



Part One

Manuscript Form

As you are learning to write, you should have a clear idea of what is good manuscript form. You should do everything—writing the **title**, leaving **margins**, **indenting**, **capitalizing**, and **dividing words**—according to generally accepted rules. Whenever you write something, work carefully, write neatly and clearly, and try to make as few mistakes as possible. Before handing in your essay or exercise, proofread it once or twice, because you may need to make some final corrections and changes. If you always work in this way, you are sure to make progress.

I. Arrangement

Either lined exercise books or regular office paper (size 19×27 centimeters) may be used. To make your handwriting easy to read and provide room for corrections, you had better write on every other line, and write on only one side of the paper if it is thin.

Leave a margin on each side of the paper—about two centimeters at the top and a centimeter and a half at the left, the right and the bottom. In an exercise book the top and bottom margins are already there, so you need only to draw a vertical line to mark the left margin.

You cannot make the right margin very straight, but you must not write to the edge of the paper. When there is not enough space left for a word, write it on the next line if it cannot be divided. In other words, there must be some blank space on the right side of the paper.

Write the **title** in the middle of the first line. **Capitalize the first and last words** of the title and **all other words** (including words following hyphens in compound words) **except articles, coordinating conjunctions** (*and, or, but, nor, for*), **prepositions**, and the **to in infinitives**:

My First Visit to the Palace Museum
The People without a Country
Rules to Abide By
Dickens and David Copperfield
What Can the Artist Do in the World of Today?
What Reform Means to China
The Myth of a "Negro Literature"
The English-Speaking People in Quebec

No period is used at the end of a title. Use a question mark if the title is a direct question, but do not use one if it is an indirect question. Use quotation marks with quotes or titles of articles; and underline (or italicize if you use a computer) names of books.



Task 1 Capitalize the following titles:

1. where i lived, and what i lived for
2. are transgenic crops safe
3. well-known dramatists of the ming dynasty
4. a day to remember
5. approaches to teaching english as a foreign language
6. criticisms on the ending of mark twain's *adventures of huckleberry finn*

Indent the first line of every paragraph, leaving a space of about **four or five letters**.

For paging use Arabic numerals without parentheses or periods in the upper right-hand corner of all pages. The first page need not be marked.

Do not begin a line with a comma, a period, a semicolon, a colon, a question mark or an exclamation mark. Do not end a line with the first half of a pair of brackets, parentheses, or quotation marks. The hyphen that indicates a divided word is put at the end, not at the beginning, of a line.

II. Capitalization

Capitals are used mainly at three places: the first words of sentences, key words in titles, and proper names.

Not only a complete sentence, but a sentence fragment treated as a sentence, should begin with a capital letter.

The first word of quoted speech (words put between quotation marks) is capitalized. If a quoted sentence is broken into two parts and put in two pairs of quotation marks, the second part does not begin with a capital letter unless the first word is a proper noun or an adjective derived from a proper noun:

He said, "My trip to Mount Tai was interesting but tiring."
"My trip to Mount Tai," he said, "was interesting but tiring."
I asked, "When do you usually go home?"
She answered, "At weekends."

Common nouns that are parts of proper names are capitalized:

Common Nouns

a famous university
a broad street
a large lake

Proper Names

Peking University
Chang'an Street
Lake Erie

the president of the university	President Brown
middle, age	the Middle Ages
labor, day	Labor Day
people, republic	the People's Republic of China

Words derived from proper names are usually capitalized:

Marxist	Darwinism	Hegelian
Confucian	Latinize	Vietnamize

But proper names or their derivatives may become common nouns, verbs or adjectives:

mackintosh (after Charles Mackintosh, a Scottish chemist)
 chauvinistic (derived from Nicolas Chauvin, a devoted adherent of Napoleon)
 quixotic (after Don Quixote, hero of the novel of the same name)
 anglicize (from the Latin word *Anglicus*, meaning English)

III. Word Division

When you write near the edge of the paper, take a look at the space left. If it is not enough for the word you are going to write, you have to decide whether to divide the word or to write it on the next line. Never squeeze a word into the margin.

The general principle is to divide a word according to its syllables and never put the hyphen at the beginning of a line. Pay attention to the following:

One-syllable words like *through*, *march*, *brain* and *pushed* cannot be divided.

Do not write one letter of a word at the end or at the beginning of a line, even if that one letter makes up a syllable, such as *a•lone*, *trick•y*.

Do not put a two-letter syllable at the beginning of a line, like *hat•ed*, *cab•in*.

Avoid separating proper names of people or places, like *Chi•na*, *Aus•ten*.

Divide hyphenated words only at the hyphen: *father-in-law*, *empty-handed*.

Do not divide words in a way that may mislead the reader: *pea•cock*, *re•ally*.

Do not divide the last word on a page. Instead, write the whole word on the next page.

Divide words with prefixes or suffixes between the prefix or suffix and the base part of the word: *re•state•ment*, *un•relent•ing*.

Divide two-syllable words with double consonants between the two consonants: *strug•gle*, *shat•ter*.

Dividing words is not always easy. When in doubt, consult a dictionary (see Part Two, VI).



Task 2 Divide the following words according to general rules:

alive	setting	sister-in-law
handy	correctness	gratitude
bonus	permission	sociable
thought	dictatorship	far-reaching

IV. Punctuation

How to use different punctuation marks will be discussed in detail in Part Ten. The following are a few basic rules which all students learning to write should remember:

Use a period (full stop) at the end of a complete sentence, however short it is.

Do not use a comma to join two coordinate clauses; use a comma and a conjunction, or a semicolon.

Make your commas different from your periods. A comma has a little tail (,); a period is a dot (.), not a tiny circle (。), which is used in written Chinese.

Use a question mark at the end of a direct question; do not use one at the end of an indirect question:

“Have you done your exercises?” the teacher asked.
 The teacher asked whether we had done our exercises.

Use the exclamation mark only after an emphatic interjection or words that express very strong emotion. Do not overuse it.

Put direct speech between quotation marks. The subject and verb that introduce a quotation may be put before, after, or in the middle of the quotation:

She said, “We have decided to take the examination.”
 “We have decided to take the examination,” **she said**.
 “We have decided,” **she said**, “to take the examination.”

Pay attention to the way the three sentences are punctuated. In the first sentence, “She said” is followed by a comma; in the second, the quotation closes with a comma and “she” is in small letters; in the third, “decided” and “she said” are followed by commas, and the second half of the quotation begins with a small letter. In short, the quotation and “she said” are treated as one sentence; only the first word of the quotation has to be capitalized.

Task 3 Punctuate the following passage and use capitals where necessary:

we entered the room jane looked around and asked where is the cat

she must have run away I answered she doesn't like to stay at home
 we must go and find her jane said let's go
 at this moment the cat walked out from under the chair

V. Handwriting

Write carefully so that your handwriting can be read easily. Be sure to make your capitals a little bigger and higher than your small letters, make your *a*'s different from your *o*'s, and your *n*'s different from your *u*'s, dot your *i*'s and *j*'s, and cross your *t*'s. Leave a little space (about one letter) after a comma and a slightly bigger space (about two letters) after a period.

When you want to cross out a word, do not use brackets to enclose it, but draw a thick line across it. When you want to add a word, write it above, not below, the line of words you have written with a clear sign showing where it is to be inserted.

There are two common ways of writing the letters: one is to form loops and the other is to print (to write without joining the letters). Both are good, but you had better stick to one of the two styles.

Task 4 Copy two or three paragraphs from a book; try to write neatly and pay attention to handwriting and manuscript form.



Keys for Reference

Task 1

1. Where I Lived, and What I Lived For
2. Are Transgenic Crops Safe?
3. Well-Known Dramatists of the Ming Dynasty
4. A Day to Remember
5. Approaches to Teaching English as a Foreign Language
6. Criticisms on the Ending of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Task 2

a-live	set-ting	sister-in-law
han-dy	cor-rect-ness	grat-i-tude
bo-nus	per-mis-sion	so-cia-ble
thought	dic-ta-tor-ship	far-reaching



Task 3

We entered the room. Jane looked around and asked,

“Where is the cat?”

“She must have run away,” I answered. “She doesn’t stay at home.”

“We must go and find her,” Jane said.

“Let’s go.”

At this moment the cat walked out from under the chair.



Part Two Diction

Diction is the choice and use of words. The English language has a very large vocabulary: as many as 400,000 words are collected in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Of course no one knows or need to use so many words. Only a small part of them are used by ordinary people for ordinary purposes. Students learning to write should learn to use the words that are most useful and most often used to express themselves. Sometimes one may use the wrong words, but more often the words one uses are not entirely wrong, but inappropriate, inexact, unidiomatic or uninteresting. A basic knowledge of diction may be of help.

I. Levels of Words

The words that are often used may be divided, from a stylistic point of view, into three types: **formal**, **common**, and **informal**.

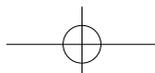
Formal words may also be called learned words, or literary words, or “big” words. They mainly appear in formal writing, such as scholarly or theoretical works, political and legal documents, and formal lectures and addresses. Many such words contain three or more than three syllables; most of them are of Greek or Latin origin. They are seldom used in daily conversation, except for special purposes. Here is a paragraph from a scholarly paper which contains some of the features of formal English:

There is nothing new in the recognition, within a given language, of a distinction between common usage and uses of the language for more restricted purposes and often enough, perhaps characteristically, more elevated purposes. The monolithic nature of English is not questioned when literary essayists like Emerson contrast poetry and common speech. The latter is recognized in America to be the proper subject for the investigation of linguists who, however, now show some incipient inclination to investigate poetry, too, and other noncasual utterances in a given language.

—C. F. Voegelin

There are only three sentences in this paragraph; all of them are long and involved. And there are in it quite a few formal or learned words, such as *recognition*, *characteristically*, *elevated*, *monolithic*, *investigation*, *incipient*, *inclination*, *noncasual*, and *utterances*. Long sentences and formal words are appropriate here because the paper, which discusses a rather complex question, needs them to be theoretically clear and exact.

Most of the words in the paragraph, however, are those that people use every day, and appear in all kinds of writing. Because of this, they are called **common** words. Read the following paragraph:





When I was a kid, and reading every science fiction book in the local library, I used to wonder exactly how the future would happen. By that I don't mean what the future would be *like*—science fiction already told me that—but rather how we'd actually get there. Science fiction books seemed to agree, for example, that in the future there would be no money—all transactions would be made via identity cards and centralized computers. But that seemed dubious to me: how, I wondered, are you going to get everybody to give up money in the first place?

—Michael Rogers

In this paragraph, except one or two words that are informal, like *kid*, and one or two that are a little formal, like *transactions* and *dubious*, all the words are commonly used words. The sentences are much shorter and simpler than those in the preceding paragraph. Such vocabulary and sentence structure fit the content of the paragraph, as it describes the thoughts of a child.

There are words which are mainly used in **informal** or familiar conversation. They seldom appear in formal writing, and in literary works their main use is to record people's thoughts and dialogs. They are usually short words of one or two syllables and most of them are of Saxon origin (i.e., not borrowed from Greek, Latin, or French). We may call them informal words, such as *guts* (meaning courage), *guy* (man), and *hassle* (bother).

Here is a paragraph with some of these words:

You have your tension. Sometimes you come close to having an accident, that upsets you. You just escape maybe by a hair or so. Sometimes maybe you get a disgruntled passenger on there, and starts a big argument. Traffic. You have someone who cuts you off or stops in front of the bus. There's a lot of tension behind that. You got to watch all the time. You're watchin' the drivers, you're watchin' other cars. Most of the time you have to drive for the other drivers, to avoid hitting them. So you take the tension home with you.

—Studs Terkel

This is part of a talk given by a Chicago driver. He uses very colloquial words and expressions like *there's*, *you're*, *by a hair or so*, *on there*, *cuts you off*, and *you got to*. But most of the words he uses are common words.

Thus there are three levels of words, with the formal or learned at the top, the informal at the bottom, and the common in the middle. Common words are good for all kinds of writing; formal words are as a rule seldom used in informal writing, while informal words are seldom used in formal writing, unless for some special purpose or effect.

These are all words of standard English, which is used by all educated speakers of the language. There are words which are used only by special groups of people for special effect. Among these are slang words, dialectal words and certain words that are often used by uneducated speakers.

Slang words are highly informal; they may be vivid and interesting, but they may, when used inappropriately, make the writer or speaker sound offensive or funny:

On hearing that his father had *kicked* the *bucket*, we wrote him a letter to express our sympathies. The big banquet held in honor of the distinguished guests was really *neat*.

Because of the slang expressions, the first sentence does not really sound sympathetic, and the second one is not serious in tone.

In the following passage a farmer said some angry words about the school teacher who had taken his pupils out on a field trip:

I'll attend to that myself in th' mornin'. I'll take keer o' 'im. He ain't from this county nohow. I'll go down there in th' mornin' and see 'im. Lettin' you leave your books and gallivant all over th' hills. What kind of a school is it nohow! Didn't do that, my son, when I's a little shaver in school.

—Jesse Stuart

The farmer's dialect is shown in his pronunciation: he omits certain sounds and pronounces *-ing* like *-in* and *care* like *keer*. He uses *ain't* for *isn't*, *I's* for *I was*, and *nohow* for *anyhow*. These words, which may be used by uneducated speakers, are not of standard vocabulary. *A little shaver* is a slang expression meaning a little boy.

Such nonstandard (or substandard) words and expressions are often seen in stories describing poorly educated people. Foreign students of English need to understand them, but should not try to use them in speech or writing.

Task 1 Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions:

1. From what type of book is this passage taken? What do you think is the purpose of the book?
2. Is the book written for scientists or for ordinary readers?
3. Are there slang expressions in the passage? Are there formal words in it? Give examples.
4. Is the diction appropriate for the content of the following passage? Give reasons.

Language is our facility to talk to each other. The word 'talk' is used not merely to avoid a rather more technical and high-sounding word like 'communicate'; talk is more precise and more relevant to the special nature of human language than 'communicate'. In the first place, all creatures—cat, sparrow, and bee—can be said to *communicate* with each other to some extent. They can attract each other's attention, warn of danger, woo their mates, and direct the way to food. We are still learning just how well animals can communicate with each other, but there can be no doubt that animal communication is wholly rudimentary as compared with the complex and subtle control of language possessed by even the least intelligent or least educated English tramp or Australian aboriginal. It is



therefore appropriate to say that language involves 'talk' to emphasize that language is a peculiarly human activity.

—Randolph Quirk

II. The Meaning of Words

The **meaning** of a word has two aspects: **denotative** and **connotative**. A word's denotation is what it literally means, as defined by the dictionary; its connotation is the feeling or idea suggested by it.

For instance, *country*, *nation*, *state* and *land* have more or less the same denotation and may all be translated into *guojia* [国家] in Chinese, but their connotations are quite different. *Country* refers to an area of land and its population and government, *nation* emphasizes the people of a country, *state* refers to the government or political organization of a country, and *land* is less precise but more literary and emotive than country.

an island *country*; neighboring *countries*

In area China is the third largest *country* in the world.

a peace-loving *nation*; the awakening *nations* of Africa

The modernization program has won the support of the whole *nation*.

state organs; *state*-owned enterprises

China is my native *land*.

As compared here, these four words may be said to be synonyms. English is particularly rich in synonyms as a result of incorporating words from other languages over the centuries. But we should remember that it is difficult to find two words that are exactly the same in meaning and use. They may be different in stylistic level, in the degree of emphasis, in emotional coloring, in tone, and in collocation.

Generally speaking, words of Anglo-Saxon origin are often common or informal, whereas those of Latin or French origin are often learned or formal. Look at these words:

ask	time	rise
question	age	mount
interrogate	epoch	ascend

In each group the first word is from Anglo-Saxon and the second and third from French or Latin. The first one is clearly more common or colloquial.

Big and *large* are both commonly used words, but *large* is slightly more formal and may be used to describe things that are unusually big, so it is more emphatic than *big*. *Huge*, which is more literary than these two words, means extremely large, and is more emphatic than *large*.

