

Systematic Guide to English Writing

The Practical Approach

Kee C. Yang Wang Lin and Zhang Shufa
Shantou University

地道英语 写作技巧

——系统实践

杨纪斌
汪 林 编著
张树发

科 学 出 版 社

SYSTEMATIC GUIDE TO ENGLISH WRITING

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地道英语写作技巧 ——系统实践

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内容简介

本书由加拿大籍英语专家、归国留学生和经验丰富的英语教师合作编写。他们在多年海内外英语教学中,总结出系列行之有效的英语写作系统训练法,能使学生在较短时间内掌握并熟悉英语写作的基本技巧。对于大幅度提高英语水平,迅速攻克写作难关具有很大的指导作用。全书内容包括:怎样下笔,提纲的形成,句子的结构、型式、种类、转化、扩充和联合,选词与表达,实用介词、短语动词和习语,主题句子与中心思想、段落发展、协调等。

书中配有练习、美国《时代周刊》、《新闻周刊》词汇和短语,以及 TOEFL 写作试题,是通过国家分级考试、或各种留学考试的必备参考书。

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——系统实践

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前 言

近年来,我国大学生的英语水平普遍提高,但英语写作仍是薄弱环节,尤其是缺乏基本技能的训练。要适应改革开放的需要,提高英语交际能力,必须加强写作技能的系统实践。本书就是为了满足这一需求。

我们总结了自己在国内外的教学经验,特别是针对中国学生的特点,在书中强调基本写作技巧的系统训练,特别注重把学生学过的语法、词汇知识与写作技能有机地结合起来。本书共分六章。每章含解释、范例和各种练习,包括用词、造句到篇章结构等多种写作技巧。书后的附录中编进了新颖实用的词汇使用知识和 TOEFL 写作试题。

本书适用于英语和非英语专业的大学生、国家分级考试和留学考试的应试者、英语教师和从事与英语有关工作的朋友。

本书在编写和出版过程中得到了李嘉诚先生、黄丽松博士、温绮雯小姐和汕头大学领导的热情鼓励和支持。在此一并表示感谢。

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CHAPTER ONE : START TO WRITE

I. OUTLINE — THE ORGANIZATION OF YOUR COMPOSITION

The first question students would ask when they encounter a composition writing is : how do I start? I don't know how to write. Easy and simple as it may seem, even some of the plain essay writing involving subjects of students' choice, also pose some difficulties for them : can they orderly write their paragraph, with unity and coherence or do they organize their materials logically and chronologically for a proper presentation? All of these details are too easily ignored or neglected. How can teachers then, ask them to avoid these kinds of dilemma? The most important aspect of their basic problems is then an organizational matter. How to organize their ideas and thoughts in an orderly and proper fashion so as to enable them to write with ease and suit presentation to their readers with logic and style? The secret of all of these types of successful writing lies in the procedures of careful planning, and writing up the OUTLINE of their composition. A good outline serves the following functions :

1. It enables the writer to focus on his main idea(s) and thus arrange them into proper order and prospective.
2. It is a guide for the writer just as the navigating chart to the sailor, to promptly guide him through the various passages with proper and smooth connection between ideas and thoughts and their eventual presentation.
3. The introductory statement or leading sentences (topic sentences), if properly presented, will enable the readers to grasp the issues and topics that follow, and he will thus be motivated to read the details of the entire essay.
4. A well-organized "Introduction" also enables the students to bring forward the focus of his essay and to follow a pattern or method of writing up such introduction that he will subsequently be confident to adopt.
5. Present an orderly and prompt development of the paragraphs or the entire essay based on logical development of the main ideas guided by the leading sentences or paragraphs.
6. Students also will be able to write an effective conclusion that will sum up his composition's main theme and opinions, and in an effort to create an impressive perception and reception from the readers.

Basically, there are three different types of OUTLINE—namely, the scratch, the topic and the sentence outlines.

A. Scratch Outline

As you think, your ideas and thoughts properly will strike like the lightning and it is far too fast for you to write down everything in details. Hence, you have to try to write them down as fast as you could. It is when you have to use the simplest words, or in the case of Chinese students who think in terms of Chinese thoughts, they can also write down in Chinese words.

Examples

1. Scratch Outline on Pollution

Car emissions
Industrial wastes
factory smoke
acid rain
acid lake water
fish die
noises by cars and factories
garbages scattering
burning of grasses and plastic bags
chemical pollution
Poisonous fumes

2. On Secondary Education

in other countries
six years too long
is trigometry necessary
is English writing essential
why I'm bored? (Head of Dept. should beblamed)
extracurricular activities
incentives and rewards
all memorization

3. On Intensive Reading

—awkward and boring lessons
—unnecessary for English-major
restrained literacy English study
waste of time, lowering English standard and interest
—only memorization of vocabulary
—no practical meaning and practice
—follow the old system

- no satisfactory results, (most Head of dept. lack academic know-how)
- selected essays are old-fashioned
- Create functional illiteracy

B. Topic Outline

This is probably the most commonly used method in writing an outline as it is simple, clear and does not require to write up the whole sentence. By writing topic outline, students are only asked to write a few words or short phrases. The outline can be divided into several levels or tiers. The first level is the main headings, represented by Roman numerals : I, II, and III etc. ,to represent the main or major ideas; the second level is designated by capital letters A, B, C. Subsequently, the third level is designated by Arabic numbers 1, 2, 3, etc.

Level one	I. main idea
level two	A. sub-idea
	B. sub-idea
level three	1. sub-idea from A.
	2. sub-idea

Since the division and subdivision of the main idea and sub-idea are dichotomous (i. e. ,two branches) ,they always branch out in two; for example,

Wrong :	I . main idea	Correct :	I . Main idea
	A. sub-idea		A. sub-idea
			B. sub-idea
	II . main idea		II . Main idea
	A. sub-idea		A. sub-idea
			B. sub-idea

The above left part is wrong, because the division of main idea is only represented by A. The correct way should be A. and B. Of course, we can also divide and subdivide main ideas into three or more sub-ideas.

SAMPLES OF TOPIC OUTLINE TITLE :

TITLE : Pollution

Introduction or thesis statement : We are making our environment unfit for our healthy living.

- I. Air pollution
 - A. Car emission
 - 1. Contributes to lung cancer and emphysema
 - 2. Causes smog in cities
 - a. in North America
 - b. in developing countries
 - B. Factory smoke
 - 1. Kills vegetation near factory

2. Kills lakes and contaminates soil

II. Water Pollution

A. Industrial Wastes

1. Pollute sea coasts

- a. Taint oyster beds and shell fish
- b. Damage the feeding grounds for wild fowls

2. Pollute inland waters and rivers

- a. Unfit for swimming and fishing
- b. Toxic and mercury compounds in fish

B. Municipal Wastes

1. Use up oxygen in fresh water lakes(kill fish)

2. High bacteria count in drinking water

III. Noise pollution

A. Aeroplane noises

B. Factory noises

C. Traffic noises

- 1. Causes nervousness
- 2. Causes high blood pressure(hypertension)

Conclusion : Pollution causes irreparable damages to our environment and renders it unfit for habitation.

TITLE : Studying in Another Country

Introduction : There are many good reasons for people to study in a foreign country

A. Language

Body : B. Culture

C. People

Conclusion : People can broaden their experience and increase their knowledge by studying outside of their own countries.

C. Developing Outline from Reading

Read the following sentences and pick up the key words as main idea of the contents.

Examples

1. Stamp-collection is my hobby. I collect stamps from various countries and I start collecting them since I was a young boy. I also exchange stamps among my friends and make friends through this kind of activity. It is really a good hobby and I hope some of my stamps will be very valuable and the prices will appreciate in the future.

The topic and key words of this paragraph _____

2. Imelda Marcos, former first lady of the Philippines, has countless pairs of shoes.

She has shoes for the formal party for friends, informal gathering with close relatives and of course, sparkling shoes for the state banquet where she has to entertain foreign guests and dignitaries.

The topic or key words _____

3. Animals are man's close friends. We do not keep those big and fierce animals at home because they are very difficult to tame or to domesticate. But for dogs and cats and other small cute little creatures we simply love to keep and play with them. In fact, some of them, especially dogs and cats are known to be man's best friends.

The key word _____

4. The most valuable precious stone is the diamond. It is not only expensive, but it is also very rare as compared to other types of stones. The value of it has appreciated tremendously during the past few decades. We use diamonds for gifts, wedding and engagement rings, necklaces and other decorations. Indeed, it is the most loved gem for girls.

The key word of this paragraph _____

Exercises

1. Developing an Outline from the following article.

TITLE : Things That I Like in San Francisco

There are many things I want to do that I have not done in San Francisco yet. I have heard that the trolley street cars are really fascinating and fun to ride. They travel up and down on the streets of this beautiful and yet hilly city. I have read about this lovely city, especially the charm of the old section. Besides being one of the main tourist attractions, fisherman's Wharf also offers fine seafoods at many of the famous restaurants and cafés; it is also a good place to relax and to listen to Jazz and Country music. The Golden Gate Bridge and the scenic Mediterranean-style Marine County is the fascinating place one should not miss. On top of the Chinatown is also a colorful and exotic district. In brief, it is such a nice place to visit and I wish to come back again for my next vacation.

2. Developing a three-level Outline and then rewrite in your own words, or a summary, one-tenth of the original length of the following article.

INCIDENT ON A LAKE IN LAUSANNE

Winston Churchill

My brother and I were taken this summer by our parents for a so-called walking-tour in Switzerland, with a tutor. I need hardly say we travelled by train so far as the money lasted. The tutor and I climbed mountains. We climbed the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa. The spectacle of the sunrise striking the peaks of the Bernese Oberland is a marvel of light and colour unsurpassed in my experience. I longed to climb the Matterhorn, but this was not only too expensive but held by the tutor to be too dangerous. All this prudence however might easily have been upset by an incident which happened to me in the Lake of Lausanne. I record this incident that it may

be a warning to others. I went for a row with another boy a little younger than myself. When we were more than a mile from the shore, we decided to have a swim, pulled off our clothes, jumped into the water and swam about in great delight. When we had enough, the boat was perhaps 100 yards away. A breeze had begun to stir the waters. The boat had a small red awning over its stern seats. This awning acted as a sail by catching the breeze. As we swam towards the boat, it drifted farther off. After this had happened several times we had perhaps halved the distance. But meanwhile the breeze was freshening and we both, especially my companion, began to be tired. Up to this point no idea of danger had crossed my mind. The sun played upon the sparkling blue water; the wonderful panorama of mountains and valleys, the gay hotels and villas still smiled. But I now saw Death as neat as I believe I have ever seen Him. He was swimming in the water at our side, whispering from time to time in the rising wind which continued to carry the boat away from us at about the same speed we could swim. No help was near. Unaided we could never reach the shore. I was not only an easy but a fast swimmer, having represented my House at Harrow, when our team defeated all comers. I now swam for life. Twice I reached within a yard of the boat and each time a gust carried it just beyond my reach; but by a supreme effort I caught hold of its side in the nick of time before a still stronger gust bulged the red awning again. I scrambled in, and rowed back for my companion who, though tired, had not apparently realized the dull yellow glare of mortal peril that had so suddenly played around us. I said nothing to the tutor about this serious experience; but I have never forgotten it; and perhaps some of my readers will remember it too.

3. Developing a three or four-level outline and write a summary, or rewrite, of one-tenth of original length

SIMPLICITY

William Zinsser

Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills and meaningless jargon.

Who can understand the viscous language of everyday American commerce and enterprise: the business letter, the interoffice memo, the corporation report, the notice from the bank explaining its latest "simplified" statement? What member of an insurance or medical plan can decipher the brochure that tells him what his costs and benefits are? What father or mother can put together a child's toy—on Christmas Eve or any other eve—from the instructions on the box? Our national tendency is to inflate by sounding important. The airline pilot who announces that he is presently anticipating and experiencing considerable precipitation wouldn't dream of saying that it may rain. The sentence is too simple—there must be something wrong with it.

But the secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components. Every word that serves no function, every long word that could be a short word, every adverb that carries the same meaning, that's already in the verb, every passive construction that leaves the reader unsure of who is doing what—these are the thousand and one adulterants that weaken the strength of a sentence. And they usually occur, ironically, in proportion to education and rank.

During the late 1960s, the president of a major university wrote a letter to mollify the alumni after a spell of campus unrest. "You are probably aware," he began, "that we have been experiencing very considerable potentially explosive expressions of dissatisfaction on issues only partially related." He meant that the students had been hassling them about different things. I was far more upset by the president's English than by the students' potentially explosive expressions of dissatisfaction. I would have preferred the presidential approach taken by Franklin D. Roosevelt when he tried to convert into English his own government's memos, such as this blackout order of 1942 :

Such preparations shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination.

"Tell them," Roosevelt said, "that in buildings where they have to keep the work going to put something across the windows."

Simplify, simplify. Thoreau said it, as we are so often reminded, and no American writer more consistently practiced what he preached. Open Walden to any page and you will find a man saying in a plain and orderly way what is on his mind :

I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will. Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows. The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert.

How can the rest of us achieve such enviable freedom from clutter? The answer is to clear our heads of clutter. Clear thinking becomes clear writing : one can't exist without the other. It is impossible for a muddy thinker to write good English. He may get away with it for a paragraph or two, but soon the reader will be lost, and there is no sin so grave, for he will not easily be lured back.

Who is this elusive creature, the reader? He is a person with an attention span of about twenty seconds. He is assailed on every side by forces competing for his time : by newspapers and magazines, by television and radio, by his stereo and videocassettes, by his wife and children and pets, by his house and his yard and all the gadgets that he has bought to keep them spruce, and by that most potent of competitors, sleep. The man snoozing in his chair with an unfinished magazine open on his lap is a man who was being given too much unnecessary trouble by the writer.

It won't do to say that the snoozing reader is too dumb or too lazy to keep pace with the train of thought. My sympathies are with him. If the reader is lost, it is generally because the writer has not been carefully enough to keep him on the path.

This carelessness can take any number of forms. Perhaps a sentence is so excessively cluttered that the reader, hacking his way through the verbiage, simply doesn't know what it means. Perhaps a sentence has been so shoddily constructed that the reader could read it in any of several ways. Perhaps the writer has switched pronouns in mid-sentence, or has switched tenses, so the reader loses track of who is talking or when the action took place. Perhaps sentence B is not a

logical sequel to Sentence A. The writer, in whose head the connection is clear, has not bothered to provide the missing link. Perhaps the writer has used an important word incorrectly by not taking the trouble to look it up. He may think that "sanguine" and "sanguinary" mean the same thing, but the difference is a bloody big one. The reader can only infer (speaking of big differences) what the writer is trying to imply.

Faced with these obstacles, the reader is at first a remarkably tenacious bird. He blames himself—he obviously missed something, and he goes back over the mystifying sentence, or over the whole paragraph, piecing it out like an ancient rune, making guesses and moving on. But he won't do this for long.

The writer is making him work too hard, and the reader will look for one who is better at his craft.

The writer must therefore constantly ask himself : What am I trying to say?

Surprisingly often, he doesn't know. Then he must look at what he has written and ask : Have I said it?

Is it clear to someone encountering the subject for the first time? If it's not, it is because some fuzz has worked its way into the machinery. The clear writer is a person clear-headed enough to see this stuff for what it is : fuzz.

I don't mean that some people are born clear-headed and are therefore natural writers, whereas others are naturally fuzzy and will never write well. Thinking clearly is a conscious act that the writer must force upon himself, just as if he were embarking on any other project that requires logic : adding up a laundry list or doing an algebra problem. Good writing doesn't come naturally, though most people obviously think it does. The professional writer is forever being bearded by strangers who say that they'd like to "try a little writing sometime" when they retire from their real profession. Or they say, "I could write a book about that." I doubt it.

Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time, or even the third time. Remember this as a consolation in moments of despair. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it is hard. It's one of the hardest things that people do.

D. Writing Outline Systematically and Orderly

1. By Analysis :

Ideas of the outline are grouped according to their logical sequence or pattern of development, e. g. classification, cause and effect, and the statement and example.

Simple classification

Thesis statement : Our Canadian educational system is both comprehensive and flexible

I . Elementary Schools

A. Public

B. Private

Ⅱ . Senior Elementary Schools

Ⅲ . Secondary Schools

A. Public

- 1. Composite schools
2. Vocational schools
3. Academic colleges

B. Private

1. Non-denominational
2. Denominational
 - a. Catholic
 - b. Protestant
 - c. Jewish

Ⅳ . Post-secondary Education

A. Universities

B. Community colleges

C. Technical institutes

Statement and example

Thesis statement : Movies are better than ever

I . Better Actors and Actresses

A. Robert De Nir

Dustin Hoffman

B. Katharine Hepburn

Faye Dunaway

Anne Bancroft

Ⅱ . Better Directors

A. Francis Ford Coppola

B. Sidney Lumet

C. Martin Ritt

D. Stanley Kubrick

Ⅲ . Better Scripts

A. The Godfather , Parts I and II

B. Bonnie and Clyde

C. The Sting

Ⅳ . Better Cinematography

A. 2001 : A Space Odyssey

B. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid

C. The Sound of Music

Cause and effect

Thesis statement : Our dependence on foreign energy is leading us into a recession

I . Balance of Payments Deficits