

Communicate in Writing

A functional approach to writing through reading comprehension

Keith Johnson



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A functional approach to writing through reading comprehension

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for Tanya

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To the teacher

There are several ways in which '*Communicate in Writing*' can be used, according to the level of the students, their reasons for learning English, and the length of their course. Specific suggestions on how to use the book with different groups of students are given in the Teacher's Book.

It is a feature of '*Communicate in Writing*' that many of the exercises are intended for group work, while a certain number can also (with particular groups of students) be done orally in class. The Teacher's Book suggests how to use the exercises in these ways. It also contains a key with model answers to many of the exercises, notes on points of interest, and suggestions for further exercises.

To the student working alone

The best way to use '*Communicate in Writing*' is of course in the class with a teacher. But for many students, particularly those who have come to Britain to study a subject other than English, this is just not possible. '*Communicate in Writing*' can be used for self study, but if you wish to use the book in this way, you will need a copy of the Teacher's Book and Key. This contains model answers to many of the exercises, provides notes on points of interest, and suggests some further exercises.

NOTE: This book is not intended to be written in by the student. Where an exercise involves inserting material, this is indicated by six dots (.) and students should write in their own exercise books.

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Part 1

Describing things and ideas

Unit 1 (Introductory Unit)

Introduction to 'Communicate in Writing'

1. Note-taking

Read this passage about '*Communicate in Writing*'. Following it are some notes on Paragraphs 1 and 2. Copy and complete them. Write in your own books.

'*Communicate in Writing*' has been written for two types of student. One is the student who is learning English in order to study some other subject, in the arts or sciences, and who wants to learn how to write academic English. The other is the student whose main interest is English and who needs to learn how to write essays as part of his school or university course.

As its title suggests, the book's main aim is to teach writing. But each unit contains a passage of English, followed by exercises to make sure you have understood how that passage is organised. There is, in other words, quite a lot of reading practice. Why is so much reading practice given in a book on writing? Simply because if you wish to organise your own essays correctly, it is important to understand how other writers have organised their passages. Answering questions like 'How is this passage organised?' and 'In what other ways could the writer have organised it?' is a useful step towards improving your own writing.

Each unit of '*Communicate in Writing*' is about a different subject. Unit 2 for example is about stars and planets, and Unit 5 is about volcanoes. These subjects have been chosen because of their general interest, and you do not have to be an expert on each subject to follow the units. Even so, the student who is learning English in order to study some other subject may ask whether he would spend his time better reading and writing about his own subject. This is not necessarily true. Essays, reports and dissertations have a lot in common, whether they are about zoology, chemistry or sociology. So the zoologist, the chemist and the sociologist can learn a lot about writing good English by reading and writing passages on subjects of general interest. There is a glossary at the back of the book to help you with unfamiliar words. Words in the glossary are marked with an asterisk (*).

1. 2 types of student: (a) *Student learning Eng. to study other subject.*
(b)
2. Book teaches But much practice in it.
Reason:

2. Understanding the passage

Does the writer believe these things? Read Paragraph 3 and decide:

- (a) The student can learn by reading and writing about subjects other than his own subject.

- (b) The student would spend his time better reading and writing about his own subject.
- (c) Essays on different subjects are very different from each other.
- (d) You can use '*Communicate in Writing*' without knowing a lot about the subjects discussed in each unit.

3. 'Even so'

- (i) The expression 'even so' means 'in spite of this'. Find the example of this expression in the passage. Write a sentence making the same point, but beginning 'in spite of the fact that . . .'
- (ii) Use the information given in the passage to complete these sentences:
 - (a) As its title suggests, the book teaches writing. Even so,
 - (b) There are some differences between essays on different subjects. Even so,
 - (c) ; even so, the book's main aim is to teach writing.
 - (d) ; even so, you do not have to be an expert on each subject to follow the units.

4. Completing a passage

Originally the passage had a fourth paragraph describing how '*Communicate in Writing*' is organised. Use the information given on the contents page (page ii) to complete this part of the paragraph. (Sometimes a space needs more than one word.) Write in your own books.

'*Communicate in Writing*' is divided into parts. The first ten units are about ; Units 11–15 deal with , and Units with developing an argument. There are three different Unit 1 is an introductory unit, and to introduce the student to the book. Units 5, 10, 15, 20 are , and contain revision exercises. are main units.

5. The main units

The paragraph ends by describing how each main unit is organised. Here are some notes on what the writer says. Finish the paragraph:

Main Units

- 3 parts.
1. Passage + exercises associated with passage.
 2. An important aspect of writing (e.g. Unit 3 'defining'; Unit 4 'classifying'.)
 3. Additional exercises – to be done if there is time.

Unit 2

Dying stars...and living planets

Part I

1. Read this passage about dying stars, and complete the table which follows it. Write in your own books.

The old belief that the universe never changes is quite wrong. Even before the invention of the telescope*, astronomers* noticed that bright stars suddenly appear in the sky, and then later disappear. These stars were called 'novae' because they were thought to be new. In fact we now know that they
5 are really old stars which are slowly dying. A recent case of a nova occurred in 1918, and one of the few people who saw this was the American astronomer Edward Barnard. He was driving along in a car, occasionally looking up into the sky. Suddenly he noticed a star that he had never seen before, and exclaimed, 'That star should not be there!' He was in fact watching the
10 explosion of a nova.

Novae are old stars which are slowly dying. As they do so, they let out* huge clouds of material, sometimes as large as the earth, and these explode into space at a speed of about 8,000,000 kilometres per hour. When this happens, the hotter parts of the star become visible, and this is why novae
15 are so bright. Although the explosions are huge on a human scale, they only consume* a small part of the dying star's energy. The death is a slow one, and the star may continue to explode for thousands of years. Indeed, there are even some stars which explode once a fortnight.

There are other old stars which do not die slowly, but are completely
20 destroyed by one great explosion. These are known as 'supernovae'. The explosion of a supernova is equivalent to about a million, million, million, million hydrogen bombs going off* at the same time. Just before the explosion the star's density* becomes very great and it spins at a very high speed. A matchbox of material taken from the star at that time would weigh about
25 1,000 tons, and the star would be turning at about 16,000,000 kilometres per hour. The explosion itself occurs suddenly, in the space of a minute, but the supernova continues to shine long after the event. One supernova which Chinese astronomers observed in 1054 can still be seen by us today. It has been shining for at least nine hundred years.

NOVAE	SUPERNOVAE
1. die slowly	1. <i>die suddenly</i>
2. many explosions	2.
3. each explosion destroys one small part only	3.
4.	4. shine continuously for long time

2. Note-taking

- (i) Complete these notes on Paragraph 1. Write the missing words in your own books:

. does change. Bright suddenly appear, then disappear. Called ' ' because thought In fact, old stars slowly Recent case* occurred in

- (ii) Notes should be short, so that you can read them quickly later. They need not be grammatical, and you can leave out articles ('the', 'a', 'some'), etc. But they must be complete enough for you to understand. Make these notes on Paragraph 2 shorter. Then show them to your partner. Can he understand them?

Novae = old stars which are slowly dying.

They are bright because the hotter parts of the star become visible as they explode and let out huge clouds of material. The death is slow, so the star may continue to explode for thousands of years.

3. Referring back

Words like 'this', 'these', 'it', 'so' usually *refer back* to something the writer has already mentioned. Decide what these words in the passage refer back to:

line 13 This = (a) the great speed (b) letting out clouds of material
(c) the slow death of old stars

line 14 This = (a) letting out clouds of material (b) the hotter parts
(c) the exposure* of the hotter parts

line 20 These = (a) the great explosions (b) the old stars destroyed
by one explosion (c) old stars

line 23 It = (a) the star (b) the star's density (c) the explosion

line 11 So = (a) let out clouds of material (b) explode
(c) slowly die

Dying stars...and living planets

4. Novae and supernovae

In Exercise 1 you completed a table showing the differences between 'novae' and 'supernovae'. Write a short paragraph describing these differences.

Part II Referring back, and giving new information

Except when they are introducing a completely new subject, most sentences *refer back* to something already mentioned. At the same time, they usually say something new. They *give new information*.

Very often it is the *first part* of the sentence which refers back, and the *last part* which gives new information. For example:

... which do not die slowly, but are completely destroyed by one great explosion. These are known as 'supernovae'.

The first word ('these') in the underlined sentence refers back to something already mentioned – the old stars destroyed by one great explosion. The rest of the sentence ('are known as "supernovae"') gives the reader new information.

5. In each of these examples from the passage, the first few (underlined) words refer back to something already mentioned. Decide what.

line 11 (a) As they do so, they let out huge clouds of material . . .

line 16 (b) The death is a slow one, . . .

line 26 (c) The explosion itself occurs suddenly . . .

line 28 (d) It has been shining . . .

6. The moon

Look at these sentences:

The time it takes the moon to orbit* is called the lunar month.

Twenty seven days	is	one lunar month.
NEW INFORMATION		REFERRING BACK

We can rewrite the second sentence so that the *first part* refers back and the *last part* gives new information:

The time it takes the moon to orbit is called the lunar month.

One lunar month	is	twenty seven days.
REFERRING BACK		NEW INFORMATION

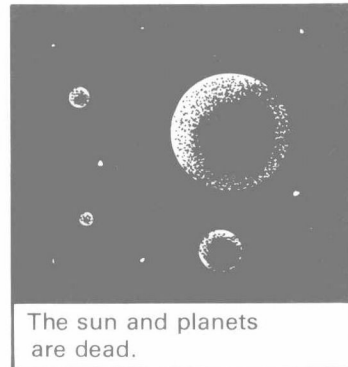
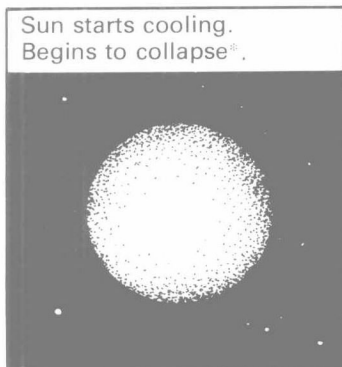
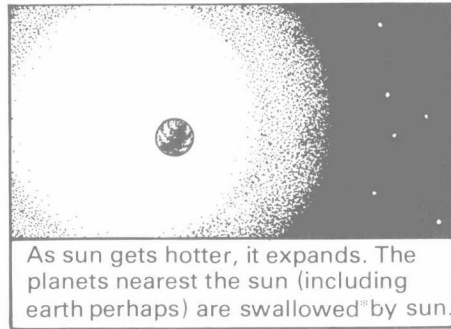
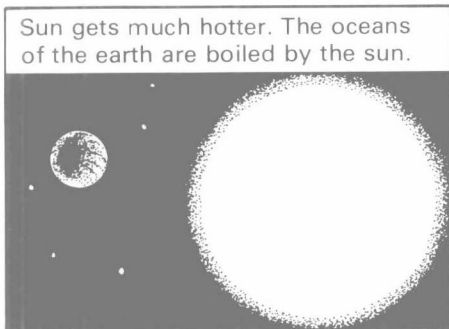
Here are some more sentences about the moon, Earth's nearest neighbour. Rewrite them in the same way.

- (a) At the equator* the moon's temperature reaches 28°C. The hottest part of the moon is of course the equator.
- (b) Some of the craters* of the moon are very large. The same structure is seen in the large and small craters.
- (c) The lunar month is getting longer. The moon is moving farther away, so the lunar month is getting longer.
- (d) The moon does not have any light of its own. The sun shines its light onto the moon.
- (e) The moon is a great ball of rock. The earth is eighty times the size of the moon.

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7. The death of our sun

Novae and supernovae are millions of miles away. Much more important to us (in about 10,000,000,000 years' time!) is the death of our own sun. Here is what will happen:



Dying stars...and living planets

Write a paragraph about the death of the sun and the planets. Remember what you have studied about referring back and giving new information. Use words like 'this', 'it' and 'so' to refer back.

8. Parallel writing

- (i) The largest planet of our sun is Jupiter. Here is a short passage describing Jupiter:

The planet Jupiter is fifth nearest to the sun, the distance between the two being 483 million miles. It spins very rapidly, taking only 9 hours 50 minutes to complete one rotation*. With a diameter* of 89,000 miles, Jupiter is the largest of the planets; it is also very heavy – much heavier than the earth. Because it is so far from the sun, Jupiter's surface is very cold and can reach temperatures as low as -138°C . Its 'atmosphere' is mostly hydrogen and helium*.

In what order does the writer describe these things?

diameter; 'atmosphere'; weight; distance from sun; temperature; speed of rotation.

- (ii) Now here is some information about another planet, Venus. It is sometimes called the 'mysterious planet', because we know so little about it.

VENUS: the 'mysterious planet'

'Atmosphere': 95% carbon dioxide

Diameter: 7,700 miles (one of the smallest planets)

Weight: not great; about same as earth

Distance from sun: 67 million miles (second nearest planet to sun)

Temperature: very hot; as high as 477°C

Speed of rotation: we don't know, but probably very slow – between 68 hours and 250 days for one rotation!

Write a passage about Venus. Make it look as much like the Jupiter description as possible. Describe the same things, in the same order. Begin: 'The planet Venus is second nearest to the sun . . .'

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9. Writing about your subject

Write a paragraph describing your subject for someone who knows nothing about it. Show the description to someone in the class (if possible someone who is studying another subject). Can the person understand what you have written? If not, make your description clearer.

Part III Additional exercises

10. Adding information

You want to add this information to Paragraph 3 of the passage. Decide *where* you would put it, and *what words* you would use.

- (a) The explosion of a supernova is like a cosmic bomb.
- (b) The supernova which the Chinese saw is known today as the Crab Nebula.
- (c) The records of the Royal Observatory in Peking mention the Crab Nebula supernova.
- (d) Supernovae can shine for well over a thousand years.

11. Describing the moon

Use the information given in Exercise 6 to write a short description of the moon.

12. Comparing Jupiter and Venus

- || Use the information in Exercise 8 to write a passage *comparing* Jupiter and Venus.

Further reading

Moore P. *The New Look of the Universe*, Zenith Books, 1966.

Hoyle F. *The Nature of the Universe*, Penguin Books, 1963.

Gamow G. *A Star Called the Sun*, Penguin Books, 1967.

Unit 3

Skid row

Part I

1. Read this passage about skid row, and complete the table which follows it. Write in your own books.

Vagrancy has long been a problem in both Europe and America. Indeed, the first mention of the problem in Britain was made in A.D. 368. Vagrants – people, that is, not living in one fixed place but moving from town to town – have always been severely punished by the law; more severely in many countries than drunks or beggars. ‘Everyone’, the law says, ‘must have a bedroom.’

In Europe there have never been places where vagrants can collect together in a community. In fact governments have often tried to solve the problem by returning vagrants to the place where they were born. In this way they have prevented large communities of vagrants from forming. But in America, such communities have been allowed to collect in almost every city. These communities are known as ‘skid row’. Skid row is something found only in the United States. It is the area of an American city in which the homeless live. The expression was originally ‘skid road’. It was the name given to the road in Seattle down which trees were pushed (or ‘skidded’*) after they had been cut down. The lumberjacks who had cut the trees down lived along this road. The word ‘road’ changed to ‘row’, and now the expression ‘skid row’ is used for any vagrant community in America.

The vagrant’s main problem is to find a place to sleep. There are different types of accommodation on skid row. The best is in ‘tourist hotels’. These are quite clean and try to give some protection against fire and theft. Much worse are the ‘flophouses’, public or private houses which give the vagrant a floor to sleep on. But the worst accommodation of all is found in the ‘hobo jungle’. This is an area of skid row consisting of a few shacks – small houses made of pieces of metal, wood and even cardboard*.

WORD	DEFINITION
1. vagrant	1. <i>person moving from town to town</i>
2.	2. men who cut down trees
3. flophouse	3.
4. hobo jungle	4.
5.	5. house made of metal, wood, cardboard

2. Understanding the passage

Which of these sentences best describes the writer's *main point*:

In Paragraph 1 the writer:

- (a) compares punishments for vagrancy, drunkenness and begging.
- (b) says that vagrancy has long been a problem.
- (c) gives a short history of vagrancy.

In Paragraph 2 the writer:

- (a) introduces and talks about the idea of skid row.
- (b) gives the origins of the expression 'skid row'.
- (c) describes different solutions to the problem of vagrancy.

How would you describe the *main point* the writer makes in Paragraph 3?

3. Note-taking and summarising

- (i) Complete these notes on Paragraph 3. Write in your own books:

Skid row accommodation

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|-------|
| (a) | ... <i>tourist hotels</i> ... | : <i>quite clean & give some protection</i> | Best |
| (b) | ... | : | ↓ |
| (c) | ... | : | Worst |

- (ii) Here is a summary of the passage with some words missing. What do you think the missing words might be? (One word per space.) Write in your own books.

Vagrancy, a problem in many countries, has always been punished by the law. European have often tried to solve the problem returning vagrants to birthplace, in America vagrant communities called skid rows have grown up in every city. The vagrants on skid row in different types of accommodation, from the fairly clean and 'tourist hotels' down to the 'hobo jungle', of a few shacks.

4. Adding information

You want to add these sentences to the passage, one to each paragraph. What do the words 'this' and 'these' refer to? Decide *where* you would put them.

- (a) Some of these are tolerable, while others are extremely bad.
- (b) But in spite of this, vagrancy is still a problem.
- (c) This was, for example, the solution tried in 17th century England.

Skid row

5. More practice in referring back

In Unit 2 you saw how the *first part* of a sentence often refers back, and the *second part* gives new information. Some of the sentences below do not begin by referring back. Which? How would you rewrite them?

- (a) These communities are known as 'skid row'. America has communities known as 'skid row'.
- (b) It was the road in Seattle down which trees were pushed. Along this road lived the lumberjacks.
- (c) The best accommodation is in 'tourist hotels'. Protection against fire and theft is given in tourist hotels.
- (d) Much worse are the 'flophouses'. Flophouses give no more than a floor to sleep on.

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Part II Defining

6.

- (i) Here is how the writer defines skid row:

Skid row is the area of an American city in which the homeless live.

Use the table you completed in Exercise 1 to make more definitions like this.

- (ii) Notice the structures the writer of the passage uses to define the words in the table.

- 7. Here is another way of defining skid row:

The area of an American city in which the homeless live is known as skid row.

Use the table to make five more definitions like this.

- 8. When can you use these two types of definition? Decide whether (a) or (b) would follow each underlined sentence. Remember what you have learned about *referring back* and *giving new information*.

Some people in America do not live in one fixed place.

- (a) Vagrants are people who do not live in one fixed place.
- (b) People who do not live in one fixed place are known as vagrants.