Introduction to
ACADEMIC WRITING

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Addison-Wesley Publishing Company
Reading, Massachusetts • Menlo Park, California • New York
Don Mills, Ontario • Wokingham, England • Amsterdam • Bonn • Sydney
Singapore • Tokyo • Madrid • Bogota • Santiago • San Juan

A Publication of the World Language Division

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ISBN 0-201-14507-3
FGHIJKLMNOP-AL-99876543210

Introduction

Introduction to Academic Writing is an intermediate writing textbook and workbook for non-native speakers of English from age 16 through adult. It is a comprehensive writing text that uses high interest topics to teach rhetoric, grammar, and sentence structure.

This textbook contains ten chapters, each requiring 6 to 10 hours of class time. It covers a wide range of skills from basic punctuation and capitalization rules in Chapter 1 to rather advanced clause work in Chapters 8, 9, and 10. The organization is highly flexible, allowing teachers to select chapters or sections of chapters suitable for the varying abilities typical of intermediate classes.

Chapters 1–3 and 7–10 include sections on organization, grammar, and sentence structure. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the organization sections, in which rhetorical principles are explained and practiced at both the paragraph and essay levels. Each chapter begins with a model essay exemplifying one of the basic modes of writing: narration (temporal order), description (spatial order), and exposition (classification, comparison and contrast, and persuasion).

The grammar sections are selective rather than comprehensive; that is, they present items of grammar that are pertinent to the rhetorical modes being studied (such as comparatives in Chapter 10, Comparison and Contrast) or that are especially troublesome to intermediate learners of English (such as simple past vs. present perfect verb tense).

The sentence structure sections present three types of English sentences (simple, compound, and complex) in order of progressive difficulty. In the first three chapters, simple and compound sentences are taught and practiced extensively. Then, the structure of independent and dependent clauses is taught. The coverage in later chapters includes complex sentences with dependent adverb, noun, and adjective clauses.

Most chapters also contain a dictation/dictocomp, sentence combining exercises, a freewriting assignment, and prewriting and postwriting activities.

Each chapter concludes with a choice of writing assignments, with the more difficult ones marked with a star.

The overall organization of the book is as follows: In Chapters 1–3, students work with the "easier" modes of narration and description. The final writing assignment for these chapters can be either a single paragraph or a multiparagraph essay. In Chapter 4, a detailed

examination of paragraph structure begins and continues in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 teaches basic essay organization in depth, and the remaining chapters expand on this information to include the various essay forms: classification, persuasion, etc. A chapter on business letter writing is included, as nearly all ESL/EFL students need to know the conventions of English-language business letters at some time.

Additional features of *Introduction to Academic Writing*:

- Every effort has been made to control the vocabulary. Idioms and words or expressions that may cause difficulty are marked with an asterisk and are glossed in footnotes at the bottom of the page.
- Explanations and directions are written in simple English to make it easy for students to read and understand on their own.
- Each of the grammar and sentence structure sections within a chapter are independent and, therefore, are optional. A section may be omitted if the teacher judges it to be too elementary or too advanced for his or her class. Omitted sections may, of course, be assigned to individual students for remedial/supplemental work as needed.
- Prewriting (brainstorming, outlining, draft writing) and postwriting (drafts, checklists) activities are interspersed throughout the text.

To the Teacher

The following paragraphs present explanations and suggestions for the activities in *Introduction to Academic Writing*, as well as additional information that may be helpful.

Dictation / Dictocomp Practices. Dictocomps are usually short paragraphs that reflect the rhetoric, grammar, and sentence structure elements of each chapter. You may use these exercises as traditional dictations or you may use them as dictocomps, whichever best fits your teaching style. For the traditional dictation technique, assign the material for study; then, in class, ask the students to transcribe the material as you dictate it. For the dictocomp technique, present the material as an unannounced in-class composition exercise toward the end of the class's study of the chapter.

The dictocomp method is simple: read the material (usually a paragraph) two or three times to the class. Do not permit the class to take notes during the readings. You then may answer questions after the readings, or, alternatively, may solicit a verbal recitation of the material. Write any difficult spelling words on the board. You may also choose to write "key" words and phrases on the board to aid the students' memories in recalling the order of the main points. Finally, direct the students to write the dictocomp, adhering as closely as possible to the original.

Do not expect students to write a dictocomp verbatim (as they would a dictation). Any correct version is acceptable. Grade students' work based on inclusion of important points as well as on correctness of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Scoring should also take into account any attempt to use new rhetorical or structural items taught in the chapter.

Prewriting Activities. A great deal of attention is given to prewriting activities. You will need to remind students again and again that writing is a continuing process, that no piece of writing is ever really finished. Reluctant writers resist being required to outline their ideas and then to write several drafts before producing the final, "polished" composition. Make every effort to insure that students do the prewriting and postwriting activities with care and thought. These exercises *will* improve students' writing!

Class Activity. Since many students experience writer's block when trying to get

started with an essay assignment, it would be very helpful for them to do a practice brainstorming session, either as a class or in small groups, on a related topic before each essay assignment at the end of each chapter.

Follow this procedure:

1. Choose a topic related to the lesson chapter.
2. Write the practice thesis statement on the board.
3. Elicit ideas from the students that would support the thesis.
4. After completing the brainstorming session, have students pick out the most important main ideas and mark them with capital letters A, B, C, etc.
5. Then, have the students pick out the lesser points that support each of the main ideas and mark them with numbers 1, 2, 3, etc.
6. Make a rough outline from the items in steps 4 and 5.

This class or group exercise will give the students the confidence they need to get started on their own essay.

Freewriting. The short freewriting assignments may or may not be graded, as you wish. If you do not grade the compositions, you might use them as "trial runs"—a means for students to try out newly acquired skills without penalty. Although topics are suggested, we encourage you and your students to develop your own topics.

Grammar. Grammar exercises may be worked through in class, assigned to individual students for remedial or supplemental work, or omitted altogether.

Sentence Structure. The sentence structure sections in Chapters 1–5 are basic and should not be omitted in most instances. However, you may choose to omit the complex sentence work in Chapters 7–10 (adjective clauses, noun clauses, adverb clauses of contrast).

On Your Own. We have suggested a variety of topics for student compositions at the end of each chapter and have marked the more challenging assignments with a star. However, we urge you to explore other topics of interest with your class that may be more relevant to their particular country, culture, or current events. Take care that topics suit the rhetorical mode of the chapter, however.

Correcting Compositions. Your task of correcting and commenting on students' drafts and final compositions is all-important. We would like to pass on a method that will lighten your load and provide maximum opportunity for the student to learn to self-correct.

If you and your students have access to cassette tape players, ask each student to give you a blank tape at the beginning of the term. Discuss each assignment with the student on the tape, pointing out errors and suggesting improvements. Hand back the tape with the assignment to the student for correction. The student revises his or her work and hands in the tape with the revised copy. Thus, you can use the tape again and again.

The advantages of using a cassette tape to correct compositions are many: The student receives more "personal" attention, and you are relieved of the necessity of *writing* copious commentary on each point needing revision (and thus spared writer's cramp with each set of papers). By merely suggesting, rather than writing in corrections, you can encourage students to think about, assess, and eventually edit their own work. For example, early in the term, you might give a lengthy explanation such as this: "You need a transition expression at the beginning of your third paragraph. Because the idea you discuss in this paragraph is additional to the main idea in your second paragraph, you need to use a transition such as 'furthermore,' 'moreover,' 'in addition,' or 'secondly.' Put the transition expression at the beginning of the paragraph, and don't forget to put a comma

after it." Later in the term, a shorter hint should suffice: "You need to introduce paragraph 3 with a transition signal indicating that it discusses an additional idea."

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank our "support group"—those individuals who critiqued, always encouraged, and in many instances inspired us during the writing of this book: Eileen Hansen, Middlesex County College; Thomas H. Kitchens, University of Texas at Austin; Catherine Sadow, Northeastern University; Cathy Day, Eastern Michigan University; Elizabeth Minicz, Triton College; and Susan Vik, Boston University.

We gratefully acknowledge Cynthia Weber of the Berkeley Adult School, who field-tested the manuscript and offered excellent suggestions to improve its contents.

Finally, we wish to thank our families: Andrew Hogue, a son who had to compete with the book for attention; also, George Oshima, Suzanne, Kathleen, and, of course, Ryan. Their constant support and understanding helped to make this book become a reality.

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Contents

PART I

Narrative and Descriptive Writing

chapter 1

Introductions

Model: Introducing Princess Diana

If Princess Diana were to write a composition introducing herself, it might go something like this:

Hello! My name is Princess Diana of Wales. I am married to Prince Charles of Wales, the future king of England. We live in an apartment in Kensington Palace in London, England.

Let me tell you about my life. I was born on July 1, 1961, at Park House on the royal estate of Sandringham in Norfolk, England. I have two older sisters, Sarah and Jane, and a younger brother, Charles. I attended various boarding schools during my early years. My favorite subject was English history. At school I studied ballet and tap dancing, and I also won swimming contests. When I was sixteen, I went to school in Switzerland. I studied French and learned to ski. When I finished school, I lived in London with three of my girlfriends. The two things I enjoyed most were dancing and children, so I became a teacher at the Young England Kindergarten. My life was quite normal before I became a princess. I took the bus to work, rode a bicycle, drove my own car, and went shopping. Then, when I became engaged to Prince Charles, my life changed completely.

On July 29, 1981, I married Prince Charles at St. Paul's Cathedral. There were twenty-seven hundred guests at our wedding, and the ceremony* was on television all over the world. On our honeymoon, we cruised the Mediterranean Sea on the royal yacht *Britannia*.

After we returned from our honeymoon, I began my life as the wife of the future king of England. I visit a lot of schools and hospitals, travel with my husband, and attend many official ceremonies. The prince and I enjoy bicycling, swimming, and skiing. In the evening, we may attend the ballet or the opera. In 1982, our son

ceremony: formal public or social event

William was born, and in 1984, our son Harry was born. I enjoy spending time with them. I am very busy with my royal duties, but my husband and my children are the most important things in my life.

In brief, my life has changed a lot since I became a princess, but I love every minute of it!

Questions on the Model

1. Who is Princess Diana?
2. What do you learn about her in the first paragraph?
3. What does the second paragraph tell you about her?
4. How many brothers does Princess Diana have? How many sisters?
5. What do you learn about Princess Diana in the third paragraph?
6. How old was Princess Diana when she got married?
7. How does she spend her time now?
8. What are the most important things in her life?

ORGANIZATION

A **paragraph** is a group of related statements that a writer develops about a subject. Each paragraph is a separate unit marked by indenting the first word from the left-hand margin, or by leaving extra space above and below the paragraph.

A **composition** is a piece of writing that has more than one paragraph. It is divided into three parts: a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning is called the **introduction**, the middle is called the **body**, and the end is called the **conclusion**. The introduction and the conclusion are usually one paragraph each. The body may have one, two, or more paragraphs.

For example, the composition about Princess Diana that you just read has five paragraphs. The first paragraph, which introduces the topic of the composition (Princess Diana), is the introduction. The last paragraph is the conclusion. The three paragraphs in the middle are the body.

Each paragraph in the body discusses a different subject. Paragraph 2 (the first body paragraph) tells about Princess Diana's life before her marriage. Paragraph 3 (the second body paragraph) tells about her wedding. Paragraph 4 (the third body paragraph) tells about her life after marriage. How can you tell what the main topic of each paragraph is? The first sentence usually (but not always) tells you.

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Capitalization

In English there are many rules for using capital letters. You probably know many of them already. To test your knowledge, look at the composition about Princess Diana again and write the words with capital letters in the spaces that follow. Add the rules (if you know them) in the spaces to the right.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

(Continue on a separate sheet of paper.)

You may not have been able to give all the rules, but aren't you surprised at how many you already know!

CAPITALIZATION RULES

Here are some important rules for capitalization:

- Capitalize the first word of a sentence.

  Hello! My name is Princess Diana.
  We live in an apartment.

- Capitalize the pronoun *I*.

  Charles and I enjoy skiing.

- Capitalize all proper nouns. Proper nouns include:
  - Names of deities:

    God
    Allah
    Shiva

  - Names of people and their titles:

    John P. Doe
    Princess Diana of Wales
    Dr. Jonas Salk
    Professor Henry Higgins
    Mr. and Mrs. John O. Smith

    (BUT: Do **not** capitalize a title without a name: the general, the prime minister, the math professor, the prince, the king.)

  - Names of specific places (places you could find on a map):

    Gary, Indiana
    Mediterranean Sea
    North Pole
    Park Avenue
    Lake Victoria
    Telegraph Avenue
    Trafalgar Square