

普通高等教育规划教材

英文写作实用教程

Practical English Writing

隗雪燕 安 静 主 编
茹克叶·穆罕默德

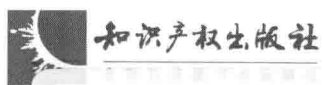


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内容提要

本书依据当代写作理论,从基础写作、实用写作和学术写作三个方面对英文写作进行了系统的阐述。通过讲练结合,帮助学生掌握英文写作的规范、方法、技巧,逐步学会运用适当的语言进行各类文体写作,避免英文写作中易出现的错误,有助于广大英语学习者进一步提高语言技能,并且通过写作促进其掌握专业知识、培养实际应用能力、全面提升英文综合素养。本书介绍了大量的英文写作技巧和策略,从基础的句子写作、段落写作、篇章写作,循序渐进、逐级过渡到实用文体及学术论文写作,引导学生在系统的学习中融会贯通。本书适合非英语专业研究生、博士生以及中、高级英语学习者使用。

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Part 1 Basic Writing

Unit 1 Sentence Development

1.1 Correct Sentences

All kinds of writing are made of sentences. If we want to write well, we should learn to write correct and good sentences. In this section, we shall discuss the requirements of a correct sentence.

According to Ding(2005), there are at least these requirements: 1) it should be structural complete; 2) it should begin with a capital letter; 3) it should end with a full stop, or a question mark, or an exclamation mark; 4) it should express a single idea.

1) Completeness

Structural completeness means that every sentence should have a subject and a predicate verb and should also begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

Look at the following sentences to decide whether they are complete or not.

Sample 1:

- ① How to operate this computer?
- ② Because he hadn't finished his assignment, so he continued working in the classroom.
- ③ Mark Twain whose experience as a sailor on the Mississippi provided him with abundant materials for the novels he was to write.
- ④ The first use of mathematics in geology apparently was in the early 19th century by James Hutton and John Playfair, Charles Lyell used statistics to subdivide the Tertiary in 1833.

(丁往道、吴冰, 2005)

Explanation

The first example is not complete in structure. It has no subject or predicate verb, which are two necessary elements of a normal sentence. To make it complete, we have to supply it with a subject and turn the infinitive phrase "to operate" into a predicate

verb as the following.

How do you operate this computer?

How should this computer be operated?

The second example is wrong because it has no main clause; the first part is an adverbial clause introduced by “because” and the second part is a coordinate clause beginning with “so”. One of these two words has to be left out:

He continued working in the classroom because he hadn't finished his assignment.

He hadn't finished his assignment, so he continued working in the classroom.

Exercise 1

See the following sentences and try to correct them.

- ① So I made great progress in my studying and deeply moved.
- ② Then he attended Hillside Junior High. A school that was a bad experience.
- ③ Because the English Test for Ph. D candidates at this university is very difficult.

The third example is very long, but it is not grammatically complete, because there is no predicate verb in it. One way of improving it is:

Mark Twain's experience as a sailor on the Mississippi provided him with abundant materials for the novels he was to write.

This error is common among Chinese students, since they tend to make longer sentences and usually forget to check it out.

Exercise 2

See the following sentences and try to correct them.

- ① The small, one-story houses are all the same size and style. With no difference except the color.
- ② The old man returning home after eight years' absence to find that all the neighbors he had known were no longer there.
- ③ Urbanization which had an annual urban growth rate of 3.6% in developing countries between 1950 and 2005 versus only 1.4% in industrialized countries.

The fourth example is wrong because it is a run-on sentence. This is a commonly mistake made by Chinese students. There are three ways to correct it.

(1) To divide it into two sentences

The first use of mathematics in geology apparently was in the early 19th century by James Hutton and John Playfair. Charles Lyell used statistics to subdivide the Tertiary in 1833.

(2) To change comma into semicolon

The first use of mathematics in geology apparently was in the early 19th century by James Hutton and John Playfair; Charles Lyell used statistics to subdivide the Tertiary in 1833.

(3) To add a conjunction between the two fragments

The first use of mathematics in geology apparently was in the early 19th century by James Hutton and John Playfair, but Charles Lyell used statistics to subdivide the Tertiary in 1833.

Exercise 3

See more examples of this kind of errors in sentence writing and try to correct them.

① You also told me so many good ideas about how to make a good and native conversation with our foreign friends, I think this is most important for my life.

② He likes reading English novels, she likes watching English films.

③ All the kids in the neighborhood have seen the movie, my parents think I am too young to see it.

④ Mr. Zhang has a very good chance of being elected president of the association, he has shown excellent leadership and is very popular among association members.

⑤ Some people say they care for the environment, they litter cigarette butts or fruit skins just about anywhere they happen to be.

2) Right Subject

It's easy to ensure the completeness of a sentence, while it is difficult to spot another grammatically mistake, which is related to use the right subject.

Look at the following sentences:

Sample 2:

① On entering the classroom, the students stood up and said, "good morning".

② After finishing her composition, the translation exercise was taken up.

- ③ Hurrying to the conference room, no one was there.
- ④ Returning home after work, supper was waiting for him in the kitchen.
- ⑤ To look at a map, the importance of this new railway will be seen.

(丁往道、吴冰, 2005)

In these five sentences, the subjects are not properly related to the gerunds, participles or infinitive in the first parts of the sentences. Therefore, they are wrong subjects. Judging by the meaning of the first sentence, it is not the students but the teacher who entered the classroom, so the subject should be changed. The next four sentences are wrong in a similar way. Improved versions are as follows.

- ① On entering the classroom, the teacher was greeted by the students, who stood up and said, "Good morning!"
- ② After finishing her composition, she took up the translation exercise.
- ③ Hurrying to the conference room, she saw nobody there.
- ④ Returning home from work, he saw supper waiting for him in the kitchen.
- ⑤ You have only to look at a map to see the importance of this new railway.

Exercise 4

Try to correct these mistakes.

- ① Having missed lessons for a week, a written excuse was needed.
- ② Not knowing his name, it was difficult to introduce him.
- ③ Standing on the top of the mountain, the lake looked very beautiful.
- ④ Having dinner with his family, a friend came for a visit.

3) Agreement between the Subject and the Predicate Verb

In sentence writing, the predicate verb of a sentence should agree with the subject in person and number, such as the third-person singular subject takes a predicate verb with " - s" if the verb is in present tense. Though simple rule it is, many students make this kind of mistakes frequently in their writing. There are general rules of applying " - s" and " - ed" to the verb, but there are always exceptions. Therefore, it is very important to know these general rules and those exceptions in order to avoid this kind of mistake.

Exercise 5

Look at the following sentences below:

- ① The population of London is around 7 million. The infrastructure to support this make London one of the most intensively investigated areas of upper crust.

- ② By the end of this semester, they will have take up 30 courses in all.
- ③ The government has still not settled a date for the election.
- ④ They mounted on their bikes and rode off.
- ⑤ The tropical fish swam slowly around in tank.
- ⑥ As this paper has showed, the accuracy of these new models will not only be depend on the density and quality of this data input, but also on the theoretical understanding of the underlying geology.

(1) Uncountable Nouns

In order to remember the past tense, past participle of a verb, it is also very important to be aware of the situation where it is difficult to determine the number of a subject.

There are some nouns, which seem to be countable in Chinese, but are not in English.

Exercise 6

Look at the sentences below to correct the errors if there are.

- ① In recent years, a large quantity of researches has been done on this problem in China.
- ② The moment I'm putting together a research proposal for my dissertation. I hope to submit it to the thesis committee for approval by early November.
- ③ Have you had a chance to work with the new equipments in the organic chemistry lab yet? My research partners and I will be doing some tests there early next week.
- ④ I want to buy some furniture in IKEA before I move in.
- ⑤ Good news is that we will get the grant next month.

Words like “machinery, help, scenery, information, research, news, evidence, garbage, trash, advice” are all uncountable. Therefore, the predicate verb should always be singular.

(2) Collective Nouns

Look at the following sentences:

Sample 3:

His whole family is/are here with him.

The majority of the students taking this exam is/ are girls.

The audience was/were shocked by the scenes of violence in the film.

(丁往道、吴冰, 2005)

Collective nouns like “family” and “audience” may either be singular or plural, depending on the meaning in which they are used. If you think of “family”, “government”, and other similar words as a whole, a singular verb is needed. If you think of them as made up of a number of people, a plural verb is needed.

Sample 4:

There is a lot of important news in today's newspaper.

Mathematics is extremely interesting to him.

All the people in the room are enjoying his funny stories.

The police have begun making inquiries about the case.

The number of Ph. D degree holders among the teaching staff of the school is very small.

A number of Ph. D degree holders are teaching at this university.

Some words, like “news” and names of branches of learning are uncountable, and therefore they are always singular; some words, like “people” and “police”, are always plural. If “number” is the subject of the sentence, the verb should be singular; “a number of” is a modifier like “many”, and the real subject is Ph. D “degree holders”, so the verb should be plural.

Sample 5:

There is an old worker and three young men doing the job today.

Either you or I am to take up the work.

When two subjects refer to different persons or are different in number, the verb should agree with the subject close to it. In the above sentences “is” and “am” are correct.

Sample 6:

John, together with two assistants, is/are repairing the machine.

Besides Smith, William is/are going to speak at the meeting.

Words after “together with, in addition to, besides”, etc. are objects of prepositions; they do not affect the number of the subject. So the singular verbs are correct in the two sentences above.

Sample 7:

Where I can put all these books is a problem.

What I want is only three meals a day.

A subject clause generally takes a singular verb, but a “what – clause” which clearly refers to many things can take a plural verb:

Sample 8:

What she has bought are atlases and maps of various countries.

Exercise 7

Look at the following sentences to decide which verb should be used.

- ① Nowadays news (is, are) transmitted instantly to mass audiences
- ② Smoking cigarettes (is, are) dangerous to your health.
- ③ Professor Smith, together with twenty of his students, (is, are) coming to our school in May for a short visit.
- ④ There (is, are) a Japanese and two Koreans in his class.
- ⑤ Many planets, including the earth, (revolves, revolve) around the sun.

4) Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun usually refers to or replaces a noun or pronoun previously mentioned and this previously mentioned noun or pronoun is called antecedent. A pronoun and its antecedent should agree in number (singular or plural), person (first, second or third), and gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter). A singular noun antecedent takes a singular pronoun, whereas a plural noun antecedent takes a plural pronoun. While this rule seems simple, some nouns and pronouns can create some difficulty.

(1) Indefinite Pronoun as Antecedents

Indefinite pronoun antecedents such as “anybody, anyone, anything, each, everybody, everything, nobody, nothing, somebody, and something” are singular in meaning and thus take singular pronouns.

Incorrect: Each customer is expected to know exactly what they are getting before signing on the document.

Correct: Each customer is expected to know exactly what he or she is getting before signing on the document.

Incorrect: Everybody in the film must do their share.

Correct: Everybody in the film must do his or her share.

Indefinite pronouns such as “both, few, many”, and “several” are plural in meaning and thus take plural pronouns.

Sample 9 :

Few scholars in the world today can say that they know more about Sanskrits than professor Ji of Beijing University.

Indefinite pronouns such as “all, any, most, none, some” can take either singular or plural pronouns, depending on their meaning in the sentence.

Sample 10 :

Some of the customers complain that they are not happy with the way there have been treated in that restaurant.

Some of the food served in that restaurant is left over from the day before, so it tastes stale.

(2) Antecedents Joined by Conjunctions

When antecedents are joined by conjunctions such as “or, nor, either...or, neither...nor, both...and, not only...but also”, the pronoun agrees with the antecedent which is closer.

Sample 11 :

Neither Professor John Smith nor Professor Mary Allhouse has come to pick her ticket for the party yet.

Neither Professor MaDxy Allhouse nor Professor John Smith has come to pick his ticket for the party yet.

(3) Collective noun antecedents

Collective noun antecedents such as “family, team, jury, audience, class, association”, and “committee” use a singular pronoun when they act as a unit and use a plural pronoun when they refer to individual members.

Sample 12 :

The Board of Directors is confident of its plan to increase the company's market share by 20% by the end of the year.

The Board of Directors couldn't reach an agreement among themselves whether they should implement the plan to increase the company's market share by 20% by the end of the year.

Exercises 8

Correct the pronoun agreement errors in the following sentences

① Each college professor is free to teach whatever way they want to as long as they

follow the general guidance.

- ② If a person spends too much time watching TV, you may become a couch potato.
- ③ She felt that she should have known that neither Margie nor Tim would open their hearts completely to her.
- ④ The symphony orchestra came on the stage and took its seats.

5) Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

A modifier is a word or phrase or clause that functions as an adjective or adverb to describe another element or quality or limit the meaning of another element in a sentence. The connection between the modifier and the word or phrase being modified needs to be made clear so as to avoid confusion.

(1) Misplaced Modifier

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is positioned in a sentence in such a way that it does not modify the words or phrase which it is supposed to.

Misplaced: About 20 nurses are on vacation in the municipal hospital. (Are the nurses out of their minds, taking vacation in the hospital?)

Misplaced: Stretching endlessly toward the horizon, I was captivated by the uncultivated yet fertile farmland the first day in Beidahuang, the Great Northern Wilderness. (Could "I" stretch endlessly toward the horizon?)

To correct or avoid such confusing and sometimes embarrassing errors, make sure to place the modifier immediately before or after the word or phrase it is supposed to modify.

Correct: About 20 nurses in the municipal hospital are on vacation.

Correct: The first day in Beidahuang, the Great Northern Wilderness, I was captivated by the uncultivated yet fertile farmland stretching endlessly toward the horizon.

(2) Dangling Modifier

A Dangling modifier does not modify any element in a sentence though it often seems to refer to something implied in the sentence. Grammatically, however, it could be taken to modify the closest word in the sentence, thus, producing confusion or some humorous effect.

Dangling: Whistling sweetly, the new-born baby stopped crying. (Did the new-born baby whistle to calm herself down?)

Dangling: While taking a little nap under a blooming peach tree, little insects began to attack. (Imagine little insects taking a nap under the tree and launching an attack at the same time!)

There are two ways to correct the dangling modifiers.

① Add a meaningful word or words to the sentence for the modifier to modify.

Correct: Whistling sweetly, the young father got the new-born baby to stop crying.

Correct: While taking a little nap under a blooming peach tree, the worn traveler was attacked by little insects.

② Change the dangling modifier into a dependent clause.

Correct: When the young father began whistling sweetly, the new-born baby stopped crying.

Correct: While the worn traveler was taking a little nap under a blooming peach tree, little insects began to attack.

Exercise 9

Identify and correct misplaced or dangling modifiers in the following sentences.

① After long hours of sweating under a hot summer sun, a cold shower is particularly refreshing to me.

② As a small child, grandpa used to tell him all kinds of fairy tales and he still remembers many of them.

③ Young or old, rich or poor, the insurance company should treat all of its clients equally.

6) Correct Use of Tense

How to use tense is one of the problems of Chinese students, since there are no tenses in Chinese, which simply use adverb to indicate this relation. Therefore, it is very common for Chinese students to make mistakes in tense usage.

Generally speaking, there are several tenses that Chinese students are confused to their usages.

(1) Present Tense

Present tense describes something that happens regularly. If what you are discussing is a fact, you should use present tense.

Compare the following pairs of sentences. Can you tell the differences between them?

Sample 13:

① He has three daughters.

He had three daughters.

② She is a girl.

She was a girl.

Explanation:

① “He has three daughters” tells a fact and it is still true to him, while “He had three daughters” tells a fact in the past, and there is no where to know about how many daughters he has now. Maybe he no longer has three daughters.

② “She is a girl” tells a fact about her gender, which is still true to her, while “She was a girl” tells a fact in the past, which indicates that she is not a girl anymore.

(2) Past Tense

Contrast to present tense, past tense describes things that happened in the past. If you can clearly tell the differences between the above pair of sentences, you can have a clear distinction between the two tenses.

(3) Present Perfect Tense

Perhaps present perfect tense is more difficult than the other tenses and deserves greater attention. When we talk about something that happened in the past, we should use past tense. When we talked about something that happened in the past, but its results remains at present, we should use present perfect tense.

Compare:

① I went to the park yesterday.

② I have been to the park.

Explanation:

The first sentence tells the listener the time when the speaker went to the park, while the second sentence means that the speaker knows something about the park, and perhaps he would not like to go to the park again. In the following sentences, there are tense mistakes.

Sample 14:

① We have revised our work plan last night.

② They changed their time table and they are working according to it.

③ This is the latest novel. Did you read it?

④ We are going to the Great Wall. Did you ever go there?