

## B2 学术写作训练

### 学术写作实践精析（三）

#### EXPOSITORY WRITING 说明文写作

EXPOSITORY WRITING is writing text that **informs, describes, and explains**.

❖ 这一类文体主要有两种类别：

##### 1. INFORMATIVE WRITING(信息类)

conveys information(传递信息). It's writing that tells you about something. If you know a lot about birds, stars, baseball, or anything else, and you'd like to share that knowledge with others, you want to do some informative writing.

##### 2. EXPLANATORY WRITING(解释性)

offers explanations(给出解释). It's writing that answers a question like, "How does this thing work?" Or "Why is that thing like that?" If you want to explain why the sky is blue, or how to fix a bike, or why Friday is called Friday, you'll do some explanatory writing.

#### EXPOSITORY ESSAY PURPOSE

An expository essay, with its "explain, inform, describe" form, is a perfect way to test students' knowledge in various tests or exams.

Besides, expository writing branches out into a wide array of disciplines, including:

Business

Journalism

Scientific writing

## ORGANIZATION 说明文的写作当中可以包含不同的语言组织形式

### 1. DEFINITION

Define and thoroughly describe your subject, giving details that help the reader understand what it is.

给出定义并完整地描述你的主题，给出细节帮助读者理解它是什么。

**EXAMPLE:** an essay defining the life cycle

### 2. CLASSIFICATION

Explain how your subject relates to other subjects, helping the reader understand where it fits into the broader scheme of things.

解释主题与其他主题的相关性，帮助读者通过一个更宏大的主题理解 话题。

**EXAMPLE:** an encyclopedia entry explaining how one species of seagull relates to all other species of seagulls around the world

### 3. COMPARISON/CONTRAST

Describe the similarities and the differences between two subjects.

讨论不同主题之间的相似点和差异性。

**EXAMPLE:** a history book that compares the way two different presidents led the country during a time of economic pressure, describing how they faced similar circumstances but responded to them differently

### 4. CAUSE/EFFECT

Focus on the causes behind events and their consequences

关注事件背后的原因及其后果。

**EXAMPLE:** a speech that lets kids know that if they begin to save small sums of money now, the interest on their savings will grow over time and provide them with more freedom when they get older.

## 写作方法

### INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

In informative writing an introduction is like a **preview** of what you will explain or describe. It gives the reader a glimpse of what's going to come next.

先就你的主题写一个概述，让读者知道文章的主要议题。

#### EXAMPLE:

People have been staring up at the moon, making guesses about what it must be like up there, for centuries. But it's only in the past few decades that astronomers and astronauts have begun to find solid scientific answers to that question.

After the introduction, the topic is developed with relevant facts and pieces of information that directly relate to the topic.

接下来就要给出相关的事实和有效的信息说明。

#### EXAMPLE:

Relevant: Astronauts were surprised to find out that because of the lack of atmosphere, shadows on the moon are much darker than they are on Earth.

Not Relevant: Everyone from poets to pop stars has written about what it might be like to spend time on the moon.

❖ 最常见的说明文写作内容包括：

**Definitions** 定义

**Details** 细节

**Quotes** 引用

**Examples** 举例

❖ When you include **definitions**, **details**, or **examples** it also helps to **precisely** describe the nature of the subjects discussed.

❖ **IMPRECISE EXAMPLE:**

A moonquake is a shaking fit experienced by the moon.

分析：添加细节可以提供额外的相关信息，将比较棘手的概念分解为更易于理解的段落，或者扩展读者的思路加强理解。

❖ **PRECISE EXAMPLES:**

There are four kinds of moonquakes: those caused by meteor impacts, those caused by the heat of the sun, deep ones caused by tides, and those caused by shallow internal geological shifts.

❖ **Quotes**, which report direct speech or language written by other writers, can add a firsthand account. build on formation given and offer a second verification of facts.

可以通过引用其他类别的第一手资料提供一些事实验证。

**EXAMPLE:**

Shallow moonquakes can cause a lot of motion on the surface of the moon and a lot of noise. According to Professor Clive Neal, who studies the data from the original Apollo moon landings, during some moonquakes, “The moon was ringing like a bell.”

❖ **Examples** can offer an illustration of the topic under discussion.

举例的作用当然大家就都比较熟悉了，可以对话题提供更直观的解释。

**EXAMPLE:**

Lunar dust, which is very fine and very rough, is a big threat to astronauts on the moon. For instance, it can scratch visors so badly that astronauts can barely see through them. Lunar dust has been known to almost completely disintegrate moon boots.

## MAKING A CONCLUSION

❖ 在说明文写作中，结语自然也是总结信息。然而，我们在写作时最好不要简单地重复你之前写过的内容——更好的一种方式是用合适的语言来重述并汇集信息，突出最重要的部分。

**EXAMPLE:**

Poets and pop stars might have thought there would be no need to dream about the moon after astronauts brought back reports from the surface. But with super-dark shadows, moonquakes, and strange lunar dust, there's even more to dream about than ever before.

**Transitional Phrases and Signal Words****1. Transitional Phrases and Signal Words 信号词**

You can use all the transitional phrases and signal words you use in writing arguments to write in formative and explanatory texts, too. But instead of their job being to transition between claims, reasons, and evidence, they will show the relationship between ideas and information.

**2. Domain-Specific Vocabulary 专业领域特有词汇**

- ❖ 说明文当中一定会出现一些专业领域的特有词汇，在英文中可以被叫做 Jargon。比如，医生使用医学术语；律师使用法律术语；工程师和计算机程序员使用技术术语等等。
- ❖ However, be careful with jargon! Your audience may not know domain-specific words. If the vocabulary is not common knowledge, explain the word or phrase's meaning.
- ❖ 写作时要考虑到读者对于专业词汇的理解能力，必要的时候可以加一些解释。

**EXAMPLE:**

- ❖ 1. The carnival workers would sometimes enjoy an “aba-daba”—carnival lingo(行话) for dessert cooked up in the carnival cookhouse-before going to bed.
- ❖ 2. When a lawyer says she’s going to “execute” a document, it doesn’t mean that anyone needs to fear for his or her life. In legal jargon, to “execute” something means to sign something complete a task, or carry out an agreement.

## 写作流程示例

### 1. PREWRITING: EXPOSITORY ESSAY TOPICS

- ❖ The first phase of the writing process involves brainstorming for ideas and choosing a topic. In most cases, you will be provided with some essay prompts and instructions. Carefully read them. Then, when you have a good idea of what you are expected to do, you can start searching for a perfect topic. A good topic for an expository essay should not be too broad or narrow.

#### Examples:

**The Negative Influences of Video Games** – is too broad, but if you make it more specific, for example, mention some classification of group studied, like age, gender, or other details, you will be able to narrow it down.

**How Excessively Playing Video Games Can Provoke Teen Violence** – is narrow because the subject of study and the group studied are quite specific.

- ❖ The topic should be manageable, so make sure you pick something you can address in your paper. Also, it should be relevant and significant. Finally, pick a topic that you are interested in and one you know you will be able to explain (after all, that's the main purpose of this type of essay).
- ❖ A topic can investigate pretty much anything from history to space or technology. Just find whatever engages you and go for it.

### 2. EXPOSITORY ESSAY OUTLINE

Creating an outline is vital, regardless of the type of paper you were assigned to do.

First of all, it helps to organize your thoughts and to put them in a logical sequence.

Secondly, having an outline will make the writing process simpler.

- ❖ Generally, an expository essay should consist of five paragraphs:

**Intro** – the opening clause that engages the readers, reflects the topic and main idea, and guides the reader to the main part of the text;

**Body** (3 paragraphs) – the main three paragraphs that provide the author's key points with supporting sentences (such as facts, evidence, and examples);

**Conclusion** – the last part of the paper that summarizes everything and highlights the larger significance of the paper.

- ❖ Sample expository essay outline on the topic How Excessively Playing Video Games Can Provoke Teen Violence:

### 1. Introduction

Hook - a statement, dilemma, or question that gets readers' attention, for example: 72% of teens are playing video games, with 9 out of 10 of them engaging in this pastime as a form of addiction;

Background and context for the topic: Over 200,000 homicides take place worldwide among youth between 10-29 years old. Homicide is the fourth leading cause of teen death. Psychologists insist that those 72% of teen gamers are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior, which sparks teen violence;

Thesis statement: Excessively playing video games can result in higher levels of violence among teens.

### 2. Main Body: 1st Paragraph

Topic sentence clearly defining the main point: Violent video games increase the risk of having aggressive behavior;

Supporting fact + example: Studies proving this statement;

Supporting fact + example: Real-life examples proving this statement;

Statement that analytically summarizes everything from the paragraph.

### 3. Main Body: 2nd Paragraph

Topic sentence clearly defining the main point: Video games addiction can result in social isolation and depression;

Supporting fact + examples: X% of teens report being addicted to video games;



Supporting fact + example: X% of youth report having depression;

Statement that analytically summarizes everything from the paragraph.

#### 4. Main Body: 3rd Paragraph

Topic sentence clearly defining the main point: Isolation caused by gaming addiction can grow into actual social phobia;

Supporting fact + example: Facts backed by science;

Supporting fact + example: Stats proving the statement;

Statement that analytically summarizes everything from the paragraph.

#### 5. Conclusion

Make a summary of your main ideas: The negative outcomes of excessive gaming, such as depression, isolation, violence, and social phobia, can influence each other and turn into aggression;

Restate the thesis (but do not repeat it word for word);

Connect the dots between your ideas/arguments and the broader topic;

Highlight the value of your research and reveal any unanswered questions (if needed).

### 3. DRAFTING

#### ❖ Introduction

Here are the main tips for shaping a flawless introduction:

Create a hook with a disputable question or an interesting dilemma, to attract attention;

Reveal the idea of your topic and purpose;

Make a powerful thesis statement.

#### ❖ Thesis Statement

Follow these prompts for writing a thesis statement:

Make it well defined;

Provide facts;

Help readers get the main idea of your essay;

Define the intention of your writing.



### ❖ Main Body

- Focus on a single point in each of your three body paragraphs;
- Make what each paragraph focuses on clear;
- Provide supporting examples, facts, and arguments;
- Make smooth transitions between paragraphs;
- Where appropriate, explain the value and importance of your arguments.

### ❖ Conclusion

To end your essay with a strong conclusion and leave a lasting impression on the reader, use these tricks:

- Start with a brief overview of key points, ideas, and arguments;
- Restate your thesis;
- Offer possible solutions (when appropriate);
- Explain the value of your research.

## 4. EDITING

- ❖ Writing a draft for your expository essay is just the first step. Next, you will have to carefully proofread and polish your work until it looks perfect. The best way to approach proofreading and editing is to give yourself a few days off after you have written the draft. This way, you will get back to your essay rested and will be able to look at it with a fresh mindset.
- ❖ While editing, you need to focus on grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- ❖ Apart from grammar and mechanics, pay close attention to the clarity, readability, tone, and style of your text. Is it easy to read and understand? Have you neglected to include something? Is it engaging and does it convey the main message? Ask all these questions to make sure that you end up with an excellent paper.

## 5. REVISING: EXPOSITORY ESSAY RUBRIC

- ❖ How can you know for sure that you've nailed your expository essay? **Follow this comprehensive checklist to determine whether your work is good enough or still needs improvement:**
- ❖ Is the thesis statement clear and concise? Does it appear near to the end of the introductory paragraph? Does it state your topic and motives for writing?
- ❖ Does the paper follow a logical flow of information and give an unbiased analysis of the topic?
- ❖ Do you use relevant evidence and examples to support your thesis?
- ❖ Does every paragraph in the main body focus on a single point? Does each include a topic sentence and supporting evidence?
- ❖ Are all facts and supporting arguments valid? Do they add value?
- ❖ Are there any divergences from the topic or unnecessary information?
- ❖ Does the conclusion highlight the significance of the thesis and summarize the key points?
- ❖ Are there smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs?
- ❖ Is the word choice good and precise?
- ❖ Are there any errors or gaps left after editing?
- ❖ Is the essay engaging, clear, easy to read, and effective?
- ❖ Is it formatted according to the instructions given?

## EXPOSITORY ESSAY EXAMPLE

### The Fear of Success

- ❖ Everyone has probably heard about the fear of failure. In fact, it has become such a popular explanation and excuse for not doing something that it often sounds almost trivial—even though it is a real psychological condition causing a lot of distress to those who suffer from it. At the same time, there is another, somewhat

similar phobia which is often overlooked or neglected as insignificant: the fear of success.

- ❖ At first glance, it might seem absurd: why would anyone be afraid of succeeding in his or her own life? Why would someone avoid—subconsciously or intentionally—accomplishing achievements, reaching goals, and fulfilling their dreams? The devil, as always, is in the details: the number of reasons for a person with the fear of success to worry is large. Unlike some people might think, many of these reasons are rational. Let us take a closer look at what may cause such a phobia and how it manifests itself.
- ❖ To start with, let us figure out what success means. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines success as a favorable and/or desired outcome (Merriam-Webster). Expanding this definition, we may say that succeeding means achieving a desired result in a certain enterprise, activity, occupation, and so on. Each person has his or her criteria of success, but rather often they can be reduced to several categories: achieving a certain level of financial welfare; social recognition, fame, or popularity; professional growth and development; a happy marriage and parenthood, and so on. What is common for any form of success is that it can change a person's life—and this is one of the main reasons why people can be so afraid of it.
- ❖ All of us are familiar with the expression “to get out of one's comfort zone.” Usually, it implies doing something unusual for us, something new, risky, etc. This is exactly what people with the fear of success are unlikely and unwilling to do. Success implies doing new things, being recognized in new ways, new workloads, new contacts, new demands and responsibilities—in other words, in case a person succeeds, there is too much novelty to deal with. Besides, getting into the spotlight implies being scrutinized, criticized, and discussed (99U). Public opinion can be harsh, even if “public” means ten people more than usual. Not

everyone is prepared for such attention: even the fear of standing out, being a part of an ancient survival strategy, finds a way to manifest itself in such peculiar forms. It is much safer to stay on charted territory, going through the same routine over and over again, but keeping a habitual and comfortable lifestyle intact.

- ❖ A part of this fear of novelty and change is related to personality. An individual who fears success might feel he or she is going to change beyond recognition upon becoming successful. To some extent, this is similar to the fear of death: ceasing to exist as the person who you are familiar with—and being “reborn” as a different individual, with a different set of values, habits, surrounding, occupations, and so on. This fear comes from a premise that the changes success brings require a person to completely abandon his or her older self (99U). In reality, change implies developing new qualities and habits atop of older ones. Your “older” personality does not disappear, you do not stop existing—you just acquire new traits, skills, and outlooks.
- ❖ Sometimes the roots of the fear of success go deep into childhood traumas. If you were a talented child capable of writing poems or painting, for example, your peers might not accept you. Children can be cruel—not because they are evil, but because they have yet to learn compassion, empathy, and morals. So, they can attack those who stand out: because of fear, a lack of understanding, jealousy, or for other reasons. Anyways, a person who suffered from bullying in childhood may associate standing out, which success often implies, with being ostracized, and may try to avoid it by all means (Loner Wolf). Self-doubt or feeling not worthy of success may also originate from childhood.
- ❖ The fear of success is a cunning and stealthy enemy. People nowadays are aware of the fear of failure—but many underestimate its “twin.” Originating from childhood traumas, the fear of standing out, novelty, and being a subject of public

attention, the fear of success manifests itself in a number of ways. Reminding yourself that you are worthy of success, or counselling a psychologist, might be an effective step to eliminate this fear.

### Works Cited

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