



IIT Madras

BSc Degree

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English-I (Basic English)
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Note-Writing

Hello and welcome to this session on writing, in earlier sessions, we have spoken about the importance of writing and editing, and then we saw in the one before that even when we write upon a subject we know quite well such as you know when we write a bio note, we still need to make several drafts, primarily because we know so much, we feel like telling a lot, more than the time available, than more the number of words available.

But because there is the constraint of time and space no matter how accomplished writer, each writer has to write within limited space limited time, a limited number of words. Today, we are going to look at another something we generally know very well, think of a pen, think of your mobile phone, think of your car, think of your motorbike, think of your book, a piece of clothing, a piece of furniture or anything that you own you generally know it well, but when you have to describe it, sometimes you are asked to describe your object. Then we have to follow some of these principles you know, be factual.

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QUESTION

In about 150 words, write a note on anything you own, describing all its features.

Hint:

when bought - physical description - colour, shape, size, etc. - any special features - what you like best about it - any associated event/incident, special features



Look at it, here the writing task today is in about 150 words, you do not have a lot, you only have a limited number of words, and within these limited number of words, you have to describe something which you know so well, which may have been with you for a long time, and you have such a lot of emotional and intellectual association with the object, you might

like to write a book about it. But unfortunately, no reader has so much time; no writer has so much patience or space.

So, what we do is, what all of us do is manage within limits and before we start writing, we create some kind of synopsis the highlights of points, what points shall we cover in this note writing session. So, for example, no matter what physical object you will have to, it will have a date of association with you, since when it came in your families since when it came to you, it became yours.

So, you can give a date. You can give it a physical description; it is soft or hard, black or white, tall or short, heavy or light, physical description. What kinds of things can be taken in the physical description or under physical description; you can describe the colour of the object or the colours of the object, more than one colour or the shape of the object or size etc.

You know physical details; you can give physical details, it is so many inches long, so many inches it's screen and that sort of thing. Then like any other product, whatever you are going to describe, also has some special features which make it unique which attracted your attention and because of which because of that special feature, you decided to buy that particular object.

It may have more than one feature; it may be more than two, three. But what are these things you like best and most? What is it you like best? What is it you like most about it, the particular object you are going to describe? Has there been any such event, any incident involving this phone of yours which will help you remember it for the rest of your life, these days, we are a disposable society.

We do not keep anything for too long, gone are the days when a pen, a fountain pen, an ordinary pen used to pass from one generation to the next to the next. A man giving it to his son, his son giving it to his grandson or the other way around inheriting it from father, from grandfather you know, these days such family looms, of course, they are even now there, but not as many as was the case, we frequently change our objects.

So, you know, whatever is the associated event incident with it if it is no longer with us, why is it no longer with us any special features you can describe all that and that will easily give you about 150 words. So, no matter what you describe, before you begin take these points into account, ask yourself, tell yourself in a private note, in a rough sketch that you will talk

about its date, day, month, year, then you will give it a physical description, it could be anything.

Can you describe the meal that you eat? Yes, there is a physical description the grains of rice may be long or short, chapati or bread may be soft or hard, there is a physical description there may be colour rice may be white, red, green, yellow, plain, simple in South India we cook very rice of variety of colours, rice of variety of descriptions, maybe long-grain short grains, broken grains, highly broken grains, thin grains, thick grains you can have all kinds of rice in the market, in your kitchen.

Does it have any special features? Yes, some kinds of grains of rice have an aroma; some others are plain; they either have no smell or a very common smell. What do you like best about be it phone or rice? There is something you do not like about it, some people like red rice of Kerala very much, why?

They say that it is easy to digest, they say because I like red, I subscribe to the philosophy of communism and communism subscribes to red and therefore, I like red rice. People can have a variety of opinions, no problem. So long as you describe it, the physical association is physical features and then go into special features, you have answered the question you have fulfilled the expected need the expectation of the examiner.

So, you can, no matter what physical object you can describe, what is best about it, it can be flat, from a grain of rice to your flat to your house. What is it you like best in your house? Some people say, 'oh I like the sun rising in my veranda every morning', or some other people say, 'oh no, I like the sun setting in the balcony every evening'.

There is something which is no matter what your house is like, how expensive or inexpensive, how new or old, how large or small, there is something in your house. There is something in nearly everything that you possess, which is special about it. Once again, are there any associated events incident? Yes, you can say, my parents were married in this house.

My grandparents build it on the eve of my father's marriage. You know, you can give historical, you can give geographical. You know recently I read a letter from somebody who described his grandmother's house in Trivandrum and said Nehru had come to this house, the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, accompanied by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu K. Kamaraj came to this house for lunch.

So, maybe that is special about it. One would like to remember that they put a placard saying they put a photograph of Nehru, eating lunch in his family, etc., etc. So, every physical object has some special unique quality describe that, go next.

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ACTIVITY

Read and compare the first draft and the final draft based on the following parameters:

	First Draft	Final Draft
No. of words		
No. of sentences		
Content		



I am going to describe something, and you can take a look, and as I told you in the earlier, it is rarely the case that your first draft is a perfect draft. You should be, if you want to become a great writer, a good writer, a good speaker, then you should be mentally prepared to do several drafts.

First draft, write anything that comes to your head, get everything down on paper or before you speak in public, tell everything to your recorder and then edit and then see, what is fit to be said in public and what is not, then it is highly unlikely that you will make a mistake, you will be you very much more effective speaker than otherwise and people will come from far along to listen to you.

So, I am going to show you a text to actually two drafts of a text and each draft, just look at these things. Number of words, is the first draft lengthier than the second or is the second draft lengthier than the first, what is the case? Similarly, sentences, does the first draft have many more sentences than the second? What is the case? Look at these physical details of your writing, and then content have all those particulars been answered? Is there a physical description?

Does it tell you the date of origin? Are the parts described? Is the colour of the object given? What the users of this object liked or disliked? That can come as the last point. Having said this, let us look at the text. Let look at an example.

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MY CELL PHONE (DRAFT 1)



I have a Tellmi Note 6 Pro handset for my cell phone. I bought it last year for Rs 11,000/- only. It has 4GB of RAM memory, but it can be expanded up to 256GB, which makes it as good as a medium-class laptop computer. For such a powerful phone, it has a rather small display screen, only about 6.26 inches.



I took a description of a mobile phone, some students and I do not remember the name. So, look at the first draft, I have Tellmi note 6 pro handset for my cell phone. I bought it last year for these 11,000 only, and it goes on read it at your own pace leisurely next.

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For young people, however, that is not a problem. The bigger asset of this phone is its dual camera, a 12/5MP rear camera, and a whopping 20MP with an additional 2MP front camera, this phone can practically record anything before it, stationary or mobile. I do not prefer phones that require frequent charging for phones, so I was looking for a kind of set that might not require charging daily. I was advised to go only for anything about 4000mAh battery, which keeps me using it without any worries for up to three days, or a train journey across India. For this class, it has a superb processor, "Snapdragon 636".



Next.

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Earlier I had an yPhone, with a very much more powerful processor, but very small power back up. Sometimes I had to charge it twice a day, and, as a result, I was always anxious to keep any calls I received or made at the minimum essential. But here I could comfortably keep these anxieties aside.

But at about 300g, it is rather heavy for my taste. I keep it in pant pockets while walking, but I feel like I was carrying some weight. Recently, I have found myself wishing to avoid going out with this set, mainly because of its weight. Otherwise, its touch screen, camera, and other extras are all good in one word.



Next.

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Ever since cell phone technology became available in India, I have used a cellphone enabled sim, which I did not wish to give up. It works very reliably in small places. Besides, even those days, it did not charge the user for the missed calls, or for roaming calls, while others did so for all services. Even this time, I, therefore, decided to go for a dual sim set. My Tellmi pro has that facility, and for the first time in my life, I am using two sim cards from one set. And enjoying this power. **(385 Words)**



Next.

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MY CELL PHONE (FINAL VERSION)



I have a Tellmi Note 6 handset. I bought it last year for Rs 11,000/- only. It has 4GB RAM memory. But it has only a 6.26 inch display screen. Its dual camera, with a 12/5MP in the rear, and 20/2MP in front, can cover large spaces. But I like it more for its battery, it is above 4,000mAh. Without recharging, I use it for up to three days. Its processor is also as good.



This is my second; this is my final draft after several. It is still, may have some inaccuracies I mean perfection is a result of constant pursuit. You must do as many drafts as required until you come to a point when you feel this is my best. It has not gone maybe 10 or 12 drafts, but quite a few even then and some of my friends said well it is nearly all right. Do not exactly all right.

Look at the text. I have a Tellmi note 6 handset; I bought it last year for rupees 11,000 only. It has a 4 GB RAM memory, but it has only 6.6-inch display screen rather small and narrow. Other physical details are given.

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Earlier I had an yPhone, with a more powerful processor, but smaller power back up. I used to charge it twice daily. But at about 300g, it is rather heavy. The best thing here, however, is its own link to the Net, getting and sending mails and messages anytime anywhere. This set has slots for two sim cards, in one I keep my business account, the other has my friends and family. **(150 Words)**



Here is the second draft of the same note, same description. Earlier it was 300 and some words. Now, it is within 150 words. Take a look. It gives you all and only required information, no redundancies and or maybe nearly no redundancies, nearly no inaccuracies. Look at the analysis; please go.

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ANSWERS

	First Draft	Final Draft
No. Of words	385	150
No. of sentences	21	12



First draft, you know, everyone has been told, write your note within 150 words, this writer in the first draft used 385 words and all of these words were compressed into only 21 sentences, the final draft had only 150 words in 12 sentences, let us take a look.

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FIRST DRAFT	FINAL DRAFT
I have a Tellmi Note 6 Pro handset for my cell phone. I bought it last year for Rs 11,000/- It has a 4GB RAM memory, but it can be expanded upto 256GB, which makes it as good as a medium class laptop computer.	I have a Tellmi Note 6 handset. I bought it last year for Rs 11,000/- only. It has 4GB RAM memory.
For such a powerful phone, it has a rather small display screen, only about 6.26 inches. For young people, however, that is not a problem.	But it has only a 6.26 inch display screen.



Look at the two drafts for the sake of comparison I have take one paragraph from here and another from the final draft. So, the first draft here says I have a Tellmi note 6 pro handset for

my cell phone; I bought it last year for rupees 11,000, it has 4GB random access memory. So, maybe hardly any redundancies compared with I think dozens of words here in the earlier books.

This writer has used hardly more than a dozen and describes fairly well, what it contains? Look at the next paragraph, for such a powerful phone; it has a rather a small display screen only about 6.26 inches, do we need to see all that particularly when we have only a few words must we say for such a powerful phone. It has been a rather small, unless of course, you searched that the net, even then I would say it is not a smart way of writing it takes you wasted time.

But regardless of that, you see how many words does it have, and the same thing can be said in about a dozen words, but it has only a 6.26-inch display screen. That is all that is to be noted that is all that as that is being said here in about two-three dozen words for such a powerful phone, it has a rather small display screen only about 6.26 inches for young people, however, that is not a problem, all that you get here is the length of the screen, what is the length of the screen? 6.26 inches, 6.26 inch display screen.

So, you know when you describe when you write for particularly you know technical purposes conveying information, rather than writing a novel or a short story about it, it is better to be factual and only factual and nothing but factual. Next, go through other words, see how they are changed.

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INACCURATE	ACCURATE
...can be expanded up to	Can expand to
... phones that require frequent charging for phones...	...need frequent charging for power...
more powerful processor, but very small power back up	more powerful processor, but smaller power back up...
I do not prefer phones that require...	Prefer ~ like
... using it without any worries...	... without worrying about its battery...
other extras.. ... in pant pockets... ~ parts ~ a pant pocket/ in a pocket in pant



So, just as the redundancy, we have brought 348 words, we cut out of them about 200 words, and we gave submitted the assignment in 150 words because we left all that was redundant. A lot of people in India make this mistake; a lot of people in other Asian countries make this mistake learning the English language; they tend to become verbose, writing more than maybe necessary.

It is already in the first draft, but your final draft must contain all and only small words those words that are essential. Then there is the question of which word accurate word if you want to take milk. You cannot ordinarily anything human beings are capable of anything.

But ordinarily, milk is drunk best in a tumbler, in a cup, but a cake is not eaten best in a cup. Unless of course, it is a specific cupcake, where you eat the cup, where you eat the cake otherwise, its container also matters it must be accurate, the same size or a peg in a hole, the size is slightly bigger than required it becomes useless. The hole is smaller than required the peg would not go, the hole is bigger than required the peg will go easily, but peg will not stay.

So, you know that is accurate all and only exactly required length that also applies to the language it is true that many words will fit one another, where you can say fine you can say can you can say nice guy, you can you can say marvellous, you can say good, all that will fit but only one of them will be accurate that is the meaning of the word accuracy.

Look at this expression here. The first draft says, this mobile phone can be extended up to expanded up to, including some GB etc. they talk about, now why to say can be expanded up to you can simply say, can expand to, expand does not necessarily require being used in the passive voice it can remain simple, it can expand you need not be expanded.

Similarly, phones that require frequent charging for phones, why cannot we simply say phones that we frequent that require frequent recharging, more powerful processor but very small power back. No, that is not accurate you should say more powerful processor, but a smaller power backup, the smaller word is necessary otherwise, you could get confused that power there was of course more, but the backup there was smaller than the one you got now.

So, it not must not only be appropriate, but it must also be accurate, only that nothing else. So, just as for instance here, I do not prefer phones that require, then you will have to say two nouns, I do not prefer phones to other phones. Here you can change prefer to like, which is nearly the same thing and you can say, I do not like phones that like require changes.

Similarly, using it without any worries, because there are batteries, good batteries. You do not mean you do not have to worry about anything; anything will mean anything, actually, what you mean to say is, without worrying about its battery. Quite often while writing we get carried away by the force of our own emotion and we make a mistake, here is a classic case. It is not that a good cell phone will take all our worries away.

I wish it did that would not happen, what happens is the following you can use the battery without worry it will last you long, it will serve the purpose for which you bought it. Similarly, you know do not say other extras, they are the parts of the phone while describing them they say other extras, no screen is not an extra, it is a part. Battery is not an extra; it is a part. So, parts of your phone.

Then, in a pant pocket or in a pant in I keep it in my parent pockets, can do you keep it in two pockets? Can you keep one phone in two pockets? So, this is the example of inaccuracy. You can keep your phone one piece only. It is possible that two phones can be kept in one pocket.

But it is not possible under no circumstances that one mobile phone can enter two pockets. That does not happen, is it not only inaccurate, it would not get fetch you higher marks, next. The point I am making is the following: many aspects of language have very mechanical principles.

Once you see the rules, you can go on that way without making any mistakes, adding to this talk of vocabulary and sentences and using them the way I have advised that is the sure way to success to becoming a greatest speaker and writer in the language you are learning. There is another way. Just get these things by heart, write an exam, somehow pass. So, you have the knowledge, but you are not confident. The choice is yours. Thank you very much.