

荣获教育部全国普通高等学校优秀教材二等奖

大学英语论文 写作手册 (修订版)

Writing Research Papers
A University Handbook

刘浣波 李如平 袁 蕾 编 著

重庆大学出版社

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

大学英语论文写作手册/刘浣波,李如平,袁蕾编著.
2版(修订版).—重庆:重庆大学出版社,2006.3
ISBN 7-5624-3555-3

I. 大... II. ①刘...②李...③袁... III. 英语—
论文—写作—高等学校—教材 IV. H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2005)第 131714 号

大学英语论文写作手册

(修订版)

刘浣波 李如平 袁 蕾 编著

责任编辑:周小群 版式设计:韩 杰

责任校对:李定群 责任印制:赵 晟

*

重庆大学出版社出版发行

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全国新华书店经销

自贡新华印刷厂印刷

*

开本:787×960 1/16 印张:10.5 字数:194 千

1999 年 12 月第 1 版 2006 年 3 月第 2 版 2006 年 3 月第 3 次印刷

印数:4 501—7 500

ISBN 7-5624-3555-3 定价:16.00 元

本书如有印刷、装订等质量问题,本社负责调换

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Acknowledgments

We wish to thank all those who have generously given us help, encouragement and advice in writing and revising this handbook, among whom are Professor Li Li, Professor Chen Zhi'an, Professor Li Changtai, Professor Liu Jiarong and Professor Xiang Xueqin from Southwest China Normal University. We are also grateful to the postgraduate students of the School of Foreign Languages, Southwest China Normal University, who have been the target population for the materials now in book form. Without their patience and comments, many of the pitfalls of the handbook would have still remained. We are especially indebted to Ms Zhou Xiaoqun of Chongqing University Press for her patience throughout the process, without which this handbook would have never come to fruition.

Liu Jianbo

Li Ruping

Yuan Lei

Preface

Many years of teaching enabled us to have the first-hand knowledge that our students are relatively weak in undertaking academic research and writing. Some students are even virtually ignorant of the basic rules and standards of writing academic research papers. It is with this in mind that we venture to write this handbook to help our students of English to familiarize themselves with the basic steps, skills and techniques in writing a research paper. Emphasis is placed on explaining the accepted practice in the MLA style of documentation. The APA style and Chicago style documentation are also introduced.

This book is the result of the authors' fifteen years of experience in teaching academic research and writing to undergraduates and postgraduate students. It has been tried and repeatedly revised at the School of Foreign Languages at Southwest China Normal University, Henan Normal University, Shanxi Normal University, Guizhou Normal University, Ningbo University, Yunnan Educational College, Xichang Teacher's College, South China University of Technology, and Shaoguan College.

It was our joint efforts that have brought about the publication of the book, but each of us was assigned with a specific chapter or chapters. More specifically, Liu Jianbo designed the framework of the book, and wrote Chapters III, IV, V, and VI. He also wrote the sample research paper. Li Ruping wrote Chapters I and II. Yuan Lei wrote Chapters VII and VIII. She also provided and updated most of the examples.

We sincerely welcome readers' comments and criticism so that improvements can be made in future editions. Meanwhile, readers are reminded that, due to the length constraints, some typesets in this book (such as double space and indentation) are not strictly in accordance with the guidelines. We apologize for any confusion this may bring about.

Liu Jianbo
Li Ruping
Yuan Lei

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Chapter I

What is a Research Paper

Definition

A research paper is an academic essay that consists of the existed academic findings and the student's own understandings, analyses and arguments on a subject. It is a lengthy documented report from the student's firsthand acquisition, synthesis, and interpretation of information. Its content focuses upon a topic that the student's own intellectual curiosity brings him or her to study. The primary purpose of a research paper is to inform the reader in the field about the research topic, methods, and to demonstrate the validity or reasonableness of the conclusion about it. A research paper may be a published article in a journal, a monograph distributed by a research institution, or a term paper, course paper and a thesis or dissertation as a partial requirement for a university degree.

Although it is meant to be objective, a research paper is also an expression of the student's own understanding of the topic. His or her personal values, insights, and experiences have a great influence on the whole writing process. There is no completely objective research paper. However, students should try to be as objective and neutral as possible.

Organization

Regardless of subject area, a research paper usually includes title page, outline, abstract, table of contents, text proper, notes, works cited, and appendix.

The title page usually consists of the following items:

1. title of paper;



2. subtitle (optional) ;
3. full name of author ;
4. submission statement ;
5. date submitted.

An outline, which is optional, usually consists of headings of each part of the paper. It gives a concise framework of the whole research paper.

An abstract is a concise preview of the whole paper and gives the reader general information on the main content.

A table of contents is a list of all the headings of the research paper in sequence of their appearance with their page numbers. It informs the content of the paper so that the readers can decide whether to continue reading. It also tells the accurate place of the identified content to make the checking convenient.

The largest part of a paper is naturally the text proper, which consists of three major sections: introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction serves as an orientation for readers of the paper, giving them the perspective they need to understand the detailed information in later sections. The body, which is the main part of the three, illustrates and supports the thesis set forth in the introduction through discussions, analyses, data, experiments and examples. The conclusion states a final idea or summarizes the paper's major arguments with an emphatic and forceful statement to influence the reader's final impression of the essay and shows the possible implication or consequence of the argument.

Notes of a research paper is optional. It provides some detailed explanations of the text.

Works Cited lists all the sources quoted in the text.

Appendix is also optional, where materials such as questionnaires, classroom observational sheets, photocopied textbooks or other documents are attached.



Working Procedure

Student researchers usually follow the following steps in writing a research paper:

- selecting a subject of interest ;
- checking reference sources for the topic ;
- focusing on one aspect of the subject (narrowing the subject) ;



- writing a research question;
- formulating a thesis statement;
- designing the study;
- developing a preliminary outline;
- collecting data;
- revising the preliminary thesis statement and preliminary outline;
- writing the first draft of the paper;
- revising the paper;
- editing for mechanical errors;
- editing the citation and the bibliography;
- finalizing the paper;
- printing and binding the paper.

Chapter II

The Research Topic

Negotiating a Topic

A tutor or an instructor may assign a topic. In this case, the tutor has already considered its suitability for research, the student's interest and understanding of a certain subject. What the student needs to do is to demonstrate his or her grasp of basic concepts through independent research and study. Assigned topics are usually closely connected with the offered courses. Students can, therefore, benefit from class notes, textbooks, assigned readings and the instructor's expertise in the field.

However, in most academic practices, tutors and instructors do not assign students topics. Instead, they expect students to find topics themselves or negotiate topics.

To negotiate a topic, students must first locate a good research subject, and resort to one or a combination of the four exercises: following personal interests, talking with other people, brain-storming and reading source materials.

2.1.1 Following Personal Interests

Interest is the best teacher. When a student begins looking for a research topic, he or she should think about those that he or she might be willing to spend time researching. If he or she does not have a real interest in a topic, he or she may lose motivation at some stage and this in return will make his or her task much harder.

Students often ask, "How shall I know that I can maintain interest in something until I have studied it thoroughly?" This is true, but the more he or she



gets into a subject, the more interesting it becomes; the more interesting it is, the deeper understanding he or she gains. Generally speaking, a student should choose something that seems to promise him or her real value, something that he or she has always wanted to learn more about. He or she will write best on a subject that he or she is interested in. His or her sense of satisfaction and achievement will certainly be greater when the job is done.

2.1.2 Talking with Other People

As the Chinese saying goes: “One evening’s conversation with a gentleman is worth more than ten year’s study.” This is also true with finding a research topic because a good research topic may come from a talk with fellow students, instructors, the elders and friends. Conversations might trigger good ideas for a research topic. Therefore, talk to classmates, instructors, the elders and friends to find out if they have any interesting ideas or experiences relevant to the subject.

2.1.3 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a form of exploring a topic that involves listing relevant words and phrases in rapid succession. Doing researches needs a lot of mental work. A student may sit down and write down all the thoughts and ideas on the subject that come to his or her mind, no matter how simple or obvious they might seem. These ideas and thoughts may look like a junk, but after sorting and grouping, they may provide valuable ideas for research.

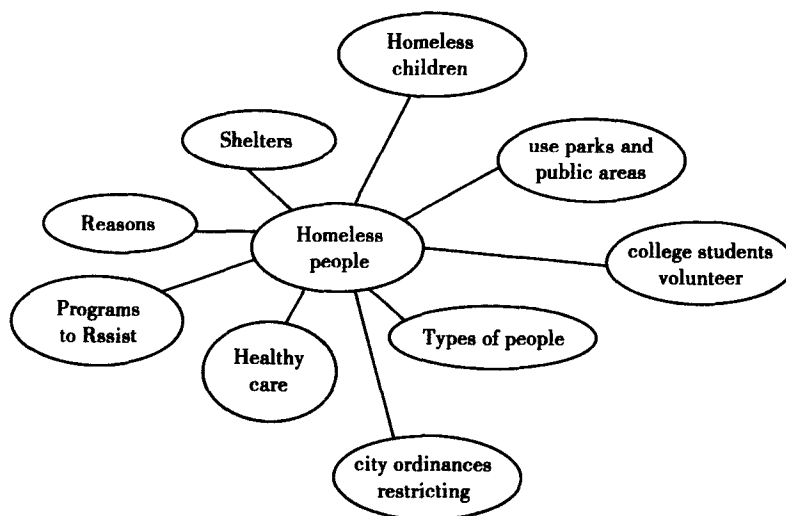
2.1.4 Word-star or Clustering

Clustering is a variation of brainstorming in which a writer places a key word or phrase in a circle as the nucleus and adds related words and ideas in radiating lines and circles.

Begin the word-star by drawing a circle around the subject, and then connect the circle with lines to any ideas that can associate with it. Circle the second idea and connect it to other associations.

Students should not have to worry about what ideas come first or how to group them. Simply write them down. Group and organize them later.

e. g.



(McWhorter 32)

2.1.5 Using Library Sources

A good library usually contains excellent sources either in paper form or in electronic form. Students usually turn to the following for ideas: encyclopaedias, books, and periodicals.

2.1.5.1 Encyclopaedias

Everyone is probably familiar with such encyclopaedias as *Encyclopaedia Britanica* and *Encyclopaedia Americana*, which cover practically all subjects. Entries in an encyclopaedia are alphabetically arranged by subjects. Articles in encyclopaedias are often excellent, authoritative summaries and discussions written by carefully chosen experts in the related fields.

An encyclopaedia article is useful in finding a topic. It can also suggest possible bibliography.

The following is an excerpt from *Columbia Encyclopaedia* about expressionism. It offers general information and classic references.





Expressionism, term used to describe works of art and literature in which the representation of reality is distorted to communicate an inner vision. The expressionist transforms nature rather than imitating it. 1 In painting and the graphic arts, certain movements such as the BRÜCKE (1905), BLAUE REITER (1911) and NEW OBJECTIVITY (1920s) are described as expressionist. In a broader sense the term also applies to certain artists who worked independent of recognized schools or movements, e. g., Rouault, Soutine, and Vlaminck in France and Kokoschka and Schiele in Austria — all of whom made aggressively executed, personal, and often visionary paintings. Gauguin, Ensow, Van Gogh, and Munch were the spiritual fathers of the 20th-century expressionist movements, and certain earlier artists, notably El Greco, Grünewald, and Goya exhibit striking parallels to modern expressionistic sensibility. See articles on individuals, e. g., ENSOR. See Carl Zigrosser, *The Expressionists* (1957); Frank Whitford, *Expressionism* (1970); John Willett, *Expressionism* (1970); Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* (1973). 2 In literature, expressionism is often considered a revolt against realism and naturalism, seeking to achieve a psychological or spiritual reality rather than record external events in logical sequence. In the novel, the term is closely allied to the writing of Frank Kafka and James Joyce (see STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS). In the drama, Strindberg is considered the forefather of the expressionists, though the term is specifically applied to a group of early 20th-century German dramatists, including Kaiser, Toller, and Wedekind. Their work was often characterized by a bizarre distortion of reality. Playwrights not closely associated with the expressionists occasionally wrote expressionist drama, e. g., Karel Capeck's *R. U. R.* (1921) and Eugene Oneill's *The Emperor Jones* (1921). The movement, though short-lived, gave impetus to a free form of writing and of production in modern theater. See Egbert Krispyn, *Style and Society in German Literary Expressionism* (1964). (Harris and Levey 913)

But always keep in mind that encyclopaedia articles are only broad introductions. Books and journals are more detailed and up-to-date. Therefore, encyclopaedias serve only to familiarize students with fundamental facts and basic concepts.



2.1.5.2 Books

Books are among the best sources in which to discover a topic for research. Skimming a book's table of contents, introduction, index and a few chapters is enough to tell whether the book is suitable. Keep in mind that a student is only browsing books for possible topics; therefore, he or she should not read the books in detail but to get an overview of possible topics.

2.1.5.2.1 Table of Contents

The table of contents of a book outlines the major subject areas and enables the reader to find under what headings a certain topic is discussed. Survey a book's table of contents to find an interesting topic.

The following is the table of contents of *Modern Poetry & the Tradition* by Cleanth Brooks:

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IX.	A Note on the Death of Elizabethan Tragedy	203
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(Brooks xxxiii)



If a student is interested in Yeats, he or she will find Chapter VIII "Yeats: The Poet as Myth-Maker" useful. He or she may ignore the other chapters.

2.1.5.2.2 Index

Most academic publications in English include an index, which is usually located at the end of a book. It lists alphabetically the book's major contents, topics, subtopics, ideas, places and names mentioned in the book. The page numbers after the index entries tell where exactly to locate the listed items. It is useful to discover specific topics.

The following is part of the index from *Modern Poetry & the Tradition* by Cleanth Brooks. It lists individual items included in the book. For example, if you want to know more about T. S. Eliot, you can turn to pages viii, xii, xvii-xviii, xxi, xxii, xxxi, 3, 4, 5, 13 n., 33, 50, 53, 58, 74, 176, 217 and so on for details.

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(Brooks 248)

2.1.5.3 Periodical Indexes

Periodicals are published more frequently than books and encyclopaedias, and they are capable in providing current information and opinions. Indexes to periodicals categorize almost all periodical articles. The most famous of such indexes include *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*, *Humanity Index*, *Social Sciences Index*, and *MLA Bibliography*. A brief look at the title and the key words