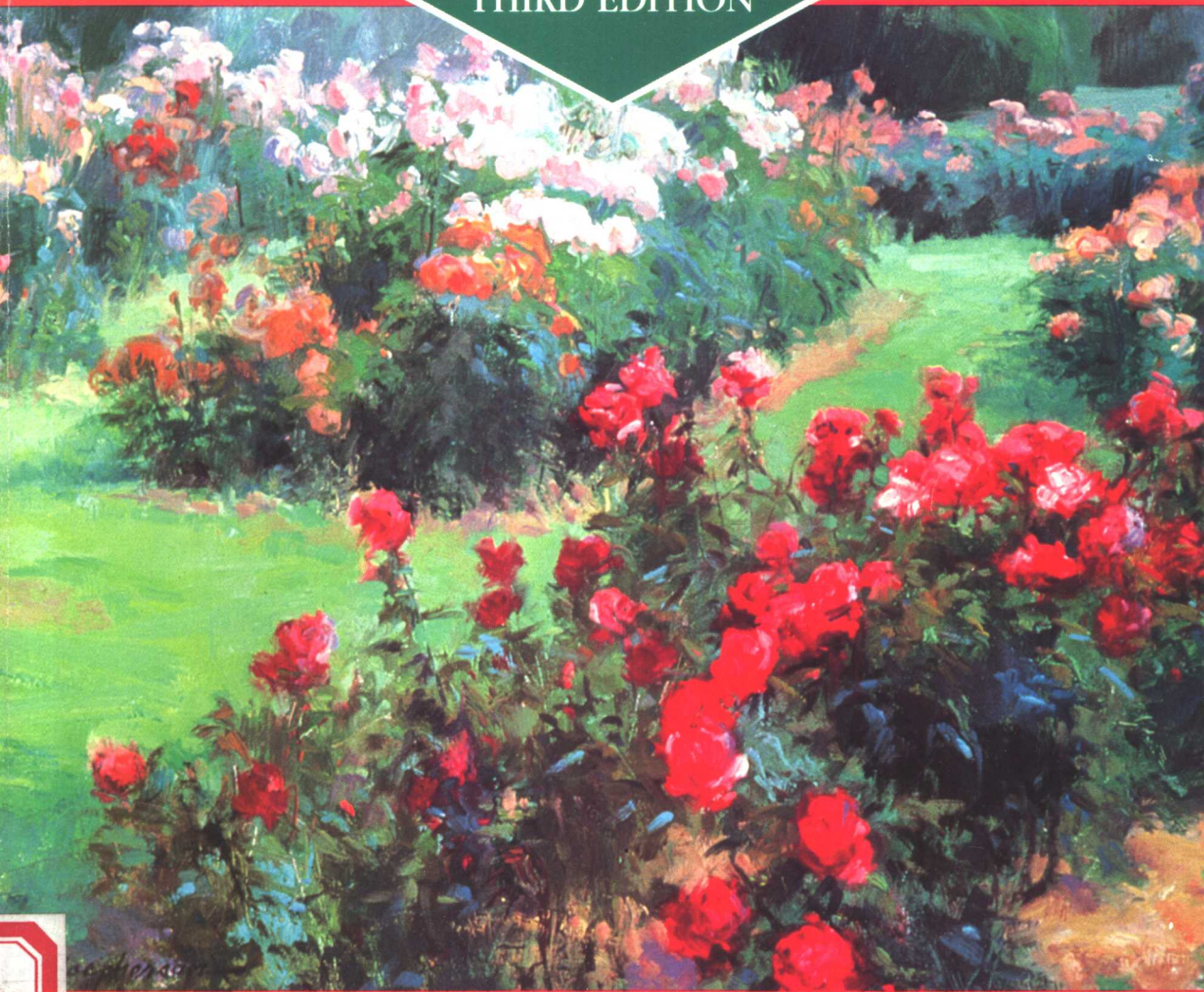


Refining Composition Skills

Rhetoric and Grammar
for ESL Students

THIRD EDITION



Regina L. Smalley ♦ Mary K. Ruetten

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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.

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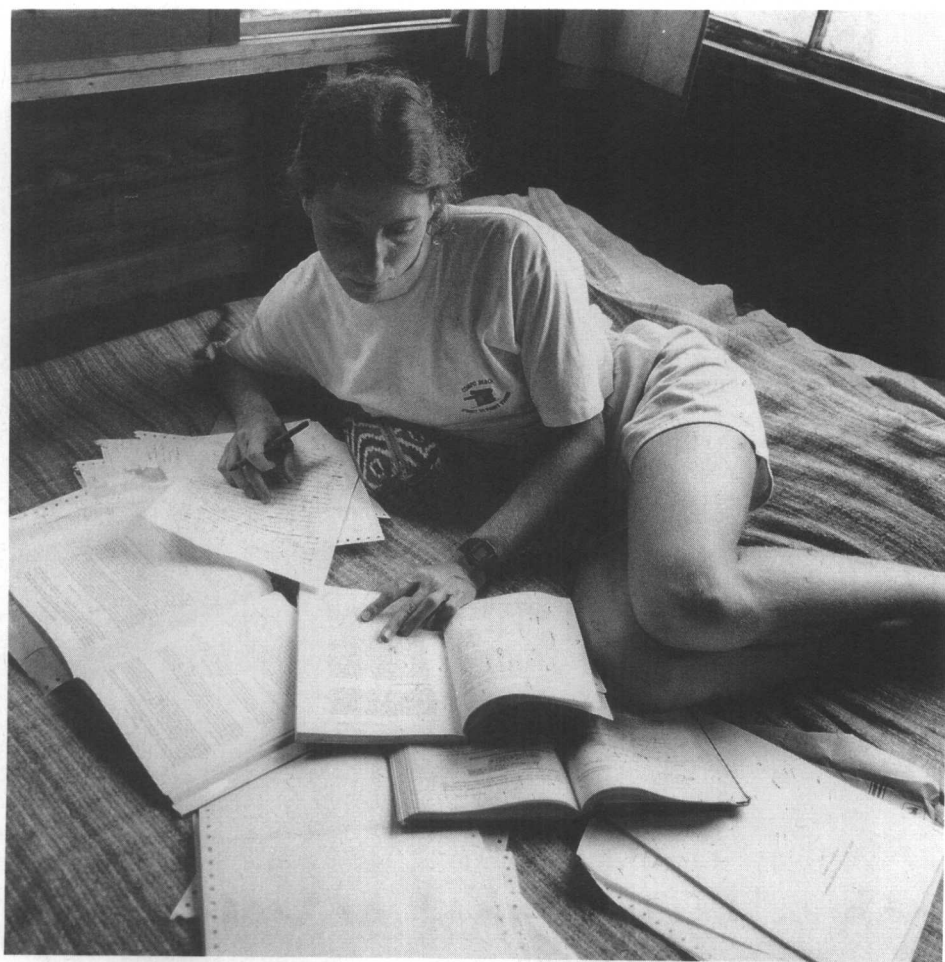
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Unit One



THE PARAGRAPH



Chapter 1



Introduction to the Paragraph

WHAT 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 _____.

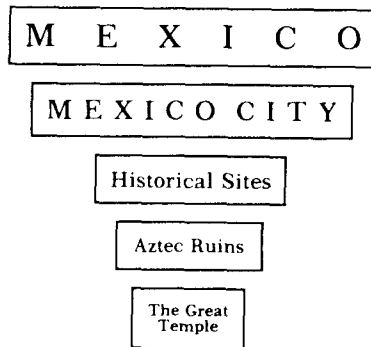
4. When we make attributions about ourselves or about others, we tend to attribute the behavior in question to either *internal* or *external* forces. When you see someone crash his car into a telephone pole, you can attribute that unfortunate piece of behavior either to internal or external causes. 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.

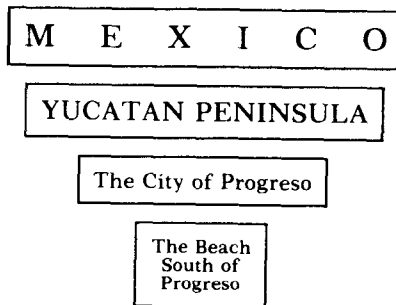
—John P. Houston, *Motivation* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), p. 255.

This paragraph is about _____

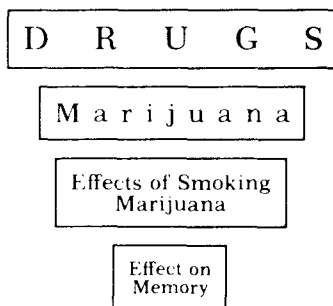
Although usually you are assigned topics to write about, often these topics are too general to be developed adequately in one paragraph. After all, for most practical purposes your paragraphs will range in length from about seven to fifteen sentences. Therefore, you will need to *restrict* your topic; 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:



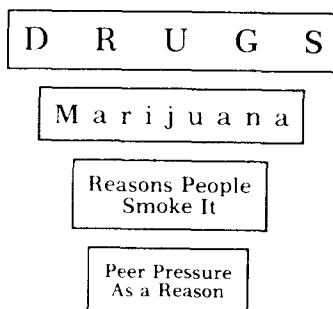
Of course, there are many other ways to narrow the same topic. For example:



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.

E X E R C I S E 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