

# *Refining Composition Skills*

Rhetoric and Grammar  
for ESL Students

THIRD EDITION



# Refining Composition Skills

*Rhetoric and Grammar  
for ESL Students*

THIRD EDITION



REGINA L. SMALLEY  
MARY K. RUETTEN

*University of New Orleans*



Maxwell Macmillan  
International Publishing Group

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Smalley, Regina L.

Refining composition skills : rhetoric and grammar for ESL students / Regina L. Smalley, Mary K. Ruetten. — 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-02-411825-7

1. English language—Rhetoric. 2. English language—Textbooks for foreign speakers. I.

Ruetten, Mary K. II. Title.

PE1408.S577 1990

808'.042—dc20

89-27101

CIP

Copyright © 1990 by Maxwell Macmillan International Publishing Group

*All rights reserved.* No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.

Earlier editions copyright © 1982, 1986 by Macmillan Publishing Company.

Collier Macmillan Canada, Inc.

Credits appear at the back of the book, which constitutes an extension of the copyright page.

Editor: Maggie Barbieri

Production Manager: Nick Sklitsis

Text Designer: Jane Edelstein

Cover Designer: Jane Edelstein

Cover photograph: The Image Bank

This book was set in Garamond by Dignity, Inc., and printed and bound by Von Hoffman Press, Inc. The cover was printed by Von Hoffman Press, Inc.

Printing: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Year: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Maxwell Macmillan International Publishing Group

ESL/EFL Department

866 Third Avenue

New York, NY 10022

Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 0-02-411825-7

# Preface



The third edition of *Refining Composition Skills* presents an integrated program of writing for high-intermediate and advanced students of English as a second language. It combines extensive practice in rhetorical strategies and techniques with a review of appropriate grammatical structures and verb tenses. With its extensive appendixes, the text can further serve as a handbook for writing, grammar, and mechanics. The primary audience is the academically oriented ESL student; however, the text also can be useful in developmental writing courses for native speakers who could benefit from more guidance in writing compositions.

*Refining Composition Skills* can accommodate the needs of students of varying degrees of experience and levels of writing skills. Inexperienced writers will build a solid foundation in writing beginning with Unit One, which presents the basic paragraph patterns useful for high school- or college-level writing: narrative, descriptive, and expository. This unit covers developing and restricting topic sentences; organizing and developing effective, detailed support of the controlling idea; and outlining. Students who have had considerable practice composing the types of paragraphs presented in this unit may consider the chapters in Unit One a review. More experienced writers might begin the text with Unit Two, which focuses on the multiparagraph essay. This unit introduces the common patterns of exposition along with argumentation. Here the emphasis is on a strong thesis statement and appropriate and well-organized support.

Except for Chapters 1 and 5, which provide introductions to the paragraph and essay, respectively, each chapter in *Refining Composition Skills* focuses on a rhetorical mode of development and the conventions associated with that mode. Each chapter contains four basic components: reading selections, an introduction to the rhetorical pattern, the relevant composition skills (devices for achieving coherence), and a grammar review. The rhetorical patterns are carefully and clearly explained and illustrated, often with student samples that can be used as models early in the chapter. The section on composition skills introduces techniques for achieving coherence, such as the use of adverbial clauses and transitional expressions, and encourages the application of those skills in the writing of compositions, thus emphasizing the necessity for revision in the writing process. In addition, each chapter includes exercises for mastery of the composition skills. The grammar review section is designed to reinforce

the rhetoric. Therefore, the grammatical structures reviewed are generally those that are particularly appropriate for the rhetorical pattern. Although the grammar review is not intended to be comprehensive, an attempt has been made to include those common problem areas for ESL students. The grammar is presented in the context of the rhetorical mode—or pattern—and the exercises are often designed to generate further writing practice of that pattern. To conclude the writing and grammar components, additional writing assignments of varying difficulty are provided.

One of the major changes in the third edition of *Refining Composition Skills* is an expanded and improved reading component. Each chapter (except Chapters 1 and 5) begins with several thematically chosen readings with topics geared toward the interests of academically oriented ESL students. The readings are followed by comprehension/discussion questions intended to generate lively class discussions and provocative essay topics. In addition, each chapter topic is reinforced in the examples and exercises throughout the chapter. The reading passages also function as examples of the rhetorical modes and of professional writing, providing evidence that the principles of rhetoric apply in writing both outside and inside the classroom. The expanded reading component allows for greater flexibility in teaching: teachers who wish to focus on the academic content of the essays can begin with the introductory essays, whereas teachers who prefer the developmental approach can begin with the sections on rhetoric.

Other revisions in this edition include a checklist at the end of each chapter and an appendix on proofreading. The checklists, which summarize the important aspects of the particular type of paragraph or essay under consideration in each chapter, provide students with a handy way to check the rhetorical effectiveness of their essays. The proofreading exercises in Appendix VII give additional practice in this important skill. Finally, many of the student models, exercises, and examples have been improved in this edition. In short, *Refining Composition Skills* retains its developmental, step-by-step approach to writing while providing greater emphasis on reading and academic content.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our reviewers, our colleagues, and our students for offering their valuable suggestions during the preparation of the third edition. We are especially grateful to Cooper R. Mackin, Mary's husband, who provided help and abiding encouragement; to Maggie Barbieri, ESL editor at Macmillan, who urged us to undertake this revision; and to Kathy Niemczyk, college production managing editor, who saw this edition through production with care and efficiency.

R. L. S.  
M. K. R.

# Contents



## *Unit One THE PARAGRAPH*

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction to the Paragraph</b>	<b>3</b>
	The Topic of a Paragraph	3
	The Topic Sentence	7
	Improving the Topic Sentence	9
	Recognizing the Topic Sentence	10
	Formulating the Topic Sentence	13
	Support	14
	Unity	17
	Coherence	19
	<i>Paragraph Checklist</i>	23
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>The Narrative Paragraph</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>READINGS:</b> Personal Discovery	24
	<i>"The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl,"</i> Elizabeth Wong	24
	From <i>The Story of My Life</i> , Helen Keller	28
	<b>WRITING</b>	33
	Present Narration	33
	<i>Composition Skills</i>	36
	Coherence	36
	Adverbials of Time and Sequence	36
	Prepositions in Time Expressions	38
	<i>Grammar Review</i>	42
	Single-Word Adverbs of Frequency	42
	Verb Tense Review: The Simple Present vs. the Present Progressive	45
	Past Narration	50
	<i>Composition Skills</i>	52
	Coherence	52
	Adverbial Clauses of Time	52
	<i>Grammar Review</i>	56
	Verb Tense Review: The Simple Past, the Past Progressive, and the Past Perfect	56
	<i>Narrative Paragraph Checklist</i>	66

<b>Chapter 3 The Descriptive Paragraph</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>READINGS: Important People, Important Places</b>	<b>67</b>
<i>"Uncle Kwok," Jade Snow Wong</i>	<b>68</b>
From <i>The Way to Rainy Mountain</i> , N. Scott Momaday	<b>71</b>
<b>WRITING</b>	<b>75</b>
Description of a Place	<b>75</b>
<b>Composition Skills</b>	<b>79</b>
Coherence	<b>79</b>
Adverbs of Place	<b>79</b>
Modification	<b>82</b>
Adjectives	<b>82</b>
Participles as Adjectives	<b>85</b>
<b>Grammar Review</b>	<b>92</b>
The Passive Voice vs. the Active Voice	<b>92</b>
Description of a Person	<b>97</b>
<b>Composition Skills</b>	<b>103</b>
Coherence -	<b>103</b>
Adjective Clauses	<b>103</b>
Participles as Adjectives	<b>114</b>
<b>Descriptive Paragraph Checklist</b>	<b>116</b>
 <b>Chapter 4 The Expository Paragraph</b>	 <b>117</b>
<b>READINGS: Learning and Education</b>	<b>117</b>
<i>"What Is Intelligence, Anyway?"</i> Isaac Asimov	<b>118</b>
<i>"Forgetting,"</i> Camille B. Wortman and Elizabeth F. Loftus	<b>121</b>
<b>WRITING</b>	<b>125</b>
Support of the Generalization	<b>128</b>
Specific Details	<b>128</b>
Examples	<b>132</b>
Illustrations and Anecdotes	<b>135</b>
<b>Composition Skills</b>	<b>136</b>
Coherence	<b>136</b>
Organization of Details and Examples	<b>136</b>
Transitional Words and Phrases	<b>140</b>
<b>Grammar Review</b>	<b>144</b>
Verb Tense Review: The Present Perfect vs. the Simple Past	<b>144</b>
Definite and Indefinite Articles	<b>152</b>
<b>Expository Paragraph Checklist</b>	<b>161</b>

## **Unit Two THE ESSAY**

<b>Chapter 5 Introduction to the Essay</b>	<b>165</b>
The Thesis Statement	<b>166</b>
The Introduction	<b>168</b>
The Developmental Paragraphs	<b>172</b>
The Conclusion	<b>181</b>

The Outline	184
<i>Essay Checklist</i>	187
<b>Chapter 6 The Example Essay</b>	<b>188</b>
READINGS: The Power of Culture and Language	188
<i>"How Unwritten Rules Circumscribe Our Lives,"</i> Bob Greene	189
From <i>"Words That Count,"</i> Letty Cottin Pogrebin	193
WRITING	196
Number of Examples	196
Choice of Examples	199
<i>Composition Skills</i>	203
Coherence	203
Organization of Examples	203
Transitions Between Paragraphs	203
<i>Grammar Review</i>	210
Gerunds and Infinitives	210
Gerunds and Infinitives as Subjects	210
Gerunds and Infinitives as Objects	213
Gerunds as Objects of Prepositions	216
Noun Clauses	218
Noun Clauses Derived from Statements	219
Noun Clauses Derived from Questions	222
<i>Example Essay Checklist</i>	227
<b>Chapter 7 The Comparison and Contrast Essay</b>	<b>228</b>
READINGS: People and Nature	228
<i>"A Fable for Tomorrow,"</i> Rachel Carson	229
<i>"Columbus and the Moon,"</i> Tom Wolfe	232
WRITING	238
Points of Comparison	238
Emphasis on Comparison or Contrast	239
Patterns of Organization	239
<i>Composition Skills</i>	246
Coherence	246
Transitions for Comparison and Contrast	246
<i>Grammar Review</i>	257
Comparisons	257
Indicators of Equality or Similarity	257
Indicators of Inequality	259
<i>Comparison and Contrast Essay Checklist</i>	265
<b>Chapter 8 The Classification Essay</b>	<b>266</b>
READINGS: A Healthy Society	266
<i>"Three Kinds of Fatigue,"</i> Jane Brody	267
<i>"A Very Short History of Some American Drugs Familiar to Everybody,"</i> Adam Smith	273



<b>WRITING</b>	278
The Principle of Classification	279
Making the Classification Complete	281
Organizing the Classification Essay	282
Introducing the Categories	282
<i>Composition Skills</i>	285
Introductory Paragraphs	285
The Turnabout	285
Coherence	287
Transitions for Classification	287
<i>Grammar Review</i>	289
Correlative Conjunctions	289
Adjective Clauses Reduced to Participial Phrases	295
Articles for Classification	298
<i>Classification Essay Checklist</i>	303
 <b>Chapter 9 The Process Analysis Essay</b>	 304
<b>READINGS: The World of Work</b>	304
From <i>The Dark Child</i> , Camara Laye	305
"Portraits of a Cop," N. R. Kleinfield	312
<b>WRITING</b>	317
Planning the Process Analysis Essay	317
Organizing the Process Analysis Essay	321
<i>Composition Skills</i>	327
Introductory Paragraphs	327
The Dramatic Entrance	327
Coherence	328
Participial Phrases	328
<i>Grammar Review</i>	332
Imperative/You/Modals	333
Expressions of Purpose	334
Conditionals	336
<i>Process Analysis Essay Checklist</i>	338
 <b>Chapter 10 The Cause-and-Effect Analysis Essay</b>	 339
<b>READINGS: Men, Women, and the Family</b>	339
"Lift Your Feet," Andrew Ward	339
"Women and Physics," K. C. Cole	341
<b>WRITING</b>	346
Multiple Causes → Effect	347
Organizing the Causal Analysis Essay	350
The Thesis Statement for the Causal Analysis Essay	352
A Problem in Reasoning	354
Cause → Multiple Effects	355
Organizing the Effect Analysis Essay	357

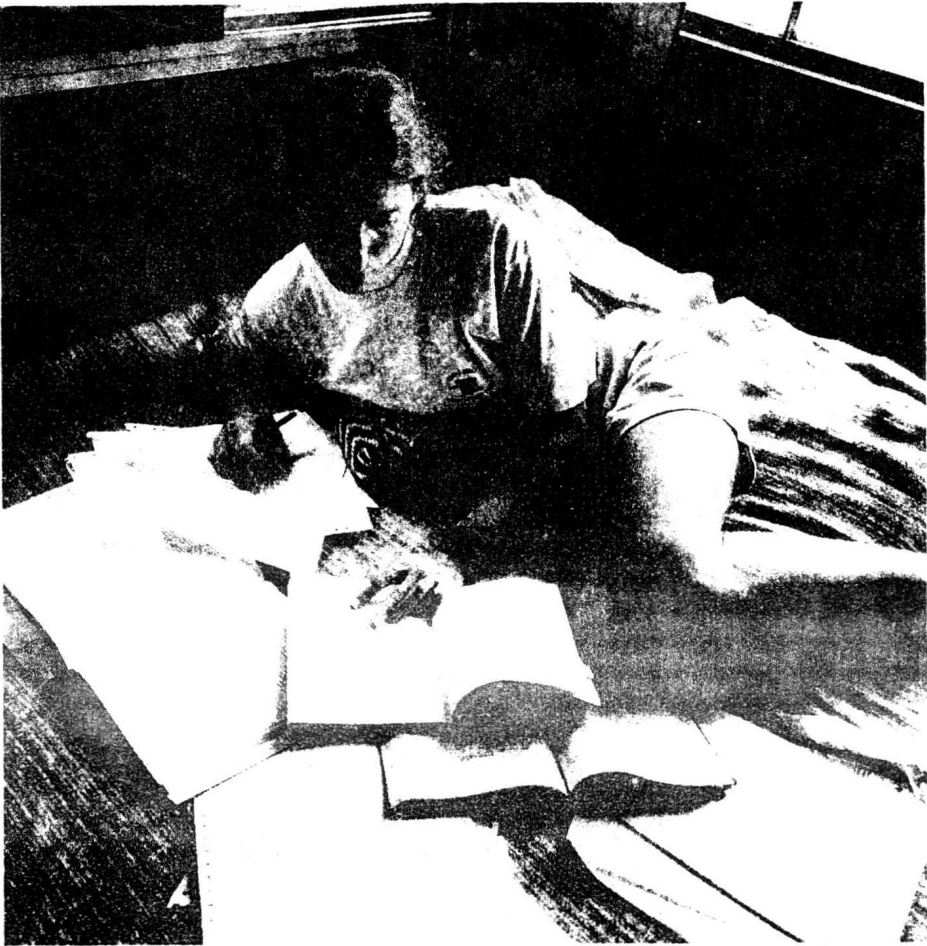
The Thesis Statement for the Effect Analysis Essay	358
The Causal Chain	360
<i>Composition Skills</i>	364
Introductory Paragraphs	364
The Dramatic Entrance	364
The Relevant Quotation	366
Coherence	368
Transitions and Expressions for Cause and Effect	368
Adverbial Clauses of Cause and Result	369
<i>Grammar Review</i>	373
Unreal Conditions	373
Articles	376
<i>Cause-and-Effect Analysis Essay Checklist</i>	379
 <b>Chapter 11 The Argumentative Essay</b>	 380
READINGS: Problems, Issues, and Solutions	380
<i>"Bilingualism's Goal,"</i> Barbara Mujica	380
<i>"The Bounty of the Sea,"</i> Jacques Cousteau	384
<i>"There's No Way to Go But Ahead,"</i> Isaac Asimov	387
WRITING	392
The Argumentative Thesis: Taking a Stand	393
The Opposition: Knowing What You Are Up Against	394
Arguing Your Case: The Logic Behind Your Reasons	396
Explaining and Supporting the Reasons	404
Planning the Argumentative Essay	408
Organizing the Argumentative Essay	410
<i>Composition Skills</i>	415
Coherence Review	415
<i>Grammar Review</i>	417
Subjunctive Noun Clauses	417
<i>Argumentative Essay Checklist</i>	421
 <b>Appendixes</b>	 423
APPENDIX I	425
The Definite Article with Place Names	425
The Definite Article with Other Proper Nouns	427
APPENDIX II	430
Punctuation Problems	430
Rules for Punctuation	432
APPENDIX III	441
Rules for Capitalization	441
APPENDIX IV	443
Noun Plurals	443
APPENDIX V	447
Subject-Verb Agreement	447

APPENDIX VI	451
Principal Parts of Irregular Verbs	451
Problem Verbs	454
APPENDIX VII	456
Verbs and Their Complements	456
APPENDIX VIII	464
Prepositions	464
APPENDIX IX	468
Verb–Preposition Combinations	468
APPENDIX X	472
Prepositions After Other Expressions	472
APPENDIX XI	475
Two-Word Verbs	475
APPENDIX XII	483
Proofreading	483
APPENDIX XIII	487
Fallacies	487
 <i>Index</i>	 491

# *Unit One*



## THE PARAGRAPH





# Chapter 1



## Introduction to the Paragraph

**W**HAT is a paragraph? You probably know that a paragraph is a group of sentences and that the first sentence of this group is indented; that is, it begins a little bit more to the right of the margin than the rest of the sentences in this group. But it is not enough to say that a paragraph is a group of sentences. How do these sentences relate to each other? How does a paragraph begin and where does it end? What constitutes a good paragraph? These are the questions we answer in this first unit.

### The Topic of a Paragraph

To begin with, a *paragraph* is defined as a group of sentences that develops one main idea; in other words, a paragraph develops a topic. A *topic* is the subject of the paragraph; it is what the paragraph is about. Read the following paragraph, which is *about* the habit of smoking cigarettes.

Smoking cigarettes can be an expensive habit. Considering that the average price per pack of cigarettes is about one dollar, people who smoke two packs of cigarettes a day spend \$2.00 per day on their habit. At the end of one year, these smokers have spent at least \$730.00. But the price of cigarettes is not the only expense cigarette smokers incur. Since cigarette smoke has an offensive odor that permeates clothing, stuffed furniture, and carpet, smokers often find that these items must be cleaned more frequently than nonsmokers do. Although it is difficult to estimate the cost of this additional expense, one can see that this hidden expense does contribute to making smoking an expensive habit.

## EXERCISE 1-1

Study the following paragraphs to find their topics. Write the topic for each paragraph in the space provided.

1. A final examination in a course will give a student the initiative to do his or her best work throughout the course. Students who are only taking notes and attending classes in order to pass a few short tests will not put forth their best effort. For instance, some of my friends in drama, in which there is no final examination, take poor notes, which they throw away after each short test. Skipping classes also becomes popular. Imagine the incredible change a final examination would produce. Students would have to take good notes and attend all classes in order to be prepared for the final examination.  
—Suzanne Gremillion

This paragraph is about \_\_\_\_\_

2. Another reason why I like the beach is its solitary atmosphere. At the beach I have no witness but the beach, and I can speak and think with pleasure. No one can interrupt me, and the beach will always be there to listen to everything I want to say. In addition, it is a quiet place to go to meditate. Meditation requires solitude. Many times when I am confused about something, I go to the beach by myself, and I find that this is the best place to resolve my conflicts, solve problems, and to think.  
—M. Veronica Porta

This paragraph is about \_\_\_\_\_

3. Some seeming English-Spanish equivalents are deceptive. Their forms are similar, but they have developed different shades of meaning in the two languages. These are sure to cause trouble for Spanish speakers learning English. The Spanish word *asistir* looks like the English word *assist* but has none of the latter's meaning of "help." Instead, *asistir* means "to attend" or "to be present." Thus, Spanish English speakers will say that they assisted a class when they mean that they were present at it. *Actual* in Spanish means "present," not English "actual"; *desgracia* means "misfortune" not "disgrace," *ignorar* means "not to know" instead of "to ignore."  
—Jean Malmstrom, *Language in Society* (New York: Hayden, 1965), pp. 108-9.

This paragraph is about \_\_\_\_\_

4. When we make attributions about ourselves or about others, we tend to attribute the behavior in question to either *internal* or *external* forces. When you see someone crash his car into a telephone pole, you can attribute that unfortunate piece of behavior either to internal or external causes. You might conclude that the person is a terrible driver or emotionally upset (internal causes), or you might conclude that another car forced the driver off the road.

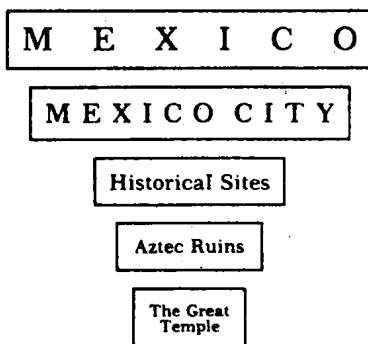
(external cause). If you fail an exam, you can attribute it to internal causes such as stupidity or a failure to study, or you can attribute it to external causes such as an unfair test or an overheated room.

—John P. Houston, *Motivation* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), p. 255.

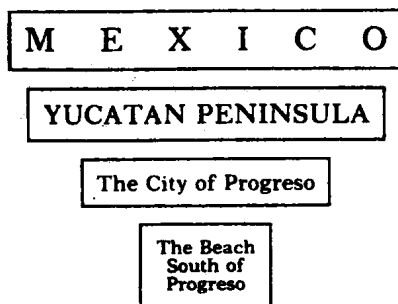
This paragraph is about \_\_\_\_\_

---

Although usually you are assigned topics to write about, often these topics are too general to be developed adequately in one paragraph. After all, for most practical purposes your paragraphs will range in length from about seven to fifteen sentences. Therefore, you will need to *restrict* your topic; that is, you will need to narrow down your topic to a more specific one. Suppose, for example, that you are asked to write about your favorite place and you choose a country such as Mexico. Although you could easily write several sentences naming all the things you like about Mexico, it would be more interesting for your reader if you narrowed down the topic *Mexico* to a particular place in Mexico, such as the Great Temple in the Aztec ruins. Your topic should be narrowed down as much as possible. Look at how the topic *Mexico* is narrowed here:

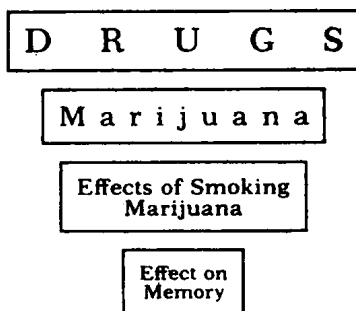


Of course, there are many other ways to narrow the same topic. For example:

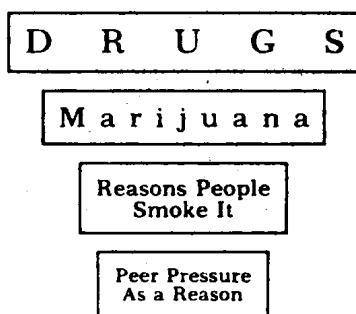




Now let us suppose that you are asked to write a paragraph about drugs. Obviously, the topic *drugs* is far too broad for specific development in one paragraph; the topic needs to be narrowed down, restricted. Observe here how the topic *drugs* can be restricted:



This paragraph, then, will discuss *one* of the effects of smoking marijuana: memory loss. Like most topics, this one can be narrowed down in several ways. Observe:



This paragraph will discuss one of the reasons people smoke marijuana: peer pressure.

---

### EXERCISE 1 - 2

Fill in each line that follows by narrowing down the topics given. For the last one, select your own topic and then narrow it down.

1. Cigarettes  
Effects of Smoking Cigarettes  
Effects on Health  
Effects on Lungs
2. Cigarettes