Mr. John Smith proclaims that he is concerned with ecology and the preservation of natural beauty. But he doesn't give a flip about littering public places. Johnny purchases clothes from the most extravagant store in town yet he is a happy brown bagger when it comes to lunch. I am clueless about this dude; he is full of contradictions.

这里的"*proclaims*, *preservation*, *purchase*, *extravagant*, *contradictions*"都是非常正式的词汇,而"*Mr. John Smith*, *concerned with*, *give a flip about*, *this dude*"则是口语词汇。

Practice 1. 1

1. Read the following two paragraphs deciding which one is more formal.

(1) I'm no scientist at all. I'm glad now, though that I was pressured into becoming a scientist by my father and my brother. I understand how scientific reasoning and playfulness work, even though I have no talent for joining in—I've spent a lot more time with scientists than with literary people, my brother's friends, mostly. I enjoy plumbers and carpenters and automobile mechanics too.

(2) Once we grasp the tremendously important role that words play in poetry, as compared to the role they played in prose, it may help us arrive at a definition of the difference between the two categories. A poem will result when the genius of a language—its words, their sound and their sense—offers the genius of a poet an opportunity to perform a miracle.

2. Replace the underlined words with appropriate words or expressions.

(1) He resides in an elegant mansion.

(2) After breakfast, they commenced to do their homework.

(3) The film show terminated at 5. p. m.

(4) At last they extinguished the forest conflagration.

(5) The little girl remarked that she didn't like candy.

(6) Jack endeavored to convince his younger sister but failed.

(7) We will give you a discount of 3 percent if the moneys made within 15 days of delivery.

(8) Hi, Rose!

Hi, Jack! How about coming to my home tomorrow? I'll extend a warm welcome to you.

1.2 General &Specific(笼统词汇与具体词汇)

Both general and specific words are useful in writing. When we describe or explain things, or when we give details, we should try to use specific or concrete words wherever possible, for they are vivid, exact and interesting; when we summarize or generalize, we may find general or abstract words useful.

General	**Concrete**
Animal	tiger, horse, fox, cat, mouse, bird, butterfly, insect
Laugh	chuckle, roar, smile, grin, beam
Big	huge, great, large, vast, immense, enormous, tremendous
Scientist	physicist, chemist, biologist, astronomer, geologist, mathematician
Walk	stroll, stride, drag, shuffle, slouch, totter, sway, hobble, lurch, limp, plod, wander, saunter, loiter

Words are general or specific by comparison. Animal is general when compared with tiger, horse, etc., but horse is more general than steed, stallion, etc.

General: He put the book on the desk.

Specific: He threw the book on the desk.

General: He has a big house.

Specific: He has a two-storied house with four bedrooms, two living-rooms, a dining-room and a kitchen.

General: Students do many interesting things after classes.

Specific: At four o'clock in the afternoon after school, the sports fields are alive with energetic students. Football and basketball matches, volleyball, and badminton are all in full swing.

General: Public transportation system is very poor in small towns in China.

Specific: There are many problems in the public transportation system in small towns in China. The first problem is that the buses are seldom on schedule. Second, maintenance is very poor. The buses often break down, causing long delays. The third problem is the poor attitude of many of the drivers. They refuse to give information about transfer points, and they show little consideration for the comfort and safety of their passengers.

After giving the above details, if we want to summarize, sentences similar to those marked "general" can be used:

It is really a big house for one family.

Everyone says it is a beautiful park.

In short, I wasted a lot of time yesterday.

When we are trying to enlarge our vocabulary and learn to use effective words, we need to pay

special attention to concrete and specific words. We usually think of general words first when we write, but we should remember that there are many specific words which are similar in meaning but are more colorful and impressive. They are the words we should make an effort to learn and use.

Practice 1. 2

1. Choose the appropriate to fill the blanks.

(Going, Tramping) _____ through the woods one(time, afternoon) _____ in the spring of last year, I found a(young, baby) _____ owl in a pile of(foliage, leaves) _____ at the foot of a(beech, tree) _____. (Small, Palm sized) _____ covered with(grayish-white, light gray) _____ fluff, he(looked stared) _____ up at me with dark, shining eyes. Overhead, I could see the(place, hole) _____ from which he had(come, fallen) _____, a(distance, drop) _____ of 30 feet which should have(killed him, broken his neck) _____. But the little bird was apparently(in good condition, alive and kicking) _____, (moving, fluttering) _____ his wings and hissing.

2. Expand the following ideas by using specific and concrete words and details.

(1) Young people today have their own problems.

(2) The flood caused much destruction.

(3) People's income has been considerably increased in the last few years.

(4) During the vacation we saw many interesting sights.

(5) The man was boring.

(6) The teacher was angry.

1. 3 Denotation &Connotation(原义与涵义)

Denotation is a word's direct, literal(字面的) meaning. For instance, home is defined in the dictionary as "place where you live". While connotation is the word's implied, suggested meaning. It refers to the emotional response stimulated by associations that the word carries with it. Thus for everyone home suggests warmth, security and love.

As a writer, it is important to know the connotations of the words.

Firstly, words may have similar denotations but their connotations are different.

e. g. country, nation, state 和 land, 都可以译成"国家", 但它们的涵义却相差甚远。

Country emphasizes the territory. Nation emphasizes the people; State emphasizes political organization; Land is often used to connote certain feeling.

Secondly, some English words seem to have almost exact equivalents in Chinese as far as denotations are concerned, but they have quite different connotations.

如 propaganda"宣传"一词在中国是中性词并不带有西方人所理解的贬义; phoenix 在西方象征"复活"、"再生", 而汉语的这一词却表示"祥瑞";Peach 在汉语中象征"长寿" 而在英语中却用以指代"特别讨人喜爱的人或物"。又比如 在表示色彩的词中 green 是青春的颜色, 常表示希望、活力, 但在英语中 green 又与"妒忌"(to be green with envy, green-eyed)和"没有经验的"(a green horn)相联系。

Thirdly, some English words have the same denotations but they have complimentary, neutral or

derogatory connotations. For instance, all the following adjectives mean "thick in body because of presence of superfluous flesh", but differ widely in connotation.

Stout: suggesting robust health

Portly: suggesting slow dignity

Plump: suggesting a pleasant fullness of figure

Rotund: suggesting a spherical shape

Chubby: suggesting the bouncy roundness of a cherub or a well-fed baby

Fat: suggesting the neutral, general uncomplimentary connotation

Corpulent: suggesting an unbecoming bulkiness

Obese: implying an unhealthy excess of fat

More examples:

complimentary	derogatory	neutral
public servant	bureaucrat	government employee
financier	speculator	investor
law officer	cop	policeman
captain of industry	tycoon	successful businessman

1.4 Synonyms(同义词)

The English language is very rich in synonyms. This is partly due to the fact that English has over the centuries borrowed or absorbed tens of thousands of words from other languages, mainly Greek, Latin and French. Words of Anglo-Saxon origin are generally colloquial or informal, and they form a great part of the vocabulary that people use daily. Many of the words of Greek, Latin and French origin are formal, learned or "big", and are mainly used in formal writing or speech. For instance, "Laugh, smile, chuckle and giggle" are verbs and nouns with similar meanings, but they denote different ways of laughing. "To laugh" is to smile with sounds of the voice, and "to smile" is to show amusement with an expression of the face without producing any sound of the voice, "to chuckle" is to laugh quietly with a closed mouth, and "to giggle" is to laugh repeatedly in an uncontrolled way, especially when one is amused, nervous or embarrassed. To describe a certain person's smile or laugh on a certain occasion perhaps only one of these words is most suitable.

All this shows that it is important to study useful synonyms and their minute differences. Generally, they may be different in stylistic level(文体层次) in the degree of emphasis(强调程度), in emotional coloring(感情色彩), and in collocation(搭配). Let's cite a few examples to illustrate our point.

1. Phrasal or prepositional verbs are most suitable in an informal style.

Formal	**Informal**
Conduct	carry out
Discover	find out
Investigate	look into

2. The words borrowed from French and Latin are more formal than native words.

These borrowings are more appropriate in formal and technical writing.

policeman—constable—bobby—cop

policeman(neutral)—constable(neutral)—bobby(colloquial)—cop(slangy)

ask—beg—request

ask(neutral)— beg(colloquial)— request(formal)

3. **Many synonyms have clear affective values.**

result—consequence

result(neutral)—consequence(negative implication)

big—great

big(the bigness of size, volume and so on, without any emotive coloring)—great(suggest distinguished, eminent, outstanding)

little—small—tiny

little(attractiveness, pleasantness)—small(not big)—tiny(abnormal growth of the child)

Another example:

"statesman" and "politician" have the same denotative meaning—one who is skilled in the science of government or politics. But "statesman" has favorable connotations while "politician" has unfavorable or derogatory connotations. The former means "A person with wisdom and skill in managing the affairs of state", the latter means "a person who is in politics merely for personal gain".

4. **Many words are synonyms in meaning but different in usage in simple terms. They form different collocations and fit into different sentence patterns.**

e. g.

allow—let

allow sb. to do sth. —let sb. do sth.

answer—reply

answer(transitive v.) the letter—reply(intransitive v.) to the letter

empty—vacant

empty box/street/room(no one or nothing inside)—vacant seat/chair/apartment(not occupied)

lump—slice—chunk—sheet—piece

a lump of sugar— a slice of meat— a chunk of wood— a sheet of paper— a piece of soap

In understanding the meaning of words, we should avoid equating an English word with a Chinese one. It is hardly possible to find an English word which has exactly the same meaning and implication as a Chinese word. "Book" and "shu", "strike" and "da", "land" and "tudi", "family" and "jia", are synonymous only in one of their many senses, and are different in others. Take "family" for instance. The word refers to people who are closely related, especially father, mother and their children. It does not refer to the house where a family lives, while the Chinese word "jia" has this meaning. We have to be careful when we use those English words which we think are equivalent to certain Chinese words.

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