

● 大学英语拓展课程系列

拓展课程



A Practical Approach to Expository Writing 英语段落写作教程

学生用书

梁正溜 编著

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前言

对一个英语学习者而言,如何真正地学好并掌握写作,关键在于有没有一条具有实效的学习路径。写作是深层次的交流,不能用肤浅的考试的写作模式误导学生。那么,学习英语写作的着眼点在哪里呢?笔者在教学实践中找到的答案是:立足于文章段落的写作,将段落视为一个相对独立的单位进行解剖、分析、领会、效仿并掌握。

文章由段落所组成,每一个段落都具有个性和共性。透过各种段落的个性表面,不难看出段落在性质、功能等方面具有共性,即共同的特征,这在客观上具备了让读者认知和效仿的可能。一旦将其习得,从某一段落的写作到一篇文章的写作的过渡便水到渠成了。这一步对任何一位外语学习者都是有意义的,可能是非走不可的。这一步有助于学生潜心专注段落之中,从而集中精力领悟英语思维的方式,感受英语写作思路脉搏的跳动,同时促进自己的认知和感悟,并效法写出一个真正的英语段落。这可是跨出真正地学好并掌握写作的关键一步。

本书为学习者精心设计安排了这一步,帮助他们打下坚实的写作理论基础,并在实践中指导他们怎样写出像样的段落。本书可用作本科生或研究生的写作选修课教材,也可用作主干教材的辅助配套教材,或作为自学课本。

本书共有十七单元。笔者建议可按部就班,循序渐进,或者可根据教学实际情况安排选定内容,灵活组合。在具体安排上,务必将课堂教学活动与课外作业相结合。在此有必要强调写作语言表达形式的多样性,所以,教师用书提供的参考答案不是绝对的,仅作参考,在教学过程中不必拘泥于形式上的吻合。提供参考答案的目的是在课堂的互动中起到一个对照和反馈的作用。

作者

2014年3月

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Unit 1

The Topic Sentence

I. Definition of the Topic Sentence

Ideally, each paragraph of your expository essay ought to treat one, and only one, aspect of the thesis. The sentence you use to narrow your supporting details to one particular aspect of the thesis is known as the topic sentence.

Since it states the main idea of a paragraph, the topic sentence must be a sentence of opinion or attitude. Therefore, it is usually the most general of all the statements in the paragraph. A topic sentence is to a paragraph what a thesis sentence is to a theme.

***Note:** Not all paragraphs contain a topic sentence. The topic sentence can be implied, or suggested — not written out at all. You may choose not to use a topic sentence if your point of view is clear in the paragraph.*

II. Functions of the Topic Sentence

The topic sentence functions in three ways. Firstly, it provides a focus for the paragraph. Put in other words, it tells the reader what the paragraph is about by summarizing the supporting details. Secondly, it affords paragraph unity. This means that it limits the scope of the paragraph. And thirdly, it reflects a point of view about the thesis.

III. Placement of the Topic Sentence

Nine times out of ten, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph, although it may appear at almost any point in it. By placing the topic sentence at the beginning, you can direct the reader's attention, arouse the reader's interest and give the reader a sort of promise which you will honor with your reasons or grounds. Placed at the beginning, moreover,

the topic sentence seems to help you avoid drifting away from the topic.

You can make your paragraph result in a dramatic one by placing the topic sentence at the end of it. By not stating the topic sentence until the last sentence, you can create a feeling of suspense that makes the reader want to keep on reading.

It is deductive to place the topic sentence at the beginning and develop the topic by explanations. On the other hand, it is inductive to place the topic sentence at the end and induce the topic from explanations. As in the case of the thesis sentence, the placement of the topic sentence is a technical matter.

IV. Two Parts of the Topic Sentence

The topic sentence is composed of two parts: subject and predicate (the controlling idea). The subject tells us what the paragraph deals with. The predicate tells us something about the subject. It is the controlling idea of the topic sentence. The topic sentence is supposed to contain the controlling idea that the rest of the paragraph is to develop. The topic sentence with a definite controlling idea is the first requisite for ultimate paragraph unity.

V. Follow-up Activities

1. *Identify the topic sentence in each of the following paragraphs by underlining it.*

PARA. 1

Education in any society is a mirror of that society. In that mirror we can see the strengths, the weaknesses, the hopes, the prejudices, and the central values of the culture itself. The great interest in exceptional children shown in public education over the past three decades indicates the strong feeling in our society that all citizens, whatever their special conditions, deserve the opportunity to fully develop their capabilities.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is the topic sentence a sentence of opinion?
2. Is it the most general statement of the paragraph?
3. What is the controlling idea of the topic sentence?
4. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea?
5. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

PARA. 2

Writing can be done in several places and directions concurrently and is as easily manipulated in space as it is in time. Texts can be constructed from writing done on separate pieces of paper, in notebooks, on index cards or on chalk boards, at the same time that a main draft is being produced. Words and lines can be moved around on a page just as pages themselves can be reshuffled into different sequences. Writing is a plastic art.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is the topic sentence a sentence of opinion?
2. Is it the most general statement of the paragraph?
3. What is the controlling idea of the topic sentence?
4. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea?
5. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

PARA. 3

No one writes enough, especially at school, to have enough mistakes corrected to learn to write by trial and error. Not even the transcription aspects of writing could be learned in this way, let alone all the subtleties of style and expression. The only source of knowledge sufficiently rich and reliable for learning about written language is the writing already done by others. In other words, one learns to write by reading. The act of writing is critical as a basis for learning to write from reading; our desire to write provides an incentive and direction for learning about writing from reading. But the writing that anyone does must be vastly complemented by reading if it is to achieve anything like the creative and communicative power that written language offers.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is the topic sentence a sentence of opinion?
2. Is it the most general statement of the paragraph?
3. What is the controlling idea of the topic sentence?
4. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea?
5. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

PARA. 4

How many men would have considered the possibility of an apple falling up into the tree? Newton did because he was not trying to predict anything. He was just wondering. His mind was ready for the unpredictable. Unpredictability is part of the essential nature of research. If you don't have unpredictable things, you don't have research. Scientists tend to forget this when writing their cut and dried reports for the technical journals, but history is filled with examples of it.

PARA. 5

The fact that experiences influence subsequent behavior is evidence of an obvious but nevertheless remarkable activity called remembering. Learning could not occur without the function popularly named memory. Constant practice has such an effect on memory as to lead to a skilful performance on the piano, to the recitation of a poem, and even to reading and understanding the words. So-called intelligent behavior demands memory, remembering being a primary requirement for reasoning. The ability to solve any problem or even to recognize that a problem exists depends on memory. For instance, the decision to cross a street is based on remembering some earlier experiences.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is the topic sentence a sentence of opinion?
2. Is it the most general statement of the paragraph?
3. What is the controlling idea of the topic sentence?
4. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea?
5. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is the topic sentence a sentence of opinion?
2. Is it the most general statement of the paragraph?
3. What is the controlling idea of the topic sentence?
4. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea?
5. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

PARA. 6

There are something like eleven million meetings taking place in the United States every day of the working week, it has been estimated. Meetings must be a very important aspect of modern life. The reason is that people meeting together often come up with better ideas and decisions than one person working alone. It gives the members chance to present their ideas and have them challenged and changed by argument and discussion. This, it is hoped, leads to a better use of time and money.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is the topic sentence a sentence of opinion?
2. Is it the most general statement of the paragraph?
3. What is the controlling idea of the topic sentence?
4. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea?
5. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

PARA. 7

Words should not be used to demonstrate the learning of the speaker, to impress or bedazzle the audience, or to conceal any weakness in the subject matter of the speech. The true function of words — to serve as a link of communication between speaker and hearer — should not be forgotten. Their primary function should be to transmit the speaker's meaning as clearly and effectively as possible. If words attract attention to themselves and away from the basic ideas, they are poorly used. This is the essential test to which any speaking style must be submitted.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is the topic sentence a sentence of opinion?
2. Is it the most general statement of the paragraph?
3. What is the controlling idea of the topic sentence?
4. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea?
5. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

PARA. 8

Everyone wants to live a long, healthy life. We know that the food we eat affects us in different ways. For instance, doctors believe that fruit and vegetables can actually prevent many different diseases. On the other hand, animals' fat can cause disease. We can improve our diet now, and enjoy many years of healthy living.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is the topic sentence a sentence of opinion?
2. Is it the most general statement of the paragraph?
3. What is the controlling idea of the topic sentence?
4. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea?
5. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

2. Read each of the following paragraphs carefully. Then select, from among the sentences listed underneath the paragraph, the one that you think would be the most appropriate topic sentence.

PARA. 1

They know the difference between what is and what should be. They also know what they can change and what they cannot. Many times unrealistic people get stuck with their idea of what should be. This habit makes them unable to accept what is and forces them to spend great amounts of energy trying to push the world and the people in it into a shape that comes close to their ideal pictures of it. Realistic people accept evidence that contradicts what they believe or want to believe, and, if it is important, modify their beliefs accordingly.

Guide Questions:

1. What is the subject being discussed in the paragraph?
2. What can be figured out from the supporting details?
3. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea you chose?
4. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?
5. What is the purpose of the exercise?

Choose the best candidate:

- A. Mentally healthy people take responsibilities for their own actions.
- B. Mentally healthy people are not frightened by the unknown.
- C. Mentally healthy people have a good self-image.
- D. Mentally healthy people are realistic.

PARA.2

This means that they have positive mental pictures and positive good feelings about themselves, about what they are capable of, and about the roles they play. People with good self-images like themselves, and they are better able to like others genuinely. They are also likely to live up to their positive feelings about themselves, which, in turn, reinforces these feelings. Having a good self-image is based on a realistic assessment of one's own worth and value and capabilities. It does not mean being "stuck on yourself."

Guide Questions:

1. What is the subject being discussed in the paragraph?
2. What can be figured out from the supporting details?
3. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea you chose?
4. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

Choose the best candidate:

- A. Mentally healthy people have a good self-image.
- B. Mentally healthy people are capable of emotional intimacy.
- C. Mentally healthy people are aware of feelings and able to express them.
- D. Mentally healthy people know what their needs are and do what they must to satisfy them.

PARA. 3

All diseases, the philosophy says, are due to an imbalance of these forces. An acupuncture practitioner first locates the energy imbalance and then seeks to restore the balance by inserting needles into one or more loci and leaving the needles in places for a designated period of time. The equilibrium of *yin* and *yang* is then expected to be restored and the disease is cured.

Choose the best candidate:

- A. In human beings, health results from the balance of *yin* and *yang*.
- B. The forces behind life and death are in the form of vital energy.
- C. *Yin* and *yang* represent negative and positive respectively.
- D. Human beings are subject to universal laws.

PARA. 4

In their lessons at school, boys and girls may learn about such virtues as unselfishness, courage, discipline and love of one's country; but what is learned in books cannot have the same deep effect on a child's character as what is learned by experience. The ordinary day-school cannot give much practical training in living, because most of the pupil's time is spent in classes, studying lessons. So it is what the pupils do in their spare time that really prepares them to work for their team and not for himself on the football field, he will later find it natural to work for the good of his country instead of only for his own benefit.

Guide Questions:

1. What is the subject being discussed in the paragraph?
2. What can be figured out from the supporting details?
3. Can the supporting details be related to the topic you chose?
4. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

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1. What is the subject being discussed in the paragraph?
2. What can be figured out from the supporting details?
3. Can the supporting details be related to the topic you chose?
4. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

Choose the best candidate:

- A. Primary education begins with sports and games.
- B. Sports and games are popular among boys and girls.
- C. Education cannot do without sports and games, either.
- D. Sports and games are very useful for character-training.

PARA. 5

No one is born a smoker, although the new baby may interact with smokers and with smoke early in infancy — often on the way home from the hospital after delivery. Curiosity and the desire to imitate adults, especially smoking parents, probably encourage many children to experiment. The initial reaction, however, is likely to be unpleasant, and usually there is no social approval forthcoming. It is not until adolescence that smoking becomes a live option for most young persons. More time is now spent away from home with peers; there is increased freedom from authority figures who often discourage or forbid smoking; needs for security and acceptance through group conformity grow; and the demand for immediate need gratification flourishes. The psychological stage for smoking has been set and is fertile enough to generate nearly one million new, young smokers each year.

Choose the best candidate:

- A. Smoking is a popular and widespread behavior.
- B. Smoking is a forbidden behavior in children.
- C. Smoking is a juvenile behavior.
- D. Smoking is a learned behavior.

Guide Questions:

1. What is the subject being discussed in the paragraph?
2. What can be figured out from the supporting details?
3. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea you chose?
4. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

PARA. 6

You see nothing while your eyes are moving; to see, you must stop and focus. Reading is much more than eye movement. When it is properly developed, the reading process is a thinking process. When you are reading to learn, you are constantly thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, comparing, and reasoning. You are adding new information to previous knowledge, judging its value, and comparing its use in solving problems or creating new horizons.

Choose the best candidate:

- A. Reading goes faster than eye movement.
- B. Reading is the biggest source of learning.
- C. Reading is not a simple physical activity.
- D. Reading is mainly done for information.

PARA. 7

At least two important processes go on at the same time. As you read, you take in ideas rapidly. But at the same time you express your own ideas to yourself as you react to what you read. You have a kind of mental conversation with the author. If you expressed your idea orally, they might sound like this: "Yes, I agree. That's my opinion too," or "Ummmm, I thought that record was broken much earlier. I'd better check those dates," or "But there are some other facts to be considered!" You

Guide Questions:

1. What is the subject being discussed in the paragraph?
2. What can be figured out from the supporting details?
3. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea you chose?
4. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

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1. What is the subject being discussed in the paragraph?
2. What can be figured out from the supporting details?
3. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea you chose?
4. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?

don't just sit there taking in ideas; you do something else and that something else is very important.

Choose the best candidate:

- A. Reading is made up of two steps.
- B. Reading is not one single activity.
- C. Reading makes the reader critical.
- D. Reading is both a physical and a mental activity.

PARA. 8

It is tiring physically, demands more concentration, and it is slow, perhaps ten times slower than the speed at which we comfortably manage to read, speak or listen to speech. We can only become proficient at writing by practice, and we can only write proficiently when we write spontaneously and relatively fast.

Choose the best candidate:

- A. Writing is a physical activity.
- B. Writing is not taught, but learned.
- C. Writing is made perfect by practice.
- D. Writing tends to be laborious in any case.

Guide Questions:

1. What is the subject being discussed in the paragraph?
2. What can be figured out from the supporting details?
3. Can the supporting details be related to the controlling idea you chose?
4. Does the paragraph deal with only one topic?