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# 英语写作阶梯

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## 内 容 提 要

本书根据最新《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》中四级的写作要求编写。内容包括便条、邀请函、书信、段落、文章写作和常用修辞手段介绍。如果读者按照本书的内容循序渐进,必定会在英语写作方面有所突破。本书可作为英语专业一年级下和二年级上的学生教材,也可供具有一定英语基础并希望在英语写作方面有所提高的读者学习。各章的部分练习参考答案可在上海交通大学出版社的官方网页上搜索。

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# Preface

Despite the claims of some people that there is little need for people to learn to write in an electronic age, there is still an insistent and persistent cry for effective writing. Even in an electronic age, you can scarcely hope to succeed unless you can express yourself in writing with some degree of effectiveness. Writing can help you think critically. It can enable you to perceive relationships, to deepen perception, to solve problems, etc. Often you discover what you really think and feel about people, ideas, issues and events only in the actual process of writing. Writing in English is even more important to the language learners, because the final product of language learning is to use the target language rather than regard it as a decoration.

Then what is effective writing? Effective writing requires:

1) Ideas that are interesting and important. Ideas are the heart of the piece—what the writer is writing about and the information he or she chooses to write about it.

2) Organization that is logical and effective. Organization refers to the order of ideas and the way the writer moves from one idea to the next.

3) Voice that is individual and appropriate. Voice is how the writing feels to the readers when they read it. Is it formal or casual? Is it friendly and inviting or reserved and standoffish? Voice is the expression of the writer's personality through words.

4) Word Choice that is specific and memorable. Good writing uses just the right words to say just the right things.

5) Sentence Fluency that is smooth and expressive. Fluent sentences are easy to understand and fun to read with expression.

6) Conventions that are correct and communicative. Conventions are the ways we all agree to use punctuation, spelling, grammar, and other things that make writing consistent and easy to read.

This book deals most, if not all, of the above requirements, and is divided into five chapters, each of which is on notes and invitation cards, letters, paragraphs, essays and rhetorical devices.

If you read carefully and do most of the exercises, you can expect and be expected that your writing will improve.

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# Chapter I Notes and Invitation Cards

## 1.1 Note Writing

### 1.1.1 Definition and Features

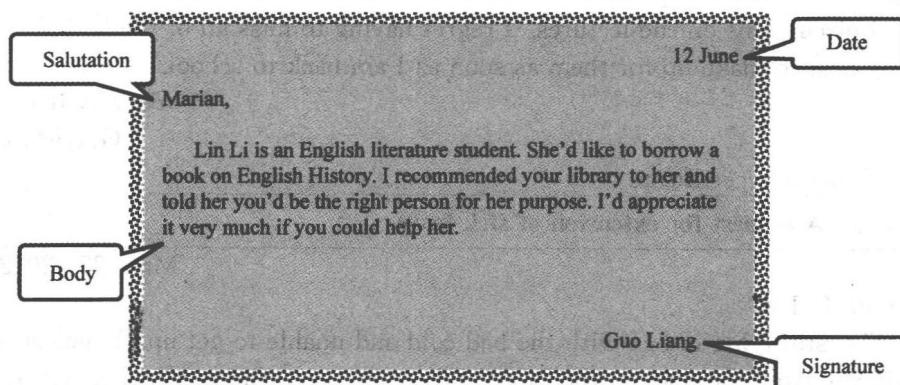
Notes are short informal letters written for various purposes. Notes are messages from one person to another, often to colleagues, friends and family members. Written in quick contact, notes are usually not enveloped or posted. Therefore, notes require relaxed social rules; they are simple in form, often consisting of just one or a couple of sentences, and informal and colloquial in language.

### 1.1.2 Composition

Though a note allows omission both in form and language, generally it has the following parts:

- The compulsory parts; date, salutation, body, signature
- The optional parts; respectable title, complimentary close

#### Example



Salutation: informal in style; usually without respectable title unless it is necessary to have one

Date: clear and brief in presentation; usually not including the month and the year

Body: informal in style; basically grammatical in language; using contracted forms; short in length

Signature: informal in style; usually without complimentary close unless it is necessary to have one

### 1. 1. 3 Notes for Various Purposes

Informal notes are widely used in people's life just because of their flexible ways of writing, convenient handling in delivery and their multi-purposed communication. The following are some of the purposes for our daily communication through notes.

#### 1. 1. 3. 1 Request for Leave

##### Requirements for writing:

- Clarify the reason for the leave.
- State the length of absence asked.
- Use a sincere tone.
- Enclose any necessary certificate.

##### Example 1 A request for sick leave

A sick note (BrE.) or an excuse (AmE.) is a note written by you or your doctor or your parents saying that you were too ill to go to work or school.

Mar. 25, 2012

Dear Prof. Li,

I am sorry to apprise you that I am unable to attend school today owing to a bad cold. Since I'm having a high temperature, the doctor said that I should stay in bed at least until the temperature is gone. I know you are going to give us an important lecture today and tomorrow and there will be some useful discussions on the lectures. I regret having to miss all of them. I shall do my best to make up for them as soon as I am back to school.

Your student,  
Guo Ming

Encl. Doctor's certificate

##### Example 2 A request for extension of sick leave

Mar. 27, 2012

Dear Prof. Li,

I'm still lying in bed with the bad cold and unable to get up. I enclose a certificate from the doctor who is attending on me, as he is afraid it will be another three days before I shall be able to resume my study. Please give me an extension for as many days.

Your student,  
Guo Ming

Encl. Doctor's certificate

**Example 3 A request for sick leave from a parent**

Apr. 10, 2012

Dear Sir,

Please excuse Lin Juanjuan's absence from school today. She was found to have the blood-shot eye last night, and I felt it would not be fair to the other children to allow her to attend school. So I am writing to ask you for a three-day sick leave and will let her resume her study if she gets better in three days.

Very truly yours,  
Lin Daquan

**Example 4 A request for compassionate leave**

May 2, 2012

Director Chen,

A call has just come to me saying that my mother is seriously ill and urging me to go home at once. Because of this I should very much like to have a leave of three days beginning on May 3. Jane Wang will take my place as the class president for a few days. I hope that my request will be given due consideration.

Qin Wei

**1.1.3.2 Introduction****Requirements for writing:**

- Give the full name of the person to be introduced.
- Clarify his/her identity.
- State the purpose of the introduction.
- Express appreciation.

**Example**

May 2

Dr. Hope,

This is to introduce my friend Wayne Morris who has stomach trouble. He has been suffering for two weeks now. He has been to several hospitals but there has been no effect. I know you are an expert in this field and therefore recommended you to him. I'd appreciate it if you could give him a thorough examination.

Sally Simpleton

**1.1.3.3 Giving Information****Requirements for writing:**

- State clearly the message to be offered.
- Make your expression brief and to the point.

### Example 1 Lending magazines

2 Feb.

Dear Albert,

You must have finished reading those old magazines on paintings. Now I've received some new ones from Kim and in them found some new Chinese painting works which I'm sure you'd like to enjoy. Come and get them if you want to read them. I'll be at home in the evening and will be expecting you then.

Ken

#### Information to be included:

- The name of the person who called
- The exact time of the call
- What was told in the call

### Example 2 Leaving a telephone message

9:30 a. m. May 17

Dear Mr. Ali,

A Mr. Svartvik (I'm not sure whether I got the spelling correct), who recently came to Shanghai from Sweden, wishes to see you. He said he had contacted you by email the other day. You are requested to give him a ring this evening any time from 8:00 to 10:00.

Tel. No. 55500061, ext. 133.

Helen

#### 1.1.3.4 Offering Help

##### Requirements for writing:

- State what the help is.
- State why you offer it.
- Tell how you can offer it.

##### Example

18 Mar. Wed.

Dear Katie,

I'm leaving for Beijing next Monday for business and going to stay for about two weeks. As Beijing is your hometown and you have many friends there, are there any errands I can run for you? Or is there anything for me to take to them? If so, please inform me or send it to me before Sunday.

Kathleen

#### 1.1.3.5 A Note with a Present

##### Requirements for writing:

- State what the present is.

- Tell why you send the present.
- Express the hope that the present will suit the receiver or that the receiver will like it.

**Example**

27 Dec.

Dear Jiahui,

Here is a disc of chamber music for you, since you've always been a lover of serious music. I found on the list some of the pieces you often mention. So I think it will surely provide relaxation during your spare time. I hope it gives you great pleasure. Best wishes for the coming year.

Yours,  
Mike

**1.1.3.6 Thanks**

**Requirements for writing:**

- Give expression of gratitude.
- Mention the reason for the gratitude.
- Express pleasure (at the gift itself) or appreciation of the help you received.
- Offer favorable words on the part of the addressee.

**Example 1 Thanks for a gift**

2nd Jan.

Dear Uncle,

Thank you for the smartphone you gave me as a birthday gift. It is so elegant and useful. It's exactly what I need. I've wanted such a phone for long. I know it's expensive, so I'll treasure it. Great appreciation of your thoughtfulness.

Your loving nephew,  
Mike

**Example 2 Thanks for help**

12 Nov.

Dear Mr. Gleason,

The material that you sent will, I am sure, prove helpful to me in my preparations for the coming debate. You must have gone through a lot of trouble gathering the material. Besides, it was so kind of you to give so much of your time in writing such a full explanation.

I am very grateful for your assistance. And I'll keep you posted on my progress in the preparation.

Sincerely yours,  
Lucille Comstock

### 1.1.3.7 Congratulations

#### Requirements for writing:

- Mention how you heard of the good news.
- State what the good news is.
- Offer favorable remarks about the good news.
- Express how happy you are for the addressee.
- Give expression of congratulations.

#### Example

Dear Caroline,

Apr. 1st

I read in the papers that you'd won the 2nd prize in the National Photo Contest. It's said that the competition was keen, and it was not easy to win a prize. You are a real talent for photography. In spite of that, I can also realize how hard you've been working for it. I'm proud to have a friend like you. My warmest congratulations.

Edward

### 1.1.3.8 Making Appointments

#### Requirements for writing:

- State the reason or purpose for making such an appointment.
- Offer suggestions on a time and place to meet.
- Express hope to get a reply.

#### Example

Prof. Lowell,

Tue. May 9

Thank you for your email about the outline of my BA thesis. But there are still a few points in the outline that I'm not so clear about. Can I meet with you and talk about them? If you can, could you please appoint a time and place and leave a message for me with Ms. Lin at the department office? I'm available most of the afternoons and evenings of the week. Thank you.

Wang Hong

### 1.1.3.9 Making Arrangements

#### Requirements for writing:

- Be very precise and clear as to the time, place and what has been arranged.
- Express hope to get a reply.

### Example

5 Aug.

Dear Dr. Baker,

Your lecture on Irish literature to the post-graduates of the English Department is scheduled to be delivered on Monday, 14 August, in the Department Lecture Hall, Room 110 Building 57. A car is coming to pick you up at 1:30 p. m. , and Miss Smith will be there receiving you. Please inform us if you are otherwise engaged or have any questions about the arrangement. Thank you.

Mary Cooper

#### 1.1.3.10 Regret and Apologies

##### Requirements for writing:

- Mention the affair to apologize or feel regretted for.
- Explain the reason.
- Use an apologetic or a regretful tone.
- Express hope to remedy (and to get a reply).

##### Example 1 Regret

12 July

Dear Liqiu,

I was away on a trip to Qingdao. As I left in a hurry, I didn't inform anyone. I regret having missed seeing you. We've not met for quite some time, have we? I have so many things to tell you. I'll be home afternoons the whole week. Would you drop in? Give me a ring before you come. Looking forward to your early visit.

Miaoying

##### Example 2 Apology

Nov. 25

Dear Tom,

I still feel very sorry for my quarrel with you about the matter yesterday. As soon as I got back home and was informed of the truth, I realized that the mistake was mine and not yours. I really need to learn to control myself and find out the facts before speaking about them. Please forgive me for being rude, and I do want to find a time to talk to you in person.

Yours ever,  
Jack

#### 1.1.3.11 Asking after Someone's Health (A get-well note)

##### Requirements for writing:

- Mention the source of the sad news.

- Express regrets.
- Offer some comforting words or “get well soon” words.

**Example**

26 Mar.

Dear Harold,

Gray told me yesterday that you are down with the flu. He said the doctor told you to stay home and be quiet for a period of time. We'll miss you very much, but you do need a good rest. We all hope you'll be up and around again soon. Don't worry about the lessons. We'll take care of the class notes for you.

Best regards,

Yours ever,  
Basil

**1. 1. 3. 12 Invitation**

**1) Requirements for writing a note of invitation:**

- Mention the occasion for the invitation.
- Give the reason for inviting the addressee (optional).
- Tell the time and the place for the activity.
- Express pleasure of seeing the addressee on that occasion or hope of having the invitation accepted.
- Expect a reply and the reason for this (optional).

**Example 1 Invitation to a concert**

June 1,

Dear Meili,

We're going to have a classic music appreciation evening in our auditorium this coming Saturday. Symphony No. 9 by Beethoven, your favorite piece, will be on the program. Besides, we'll have a teacher from the Music Department of the Arts College of our university to talk with us on the classic music. You'll certainly like that. We would like to have you join us. The time is 7:30 p. m. Drop me a line if you're interested.

Yours,  
Ah Fang

**Example 2 Invitation to a birthday dinner party**



14 Feb.

Dear Kate,

Next Monday is my 20th birthday, and I'm arranging a dinner party for this occasion in my home. Many friends of mine will come. You're my childhood friend, so the party won't be a party without you. You'll sure meet some old friends you've not seen for long. How exciting it'd be seeing each other all at the same time! I'll be expecting you any time after six.

Yours,  
Rebecca

**2) Requirements for writing a note of accepting an invitation:**

- Express appreciation of being invited.
- Give your certainty of having a good time.
- Give your assurance of being punctual or your apology for having to be late (optional).
- Express your offer of help (optional).
- Express your expectation for the occasion.

**Example 3 Accepting the invitation to a party**

16 Feb.

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for asking me to your birthday party. I'd be only too glad to come. It'll be a very nice time, I'm sure. You can count on me to be punctual, but do you want me to come earlier to help? Or shall I bring you anything you might need? Looking forward to seeing you and the others.

Love,  
Kate

**3) Requirements for writing a note of declining an invitation:**

- Express appreciation of being invited.
- Explain the reason for not being able to attend the activity.
- Express regret for missing such an occasion.
- Extend felicitations, etc., should the occasion require.

**Example 4 Declining the invitation to a party**

16 Feb.

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for inviting me to your 20th birthday party. I've been down with the flu for some time now and I'm afraid I won't fully recover so soon. It breaks my heart to miss the great occasion of celebrating your birthday and meeting all the people, but I can't pass on the virus to you all. Heartiest congratulations!

Yours,  
Kate