

本书是为适应大学英语教学改革的新要求而编写

# 英语系统写作方法

# The

高燕◎著

# Systemic Writing Approach

- ◎ 写作基础
- ◎ 写作方法
- ◎ 写作技巧
- ◎ 写作范文



机械工业出版社  
CHINA MACHINE PRESS

本书读者对象：在校大学生、研究生以及其他英语写作爱好者

本书是为适应大学英语教学改革的新要求而编写

# 英语系统写作方法

# The

高燕◎著

H315  
408

# Systemic Writing Approach



- ◎ 写作基础
- ◎ 写作方法
- ◎ 写作技巧
- ◎ 写作范文



机械工业出版社  
CHINA MACHINE PRESS

本书读者对象：在校大学生、研究生以及其他英语写作爱好者

本书系统阐述了英语写作的具体环节和实际应用中不同体裁和风格文章的构思和布局。从英语写作的基本组成要素入手,到如何为某一论点提供有效的支持论据;从如何做好写文章的准备,到如何构思一个段落等都进行了详细、具体的阐述。每一部分的阐述都配有大量的具体实例。这些实例均选自学生的习作,具有一定的代表性和典型性。读者可以从这些具体的实例中去研读和体会,最终达到举一反三的目的。书的最后设置了四个附录,列举了日常生活中常用英语文体的写作技巧,目的在于给读者提供一个全面而又具体的英语写作方面的工具书,指导并努力提高英语写作能力和水平。

#### 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语系统写作方法 = *The Systemic Writing Approach* / 高燕著. —北京:机械工业出版社, 2006. 5

ISBN 7-111-19127-7

I. 英... II. 高... III. 英语-写作 IV. H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2006) 第 046576 号

机械工业出版社 (北京市百万庄大街 22 号 邮政编码 100037)

责任编辑:余红 版式设计:张文贵

责任印制:洪汉军

北京汇林印务有限公司印刷

2006 年 5 月第 1 版·第 1 次印刷

169mm × 239mm · 8 印张 · 340 千字

0 001—3 000 册

定价:28.00 元

凡购本书,如有缺页、倒页、脱页,由本社发行部调换

本社购书热线电话:(010) 68326294

编辑热线:(010) 88379703

封面无防伪标均为盗版

---

## Preface

*The Systemic Writing Approach* (英语系统写作方法) 一书是为适应大学英语教学改革的新要求而编写的。2004 年由国家教育部出台的大学英语教学“新要求”着重对在校大学生的英语写作水平提出了进一步的标准和具体要求。对很多学生或是在职人员想要表达自己的某些思想观点，却不知怎样用地道的语言去表述。往往他们是先用汉语写出来，然后再翻译成英语。而这样的写作过程会使学习者陷入表达的误区。作者在大学从事英语教学十几年，对此深有感触。

面对这样的局面，本书从提高大学生的实际交际能力出发，全面论述了英语写作的具体环节。从写作的基本过程，到如何准备；从怎样写段落到不同体裁的文体，都做了深入浅出的讲解和具体阐述。更配有许多实例供读者参考，理论联系实际进行说明。目的在于逐步培养学生的实际写作能力，使其能真正做到用英语进行交际。

本书共分为 13 个单元。书中的例子均选自学生的习作，具有一定的普遍性和代表性。此书可作为广大在校大学生、研究生或其他英语写作爱好者写作方面的参考书，旨在为英语学习者提供有效的途径，提高他们的写作能力及水平，进一步推动大学英语的教学改革。书中难免有不足之处，希望广大读者批评指正。

作 者

# Contents

## Preface

Unit 1	The Fundamentals of Writing .....	(1)
Unit 2	Preparing the Essay .....	(15)
Unit 3	Developing and Supporting Ideas .....	(28)
Unit 4	Planning the Essay .....	(48)
Unit 5	Writing Skills .....	(63)
Unit 6	Writing a Paragraph .....	(69)
Unit 7	Drafting and Revising the Essay .....	(107)
Unit 8	Writing General-Specific Texts .....	(121)
Unit 9	Problem, Process, and Solution .....	(131)
Unit 10	Persuasion and Argumentation Essay .....	(137)
Unit 11	Summary and Analysis .....	(156)
Unit 12	Data Commentary .....	(176)
Unit 13	Constructing the Research Paper .....	(195)
Appendix I	Academic English and Latin Phrases .....	(230)
Appendix II	Electronic Mail .....	(233)
Appendix III	The Resume .....	(239)
Appendix IV	Business Letter Writing .....	(246)

# Unit 1

## The Fundamentals of Writing

College students face a variety of writing tasks as they work towards their chosen degrees. Naturally, these tasks will vary from one degree program to another. They are, however, similar in two aspects. First, the tasks become progressively more complex and demanding the farther you go in the program. Second, they need to be written “academically”. In this sense, you must understand and be able to produce the techniques by which academic writers communicate to academic audiences. At the end of studying different units in this book, you will be able to demonstrate a command of the following skills:

1. Prewriting: think before writing
  - A. Understand the assignment
  - B. Choose a subject that you are interested in
  - C. Narrow the subject so that it can be adequately covered within the limits of the assignment
  - D. Collect ideas
  - E. Consider the audience
2. Organization: write straightforward prose
  - A. Begin and end the paper clearly
  - B. Write a thesis statement of opinion and/or intent
  - C. Move smoothly from one paragraph to another
3. Development: support ideas
  - A. Use specific details to explain general ideas
  - B. Use facts, examples, physical description, and personal experience to develop ideas
4. Revision: look again, change and strengthen

- A. Reconsider the needs of the audience
- B. Reconsider the purpose(s) of the paper
- 5. Grammar and mechanics
  - A. Use language with precision
  - B. Avoid common errors of grammar and sentence structure
  - C. Strengthen writing through editing

### The Audience

Even before you write, you need to consider your audience. The audience is an essential concept for all writers. The basic rules for all the writers are: 1) write about what you know. 2) always write for an audience. Writers choose their subjects and their methods of presenting material (diction, sentence structure, organization) according to who will read the finished product. In order to communicate successfully, to write essays that have interest and value, you must decide:

- A. Who you are: a student? A son or daughter? An expert?
- B. Who your audience is: Classmates? Parents? The officer?

Your decision about who you are and who your audience is will determine:

- A. What you write: what does your audience know? What are the interests, the needs, and the expectations of your audience? What does your audience not know? What might your audience want to know? What do you know that you can communicate to your audience?
- B. How you write: will you use short sentences and simple language? Will you use sophisticated concepts and terms? Will you use charts or photographs?

All audiences have expectations. The audience for most college students will be an instructor, who is presumably quite knowledgeable about the assigned writing topic. To be successful in your writing task, you need to have an understanding of your audience's expectations and prior knowledge, because these will affect the content of your writing.

## Showing and Telling

In the paragraphs below, students wrote about their mothers. The information in these paragraphs demonstrates the differences between

SHOWING	AND	TELLING
(Demonstrating)		(Asserting)

Simply telling your reader what you want to communicate may be easy, but it is rarely very interesting or even very believable. In order to *support* your statements, you will need to use specific details and examples. In other words, showing your reader that what you have presented is valid will make your essay more interesting and more believable.

Read the sample paragraphs. Which sentences in each paragraph simply *tell* about the mother? Which sentences *show* — that is, which sentences contain specific details and examples about the mother? In addition, which sentences discuss the mother? Do these sentences tell about the writer instead?

### Sample

- It started nineteen years ago when she brought me into the world. Mom gave me the best care any child could have gotten. She has taught me more than any teacher in school and is overflowing with love. Always understanding and easy to communicate with and there when needed. She's the best: my "Mom".

- Mom is a gray — haired lady of about 72 years. She is very sweet when she wants to be and very difficult when she puts her mind to it. I had to teach her how to drive at the age of 50, and the only safe place to teach her was in a wheat field. She is a determined lady; for example, when I was teaching her to drive she backed up the car until it boiled, but she did learn how to back. She has more trouble now keeping her stories in correct order and true. I love my mother more as I grow older. I realize some of the things she had to go through to raise me.

- An essay on my mother you said, and I began thinking what to write. I just realized that it's possible that I don't truly know my mother, or at least not as well as I'd thought. She's about an inch shorter than I am and we look very much alike. Both of us have a spreading hip problem. My mom's always there. She's easy to talk and I like hearing her opinions. I really admire her because she went back to school a



few years ago and now is teaching in an elementary school. She really loves her job and the children. She also has plenty of time to keep up just about everything else that she did before working. Now that my brothers and sisters and I are older and more on our own I'm very glad that my mother's the way she is. She has accepted the fact that we have lives of our own, and she is going on living hers. My father has also benefited from this. They really make a good team.

- My mom can handle just about anything that life can throw at her. Usually she's the most excitable person in our house. I just can't imagine what it would be like without her. Except that I would feel as though some great knowledge had been torn from my own self.

- My mother was born in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1918. She grew up in the Bavarian Alps and lived there until her family moved to the city of Marlsruhe which lies near the Black Forest, along the Rhine River. Just prior to World War II, my mother married my father and I came along in 1939. In 1945, after the war and after my father had been killed in action, my mother met and married my stepfather and traveled with him to the United States to live with him and me in California where she still resides.

The following paragraphs were written by students in response to an assignment to write a paragraph about their names. The students tried to show, by using factual information, details, and examples, what their names meant. Are there specific details in the paragraphs? What makes each paragraph interesting? What details are *memorable*?

### Sample

- My complete name is Lili Margarite Chan Gonzelez. My first name, Lili, was the name of a ballet dancer. She was my grandfather's fianc. e. They never got married because one night after her show she was killed in the street where she used to live. In my country most of my friends call me Lilian because they say that Lili is a diminutive of Lilian. My second name is the name of a flower and also the name of a saint. In the Catholic religion, our second name must have a Catholic meaning. Chan, my third name, is a Chinese name. I really don't know anything about it. My real last name is Gonzalez, and it is a very common Spanish name.

- My full name is Adel Addeb Ali Hassan Ali Ebram O'hide Salamah Faraq Al — Hada. These ten names are my names plus my father's and my grandfather's from my father's side. It is a custom in Arabia that every child has to be called by his father's side. My family name is supposed to be Al — Hadad, but for some reason my sixth

grandfather was famous, so his sons and grandsons took his name to be a family name. All of these names are Arabian. As it is everywhere, one name has been repeated, maybe because it was common during that time. Of course, I just use three of these names at school, and in most of my daily life I just like to be called by my first name, Adel. Besides that point, we have another habit of calling the child Mohammed when he is born for the first seven days. So actually I would have twenty names if we add Mohammed before each of my other names, as it is common to do back home. I remember all of these names because it is believed that we should be proud of our grandfathers.

- My name is Sin Sing Chiu, Henry. Anyone who looks at my first and second name will be puzzled by the meanings that they convey in the English language. The two words seem to indicate that I have committed so many crimes that I have come to “sing” them out. However, Sin Sing have completely different meanings in the Chinese language. In my family, every male generation is assigned a definite first name; mine happened to be Sin, which means “kind” in Chinese. The second name is given by my grandfather. He thinks that kindness should be widespread over the lands and seas. It is for this reason that I have received the name Sing which means “voice”. Chiu is my last name, and I am proud of it, because it is one of the names of the dynasties in China, and it includes a very large family. We even have generation books dated back to our great — great — great grandfathers. My English name, Henry, was chosen by my brother; it is for convenience that I have adopted this name. Since my Chinese name is not very easy to say, I can be remembered by my English name.

### General and Specific

In writing a paragraph you will need to know the difference between a general idea and a specific detail. Between the two, many levels may exist. In the examples below, each word is more specific than the word above it. That is, each of the subsets is *subordinate* to the word above it. You indicate this subordination by *indenting* the word.

solar system

planets

earth

North America

United States

Colorado

## The Systemic Writing Approach

Fort Collins  
Colorado State University  
a classroom

essay

tree

paragraph

trunk

sentence

branch

word

twig

syllable

leaf

letter

In the examples below, each general sentence is made more specific.

1. *General:* Airlines transport people all over the world.

*Specific:* United Airlines has daily flights from Denver to New York city and London.

2. *General:* Foreign students often have adjustment problems in the United States.

*Specific:* Morella has trouble understanding her American roommate.

### The Paragraph

A paragraph is a series of sentences that develop one idea. Usually that idea is stated in a general form in one sentence, called the topic sentence. That sentence tells your audience what to expect in the paragraph. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph provide the reader with specific explanation or proof (evidence, support) of the general topic sentence. The supporting sentences help the reader understand more clearly what the writer means; they show that the topic sentence is valid.

Of course, a reader does not have to agree with your topic sentence. But if your paragraph is complete, the information should show the reader that your point view is worthwhile and clear.

### Subject and Topic

SUBJECT: A General Area of Interest

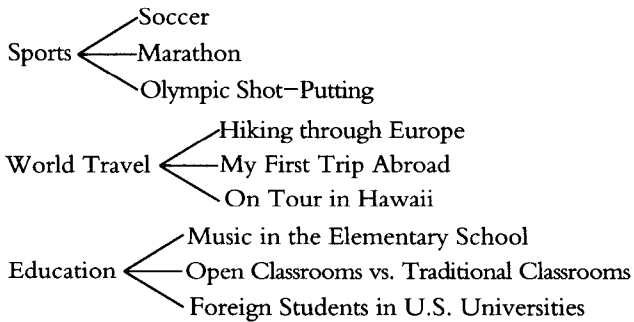
A. Sports

## B. World Travel

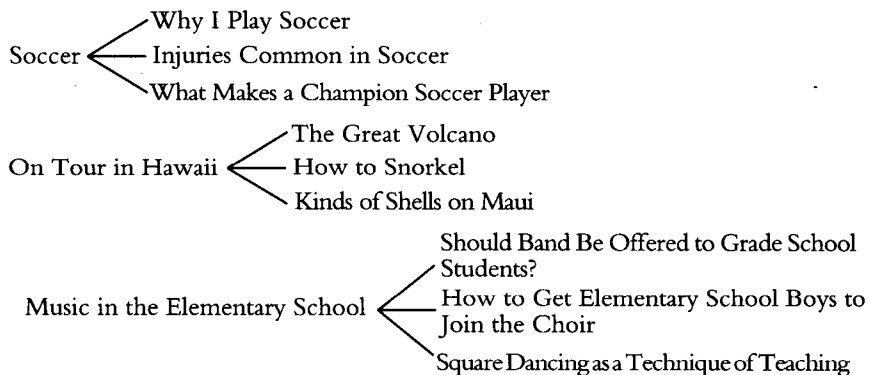
## C. Education

TOPIC: A subject that has been narrowed so that it can be covered thoroughly. How narrow a topic is depends on the assignment.

Narrowing a subject to a topic can be compared to a wide — angle camera lens that zooms in to focus on a single small flower. By *focusing* your attention on a small part of the subject, you can narrow the subject to a restricted area that you can cover in depth rather than superficially. In the examples below, the subjects have been narrowed.



Further narrowing of a topic can make the resulting paragraph even more interesting to the audience because a narrow topic forces the writer to be *more specific*, to *show* by example, fact, physical description, and personal experience rather than simply to tell.



## The Topic Sentence

For every topic, you can write several different paragraphs. Each of

these paragraphs will have a *topic* sentence that will

- A. Introduce the topic in the paragraph
- B. Be the most *general* sentence in the paragraph
- C. Be the most *important* sentence in the paragraph
- D. Contain *controlling* ideas that the following sentences in the paragraph will *explain, define, clarify* and *illustrate*. That is, the sentence will *support* or *prove* the topic sentence

A controlling idea is a word or phrase that the reader can ask questions about: How? Why? In what ways? What does that mean?

In the sentences below, the controlling ideas are underlined, and the questions a reader could ask follow that topic sentence:

- 1. It is very difficult to be alone in a foreign country.  
*Why? In what ways?*
- 2. There are several unusual superstitions in my country about death.  
*What are they? Why are they unusual?*
- 3. The most serious problem in higher education in Venezuela is the growing number of students who fail courses several times.  
*Why is the problem so serious? How many students fail? What exactly makes this situation a problem?*
- 4. Most people have the wrong idea about the definition of statistics.  
*What is the wrong idea? What is the right definition?*

**Practice**

In the topic sentences below, circle the controlling ideas. Then write specific questions that the paragraph following each topic sentence might answer.

- 1. There are differences in shape, color, and taste between the two most popular varieties of dates in Saudi Arabia.

*Questions:* \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. One of the most recent technical advances in the use of water is the development of hydroelectric power.

*Questions:* \_\_\_\_\_

3. The creativity of the preschool child can be developed with special activities.

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Violence in the sport of hockey is destroying the quality of the game.

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

### Writing the Topic Sentence

1. A topic sentence *cannot* be a simple statement of a fact because in a fact there are no *controlling ideas* that need *development*. Examples of facts that are *not* topic sentences:

A. *You can buy these socks at K-Mart for \$1.98.*

B. *We celebrate Christmas on December 25.*

2. Weak topic sentences are often simple personal opinion; the controlling idea in “I like” or “I think” is difficult to support. Examples of simple statements of opinion that are weak topic sentences:

A. *I can't help liking this book.*

B. *I like dogs better than cats.*

C. *It is my opinion that smoking causes cancer.*

3. A successful topic sentence usually contains an *opinion* that will be proved or supported in the paragraph, or a *statement of intent* that the writer will explain in detail in the paragraph. Examples of topic sentences that have an opinion or a statement of intent:

A. *Snakes make better pets than dogs or cats.*

B. *Smoking can cause genetic defects in an unborn child.*

C. *Marathon racing is good for the soul as well as for the body.*

D. *To see Europe on a mere \$10 a day, try hiking.*

E. *Building a room that utilizes passive solar energy can reduce heating costs.*

## The Point Paragraph

Each paragraph you write will contain a topic sentence and four to eight sentences that will *support* the topic sentences. These supporting sentences will be more specific than the topic sentence. Notice that the more specific ideas are indented.

A chart of a balanced, detailed paragraph looks like this:

TOPIC SENTENCE (CONTROLLING IDEAS)

A. POINT NUMBER ONE

SPECIFIC DETAILS {1, 2}

B. POINT NUMBER TWO

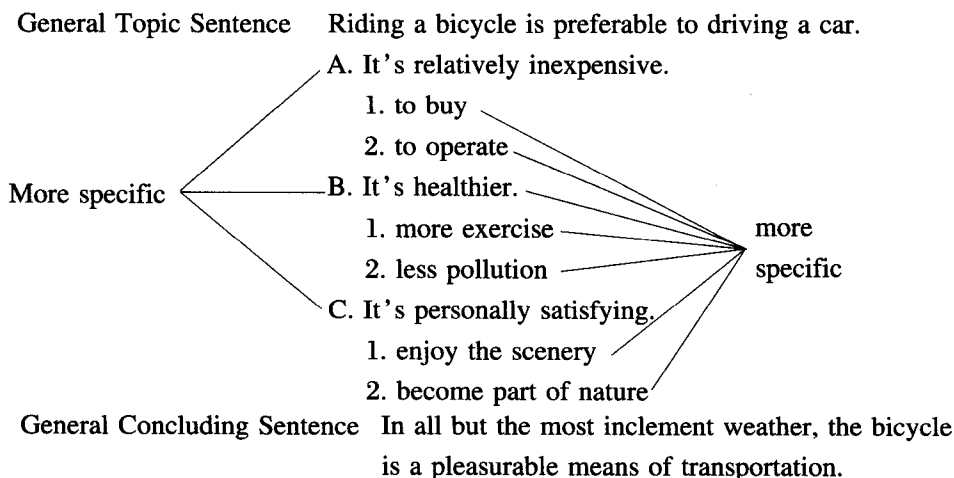
SPECIFIC DETAILS {1, 2}

C. POINT NUMBER THREE

SPECIFIC DETAILS {1, 2}

CONCLUDING SENTENCE

### Example



### Resulting paragraph:

Riding a bicycle is preferable to driving a car. First of all, a bicycle is relatively inexpensive to buy and to maintain. While a car may cost thousands of dollars to buy and hundreds of dollars annually, a good bicycle will cost only a hundred dollars or

so, and its annual maintenance cost is very small. Biking is also healthier; not only does the biker get more physical exercise than the driver, but bicycles are nonpolluting. The consequence is a person with strong legs and a strong heart whose bicycle helps keep the environment clean. Finally, bicycling is, unlike driving, personally satisfying. Instead of being a robot inside a machine, the biker pedals along, enjoying the scenery, becoming a part of nature. In all but the most inclement weather, the bicycle is a pleasurable means of transportation.

**Practice**

Read the two paragraphs below. Then outline each paragraph according to the format for the point paragraph outlined given above.

1. Write the topic sentence of each paragraph. Circle the controlling ideas in each topic sentence.
2. List the two to four main points given in each paragraph.
3. Under each main point, list the specific details used to support each point.

• In the minds of many people, the octopus is considered an animal of hell, a devil-fish; however, for me this strange creature has amazing powers. First, the octopus has excellent, humanlike eyesight; the eyes, like those of vertebrates, have lids, irises, crystalline lenses, and retinas. When a predator appears, the orange-brown eyes, which are mobile and so can be turned in different directions, flash in the sea like the sun in the sky. Similarly amazing is the octopus's facility for changing shape. Generally its favorite hiding place is a small cavity in a rock; the octopus, usually a round marine animal, can make itself entirely flat like an envelope or it can stretch itself like India rubber in order to enter the small crevice. This remarkable animal can also transform itself by changing color: white, black, and even red! The agents for these color changes are the chromatophores, the color cells; the octopus has two different kinds of cells, one for the dark colors and another for the light ones. Why does the octopus have all these transforming abilities? Because he has lost the protective shell of his ancestors and must therefore have alternative ways to survive in the sea.

• It is hard for foreign student wives to be able to make American friends since most of their husbands go to school full time while they have to stay at home taking care of the children and the house. This situation makes it almost impossible for them to go out often and meet people. Furthermore, most of the foreign wives don't speak English at all when they first come here, and this keeps them from having a



conversation with an English speaker. Finally, foreign students usually live in student housing, and generally the Americans who live there go to school. In many cases, even if only the husband is going to school, the American wife will be working. Consequently, the American couple does not have time to socialize, and the foreign student wives have very few American friends.

### The Process of Writing a Paragraph

1. Choose a subject that you know about.

*Example:* Studying abroad

2. Identifying your audience

*Example:* Classmates

3. Narrow your subject to a topic that will interest your audience.

*Examples:* Advantages and Disadvantages of Being a University Student in the United States.



Problems of Living Alone While Studying at a University in the United States.



Most Serious Problem of Living Alone While Studying at a University in the United States.

4. Collect some ideas about your topic.

*Examples:* • Having to clean the apartment

- No one to wake me up in the morning
- Having to shop and cook for myself
- Missing classes because I don't keep a regular schedule
- Spending my money too quickly
- Having to do the laundry
- Loneliness
- Don't get my studying completed — no one to discipline me

5. List details about some of your ideas that will interest your audience.

*Examples:* • waking up: late for class, never time for breakfast