



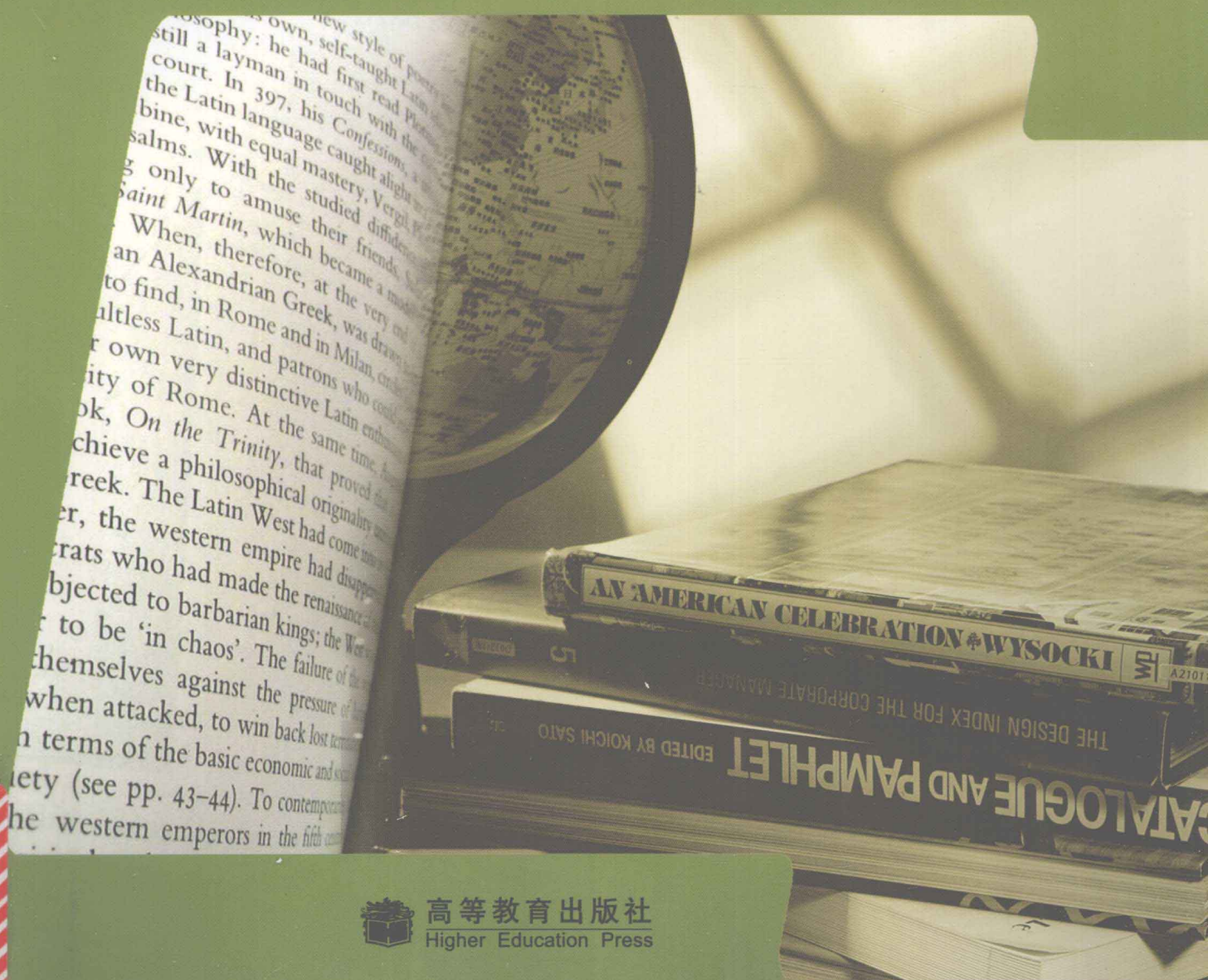
普通高等教育“十一五”国家级规划教材
大学英语自主系列教材

College English Writing

大学英语自主写作

An Autonomous Learning Edition

主编 蔡基刚



高等教育出版社
Higher Education Press



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主 编 蔡基刚 编 者 贺灿文 郑丽琦



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图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

大学英语自主写作/蔡基刚主编 —北京: 高等教育出版社, 2008. 6

ISBN 978 - 7 - 04 - 023319 - 3

I. 大… II. 蔡… III. 英语=写作=高等学校—教材
IV. H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2008) 第 082832 号

策划编辑 陈锡鏖 责任编辑 周俊华 张迎庆
封面设计 王 慧 责任印制 尤 静

出版发行 高等教育出版社
社 址 北京市西城区德外大街 4 号
邮政编码 100120
总 机 010 - 58581000

经 销 蓝色畅想图书发行有限公司
印 刷 北京四季青印刷厂

开 本 889 × 1194 1/16
印 张 12.75
字 数 400 000

购书热线 010 - 58581118
免费咨询 800 - 810 - 0598
网 址 <http://www.hep.edu.cn>
<http://www.hep.com.cn>
网上订购 <http://www.landaco.com>
<http://www.landaco.com.cn>
畅想教育 <http://www.widedu.com>

版 次 2008 年 6 月第 1 版
印 次 2008 年 6 月第 1 次印刷
定 价 22.00 元

本书如有缺页、倒页、脱页等质量问题, 请到所购图书销售部门联系调换。

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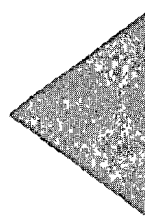
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Chapter 1

The Effect of Modern Technology

GOALS

While people are enjoying the development of modern technology, its negative impact is increasingly felt in every field. It is said that advanced technology deprives man of genuine relaxation and erodes the quality of life. In this chapter we are going to discuss the issue. In writing, we will learn how to

- i) write a unified paragraph;*
- ii) write a topic sentence,*
- iii) write supporting sentences;*
- iv) achieve coherence in writing;*
- v) avoid mechanical mistakes.*

TOPIC

Read the following text.

Stress and Technology

Bruce A. Baldwin

Stress-and-pressure-filled days have become an almost normal part of contemporary life, due to the ever-growing demands of careers, home maintenance (生活费用, 扶养), parenting (父母对子女的养育) responsibilities, and community involvement. Because of this, there is a general consensus (一致同意, 多数人的意见) that just doing all that daily needs to be done in an emotionally intense and complex process. In fact, a wit once commented, "living these days is like a grammar lesson: the past is perfect; the present is tense."

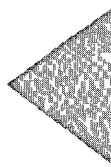
Resulting complaints are familiar: "Everything I try to do these days gets so complicated that I can't stand it. I want to run away and live back in the woods"; "There are so many little problems that interfere every day that I never get done what needs to be done. It's so frustrating, and I blow up (失去耐性) constantly." "It's really strange. Even when I'm relaxing, I have trouble doing just one thing at a time." These statements could easily be explained by the numerous responsibilities of modern middle-class lifestyles. However, a subtle and increasingly pervasive (普遍的) source of stress is the sophisticated (复杂的; 精致的) technology that has become so much a part of our lives.

While new technology and information systems have been tremendous pluses (优点) in areas such as communications and health care, the catch (难题) is that they are also beginning to impact negatively on human functioning (机能), especially emotional well-being (康乐, 安宁). This influence is at once elusive (难捉摸的) and powerful in its psychological effect. With the passage of time, and as sophisticated technology becomes even more a part of life at work and at home, the potential (潜在性, 可能性) for its negative impact increases.

The marvellous communication system made possible by technology, though beneficial in many ways, has caused a lot of strain (过度的疲劳, 紧张) on all career-bound people. No matter what our career paths are, we are constantly overloaded with new and relevant information. The days are gone when virtually (实质上) any professional could feel comfortably "up to date" on what is already known. A nagging (吹毛求疵的) guilt about not spending more time "keeping up" professionally, the pressure to constantly adapt skills and ways of doing things in light of (按照, 根据) new knowledge, and the consequent erosion (侵蚀) of stability in life are some of the negative effects of this "ever-changing" and "ever up to date" information system.

The Information Age brought in by advanced technology like electronic mail, electronic data processing, cellular telephone, miniature (微型的, 缩小的) recorders, and portable computers, has made polyphasic (同时做几件事的) activity possible, because we can get more done in a given time. However, when polyphasic activity becomes no longer able to psychologically "let go" to enjoy just one activity. Instead we are plagued (折磨, 使……苦恼) by distractions that stem from the learned habit of constantly splitting our focus (折中, 分裂焦点). As a result, genuine relaxation becomes difficult.

Modern technology intrudes (侵入) into modern man's fun and relaxation. As the saying goes,



“nothing is simple anymore,” and this complexity has increasingly extended into leisure (闲暇) activities. Take for example, fishing, a pastime (消遣, 娱乐) that many people enjoy. The “advances” are amazing: sophisticated fish finders, sonar (声纳, 声波定位仪) devices, and so on. The story is similar in virtually every other sport or leisure activity these days. However, the “gadgets” all require maintenance and can easily fail, leading to frustration and anger.

Technology makes it more difficult to separate ourselves from work. In times past, it was possible to leave a stressful workplace, go home, and relax. Since less work was mental and more was physical, it was relatively easy to remove oneself — physically and mentally — from it. The sophisticated communication technology available today was not yet developed. In contrast to “the good old days,” it is no longer possible for busy men and women to go home or go on vacation and truly “get away from it all.” It becomes difficult to relax when you are carrying a beeper that may go off (发出声响) any minute. The result is higher levels of stress in men and women because technology enables others to “find them anywhere.”

It is ironic that much technology is designed to make work easier and faster, and this will make life easier for those who must operate the technology, but such is not the case. Witness the prophetic (预言式的) words of the great philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806—1873): “It is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day’s toil of any human being”. How true this is despite the promise of “miraculous” new machinery ranging from a “new and more efficient” vacuum cleaner (真空吸尘器) to the most sophisticated computer. The solution to living well lies not in new and better technology, but in the selective disuse of it so that life can be enjoyed in a more emotionally fulfilling way.

LINK

Following are some articles related to the topic we are discussing about. You may make your contribution, and add articles of the similar topic you find on the Internet or from other sources.

The Highs of Low Technology

Johanne Mednick

I have a wonderful bicycle. My family refers to it as “that piece of junk”—an ancient piece of metal, the likes of which can be found in the dump or, if you’re lucky, at garage sales (现场旧货出售). But I have confidence in my bike. It gives me power, and I cherish its simplicity.

What intrigues (激起……的兴趣) me, in this age of technological innovation is the number of people who stop me and comment on my bike. “Where did you get that thing?” “I haven’t seen one of those in ages.” “What a great bike.”

But really, what is it that people are admiring? Perhaps my bike is representative of a world gone by: the world before gadgets (小器具). A time when people thought in terms of settling into a cushioned seat, stopping the movement with their heel and traveling a bit slower than we are traveling now. My bike is certainly not built for speed, but who needs speed when I can coast (靠惯性滑行) along the streets, hold my head high and deliciously feel the wind on my face? My bike is built for taking time. It makes people feel relaxed.

When I’m riding my bike, I feel as though I have control. And I don’t feel that way about most

things these days. I don't deny that my computer and my microwave make my life a lot easier. I use these things, but they also make me feel rather small and, in a strange way, inadequate. What if I press the wrong button? What if something goes wrong? Maybe if I learned to understand these appliances I'd feel better—more secure about my relationship with technology. But frankly, I'm not comforted by manuals and how-to courses. Of course there are always “experts” I could go to, who seem to know everything about anything. I hunger for simplicity and I have a sneaking (暗地的) suspicion that many people feel the same way. That's why they admire my bike. It comforts them and gives them a sense of something manageable, not too complicated.

Overload: More Time Is Less Time

A. Kent MacDougall

So you think you have some of the good things in life. You've got a video tape recorder and a device that answers the phone for you. And there's a gadget that turns on the lights when you're out. There are all goodies in the kitchen: the electric knife, the coffee maker, the ice maker.

Feel good about having all that stuff? Or do you wonder whether the gadgets are running you instead of you are running them? Americans apparently feel more harried (折磨) than ever these days.

Part of the reason is trying to keep up with the demands on their time to purchase, store, service, repair, replace, and protect all those “time-saving” machines. Add to them the problems of the extra car and the bigger house. “Americans are eating up their leisure time by overloading themselves with all kinds of gadgets...” says one expert in marketing.

“Labor-saving” appliances may lighten the housework. But they save little time. Looking for the right electric knife or other new gadget and getting it ready for use often can take more time than our grandparents did. Vacuum cleaners have raised standards of cleanliness. But they tempt people to spend more time than with a broom or dust rag (抹布). Power-mowing takes as long as mowing by hand. It takes longer if you add the extra hours of work to keep the power mower in repair.

Cars are another time gobbler (狼吞虎咽者, 贪食者). One expert says that tires and batteries last longer than they used to. But, there are more gadgets on them to go wrong. The growing complexity of the car means most owners can no longer play with a screwdriver and wrench (扳手) under the hood (引擎罩) to fix things themselves.

Another problem we face more and more is dealing with computers in place of people. Impersonal, cold, and error-prone (易出错的) machines are replacing clerks. So fixing errors in bills and other problems with a product of service often is a slow and maddening process.

Recreation has changed from the simple pleasures that take time. We don't read, stroll, and visit with friends much now. We're on to complicated, costly things. But to own computers with the Internet is a mixed blessing. Not only do people work more hours to pay for such costly toys, but they have less free time to enjoy them. And repair chews up a lot more time than they bargained for (预料)—time spent calling repair people and waiting for them to show up.

As people crowd their lives with things that eat up so much of their time, they come to feel that time is short. They feel they are in danger of wasting it. In the end, then, the possessions we consume end up consuming us.

RESPONSE

About the theme.

Write as long as possible to answer the following questions.

1. What do you think of the development of modern technology?
2. Do you agree that sophisticated technology has its negative impact on men's psychological well-being? Use your personal experience to illustrate.
3. What other negative effects does advanced technology have on humans apart from stress and pressure?
4. Are you willing to accept its negative effect while enjoying the benefits of modern technology? Why or why not?

About the rhetoric.

Reread paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and answer the following questions.

1. Does each paragraph express a single thought? What are they?
2. Is there a sentence in each paragraph which summarizes the thought?
3. What's the relationship between the sentence and the rest of the sentences in the paragraph?

ORGANIZATION

An effective essay will discuss a topic from different angles. To express your ideas in a logical and clear order, therefore, it is important that a typical essay be divided into several paragraphs.

How to write an effective paragraph?

Unity

The concept of an English paragraph differs from that of the Chinese one. It places much emphasis on unity, a single thought expressed by a topic sentence and developed by a group of supporting sentences.

Topic Sentence (TS)

To ensure unity, we may include a topic sentence in a paragraph. A topic sentence is a complete sentence (rather than a phrase) that expresses the main idea of the paragraph. It can be put anywhere in a paragraph, or be implied—not written out at all. But usually, a topic sentence does appear and most often at the very beginning of a paragraph, for this position tells the reader from the very start what the paragraph is about and also reminds the writer constantly what he is going to write. A long paragraph contains a concluding sentence as well as a topic sentence.

• **Nutritional deficiency is a major problem of elderly Americans.** They have little access to nutritional information or education. They lack motivation or

the energy required to prepare meals. Those who need special diets may be unable to afford or to prepare the correct foods. Rising food prices too often erode the ability of those on fixed incomes to maintain even past standards of nutrition and food intake. The elderly who live alone are less likely to provide hot, nutritious meals for themselves.

- **Indeed, the fastest growing industry in America today may be the continuing professional education of highly schooled adults.** Much of it takes place outside the education establishment—through companies, hospitals and government departments that run courses for managerial and professional employees; or through management associations and trade associations. In the meantime, many numbers of private enterprises are organizing courses, producing training films and tapes and otherwise taking advantage of growth opportunities that universities shy away from.

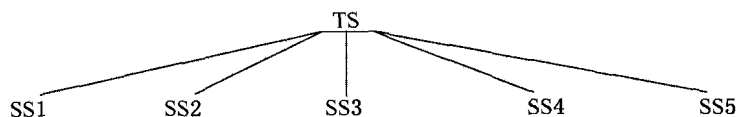
- School children used to know the story of how Abraham Lincoln walked five miles to return a penny he'd overcharged a customer. It's the kind of story we think of as myth. But in the case of Lincoln, the story is true unlike the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. Washington's first biographer (传记作者) invented the tale of little George saying to his father, "I cannot tell a lie. I did it with my ax." **What is important in both stories, however, is that honesty was seen as an important part of the American character.**

- **'Good manners are important in all countries, but ways of expressing good manners are different from country to country.** Americans eat with knives and forks; Japanese eat with chopsticks. Americans say "Hi" when they meet; Japanese bow. Many American men open doors for women; Japanese men do not. On the surface, it appears that good manners in America are not good manners in Japan, and in a way this is true. But in any country, the only manners that are important are those involving one person's behavior towards another person. **In all countries it is good manners to behave considerably toward others and bad manners not to. It is only the way of behaving politely that differs from country to country.**

- **Everywhere man is altering the balance of nature.** He is facilitating (帮助, 促进) the spread of plants and animal into new regions, sometimes deliberately, sometimes unconsciously. He is covering huge areas with new kinds of plants, or with houses, factories, slag-heaps (矿渣场) and other products of his civilization. He exterminates some species on a large scale, but favors the multiplication of others. **In brief, he has done more in five thousand years to alter the biological aspect of the planet than has nature in five million.**

Supporting Sentence (SS)

As evidenced above, a well-written paragraph has a topic sentence which is fully developed or supported by other sentences. Hence the name of supporting sentences. Look at the following diagram:



Make an analysis of each supporting sentence of the following paragraph, and you will find they are all related to the topic sentence in one way or another:

- **TS:** These days lifestyles seem to change very fast. **SS1:** It is more than just clothing and hairstyles that are in style one year and out of date the next; it's a whole way of living. **SS2:** One year people wear sunglasses on top of their heads and wear jeans and boots; they drink white wine and eat sushi at Japanese restaurants; for exercise they jog several miles a day. **SS3:** However, the next year they notice that everything has changed. **SS4:** Women wear long skirts; people drink expensive water from France and eat pasta (意大利面食) at Italian restaurants; everyone seems to be exercising at health clubs.

Obviously, supporting sentences are facts, examples or reasons that contribute to the unity of a paragraph. That is, all supporting sentences should explain a single thought and stay with it throughout the paragraph. Discussion not properly related to the main idea should be left out. More examples:

- **Modern technology intrudes into modern man's fun and relaxation.** As the saying goes, "nothing is simple anymore," and this complexity has increasingly extended into leisure activities. Take for example, fishing, a pastime that many people enjoy. The "advances" are amazing: sophisticated fish finders, sonar (声纳) devices, and so on. The story is similar in virtually every other sport or leisure activity these days. However, the "gadgets" all require maintenance and can easily fail, leading to frustration and anger.
- **The lecture system ultimately harms professors as well.** It reduces feedback to a minimum, so that the lecturer can neither judge how well students understand the material nor benefit from their questions or comments. Questions that require the speaker to clarify obscure points and comments that challenge inadequately constructed arguments are indispensable to scholarship (学问). Without them, the liveliest mind becomes dull. Undergraduates may not be able to make good contributions very often, and by lecturing alone a professor fails to attract the beginner's naive question that could have triggered a fruitful line of thought.

• **The reason for the government's lukewarm (冷淡的) attitude toward the campaign against smoking is money.** Tobacco is a wonderful commodity to tax. It's almost like a tax on our daily bread. In tax revenue alone, the government of Britain collects enough from smokers to pay for its entire educational facilities. So while authorities point out ever so discreetly (谨慎地) that smoking may, conceivably (令人信服地), be harmful, it doesn't shout too loudly about it.

Practice 1 Read the essays in this unit and identify the topic sentence of each paragraph.

Practice 2 Find 3 paragraphs with a clear topic sentence and good supporting sentences in the English material you have read.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

Practice 3 The topic sentence is missing in each of the following paragraphs. Add one according to what supporting sentences express. The first one is done for you.

- 1) Doing part-time jobs is helpful for Chinese students to have a better understanding of life.
 Chinese students are mostly the only child in the family, and their demands are normally accommodated whatever they are. They take it for granted that their parents can buy anything they want. But now in doing part-time jobs, they come to realize how hard it is to earn money. This helps them form a correct viewpoint of life.
- 2) _____
 The robots are often seen loading and unloading hot heavy metal in steel factories. Used in nuclear power plants, the robots handle the radioactive materials, preventing human personnel from being exposed to radiation.
- 3) _____
 For example a cat can teach us a valuable lesson about how to be contented, how to be serene (平静的) and at ease, how to sit and contemplate (沉思). A dog can teach us lessons of loyalty and devotion though his or her constant pleas for attention become, sometimes, a bit too much.