

English Writing
Guideline

—Essay Questions • Thesis Writing • Paper Presentation

英语写作

——论说问题 · 论文撰写 · 文稿演示

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【内容简介】 本书分为论说问题、论文撰写和文稿演示三个部分,共包括 14 个章节。针对英语专业学生和计划前往英语国家大学深造的人员的实际需求,本书重点讲解了国外本科、研究生入学及各类主观考试所涉及的论说问题要领和解答方略;系统阐述了英语学术论文的撰写步骤和格式要求;全面介绍了成型论文的多媒体演示方法和论文答辩技巧。书中配有大量新颖实例、典型范文与演示模板,对课堂教学和自学者都大有裨益。

本书适用于英语专业本科学生的高年级课堂写作教学,也是其他同类学生自学的极好参考书。

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前言

English Writing—Essay Questions, Thesis Writing and Paper Presentation English Writing—Essay Questions, Thesis Writing and Paper Presentation

《英语写作——论说问题·论文撰写·文稿演示》(English Writing—Essay Questions, Thesis Writing and Paper Presentation) 与《英语写作——遣词·造句·组段》(English Writing—Words, Sentences and Paragraphs)、《英语写作——段落·短文》(English Writing—From Paragraph to Essay) 以及《英语写作——信函·申请·证件》(English Writing—Letters, Applications and Certificates) 为系列英语写作教材。本册适用于英语专业本科学生的高年级课堂写作教学, 也是其他同类学生自学的极好参考书。

本书分为论说问题、论文撰写和文稿演示三个部分, 共包括 14 个章节以及书后 3 篇附录和参考文献。本书的编写主要是针对英语专业学生高年级写作课程的实际需求, 同时兼顾逐年增多的计划前往英语国家大学深造的人士欲提高英语学术研究水平与论文写作能力方面的迫切要求。我们精心组织力量, 将在国外工作和学习过的四位教师编成团队, 利用两年时间, 并在课堂实践的基础上编写了本书。

本书首先重点讲解了国外本科、研究生入学及各类主观考试所涉及的论说问题要领和解答方略, 包括大学入学论说文写作、研究生入学论说文写作, 即个人陈述或研修报告的写作, 以及本科和研究生阶段各类主观测试中的论说文写作。其次, 系统阐述了英语学术论文的撰写步骤和格式要求, 内容涉及选题、推敲主题句、编写大纲、搜集与整理素材、撰写与修改文稿, 以及如何按 MLA 或 APA 标明引文出处等。最后, 全面介绍了成型论文的多媒体演示方法和论文答辩技巧。书中配有大量新颖实例、典型范文与演示模板, 对课堂教学和自学都大有裨益。

本书由田德新教授统筹策划, 担任主编。具体编写工作与分工如下:

王九萍 第四、五、六、七、八章;

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李芳军 第十二、十三、十四章、附录Ⅲ;

田德新 第二、九、十、十一章、附录 I、II。

在本书的编写过程中，西安外国语学院教务处和英文学院的领导和同事给予了大力支持，并提出了许多宝贵意见。研究生龙湛同学对部分章节的内容进行了一定的充实。在此一并表示衷心感谢。

限于编者的水平和其他客观原因，书中疏漏之处在所难免，敬请各位英语届前辈、同行和读者不吝赐教，予以指正。

编 者

2005 年 4 月

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Chapter One

College Admissions Essay Questions

What Are College Admissions Essay Questions

Essay questions are often used to test students' ability to synthesize information and organize their ideas in a logical way. According to the different purposes, essay questions can be divided into college admissions essay questions and examination essay questions. The former includes essays written for both undergraduate and graduate programs while the latter can be further divided into in-class exam essay questions and take-home exam essay questions. This chapter will be devoted to the discussion of college admissions essay questions aiming at undergraduate programs.

To answer college admissions essay questions is to explain yourself, to open your personality, charm, talents, visions and spirit to the admissions committee on paper. It is an opportunity, over which you have complete control, to show that you can think about things and write clearly about your thoughts. A great application essay will present a vivid, personal and impressive picture of you to the admissions staff. It will round out the rest of your application and help you stand out from the other applicants.

For example:

My most important experience sought me out. It happened to me; I didn't cause it.

My preferred companions are books or music or pen and paper. I have only a small circle of close friends, few of whom get along together. They could easily be counted as "misfits." To be plain, I found it quite easy to doubt my ability to have any sort of "close relationship."

After the closing festivities of Andover Summer School this past summer, on the night before we were scheduled to leave, a girl I had



met during the program’s course approached me. She came to my room and sat down on my bed and announced that she was debating with herself whether she wanted me to become her boyfriend. She wanted my reaction, my opinion. I was startled, to say the least, and frightened. I instantly said, “No.” I told her I on no account wanted this and that I would reject any gestures she made towards starting a relationship. I would ignore her entirely, if need be. I explained that I was a coward. I wanted nothing whatsoever to do with a relationship. I talked a lot and very fast.

To my surprise, she did not leave instantly. Instead, she hugged her knees and rocked back and forth on my bed. I watched her from across the room. She rocked, and I watched. Doubts crept up on me. Opportunity had knocked and the door was still locked. It might soon depart. “I lied,” I said. “I was afraid of what might happen if we became involved. But it’s better to take the chance than to be afraid.” She told me she knew I had lied. I had made her realize, though, how much she actually wanted me to be her boyfriend. We decided to keep up a relationship after Andover.

Even then, I was not sure which had been the lie. Now I think that everything I said may have been true when I said it. But I’m still not sure. I learned, that night, that I could be close to someone. I also realize, now, that it doesn’t matter whether or not that person is a misfit; the only important thing is the feeling, the closeness, and the connection. As long as there is something between two people—friendship, love, shared interests, whatever else—it is a sign that there can be some reconciliation with fear, some “fit” for misfits. And it shows that fear need not always win, that we can grow and change, and even have second chances. I am still seeing her.

Sarah Mayers. *The College Application Essay*

The above college application essay begins with a brief and impressive introduction, which easily draws the reader to the rest of the essay. In the essay, the writer expresses a clear focus of idea, that is, his anxiety about relationships by means of a story. Through the conversations with a girl in the story, the writer presents a vivid picture of himself as a conservative and shy boy who is willing to

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take a risk.

Boyfriends and girlfriends can be risky essay topics. However, this writer skillfully employs the story of the beginning of a relationship to illustrate a larger point—the power of love to overcome fear. This essay enriches an application full of academic achievements, scores, and grades. It's definitely not something found elsewhere in the application. It is short and to the point. It is interesting because it is believable.

The style of the essay is simple and direct, employing short sentences and simple words to tell a simple but memorable story.

From the above example, you should have understood now what a college admissions essay is all about. However, before you start writing such an essay, you should, first of all, familiarize yourself with the different types of admissions essay questions and what you're expected to do with each. College admissions essay questions, according to the essay editors, are usually categorized into four types of topics, namely (1) a significant experience, an achievement or a risk; (2) an important issue; (3) an influential person and (4) your future goals.

A Significant Experience, an Achievement or a Risk

This type of questions (also called accomplishment questions) is actually a combination of two common questions: Describe an experience, achievement or risk that you think is significant in your life and describe a time when the experience, achievement or risk helps you grow as a person. For instance: "Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, or risk that you have taken and its impact on you."

To answer this type of questions effectively, there are a number of things for you to keep in mind. You should, in your essay, tell the admissions committee what you value, what makes you proud and what you are capable of accomplishing, but do not try to squeeze every achievement on your resume, such as TOEFL scores, GRE scores, etc. into the essay. It is ineffective to include information that the committee can read about somewhere else on your application. If you do choose to mention your achievement in your essay, be sure to demonstrate what it took to accomplish the achievement and how it affected you personally.

For the second part of the question, you are asked to describe who you really are. First of all, you should show the admissions committee that you have matured, but do not exaggerate. It is unwise if you try to describe what a terrible



person you once were just to make the point of what a great person you are now. Then, you should focus on your current personality. The committee wants to know what you are like now, not what you were like in the past. Finally, you should not invent hardships, but rather, describe real events and scenarios to prove that your growth resulted from the decisions you made and actions you took.

An Important Issue

This type of questions is among the hardest to answer. It actually asks you to relate a significant personal, local, national or international issue to your experiences or your upbringing. For example: “Discuss some issue of personal, local, national or international concern and its importance to you.”

Responding to such questions, you should remember to stay personal. You should integrate into your essay information showing why you care about such an issue and how the issue affects you personally in any way. Besides, you can write passionately on such issues, but remember to stay unbiased. Being able to write about both sides of the issues to show that you can think objectively and logically is very important. Finally, be sure to refrain from making sweeping generalizations about issues that would be out of your range of experience.

An Influential Person

This type of questions asks you to tell about the human forces that have deeply influenced you. For instance: “Indicate a person, a historical figure or character in fiction that has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.”

Many students often mistake the above topic for an essay about a person; therefore, they go on at length, describing the influential person in detail without making a connection between it and themselves. In fact, the admissions committee wants to know more about you, not about the person or fictional hero you elaborate in your essay. You should, instead, focus on describing why and how that person or fictional hero impresses you and what action you have taken to turn that impression into your personal development. There is no right or wrong answer as for whom you choose to write about. More importantly, though, is how you portray that person.

Your Future Goals

Some schools ask for an essay about your choice of a school or career. They are looking for information about your goals, and about how serious your commitment is to this particular school. For example: “Why do you want to spend two or more years of your life at our college, graduate school, or professional school? How is the degree necessary to the fulfillment of your future goals?”

Knowing the schools well to which you apply is key to answering this type of questions. You should mention specific reasons that prompt you to apply to this particular school. Danger in answering this type of questions is the insincere and ingratiating tone. However, to mention specific factors that tie in with your area of interest will help you out of the trap. Besides, finding a balanced and truthful tone and showing your solid and well-researched knowledge of the school are rewarding in responding to this type of questions.

How to Write College Admissions Essays

To write a good admissions essay involves an intricate process, of which understanding the essay question itself is the very first step, followed by a number of other steps such as brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising and editing, which you may use in writing any kind of essay. However, writing good admissions essays demands more of your attention and efforts in that you put your future on stake as a result of the quality of your essay. For exam essays or other essays you write in or outside class, you get feedback. Even if you fail an exam essay, for example, you may still get a make-up opportunity. But as for admissions essays, there is no make-up opportunity. As you may know, the college admissions officers read hundreds of essays each day. To leave a deep impression on them, you need more skills in writing your essay. The following are some of the key tips offered by essay edge editors in writing successful admissions essays at the undergraduate level.

Selecting Your Topic

Choosing an essay topic can be one of the most difficult aspects of the entire admissions process. Questions often ask you to think about your entire life, pick



just one thing, and talk about it in great depth. You may find it a tough job to locate that one event that has changed your life or the one thing that represents your entire personality. In all likelihood there isn't just one. Coming up with this idea is difficult and will require a great deal of time. But there probably is one that you can write about most passionately and effectively. The most important part of your entire essay is finding this one topic you feel most passionate about.

To locate that one topic you can write passionately and effectively, you can start to brainstorm on a long list of all that comes into your mind the moment you begin the process. Then for each of the personal characteristics or skills you have listed, ask yourself "Does it distinguish me from others I know?" For each of the activities you have listed, ask yourself "What made me participate in this activity and what made me continue to contribute to it?" For each event in your life you have listed, ask yourself "How did this event change me as a person and how did I react to it?" For each person you have listed, ask yourself "Which of this person's traits do I admire? Is there something that this person has said or done that I will always remember?" And the list can go on.

In answering these questions, you will probably find that you have a great deal to talk about for several topics. Now you can reflect more on these limited topics and pick up the one topic that will allow you to synthesize your important personal characteristics and experiences into a coherent whole while simultaneously addressing your desire to attend a specific institution.

To check that the topic is the best one you could possibly find, be sure that the topic you've selected describes something of personal importance to you; you will be able to offer vivid supporting paragraphs to your essay topic; your essay is honest and you're not inventing hardship. You should also check whether your essay specifically demonstrates your uniqueness and how that uniqueness will contribute to the realm of campus opinion, the academic environment or social life. "What will the committee remember about me after a day of reading hundreds of essays?" If your topic can pass all these listed suggestions, at this point, you may be sure that this topic is the one topic you're looking for. However, even seemingly boring topics can be made into exceptional admissions essays with an innovative approach. In writing the essay you must bear in mind your goal: to persuade the admissions committee that you are extremely worthy of admission.

Focus Your Point and Develop It Logically

When you have chosen your topic, you should keep your focus narrow and personal and prove your point in a logical and convincing way. Remember that the whole essay is to prove one single point or thesis. The reader should be able to find your main idea and follow it from the beginning to the end. The development of the main idea should be made with vivid and specific facts, events, examples, and reasons. There is a big difference between simply stating a point of view and letting an idea unfold in the details. For example;

(Original) “I like to be surrounded by people with a variety of backgrounds and interests.”

(Revised) “During that night, I sang the theme songs from Casablanca with a basketball coach, discussed Neo-conservatism with a lady from a university, and heard more than I ever wanted to know about some woman’s gall bladder operation.”

For another example:

(Original) “I want to help people. I have gotten so much out of life through the love and guidance of my family, I feel that many individuals have not been as fortunate; therefore, I would like to expand the lives of others.”

(Revised) “My Mom and Dad stood on plenty of sidelines till their shoes filled with water or their fingers turned white or somebody’s golden retriever signed his name on their coats in mud. I think that kind of commitment is what I’d like to bring to working with others.”

To develop your essay smoothly, you may well show your concerns in the following aspects. Your first concern should be clarity. If your essay is haphazardly structured, the reader simply will not be able to follow your ideas, and your whole purpose will be lost. Your second concern is focus. An essay could be clear at the sentence or paragraph level, but still lack overall coherence. Perhaps you have written three paragraphs, each clearly devoted to one topic, but you have not shown how each topic contributes to a larger point. The basic focus of every college admissions essay is why you should be admitted to the school, but a



more specific theme can be helpful. You want your reader to take away a clear point after he or she puts down your essay. Your third concern is impact. Even a clear and coherent essay can fail to achieve the optimal structure that would maximize its overall impact. For example, the main theme of your essay might be your desire to help others. After outlining this clear focus in your first paragraph, you may go on writing three clear paragraphs, each independently offering evidence of your desire to help people. What is lacking is a sense of progression: the reader sees repetition, not growth. To maximize impact, your structure must allow each point to build upon previous points, thereby improving not only your essay's flow but also the overall force of your argument.

Paying Attention to Sentence Variety

Many students mistakenly believe that their writing ability can be demonstrated by the length of the sentence they write. This is not true, however. A successful essay usually reaches a balance between long and short sentences. In fact, the best essays contain a variety of sentence lengths, mixed within any paragraph. To avoid writing long sentences, or sentences of the same length throughout a given paragraph, you can read it aloud to yourself, focusing on the pauses and rhythm. If you find you pause at almost the same interval, then vary your sentence length; if you run out of breath when you read certain sentences, break them up into smaller sentences.

Do not repeatedly begin your sentences with the structure "I + Verb + Object." This is another point you should pay special attention to. Many students unconsciously construct sentences beginning with "I" in the same paragraph. For example, "I didn't want to be the one at fault if I dropped the ball and the play didn't succeed. I did not want the responsibility of helping the team because I was too afraid of making a mistake. . . . I refrained from asking questions in class, afraid that they might be considered too stupid or dumb by my classmates. All the while, I went to practice and everyday, I went home physically and mentally exhausted." Your essay sounds monotonous by repeatedly using the "I+Verb+Object" sentence pattern in the same paragraph. You could improve your sentence types when you come to the step of revising and editing your essay. You could improve the above sentence by varying the sentence patterns: "I didn't want to be the one at fault if I dropped the ball and the play didn't succeed. I did not want the responsibility of helping the team because I

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was too afraid of making a mistake.... Afraid of being considered stupid or dumb by my classmates, I refrained from asking questions in class. All the while, I went to practice everyday, going home physically and mentally exhausted.”

Writing Good Transitions

Applicants often ignore transitions in their essays. A good essay must use transitions within paragraphs and especially between paragraphs to preserve the logical flow of the essay. Transitions are words such as *first*, *second*, *next*, *therefore*, *however*, or phrases such as *in conclusion*, *on the other hand*, *as a result* and so on. They are used within paragraphs and between paragraphs as well, bridging between your ideas and making it easy for your readers to move smoothly from one point to the next. A good essay uses transitions appropriately to preserve the logical flow of the essay. In other words, they tell the reader when you are giving a similar idea, or opposite idea, and example, a result, or a conclusion.

The following two paragraphs are about the same information; however, the revised paragraph is more easily understood because it uses transitions appropriately.

Original Paragraph:

The classroom has become a whole different realm for me. The teachers and students alike preached the importance of learning. It was implicitly obvious that the most important concern was grades. At school, teachers genuinely believe that learning is the most important objective and deeply encourage us to collaborate with each other and make use of all resources that we may find. In a certain class this year, my teacher assigned us to prepare every day of the week to discuss a certain book; there were only two requirements in this preparation—we had to maximize our sources, gleaning from everything and everyone in the school, we were not allowed to actually look at the book. I know more about that book than any other that I have actually read. It is teaching methods such as this that ensure that we will learn more. Indeed, this matter of “thinking” has been one of the most important aspects of my experience. Whether in Physics or English, I’m required to approach every problem and idea independently and creatively rather



than just regurgitate the teacher’s words. In discussion with fellow students both inside and outside of class, the complex thoughts flowing through everyone’s brain is evident.

www.virtuallyadvising.com. *College Essay Question Help*

Revised Paragraph:

The classroom has become a whole different realm for me. Before, the teachers and students alike preached the importance of learning, but it was implicitly obvious that the most important concern was grades. At school, teachers genuinely believe that learning is the most important objective and deeply encourage us to collaborate with each other and make use of all resources that we may find. In fact, in a certain class this year, my teacher assigned us to prepare every day of the week to discuss a certain book; there were only two requirements in this preparation—we had to maximize our sources, gleaning from everything and everyone in the school, but we were not allowed to actually look at the book. As a result, I know more about that book than any other that I have actually read. It is teaching methods such as this that ensure that we will learn more. Indeed, this matter of “thinking” has been one of the most important aspects of my experience. Whether in Physics or English, I’m required to approach every problem and idea independently and creatively rather than just regurgitate the teacher’s words. In discussion with fellow students both inside and outside of class, the complex thoughts flowing through everyone’s brain is evident.

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Of course, you should refrain from forcing your transitions. Using too many transitions can be just as confusing as using too few. However, a good writing requires that you use enough transitions to make your ideas flow smoothly from one point to the next so that your readers do not have to struggle understanding you.

The following is a list of commonly used transitions:

To introduce an additional idea; and, furthermore, moreover, another, besides, also, too, in addition, an additional, etc.

To introduce an opposite idea; but, yet, although, though, even though,