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+ Successful +

Writing in English

A practical guide

For those who wish to improve their writing skills



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Nowadays writing well and in a captivating way is essential in order to be successful in any field of work.

In our daily lives, whether in a personal or professional context, we have to write a variety of texts: from the simplest shopping list to the writing of formal reports or academic texts, as well as the writing of a paper or complaint, there is an undeniable need to express ourselves through different textual genres.

The need to express ourselves effectively in writing, combined with the fact that we live in a highly globalised era – mostly dominated by the English language –, has led us to the making of this publication: a practical, complete guide that can help anyone achieve a level of excellence in written English communication.

This book aims to help all English learners develop and improve advanced skills in written expression. If you are a born autodidact, you can do so through the practical activities presented in this book. If you are a teacher, you can put the

various writing strategies that we present into practice and they will help you provide your students with different techniques to master English writing.

Those who have not been in contact with English for some time will also find fundamental tools in this guide, as its practical nature and guidelines on how to structure ideas and plan and write different texts will enable them to refresh and develop their written expression skills.

Similarly, students participating in the Erasmus programme, being in a new country and having to write different kinds of texts within the academic scope, will be able to benefit from the content in these pages.

The themes in this guide have been carefully selected and developed in order to highlight the main characteristics of each textual genre, with examples of the most appropriate structures and practical exercises. The texts are presented in three categories with different levels of complexity:

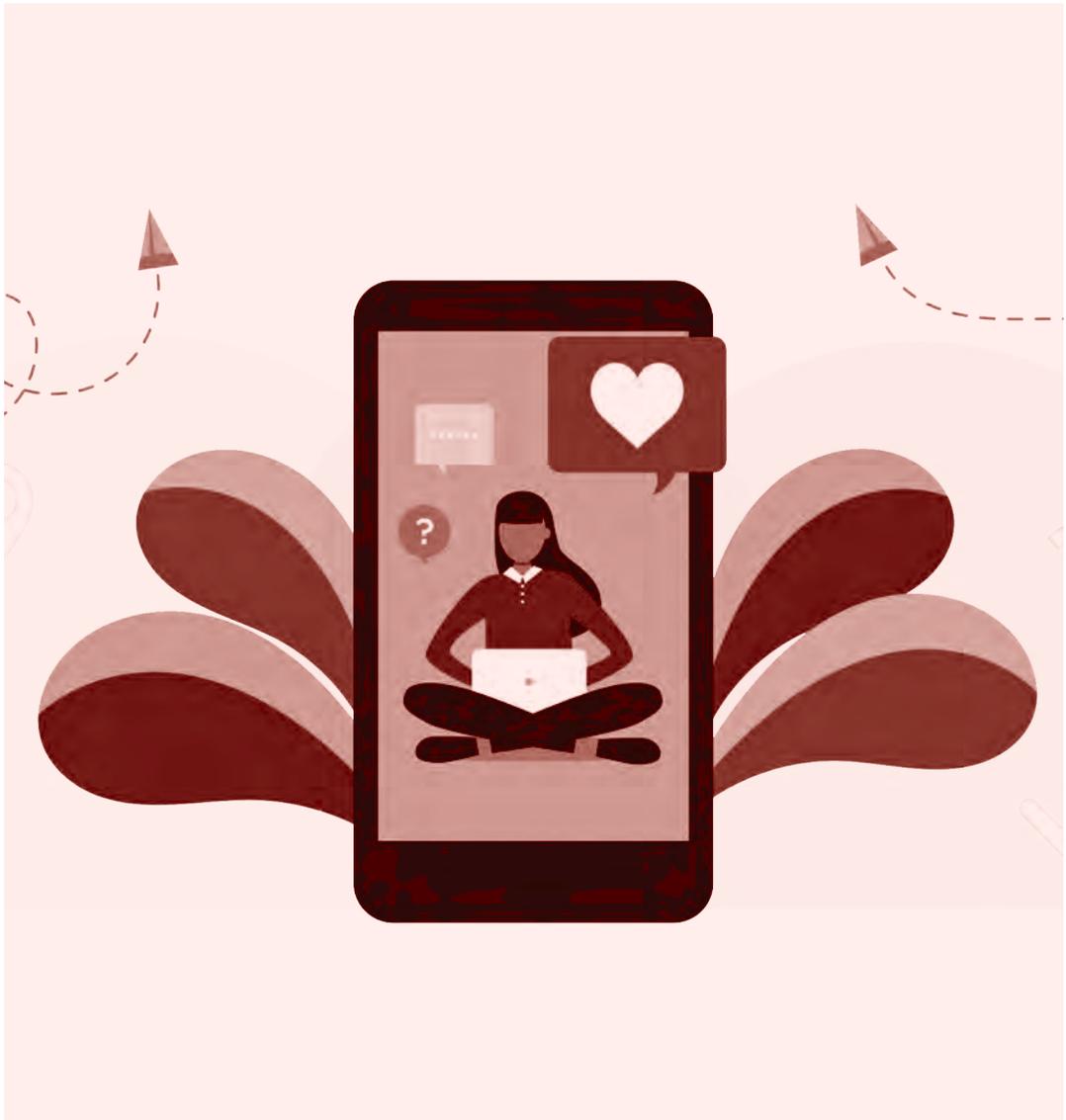
- The most elementary forms of writing: e-mails, letters, journal entries and blog posts;
- The texts that require further knowledge: formal presentation letters, opinion texts, introductions and conclusions, as well as the advertising text and newspaper or magazine articles;
- The more demanding texts: the argumentative text, the essay, the presentation of a thesis as well as the description of people and events.

In the *Self-Directed Learning: Over to you* section we shall explore the different particularities of the texts presented, in a more practical aspect of writing, allowing us to go further in the practical exploration of the different aspects of writing and language that allow us to polish our texts and present them in a clear, unmistakable way. For this reason, in these pages you will find a chapter dedicated to punctuation and another concerning the most suitable language register for each type of text. It also deals with the function of metaphors and the different systems of reference of sources within the scope of the English language.

The penultimate chapter of the guide is dedicated to text assessment tools, which are very useful to help teachers evaluate their students' writing in a fair and reasoned manner, while also responding to the need for a guide to self-assessment strategies for students.

Remember: the ability to write well is not innate, it is built on practice. This guide has been prepared to help you in this task, presenting tips and useful tools that you can put into practice, as well as techniques that you can easily learn. It will equip you with the information you need to write well and communicate effectively in order to achieve the results you desire.

3. Writing a blog and a diary



A person may want to write a blog about many different things such as technology, society, culture, fashion, education, politics and current affairs, business, etc. To do so in an interesting and informative way requires following a particular structure so that the information is accessible to the reader.

Blog writing

Five principles that can guide the process of writing a blog are:

1. Conduct **research** and check all **essential information** before including it in the blog, as well as using only topic-specific information to create an outline of the full text;
2. An **interesting heading** must be formulated to encourage people to get interested in the text;
3. Now write your **text**, which can be done piece by piece on separate occasions, or all at once in one session;
4. Some visual aids such as **pictures** or **symbols** should be used to make the text more appealing and to help the reader move more smoothly from one section to the next. Humour and sketches can be used to explain more complex and unusual topics;
5. Once the text or the **post** – as a text written for a blog is known as – has been written it should then be proofread to check for any mistakes, repetitions or omissions (i.e. things that may have been left out).

Blogs can sometimes be long, but they are generally between **400 to 800 words** long and the points made should be limited to **three main themes**. Typical blog readers can often have a rather low attention span and will wish to scan through a post rather quickly. Paragraphs and the sentences that make them up must then be short and succinct so that readers stay interested.

Think of a restaurant review someone could write after eating in a restaurant and gathering this information:

- Clancy's On The Avenue, 705 East Avenue, Toronto (416 555 0105). Three-course lunch \$20; four-course dinner \$30; wines from \$18.
- This restaurant opened in 2019. Thomas Clancy became famous while working at the Allegra in Ottawa before owning this restaurant.
- It's a small busy (customers often have to wait to be seated) restaurant. The decoration is simple and it has wooden floors and big windows. They make a good sourdough bread which should be eaten with their nutty scoop of oregano butter or their brown butter.
- Dishes look simple, however, there are vast amounts of technique involved here.
- A plate of mushrooms cooked down to a soft purée and then cooked into chips and fried looked like a plate of brown chips and the ketchup was very tasty.
- Creamy broccoli and Cheddar cheese and figs toast with cheese and chutney were a wonderful starter.
- Brandy flamed peppercorn steak was a very good main dish.
- The heavily smoked sole served up with saffron and parmesan risotto was an odd combination for a main dish.
- The crispy chocolate-hazelnut meringue cake served with superb whipped cream was a delicious dessert. The alternative was the intriguing yet somewhat strange sour cream ice cream with strawberry jam.
- The wine list was quite small but varied and there was a good number of by-the-glass options and a nice range of prices. The waiter recommended an Alsatian wine, which was a little neutral with a hint of apple sourness on the finish.
- The two of us paid \$65 for a three-course meal with wine – quite reasonable.



Sample answer

Clancy's On The Avenue, Toronto: "A small restaurant with soul" – review.

Some of the dishes here are amazing, others are perplexing.

Clancy's On The Avenue, 705 East Avenue, Toronto (416 555 0105). Three-course lunch \$20; four-course dinner \$30; wines from \$18.

Thomas Clancy made his name at the Allegra in Ottawa before opening the Clancy's On The Avenue in the Business District here in Toronto in 2019. There is a tight \$20, three-course menu at lunchtime with a couple of choices at each stage and a four-course menu in the evenings at \$30.

Clancy's On The Avenue looks casual, as if there could be little to eat here beyond a tasty sandwich. The restaurant is small and has a polished wooden floor and big windows facing the busy avenue. There are sturdy wooden tables and chairs. It is often busy and customers have to wait sometime before being seated. You won't find any flashy paintings here as the main focus is the food itself. The bread smells wonderfully and, of course, they still make it here. It's the best of sourdoughs and should be eaten with either their nutty scoop of oregano butter or their brown butter.



Some of the dishes look simple, however, there are vast amounts of technique involved here. Mushrooms are cooked down to a soft purée and then cooked into chips and deep fried. It may look like a plate with brown chips and ketchup, yet, you will be pleasantly surprised once you taste it!

There are only two choices for each course but they are quite varied. We had the entire menu and while some of the options were good, others were perplexing. The creamy broccoli and Cheddar cheese was a wonderful way to start the meal. Equally good was the figs toast with cheese and chutney. For the main course we began by eating brandy flamed peppercorn steak and loved it. However, the heavily smoked sole served up with saffron and parmesan risotto was an odd combination.



To conclude our meal, we had delicious crispy chocolate-hazelnut meringue cake served with superb whipped cream. The alternative was the intriguing yet somewhat strange sour cream ice cream with strawberry jam.

The wine list was quite small but varied and with a pleasing number of by-the-glass options and a nice range of prices. The waiter recommended an Alsatian wine, which was a little neutral for my taste, with a hint of apple sourness on the finish.

The two of us paid \$65 for a three-course meal with wine – quite reasonable! We had a good time eating delicious – even if sometimes a bit strange – food. This restaurant is definitely a place worth a visit.

Describing a person

There are many different kinds of people who have different physical features. To describe people it is important to mention the following points:

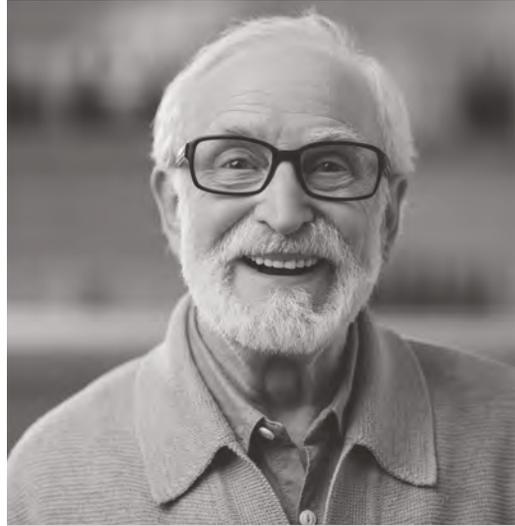
- their height (i.e. how tall or short they are);
- their weight (i.e. whether they are thin or overweight);
- their facial features (i.e. what their face looks like);
- their hair (e.g. colour and style).

Special vocabulary for the physical characteristics mentioned above is as follows:

<p>Hair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bald • Bangs • Curly • Wavy • Long • Short • Straight • Shoulder-length • Grey • Brown • Blonde • Black • Ginger • Cropped 	<p>Face</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moustache • Beard • Fat • Thin • Wide • Long • Short • Big/small nose • Big/small eyes • Fair/dark/mild skin • Piercings • Tattoos • Thin/wide/long/short eyebrows • Glasses
<p>Eyes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown • Blue • Green • Hazel • Black • Big • Small 	<p>Height</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tall • Short • Average height



Picture 1



Picture 2

Sample descriptions:

Picture 1:

I'm 32 years old. I'm about 1.65m tall and I weigh around 55 kgs. I have long, brown hair and blue eyes. I'm wearing a grey skirt with brown boots.

Picture 2:

I'm 74 years old. I'm 1.75m tall and I weight around 70 kgs. I have short white hair and a beard and hazel eyes. I'm wearing a grey cardigan, a blue shirt and a pair of black-rimmed glasses.

We can also look at examples of how other people describe people they see from popular literature:

He was a rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not. A big, loud man, with a stare, and a metallic laugh. A man made out of coarse material, which seemed to have been stretched to make so much of him... A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking-trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty. A man who was the Bully of humility. (p. 18)

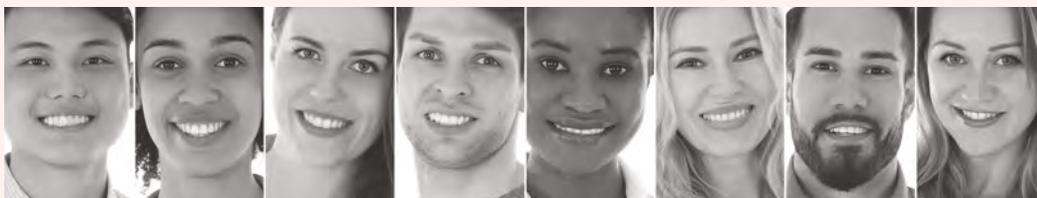
Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*. London: Chapman & Hall (1905)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/786/786-h/786-h.htm#page12>

- As texts become more complex and elaborate, the quality and style of language required to write them also becomes more demanding and sophisticated. Under those circumstances, discourse markers also become more elegant and these include:

Analogously, Besides, Better yet, By the same token, Correspondingly, Equally, For another thing, In any event, I mean, Likewise, More to the point, Similarly, To cap it all off, Too, Well, What is more

Example text 1:

The Multicultural Society



The world in 2020 is a highly globalised one. In the era of the internet in which so many social media applications such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook are used by millions of people to communicate and share their thoughts and experiences, the world seems to have become much smaller. **Moreover**, great distances no longer seem to matter so much anymore. Friendships **too** can be made and continue across these great distances. **Yet**, not everybody believes that the effects of these technologies are only positive. **While** they have brought many benefits, they have also become a platform on which people can share hateful and intolerant ideas. **Conversely**, the message of hope also has a much greater medium through which to travel and spread across the world.

A global world means that local ideas and tastes can travel and be shared everywhere. **Examples** include food, clothing and hobbies. **As a result**, many songs can be heard in one language and found in the same one on the other side of the world by somebody who is listening to in on Youtube or Spotify. **For this reason**, there is a much greater awareness of the diversity of peoples and their culture in this world. **As a consequence**, there is greater acceptance, but also greater intolerance in some places.

For example, the United States of America is a well known instance of a country where there is a mixture of nationalities and languages. **On the one hand**, this is a healthy thing as it can build tolerance. **On the other hand**, because of the presence of different people and their cultures, some local people become angry at what they see as an attack on their way of life and they say hurtful things to those people **as a result**. **However**, this does not mean that we can give up. **All things considered**, we have many reasons to be hopeful and to keep fighting for a more inclusive society.

Example text 2:

One Planet: Many Cultures

The world we live in is a complex one and its population is increasing year by year. More people mean more contact and communication between them; from country to country and from one continent to another. **However**, an increasing number of people believe that we must isolate ourselves against other cultures. **Moreover**, they think that each country should concentrate on its own culture and be proud as a nation distinct from all others. **As** they hold this view, one important factor is frequently forgotten: modern lifestyles require modern products in the form of electronics and fashion. **While** these same people believe that they should exclude people from other cultures, they still expect to be able to have all the products of convenience they are used to. **For example**, sportswear such as shoes, T-shirts and casual wear such as jeans **as well as** mobile phones and i-Pads, which are invariably manufactured in the very countries whose people are subjected to racist attitudes and behaviour. **Consequently**, in times of economic crisis people no longer wish to buy certain products from the countries they regard as inferior or in some way responsible for their own misfortune. **Under these conditions**, the most vulnerable workers in the world are unfairly treated: poorly paid and mistreated while economic conditions are good and once economic conditions deteriorate, they are amongst the first to lose their already precarious positions of employment.

All things considered it can be reasonably claimed that much racism remains in the world and **as a consequence**, unnecessary and cruel treatment of people continues. **However**, we must remember that the progress and comforts that we enjoy in the modern world in the advanced cultures we now live in was only made possible through the process of globalisation where ideas, capital (i.e. money), people and common goals shared across entire continents which over time came to be connected through advanced communication networks and supply chains. **By the same token** we face a choice: accept both the wonderful electronic products made outside the Western hemisphere which so many of us covet and have come to depend on and respect the hardworking labourers who spend long hours for little reward manufacturing those products or not. If we cannot show respect for these people, then **a logical consequence of this** attitude would be that we should stop using the products they work so hard to provide for us. Could you live without your i-Phone? Think about it. People are more important than money, more than any product. Most people realise that everybody is entitled to respect and dignity. **What is more**, each one of us can make it happen with one another and others around the world by taking small steps one at a time. Remember: changing the world starts with one person at a time. Be the change you believe in!