

高级英语写作

Advanced English Writing

主编 王茁玲

Hi now, It is time
for English Writing



China University of Mining and Technology Press

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前 言

英语写作属于英语专业技能课。根据教育部新近颁布的《高等学校英语专业英语教学大纲》中对英语专业学生写作技能的要求,结合新世纪对英语专业人才技能的需求,《高级英语写作》(Advanced English Writing)将重点放在写作文体和学术论文的写作两个方面,旨在帮助学生了解学术研究的过程和对学术论文写作规范的掌握,进而提高学生获取知识的能力、运用知识的能力、分析问题的能力、独立提出见解的能力和创新能力。

《高级英语写作》(Advanced English Writing)在总结了多年写作课教学经验的基础上,借鉴国外先进的教学理论,注重实践能力的培养。适用对象为各类非英语专业研究生、英语专业高年级学生以及具有相应基础的英语自学者。

本教材的最大特点是章节中所选实例均来自母语为英语的作家及专业人士,通过欣赏名家之作,让学生感悟美文之精髓,领略大家之风范。各章节讲解翔实,具有较强的针对性与实用性,适于学生自学;配以各种实例练习,既可提高学生分析问题、解决问题的能力,又可提高他们的书面表达能力。同时根据培养实用型人才的需要,本书将重点放在学术论文的写作内容上,从而与新大纲对英语专业学生英文写作训练的要求相吻合。本教材特色明显,针对性强,是配合新大纲的一本好教材。

具体讲授时,教师可根据实际情况灵活处理,各章节所需课时不一,有的章节用2个学时即可,有的则需用4~6个学时,甚至更多学时。

本书由王茁玲担任主编,负责全书统稿工作。殷定芳负责 Part One、Part Four 的审校工作;吴良红负责 Part Two、Part Three 的审校工作。具体章节的编写工作如下:

王茁玲:Part One(Chapter II),Part Two(Chapter VII),Part Three;

殷定芳:Part One(Chapter I),Part Two(Chapter IV),Part Four;

吴良红:Part Two(Chapter III, V, VI)。

在编写过程中,我们参阅了大量文献资料,并引用不少名家之作,获益良多,特此致谢。由于编者水平所限,不足之处在所难免,欢迎读者批评指正。

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Part One The Writing Process

Chapter I Introduction

1. Introduction to Writing in English

There are many different reasons for writing—to entertain yourself, to convey information, to make an object of beauty or pleasure. These different reasons for writing result in many kinds of writing: diaries, scientific reports, poems, or stories. Even in college or universities there are many kinds of writing. Then, what does writing mean? **First, writing acts as decision making.** Success comes from good decision making. People who succeed usually are those who make careful decisions—about a career, an investment, a relationship and so on. Instead of merely letting things happen, these decision makers remain in control of their situation. In one respect, writing is no different from life in general: successful writers remain in control by making deliberate decision during every stage of any writing task. **Second, writing contributes to the way we learn.** The Chinese saying goes “a sharp memory is not as dependable as a broken pen?” Can you recall many plots and events when asked about a book you have just finished reading? Perhaps you are excited but all you give are just some vague or incoherent comments. How you wish you had remembered more about the book and understood it better! Well once you begin to write summaries and responses while reading, you will be forced to really understand what you are reading, connect them all together, and have a much better overview of the subject. **Third, writing enriches personal growth.** Writing enables us to reflect deeply on our own experience, to examine critically our most basic assumptions, and to be in touch with our innermost selves. In a way, writing is a self-discovery process. We set an example for the story *The Old Man and Sea* written by Hemingway. Reading the story, you are touched, but you don’t know exactly what it is; you don’t know how to articulate it yet. You can sit down to analyze the basic story line through writing, to have a deep thinking about the strong-minded old man. You are stirred by the fisher’s spirits and find the high values from the story. Such writing activities would enable us to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves as well as society, people and life in general.

What Is Good Writing?

What is good writing? Different cultures using different languages may come up with very different answers to the question. Nevertheless no matter what cultures you belong to you share some general features of writing in common. A good writing must involve in the followings:

First, good writing is good thinking. Good thinking leads to good writing, and muddy thinking can only result in muddy writing. Writing is a thinking process; it is not making

a big deal out of nothing. Good writing should be substantive, really having things to say and also having insightful things to say about the topic.

This concept is important for you because as non-native speakers of English, you may tend to be overly concerned with being correct in grammar, spelling and mechanics. While good writing is expected to be free from grammatical and other errors. Actually, anxiety over grammar can only hinder you from expressing yourself effectively in English writing or speaking. At this advanced level, you should be much more concerned with higher and more important issue of writing in English.

Second, good writing involves thoughtful revision. When you read writings published in newspapers, magazines, masterpieces by great writers, you may be wondering how they could have written so beautifully and so effortlessly! They are geniuses. They are cut differently. Let's admit up front that there are geniuses who are such inspired writers that they can produce great writings at the spur of the moment without having to revise as much as one single word such as O. Henry. But geniuses are few. Most stories of a similar nature are actually myths created and embellished by people for different reasons.

The truth is for the overwhelming majority of writers, it is ninety-nine percent hard working and one percent inspiration. Experienced writers subject their writings to numerous revisions before feeling satisfied. Lu Xun, the greatest modern Chinese writer, for example, talks about pacing pensively in the study for days searching for the right word. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896~1940), an important 20th century American novelist crossed out whole sentences, paragraphs, and even larger chunks while trying to revise and bring things to his satisfaction.

Third, good writing expresses ideas clearly. Good writing reflects good thinking, and good thinking needs to be put in precise, concise and lucid prose. An important task for revision is to trim all the deadwood, pruning all the redundancies (unnecessary repetitions), wordiness (using more than necessary), and confusing and misleading ambiguities. For non-native speakers, expressing yourself clearly often involves making your writing more idiomatic (to reduce the level of negative interference of your native language and to bring your writing closer to English-speaking readers).

Only when you write clearly can you begin to think of developing a distinctive style. What kind of style (formal vs. informal; serious, no-nonsense vs. light, humorous, sarcastic or downright hilarious) you should develop or use depends on your temperament, your need, and such controlling factors as the subject you are writing about, the audience you are writing to, and the purpose you want to achieve. One style may be appropriate for certain occasions but totally inappropriate for others. You would feel totally out of place if you go to a casual gathering of old friends dressed in expensive suit and tie (unless you want to appear snobbish and showy).

Indeed, even different individuals may have different standards, tastes or expectations. However, as far as English is concerned, a set of basic characteristic, which is believed to be present in all good writing, has been promoted by educators in English-speaking countries:

Unity—all parts or elements of the writing constituting an organic and harmonious whole

Coherence—all parts or elements well connected to show clear logical (causal, contrastive, hierarchical, parallel, etc.) relations

Emphasis—special and significant stress given to important ideas by means of position, repetition, or other indication

Development—adequate elaboration and sufficient expansion

Clarity—*précis*, concise, and lucid in style

These good values are still relevant.

2. Decisions in the Writing Process

All through school, students too often write for *surface* reasons: to impress teachers; to show they can grind out a few hundred words on some topic, come up with a thesis, and organize paragraphs; to show they can punctuate, spell, and use grammar; to pass the course. Although essential for surviving in school, these surface reasons can mask the *deeper* reasons we all write: *to learn or express something about ourselves, to make human contact, to be understood.*

A. How writing is used

Readers will use your writing to learn something about you, to share your experience and insight, to see things in your way. Whether your writing succeeds will depend on what you decide to say and how you decide to say it. A Dear John or Jane letter, a job application, an essay exam, a letter to a newspaper, a note to a sick friend, your written testimony as witness to a crime—these are just a sampling of writing situation you might face. In each situation, you write because you feel strongly enough to have a definite viewpoint to express. Besides providing readers with that viewpoint, you need to give them an explanation.

Here are just a few of the countless viewpoints and writer might express:

College is not for everyone.

I deserve a raise.

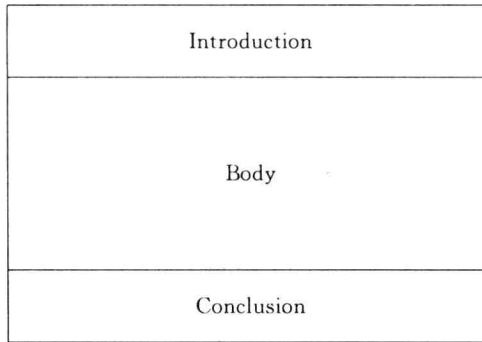
My high school education was a waste of time.

I want my life to be better than that of my parents.

Later you will see how assertions like these serve as thesis statements for essays. But you can see that the mere expression of a viewpoint is not in itself very useful to readers. To understand and appreciate any of the above assertions, readers need an explanation of the writer's exact meaning. Tell your audience where you stand, and then show them why.

B. How writing is shaped

No matter what the viewpoint and how detailed the explanation is, writers have to shape their thinking for readers to follow it. Any useful writing (whether in the form of a book, a chapter, a news article, a memo, a report, or an essay) most often reveals a sensible line of thinking by using this shape:



(1) *The introduction* attracts the readers' attention and interest, reveals the writer's viewpoint, and previews what will follow. When readers know what to expect, they find it easy to follow the message.

(2) *The Body* explains and supports the writer's viewpoint. This section achieves unity by expanding on the viewpoint. And it achieves coherence by presenting a line of thinking continuously carried from sentence to sentence, in logical order.

(3) *The conclusion* brings the message to a definite and, often reemphasizing the viewpoint.

Just about any useful writing follows some version of basic shape shown above. This shape is most obvious in the form of the standard college essay: a piece of nonfiction writing that develops and supports a particular viewpoint (thesis) through one or more paragraphs. Practice with planning, drafting, and revising college essays will help you cope with many other kinds of writing, during and after college.

C. How an essay is composed

For naming the process that produces a useful essay, *composing* probably is a more accurate word than *writing*. Too many people think that *writing* involves little more than inscribing words on paper—as if some magical energy from the friction of pen on paper could create a finished essay. But putting words on paper is only one small part of the writing process. Your real challenge lies with the other parts:

- (1) deciding on your exact meaning (what you intend to say and do by writing the essay)
- (2) deciding on your audience and how they will use your message
- (3) deciding on a plan for making your meaning clear
- (4) discovering new meanings as you work, and deciding on ways of revising your original plan and message to accommodate these new meanings

Writing is a process of transforming the material you discover—by inspiration, research, accident, trial and error, or whatever—into a message with a definite meaning. In short, *writing is a process of deliberate decision*. The term *composing* therefore better reflects the complexity of discovering, selecting, arranging and refining the parts of a whole. The writing process, then really is a composing process of planning, drafting and revising.

To show the difference between writing as a random act and writing as a deliberate process, let's follow one student writer through two different approaches to the same writing situation: first, her quickest job; and then her best job. Shirley Haley has been assigned an essay on this topic:

How do you want your life to be different from (or similar to) that of your parents?

Haley's goal here is twofold: to explore her feelings about this topic and to share that exploration with us. Her first response is a random, off-the-top-of-the-head piece of free writing that took her less than thirty minutes:

When my mother was my age, life was simple. Women really didn't have to study in college. They came primarily to find a husband, and they majored in liberal arts or teaching. They knew they were going to be wives and mothers. My mother says she got an education so she would have something to fall back on in case something ever happened to my father—which was a good thing, I suppose. Maybe it was her attitude about family first, me second that made our homelife so stable.

I appreciate the fact that my parents have given me a stable homelife, and I want parts of my life to turn out like theirs. But my parents are slaves to their house; they never go anywhere or do anything with their spare time. They just work on the house and yard. They never seem to do anything they want to do—only what other people expect of them.

I wish my parents would allow themselves to enjoy life, have more adventure. They go to the same place every year for their vacation. They've never even seen a country outside of the United States.

I'll have a family some day, and I'll have responsibilities, but I never want to have a boring life. When I'm on my own, I want my life to soar. And even though I want to provide a stable homelife for my children and husband some day, I hope I never forget my responsibility to myself as well.

While Haley's draft hints at lots of things in general, it points at nothing in particular. What exactly is she trying to say, and what is her purpose? Without a controlling viewpoint (thesis), neither writer nor reader ever finds a point of reference, an orientation. We're all confused.

At first, the essay seems to be about change in women's role, but none of Haley's generalizations (say, "women... came... to find a husband") is supported by evidence. Then, the end of the first paragraph and the beginning of the second suggest that Haley's topic has shifted to ways she wants her life to resemble her parents'. But the second, third and fourth paragraphs go on to discuss what Haley dislike about her parents' lives. The final sentence adds to the confusion by looking back to one of the now-defunct topics in the first paragraph: stable family life. We have no idea where the emphasis belongs.

Not everything that comes to writer's mind belongs in an essay, but Haley included it all, anyway. Without a definite purpose and thesis, she never could decide which material didn't belong, which was the most important, and which deserved careful development.

Besides its confusing array of material, the essay has problems of shape and style. We are frustrated by the lack of a definite introduction and conclusion. Without an introduction, we have trouble establishing a context for reading, a way of narrowing the

possible meanings we might apply to the piece. Without a conclusion, we have trouble making sense of what we have just read.

Also, the paragraphs either are poorly developed or fail to focus on one specific point and some sentences (for instance, the last two in paragraph one) seem to have logical connection. In general, the sentences lack variety and make for dull reading.

Finally, Haley never seems to have decided on an appropriate tone. We get almost no sense of a real person speaking to real people, expressing a definite attitude toward her subject. Instead of writing for audience, Haley has written only for herself—as if she were writing a journal or diary. Despite correct spelling, punctuation and grammar, Haley's quickest job fails to make contact.

Quick jobs fail because writers merely fill the page, drafting whatever comes to mind but taking no time for the two most essential stages of the writing process: planning and revising. In fact, planning and revising should take much longer than drafting. Getting some material down on the page is easy. Getting the piece to work, to make a difference with readers—this is where the real decisions are made. Indeed, if Haley hopes to write something worthwhile, she will have to struggle with decisions like these:

(1) *Planning decisions*: about exactly what she wants her topic to be, and what she wants her essay to accomplish; about what her position is, and how she will support that viewpoint; about which material, organization, and tone will work best for her specified audience.

(2) *Drafting decision*: about how to write an introduction that opens doors to her world, her way of seeing, about how to develop the middle so it shows a real mind at work and in control; about how to conclude with emphasis and imagination.

(3) *Revising decision*: about whether her material is worth reading; her organization sensible; and her style readable—rethinking and polishing until the essay represents her best job.

After many decisions and four revisions, Haley submitted this final draft:

Life in Full Color

I'm probably the only person I know who still has the same two parents she was born with. We have a traditional American family: we go to church and football games; we watch the Olympics on TV and argue about politics; and we have Thanksgiving dinner at my grandmother Clancy's and Christmas dinner with my father's sister Jess, who used to let us kids put pitted olives on our fingers when we were little. While most of my friends are struggling with the problems of broken homes, I'll always be grateful to my parents for my loving and stable background. But sometimes I look at my parents' life and hope my life will be less ordinary, less duty-bound, and less predictable.

I want my life to be imaginative, not ordinary. Instead of honeymooning at Niagara Falls, I want to go to Paris. In my parents' neighborhood, all the houses were built alike about twenty years ago. Different owners have added on or shingled or painted, but the houses basically all look the same. The first thing we did when we moved into our house was plant trees; everyone did. Now the neighborhood is full of family homes on tree-lined streets, which is nice, but I'd prefer a condo in a renovated brick building in Boston. I'd have dozens of plants and I'd buy great furniture one piece at a time from auctions and dusty shops, instead of buying the roomful

from the local furniture store. Instead of spending my time trying to be similar to everyone else, I'd like to celebrate the ways I can be different.

My parents have so many obligations. They barely have time for themselves; I don't want to live like that. I'm never quite sure whether they own the house or the house owns them. They worry constantly about taxes, or the old furnace, or the new deck, or mowing the lawn, or weeding the garden. After spending every weekend slaving over their beautiful yard, they have no time left to enjoy it. And when they're not buried in household chores, other people are making endless demands on their time. My mother will stay up past midnight because she promised some telephone voice three cakes for the church bazaar, or five dozen cookies for the Girl Scout meeting, or seventy-six little sandwiches for the women's club Christmas party. My father coaches Little League, wears a clown suit for Lions' flea markets, and both he and my mother are volunteer firefighters. In fact, both my parents get talked into volunteering for everything. I hate to sound selfish, but my first duty is to myself. I'd rather live in a tent than be owned by my house. And I don't want my life to be measured out in endless chores.

While it's nice to be able to take things such as regular meals and paychecks for granted, many other things in my parents' life are too predictable for me. Every Sunday at two o'clock we dine on overdone roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, a faded green vegetable, and sometimes that mushy orange squash that comes frozen in bricks. It's not that either of my parents is a bad cook, but Sunday dinner isn't food anymore; it's a habit. Mom and Dad have become so predictable that they can order each other's food in restaurants. Just once I'd like to see them pack up and go away for a weekend, without telling anybody; they couldn't do it. They can't even go crazy and try a new place for their summer vacation. They've been spending the first two weekends in August on Cape Cod since I was two years old. I want variety in my life. I want to travel, see this country and see Europe, do things spontaneously. No one will ever be able to predict my order in a restaurant.

Before long, Christmas will be here and we'll be going to Aunt Jess's. Mon will bake a walnut pie, and Grandpa Frank will say, "Michelle, you surely know how to spoil an old man." It's nice to know that some things never change. In fact, some of the ordinary, obligatory, predictable things in life are the most comfortable. But too much of any routine can make life seem dull and gray. I hope my choices lead to a life in full color.

Haley's deliberate decisions about planning, drafting, and revising have produced a far better essay than her first, random version on previous page. Notice the clear and distinctive shape of this essay:

Introductory paragraph

(leads into the thesis)

Thesis statement

But sometimes I look at my parents' life and hope my life will be less ordinary, less duty-bound, and less predictable.

Topic statement and first support paragraph

I want my life to be imaginative, not ordinary.

Topic statement and second support paragraph

My parents have so many obligations. They barely have time for themselves; I don't want to live like that.

Topic statement and third support paragraph

While it's nice to be able to take things such as regular meals and paychecks for granted, many other things in my parents' life are too predictable for me. _____

Concluding paragraph

Essay can vary from this exact shape in countless ways, but a good first step for gaining control is to master the standard shape.

Besides seeing how the design of Haley's whole essay has evolved, we recognize other improvements as well. Above all, we're no longer confused. Somewhere between her first draft and this last one, Haley discovered her exact meaning, and found a way of making it clear to us as well. We know where she stands because she tells us with a definite thesis; and we know why because she shows us with plenty of examples. But even though we get real substance here, nothing is wasted; everything seems to belong. And there are no ragged edges; everything sticks together.

Within the large design of Haley's whole essay, each paragraph offers a smaller design, a place for things that belong together. The introduction reveals the writer's way of seeing; each middle paragraph brings us close enough to see and touch things; and the conclusion lets us look back on everything, let us finish. Each paragraph does its job, nourishing the whole.

The style, too, is improved. We now see real variety in the ways sentences begin and words are put together. We now hear the voice of a real person speaking to real people. Haley's tone helps create contact.

Because she took the time to make deliberate decisions, Haley produced a final draft that has the qualities of any good writing: content that makes it worth reading; organization that reveals the line of thinking, and emphasizes what is most important; and style that is economical and convincingly human.

Chapter II The Process of Writing—Planning, Drafting, Revising

1. Planning the Essay

Writing is a battle with impatience, a fight against the natural urge to "be done with it." Good writers know how to win this battle; they spend more time thinking than "writing." And much of a writer's most vital thinking occurs at the planning stage. The more thinking you do at this stage, the less work you will have later during drafting and revising.

Writers plan their essays by deciding on answers to all these questions:

What, exactly, is my topic?

Why do I want to write about it?

What is my viewpoint (thesis)?

Who is my audience, and how much information do they need?

What do I know about this topic?

Of all the material I've discovered, how much is worthwhile—given my purpose and audience?

How will I organize this material?

How do I want my writing to sound?

Although these decisions (about topic, purpose, thesis, audience, material, organization, and tone) are covered here in order, rarely will you make them in the same order for planning your own writing. Shirley Haley, for instance, comes up with her thesis before brainstorming for material. Other writers begin with an outline. The key is to make all the decisions, in whichever order, work best for your particular writing task.

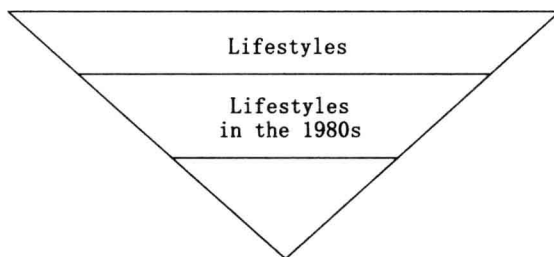
A. Deciding on your topic

If the topic is defined by your situation, you have no problem; this is the case with most out-of-school writing (“Why I deserve a promotion”; “Why you should marry me”; “How we repaired your computer”) In school, sometimes your situation is assigned, and sometimes you are asked to choose your own. When the topic decision is left to you, keep in mind one word: **focus**.

Don't make the mistake of tackling too broad a topic. Instead of describing your social life last summer or telling how to play tennis, tell us about last night's blind date or how to serve a tennis ball. To begin with a focused topic, something you know and can really talk about, something that has real meaning for you.

The world is full of subjects: love, work, sex, drugs, money, lifestyles—to name just a few. But none of these cosmic subjects can be discussed in the brief space of an essay, without being a complete waste of time. If you try to write about why love is important, we won't get to read about anything we haven't heard or seen or read many times before; if instead you share with us your experience in learning to cope with the death of a loved one, we will learn something about you, about pain and maybe about courage as well. Reading is hard work; try to reward your readers for their labors. Don't waste their time and yours with a topic you know is worthless.

Within any subject, you need to discover a topic, your particular angle of vision. First, make the subject narrow:



Even the limited subject “my lifestyle versus my parents” could be narrowed again, say, to one specific difference (in views about money or work or education, etc.).