# 怎样写好一篇文章?

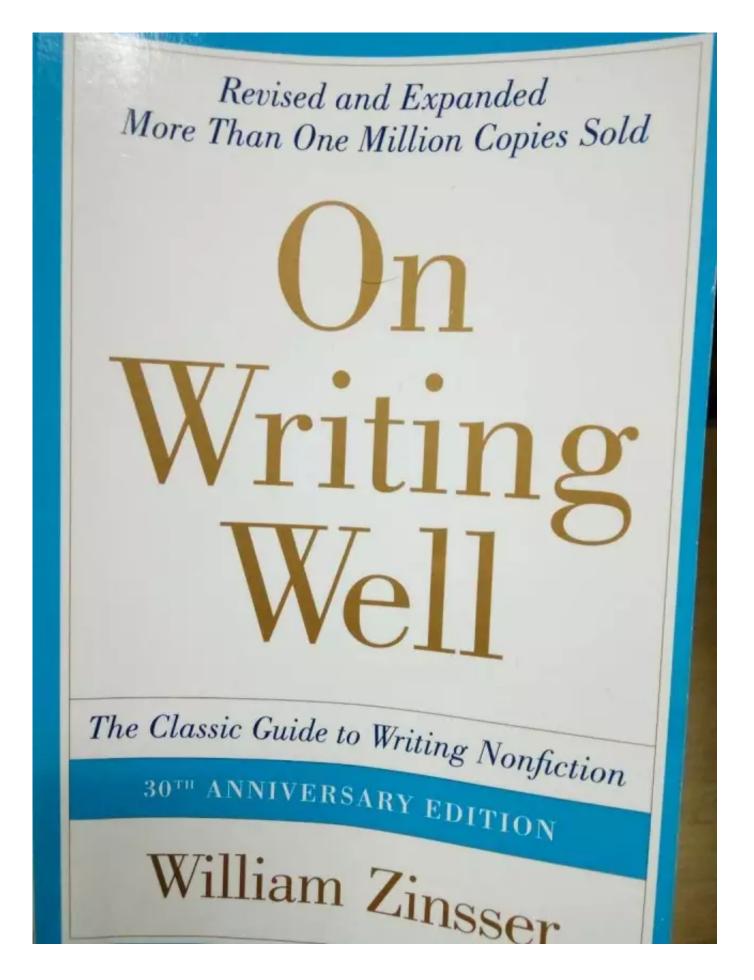
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在英文写作爱好者的眼中,On Writing Well 几乎是圣经一般的存在——这本书从1976年推出至今,已经再版七次,图书总计卖出超过两百万册,影响了无数美国人以及海外人士。作者 William Zinsser (威廉·津瑟)被《华盛顿邮报》称为是50年来最具影响力的写作教师之一。

在长达半个世纪的时间里,William Zinsser 几乎只做两件事情:写作,教写作。他为各大报刊撰稿,在耶鲁教书,帮美国政府和企业做培训,在这个过程中,他积累了极其丰富的写作和教学经验。On Writing Well 是他毕生写作经验的总结。阅读这本书是一种享受,在书中你见不到条条框框以及僵硬的说教,作者更像是你的一名老朋友,与你促膝长谈,告诉你应该怎样去用好每一个词,怎样去谋篇布局,怎样去写好一篇文章。可以说,这是一本有温度的写作指导书籍。

我在两年前曾经读过这本书,最近又花了几周时间把它重读了一遍,读的过程中又有了很多新的收获,在这里写写我的书评。



在很多人的固有印象中,会写作是一种天赋,是上天赐予少数人的礼物,但事实并不是如此。写作这种技能并不是少数人的特权,而是任何一个人在经过科学训练后都能获得的一种能力。对于写作,我们喜欢用"文章本天成,妙手偶得之"来形容一篇佳作的产生过程,但

更多情况下,好文章并不是灵感突现的产物,而是在粗糙原稿上无数次修改后的结果。就像 William Zinsser 在书中所说,要动手写,写完后大声把你的文字读出来,修改,再继续 改,一直改到自己满意为止。好文章是改出来的。



Writing is hard work. A clear sentence is no accident. Very few sentences come out right the first time, or even the third time. Remember this in moments of despair. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it is hard. It's one of the hardest things that people do

— William Zinsser —

AZ QUOTES

无论是对于英文写作还是中文写作,最重要的是动手开始写,而不是寻找灵感——绝大部分情况下,我们并不是因为有了灵感才开始写作,而是开始写作后才有了灵感。这一点不难理解:写作本身就是深度思考的过程,脑海中原本不清晰的逻辑和概念在写作中会慢慢理清,思路也会慢慢打开。静下心来,开始动笔,这是写出好文章的第一步。

除此之外,我们还需要掌握一些基本的写作技巧。William Zinsser 结合他多年的写作经历,在书中为我们列出了一系列建议。作为外语学习者,我们在写作时应该注意以下这几点原则:

# 1.简洁性(Clarity)

简洁性是On Writing Well 整本书的灵魂。作者在书中不断强调这一理念,而且也身体力行——On Writing Well 本身就是简洁性写作的典范,你在书中几乎找不到一个赘词以及模棱两可的句子。为了写出简洁有力的文章,我们要学会做减法,能用一个词表达清楚意思的,就不要使用两个词。

很多副词其实都可以从句子中删除。

比如这个句子 "The radio blared loudly", blare 本身就带有"刺耳,响亮"的含义,后面没必要再加个副词来形容。直接说 "The radio blared", "He clenched his teeth tightly"也可以简化为"He clenched his teeth".

大多数形容词也可以从句子中划掉,特别是当形容词修饰的名词本身已经带有相同的属性时。举个例子,描写水仙花时有人会写"yellow daffodils",这里 yellow 是赘词,因为水仙花本来就是黄色的。如果你真的要强调这束水仙花与众不同,比如它是红色的,那就大大方方地写 "a bunch of red daffodils",如果不是,那就省略掉形容词。

除了副词和形容词之外,我们也要学会使用动词以精简表达。

举个例子,中国学生很喜欢写"Different people have different opinions",句子又长又啰嗦,直接写"Opinions vary", "There are many problems" 可以改写为 "Problems abound","She decided to make friends with the boy"则可以简化成 "She decided to befriend the boy"。动词是一个句子的灵魂,一个好动词能让整个句子熠熠生辉,简洁有力。

类似这样的例子还有很多,平时多积累,多学会用挑剔的眼光去修改自己写的句子,这样才能写出简洁有力的文章。

## 2.衔接和连贯性(Coherence and Cohesion)

好文章一定是严谨而连贯的,句子和句子之间就像锁链一样,在逻辑上环环相扣。读者从开头到结尾顺着链条走下去能够清晰理解作者的思路。William Zinsser 在书中举了一个例子,你可以读一读,思考一下这几个句子是怎样做到互相承接的:

What struck me most powerfully when I got to Timbuktu was that the streets were of **sand**. I suddenly realized that **sand** is very different from **dirt**. Every town starts

with **dirt** streets that eventually get paved as the inhabitants prosper and subdue their environment. But **sand** represents defeat. A city with streets of **sand** is a city at the edge.

作者用 sand 和 dirt 这两个词将上面的5个句子给连接起来了,逻辑非常清晰。这种连接方式叫做语义承接(通过上下文之间的承接关系来自然行文),这属于"暗承接"。还有另一种连接方式叫"明承接",即通过连接词(比如 because, as, while, if, however, therefore, although 等)将句子有机连接起来。实际写作时这两种连接方式一般会互相配合使用,比如下面的雅思作文片段:

I tend to agree that young children can be negatively affected by too much time spent on the computer everyday. **This** is <u>partly because</u> sitting in front of a screen for too long can be damaging to both the eyes and the physical posture of a young child, <u>regardless of</u> what **they** are using the computer for.

更多关于文章连贯性的说明可以参考我之前写的一篇文章:为什么你写的文章总是缺乏逻辑感?

### 3. 在写作中投入思想和情感

好文章应该是有温度的。一篇文章的背后是一个活生生的人,而不是一台冰冷的写作机器。读者希望看到有人情味的文章——这一点无论是对于虚构类写作还是非虚构类写作来说,都同样重要。带着情感去写作,少一点官话套话,多一点人文气息,文章才有说服力,才能让读者感同身受。

如果写作时把情感从文字中剥离开来,你可能会写出这样的文字:

Objective consideration of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

这样的段落读者是不愿意看下去的,因为句子空洞而僵硬,无法让人感受到一丝温度。

带有人文气息的文字是什么样的?我想起了一个例子:

No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is that they do respect it, respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves. Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.

The judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit is reversed.

It is so ordered.

这是去年美国大法官Anthony Kennedy 对同性恋结婚法案的宣判词。与人们印象中严肃刻板的法律文书相比,这一份宣判词写得非常有人情味,从字里行间可以读出法官对LGBT群体追求婚姻和爱情这一人类基本权利的肯定。也正因为这一点,它引起了很多人的共鸣,在社交网络上广为传播。

带着情感去写作并不是一件很难的事情,写作时尝试着把"我"代入文章中,少用陈词滥调(cliché)和官话套话。

这一理念可以应用到商务邮件写作中。Shirley Taylor 在她的《商务英语写作指南》中提出了"自然化表达"的原则,即:少用繁文赘语,多说人话。

举个例子,很多人习惯了在邮件中使用标准而无意义的套话,如"Please revert to me soonest possible","Should you require any further clarification please do not hesitiate to contact the undersigned",而收件人更愿意看到的其实是这样的句子"I hope to hear from you soon." "Please give me a call on 123456 if you have any questions.",表达思想和感情才是第一位的。

尝试着在写作中多投入一些思想,个性和情感,这样才能写出好文章。

"Writers are obviously at their most natural when they write in the first person. Writing is an intimate transaction between two people, conducted on paper, and it will go well to the extent that it retains its humanity."

WILLIAM ZINSSER	
 "ON WRITING WELL"	

## 4.多查词典

William Zinsser 的桌子上常年放着韦氏新世界和Roget's Thesaurus这两本词典。在他看来,一本好的词典对于写作者的作用就如同韵书对于作曲者的作用一样大。词典可以让你找到更加精准的词语,让你明白词与词之间细微的区别。背过GRE单词的同学可能都认识 "cajole", "wheedle", "coax" 这几个单词,它们都能表示"哄骗",但词与词之间的含义又不尽相同。怎么精确使用这几个词?去翻一翻辨析词典吧

# USE THE RIGHT WORD

# induce, cajole, coax, persuade, urge, wheedle:

These words mean to make one's will or views prevail over those of another in various ways. **Induce** means to get another to do something by appealing to his reason: to *induce* a man to stop drinking; to *induce* a teenage driver to obey the traffic laws.

Persuade is the most general term and may be substituted for any of others. However, in its most specific sense, it means to attempt to produce a desired action by an appeal to the

# 5.将自己写的文章读出来

怎样检验自己写的文章好坏?一个简单的办法是:将它大声读出来。将一篇文章读上几遍,读的过程中,你会发现句子中那些"不和谐"的地方。比如,单词的搭配不对,介词用错

了,句子写得太长了,句子之间的连接过渡不自然... 我们在阅读时,并不仅仅是在"看"文字,内心一直都有个声音在默读着文章。如果文章读起来很别扭,那一定是什么地方出问题了。停下来,找到这个问题,修改后再继续读,直到你满意为止。

好文章一定是悦耳的,你可以大声读一读下面这几个例子,感受一下句子的节奏和韵律感:

- 1)The Middle East had a wretched year, but there were outbreaks of generosity. Jordan and Lebanon hosted far more refugees from the bombs, bullets and beheadings of Syria and Iraq than any rich European nation.
- 2)Passengers complained that their trips were dark, dank and dangerous, that the foul air left them coughing "like a boy with his first cigar".
- 3)Lawmakers have been arguing ever since over revisions to the all-important Land Administration Law that would put reforms into place. But bickering in the capital has not put a stop to tinkering in the provinces.
- 4)That so many people in so many different parts of the world are prepared to risk so much for this idea is testimony to its enduring appeal.

"Also bear in mind, when you're choosing your words and stringing them together, how they sound. This may seem absurd: readers read with their eyes. But in fact they hear what they are reading far more than you realize."



## 6.多模仿

大量模仿是写作进阶的必经之路,很多知名作者在写作生涯中都曾模仿和学习过其他人的作品。模仿并不意味着你会失去自己的风格,相反,这是一个推陈出新的过程,通过学习其他

人在遣词造句和谋篇布局上的巧妙之处,你才能取长补短,发展出自己独特的风格。

有哪些好的英文值得我们模仿?William Zinsser 在书中力推纽约客,海明威以及莎士比亚的作品,他认为这些都是简洁化写作的代表。作为外语学习者,我们要学会模仿优秀的英文作品,比如经济学人,纽约客等外刊上的精品文章,文笔优秀的原版书,甚至是美国总统的竞选演讲稿(这些演讲稿都出自专业竞选团队之手,无论从文笔还是逻辑上来说,都是精品中的精品)。善于模仿,才能善于写作。

除了上面提到的这几点,书中还给出了很多实用的写作指南,比如写好文章开头和结尾,少用抽象概念词,多使用主动动词,能用that 就不要用which 等,每一点都值得英文写作爱好者深思。建议每个人都去认真将这本书读上三四遍——相信我,每读一遍,你都会有新的收获。

美国的《图书馆杂志》曾经给 On Writing Well 这样的评价 "Not since The Element of Style has there been a guide to writing as well presented and readable as this one. A love and respect for the language is evident on every page." 相信任何一个读过这本书的人都会同意这句话。在书中的每一页你都能感受到William Zinsser 对语言发自内心的热爱,对写作标准的严苛和尊敬,对简洁和人性化表达孜孜不倦的追求。这也正是我们需要学习的地方——热爱语言,尊重自己写的每一个字,带着情感去创作,这样才能写出优秀的作品。

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