

STUDENTS BOOK

Effective Writing

Writing skills for
intermediate students
of American English

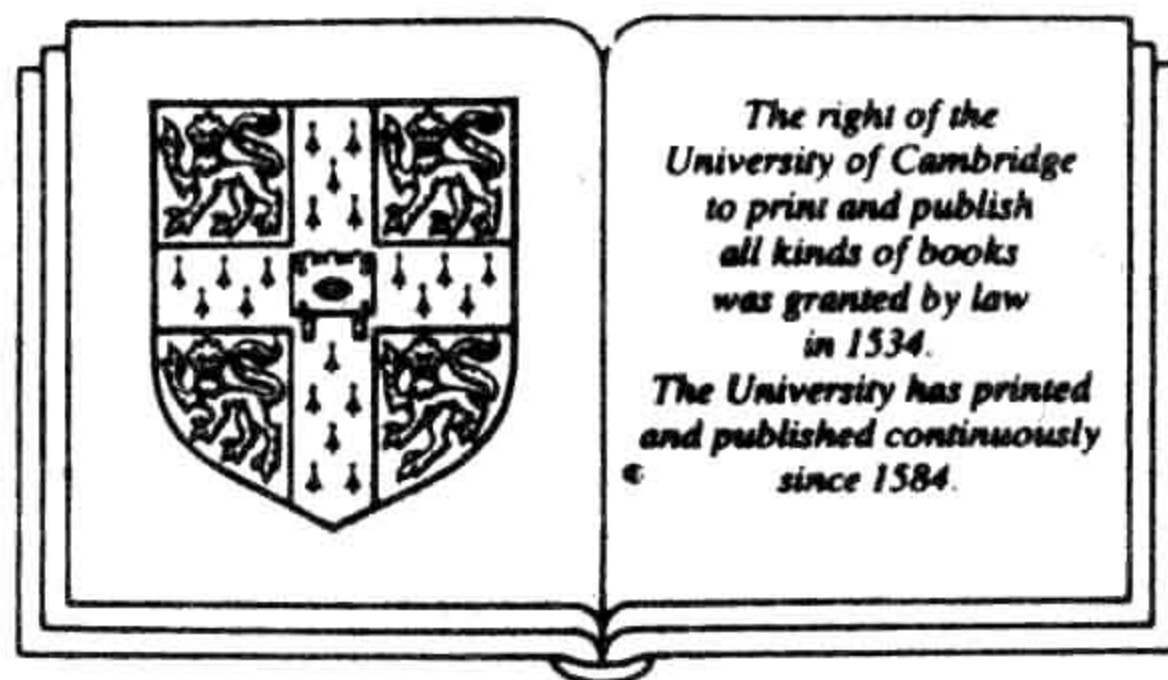
Jean Withrow

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Student's Book

Jean Withrow



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Summary: A practice book for achieving writing skills in American English in such areas as letters, stories, reports, articles, instructions, business letters, memos and opinion essays.

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To the student

Effective Writing is a book that helps you gain some of the skills you need when you write in English. The aim of the book is to help you recognize what good writing is and to give you practice writing complete, cohesive paragraphs and compositions. The purpose, in short, is to help you make what you write more effective.

Here are some of the reasons that a piece of writing is ineffective, or difficult for a reader to understand:

1. The ideas are not in an **order** that makes sense; the piece is not **well organized**.
2. The ideas are not grouped together into **paragraphs**.
3. The writer does not start the piece with a **beginning** that starts the reader in the right direction.
4. The writer does not finish the piece with an **ending** that leaves the reader with a sense of completion.
5. The **relation** between the ideas is not clear because the writer has not used words like *for example, on the other hand, because, and so on*.
6. The writer's **attitude** is not clear. Is the writer, for example, describing, suggesting, or criticizing something?
7. The piece contains ideas that are not **relevant** to what the writer wants to express.
8. The sentences do not have clear **punctuation**; there are commas (,) and periods (.) without any good reason.

The material in this book practices all these aspects of good writing. Obviously, different students vary in what they do well and what they need to work on, and they therefore need to concentrate on different things. This material allows you to do that; you can vary the order and type of exercises to suit your needs.

Many of the instructions given for the exercises suggest that you work with a group. You can learn a great deal by working with others to solve a problem or make a decision. Group work is a way of sharing knowledge, comparing opinions, and discussing ideas orally before doing individual or class work. However, this way of working is only a suggestion. Different teachers and classes should feel free to adjust any of the suggestions about ways of working with the material to suit their own needs and circumstances.

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1 Formal and informal letters

1.1 ORGANIZING IDEAS

Read this help-wanted ad:

TRAVEL AGENT

Bright individual with good phone manner, varied duties, must type 60 wpm, bilingual a plus. Experience preferred. Send resume: F3140 Times.

The following sentences form a letter that answers this ad, but the sentences are in the wrong order. Working in groups, put them in logical order. Discuss how the underlined words help you.

Should the letter be divided into paragraphs? If so, where?

4831 East 6th Street
Los Angeles, California 90037
June 3, 1988

Ms. Maria Cuellar
Travel Agents International
P.O. Box 3974
Los Angeles, California 90031

Dear Ms. Cuellar:

- a) My primary responsibility at Vacations Plus was helping plan international trips for individuals and groups.
- b) I therefore feel confident that I can make a contribution to your company.
- c) I enclose a resume as requested, and I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

»»»→

- d) In reference to your advertisement in the Times June 1, I would like to apply for the position of travel agent.
- e) Additional duties included typing correspondence, doing ticketing, and telephoning airlines, bus companies, and clients.
- f) In dealing with clients, I was often required to use Spanish and French, both of which I speak fluently.
- g) I have an Associate of Arts degree in Travel and Tourism and have worked as an intern at Vacations Plus Travel Company.

Sincerely yours,



Gerard Gernand

1.2 RELATING IDEAS: LINKING WORDS AND PHRASES

In groups, discuss the linking words and phrases underlined in paragraph 1 of the letter below. What do they mean? How do they link ideas? How are they punctuated?

Then, working individually or in groups, choose the best word or phrase for each blank in paragraphs 2 and 3 from the list below the letter.

Dear Reynaldo,

Do you remember I told you I was trying to get a part-time job as a waiter at a Japanese restaurant?

(1) Well, I finally managed to get one! Of course, I haven't been working there long, (2) but I can already tell it's a wonderful place to work. All the staff, even the maitre d', are very friendly. (3) Besides, the pay is pretty good, (4) and they let us eat whatever we want after work. (5) For instance, last night I had a big platter of sushi at 11:00!

I work only as a dinner waiter (6)..... I go to classes during the day. My main job is to take orders from customers, give the orders to the cooks, (7)..... take the food to the customers. I often have to describe the different Japanese dishes, (8)..... sashimi, sukiyaki, or teriyaki. Sometimes Japanese customers speak to

me in Japanese, expecting me to know the language.
 (9)....., I know only a few words of Japanese,
 (10)..... I get a little embarrassed. you know, my
 grandparents immigrated from Japan, (11)..... my
 parents never taught me Japanese. I'm pretty well over
 my embarrassment now, (12)....., and am
 taking advantage of learning more of the language on
 the job. I find the job very interesting
 (13)..... I get to meet so many different
 people.
 (14)....., that's my news. What about
 you? Drop me a line when you have time. Regards to
 your family.

as always,

Ken

6. a) because b) by the way c) however
 7. a) and b) so c) for instance
 8. a) besides b) however c) such as
 9. a) then b) however c) although
 10. a) then b) so c) because
 11. a) because b) besides c) but
 12. a) well b) though c) and
 13. a) why b) because c) then
 14. a) well b) for example c) but

Put a linking word or phrase in each blank below so that the relationship between the statements is clear. Choose from these words:

such as besides however
 but because and

15. There are a lot of advantages to this job. For one thing, the pay and working conditions are good. _____, it's only five minutes' walk from where I live.
16. I didn't apply for that other job _____ I didn't think I had much chance of getting it.
17. A lot of working groups, _____ plumbers, electricians, and teachers, have unions that protect their members' rights.
 _____, waiters and waitresses do not.
18. At first I didn't feel happy about not having a union, _____ now it doesn't bother me.

1.3 SHOWING ATTITUDE

Fill in the blanks below with words and phrases that show the writer's attitude toward what he is saying. Choose the best expression for each from those given below the letter.



Dear Editor:

I am responding to last week's editorial, "Youth: Our Nation's Future," in which you praised the young people of today.

(1) _____, there are just as many teenagers today who deserve praise, but there are just as many who,

(2) _____, deserve no praise whatsoever.

Take, for example, the gangs of kids that hang out on the streets of our town every night until the early hours of the morning. They not only dress strangely; they also behave irresponsibly. I have seen them write on store windows and walls. I have seen them push over parking meters and young trees.

(3) _____, I have even seen them throwing stones and yelling at elderly people walking by! (4) _____

_____, these kinds of youngsters deserve, not praise, but reprimand and punishment. (5) _____, that is

not what they are getting. The police do their best to control these disrespectful young people, but, (6) _____,

a handful of policemen cannot be everywhere at once.

I can suggest one solution to this problem of misbehaving teenagers, and that is, (7) _____, why I am writing - to make my proposal known. I suggest a 9 p.m. curfew

for kids under 18, unless, (8) _____, they are accompanied by an adult. (9) _____, this nightly curfew will not solve all of the problems caused by disrespectful youths, but it will, I believe, solve some of them.

James Pollack

Choose from these:

1. a) admittedly b) personally c) eventually
2. a) in theory b) in my opinion c) fortunately
3. a) obviously b) in fact c) naturally
4. a) officially b) unofficially c) clearly
5. a) unfortunately b) decidedly c) fortunately
6. a) obviously b) to my surprise c) seriously
7. a) frankly b) by all means c) personally
8. a) in fact b) to be honest c) of course
9. a) to my surprise b) naturally c) fortunately

1.4 USING REPORTING WORDS

Look at these ways of reporting what someone said.

- a) "I'm going to the movies on Friday," said Jose.
Jose said he was going to the movies on Friday.
- b) "Will you go to the movies with me on Friday?" said Jose to Sara.
Jose asked Sara if she would go to the movies with him on Friday.
- c) "Sure, I'll go to the movies with you on Friday," said Sara.
Sara said she would go to the movies with him on Friday.
- d) "I'm not going to the movies on Friday," Ellen said to Jose.
Ellen told Jose she wasn't going to the movies on Friday.

Notice how the underlined words change in the examples above when the sentences are rewritten using the reporting words ASK, SAY, and TELL.

The following sentences are given in the form of direct speech. Change each sentence into reported speech by using the word in parentheses at the end of the sentence. The first sentence is done for you as an example.

1. "I'm going to have a party next Saturday night," said Sam. (say)
Sam said he was going to have a party next Saturday night.
2. "I'm going to be out of town that weekend," said Fran to Sam. (tell)
3. "I'll come!" said Henry. (say)
4. "Is there anything you want me to bring?" said Henry. (ask)
5. "Sure, would you like to bring a bottle of wine?" said Sam. (ask)
6. "Fran, I'm sorry you can't come," said Henry. (say)

1.5 WRITING FIRST AND LAST SENTENCES

A. The first and last sentences of the following letter are missing. Work individually or in groups. Choose the best sentences from those given below the letter. Decide what makes a good first sentence and a good last sentence.

P.O. Box 160
Harvard, Massachusetts 01451
June 24, 1988

Lost and Found
TWA
Logan International Airport
Boston, Massachusetts 02128

Dear Lost and Found Department,

.....

.....

I had the wallet when I boarded flight #753 in London at 10:45 a.m. on June 23. When I tried to pay for a taxi in Boston, however, I discovered it was missing. Therefore, I conclude that I must have dropped it on the plane somewhere during the trip. The wallet is beige leather, and it contained several credit cards in my name, as well as about US \$140 in cash. I traveled in the nonsmoking section, in the second row from the front.

.....

.....

Sincerely yours,
Lucia de la Cruz
Lucia de la Cruz

Choices for first sentence:

- a. My wallet, which I seem to have lost, was a present from my husband.
- b. Some people keep money in a pocket, but I prefer to keep it in my good-quality wallet.
- c. Do you have my wallet by any chance?
- d. I am writing to you to ask about my wallet, which I lost yesterday.

Choices for last sentence:

- a. Some time ago I lost a chain on one of your planes, and on that occasion you were kind enough to return it to me.
- b. I would be very grateful if you could let me know if it has been turned in to you.
- c. If I found somebody else's wallet, I would most definitely turn it in to the Lost and Found Department.
- d. I am sure you find hundreds of wallets every day, but if you look carefully, you might find mine.

B. Now decide what the main purpose of the following letter is, and write a suitable first sentence and last sentence for it.

*10 Washington Street
Marblehead, Massachusetts 01945
June 25, 1988*

Dear Ms. de la Cruz,

.....

.....

I found it on the TWA plane that flew from London to Boston on June 23 (flight # 753). It was on the floor in front of seat 2C.

Because the wallet contains credit cards and cash, I hesitate to mail it to you.....

.....

.....

*Sincerely yours,
John Tavera*

1.6 COMPARING TEXTS: ORGANIZING

A. Below are two applications for a scholarship to study at a university in the United States. Either individually or in a group, decide which is better organized and more appropriately written. Discuss your decision and reasons with others.

Letter 1:

Dear Financial Aid Office,

I would like to apply for a university scholarship to study civil engineering at your university, starting next September. I am in my final year of a 5-year degree course in engineering at Munich University. In our last two years we have to choose an optional subject, and I have opted for civil engineering with a specialization in city planning. I worked from July to September of last year and the year before as a volunteer in the office of the Munich City Council.

My reading has included many articles and reports, several of which were from the United States and Great Britain, on traffic-free shopping centers. This particular aspect of city planning interests me because the centers of many German towns suffer from the dense traffic. Because your university is in the forefront of work in this area, I would like very much to do my postgraduate work there.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,



Hans Namberger

Letter 2:

Dear Financial Aid Office,

The U.S.A. is where things are happening in my particular field. I have very little experience, but my degree allows for the specialization in the planning of city centers. As far as I can see, your university would be a good place to study. At the end of this year my course will end, and I would like to go on studying traffic-free city centers. I have worked in the office of the Munich City Council, but only part-time. I should say that my degree is in civil engineering.

Several of the reports which I have read were produced in the United States and Great Britain, and traffic is a big problem in the center of many German towns, too. If I could study, say for one year, then that would continue my optional subject. The period of study I'm interested in could be any time starting next September, because my 5-year degree course in civil engineering ends at Munich University this summer.

I was not paid while I was working (from July to September) in the planning office, but I would like to do postgraduate work in the same field. I understand that your university has experts in the field of traffic-free shopping centers, and I would like to apply for a scholarship to study there.

That's all for now.



Rupert Bormann

B. Now write a letter of application for a scholarship based on the information below. You do not need to use all of the information. You may add more details if you wish.

<i>Name</i>	Anna Peterson
<i>Address</i>	15 Washington Street Hoboken, New Jersey 07030
<i>Date of birth</i>	31 March 1963; Walton, New York
<i>Degree</i>	B.A. June 1985, State University of New York, Binghamton, N.Y.
<i>Major</i>	Business
<i>Present position</i>	Since June 1985, Legal Services, Newark, New Jersey
<i>Current work</i>	Paralegal work with emphasis on tenants' rights and immigration law
<i>Other experience</i>	Volunteer at St. John's Church, Hoboken, in community legal assistance program (2 years)
<i>Goal</i>	To attend Brooklyn Law School as a part-time student and study for a degree in law

1.7 PUNCTUATING: APOSTROPHES AND CAPITAL LETTERS

A. In groups, discuss the use of the apostrophe (') in the following:

It's mine. You're wrong. He can't come. We'd better go.
Maria's sister has come. The children's toys are gone.
All the students' names were read.

There are apostrophes in the sentences below. Some are used correctly, and some are not. Correct the incorrectly used apostrophes.

1. You'll never believe whose car I rode in last week – Margarets!
2. Ill be honest; it's not really her's.
3. It's her parent's.
4. But Margarets learning to drive, and I'am always willing to go for a ride in a new car.
5. Were still laughing about Margarets' attempts to parallel park!

B. Discuss why capital letters are used in these expressions:

1. Ms. Moreno, Carol Morley, Dr. Orange, the Prime Minister, the Bishop of Calcutta
2. Sixth Avenue, Bouchart Gardens, Lake Constance, the Delaware River, the Museum of Modern Art, the Hilton Hotel
3. Monday, Tuesday, January, March, Christmas, New Year's Day
4. English, Hindi, Spanish, Indian, Spaniard, Colombian

C. Now put apostrophes and capital letters where necessary in the following letter:

dear miriam and paul,

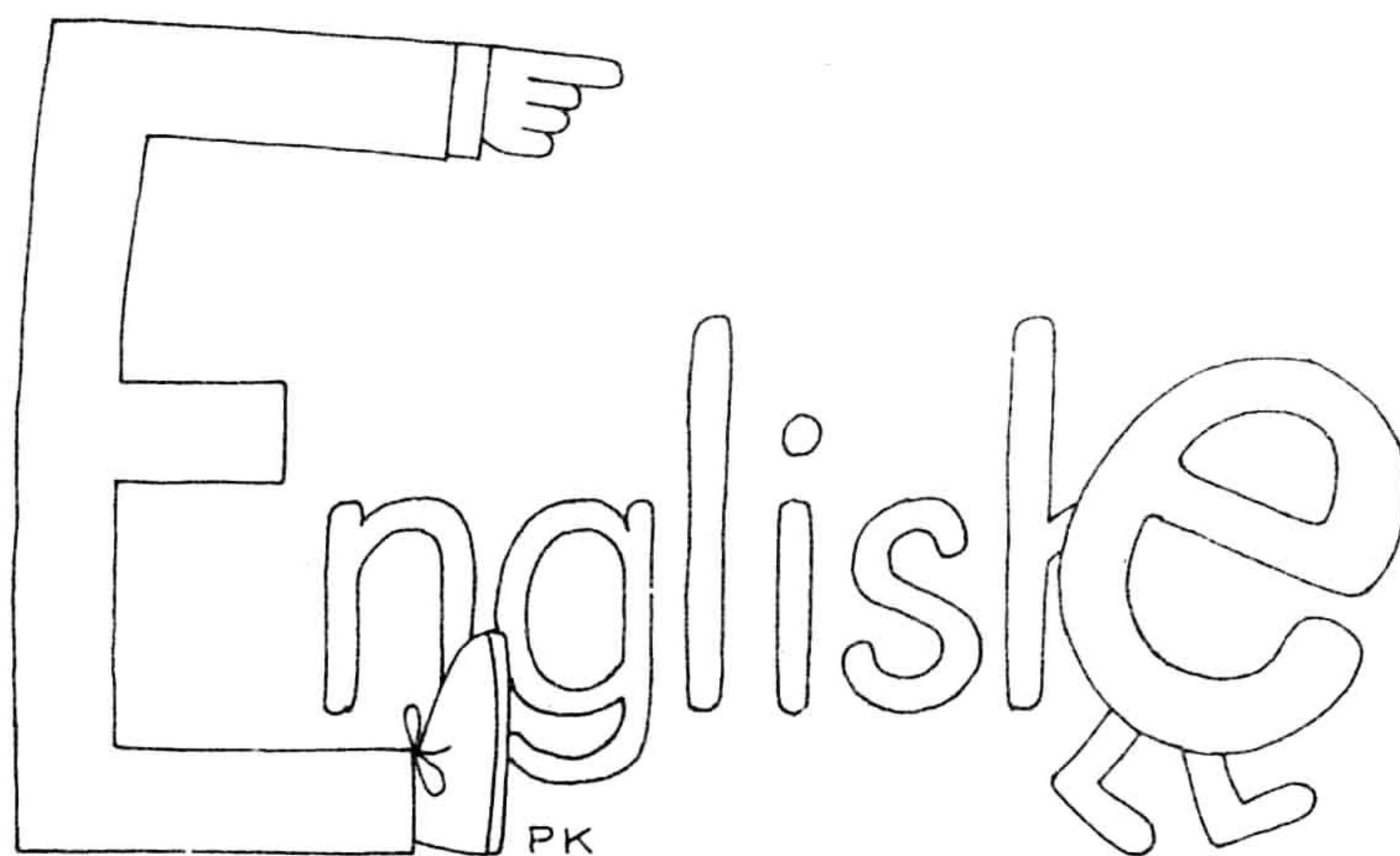
thank you for having tony and me for the weekend. we had a great time, especially at the dinner party saturday night. wed never had a real thai dinner before, and now we cant wait for our next one! tony especially liked the frogs legs with peanut sauce. in fact, when we got home, he went out into the yard to try to catch some frogs. hes out there every night after work. i dont know what he thinks were going to do with them once theyre caught because im sure not going to cook them!

we also enjoyed the tour around town on sunday and our visit to the museum of modern art. our walk along the river at sundown was the perfect end to a great day. we hope youll come to visit us soon. theres a lot

to do here, too, and we'll plan a big weekend. There's a wonderful museum with a large collection of Indian art that I'm sure you'll find interesting. Didn't you say you were free in November? Why don't you come then?

thanks again

Maria



1.8 PRACTICING WRITING LETTERS

Choose one of the following topics. Write:

- a) A letter of application for a job of your choice. (Compare 1.1)
- b) A letter about a new job or a new course of studies. (Compare 1.2)
- c) A letter responding to Mr. Pollack's letter in 1.3 objecting to his suggestion or disagreeing with his viewpoint about teenagers.
- d) A letter to the editor of a local newspaper giving your opinion about an article or editorial you recently read or about an issue, such as whether service in the military should be required or on a volunteer basis. Give as many reasons for your viewpoint as possible. (Compare 1.3)
- e) A letter to a place inquiring about something you lost or reporting something you found. (Compare 1.5)
- f) A letter of application to a specific school for a scholarship to do further studies in your field or to a specific business or company for an internship in your field of work. (Compare 1.6)
- g) A letter to friends thanking them for a recent visit. (Compare 1.7)
- h) A letter reporting on the experiences of a person you know who has recently done something difficult or interesting.
- i) A letter to an appropriate official protesting something that is planned for your neighborhood or community.