

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In this course you will practice writing and sometimes speaking. Writing and speaking are means of communicating with words. You have an idea or a feeling; you try to express this idea or feeling to another person. If you use your words well, the other person will understand what you say; your effort will be successful.

Sometimes, of course, communication is very easy. You use words every day to communicate: “I’d like a plate of chicken curry with rice, please,” or “I’m sorry, ma’m, but I haven’t finished my homework.” These are sentences you might say every day, and communication is 100% successful. Why? Well, for one thing you are sincere. You really mean what you say. For another, you are talking to the right person. If you said the first sentence to a teacher and the second sentence to a waitress you wouldn’t communicate very well, would you? But usually communication is easy. You just think of what you want to say, and you say it plainly to someone who will be interested in it.

The same, generally, is true for writing. In some ways writing is different from speaking because writing requires better organization and planning. When you write you can’t stop suddenly and say, “Oh, excuse me, I mean....,” But generally, in writing as in speaking, you think of what you want to say and you say as plainly as you can.

You may say, “Yes, that’s right, but speaking or writing in English is harder.” And we agree. In English you don’t yet have the command of structure nor the choice of words to express yourself as well as you do in Thai. What you need to improve your using of English is practice. That’s what this class is for.

This class will concentrate on language as expression, writing expression. In order to gain mastery of language the student must use the language to communicate. You will be asked to express your ideas and feelings, by writing in English. If you succeed in making people understand what you mean you will pass this course.

This 15 week course will be divided into 3 parts: letter writing, writing about reading, and writing for school newspaper. The final exam for this course will cover the three kinds of writing which are taught. The exam will be two hours and a half long. About one hour will be given to each kind of writing.

Special notes for students

Students who cannot attend the class regularly should possess their own textbooks and follow the syllabus closely. They may ask some questions and submit exercises for correcting to the instructors by mail. They should address the mail to the instructor according to the section of registration:

. (Name of the instructor)
Department of English
Faculty of Humanities
Ramkhamhaeng University, Bangkok 10240

Some special notes and suggestions on writing

The aims of the writing of this course are to teach and give practice in the following areas:

1. Practice using English
2. Develop clarity of expression
3. Communicate an idea or feeling
4. Write easily without painful pauses
5. Describe in writing something heard or seen or imagined
6. Get experience in writing letters, about reading, and news.

Sometimes compositions are written in class, sometimes outside class. In the latter, the teacher is more likely to give you several days' time to consider and write your paper: You will also be able to revise and rewrite carefully.

The kind of compositions you write in class is called an **impromptu** theme, which means that it is written with very little previous preparation. This kind of practice is good for you because much of the writing which you will do regularly, particularly for tests and examinations in school subjects, will be of this variety.

Because you have a limited amount of time, your teacher will not expect a long composition. Usually this kind of writing is limited to a paragraph or two; it is rarely longer than 150 or 200 words at most. Furthermore, the impromptu theme is usually written in pencil to permit quick changes by eraser. Then often, after returning the papers, the teacher will ask that the composition be revised and rewritten in ink.

In impromptu writing you will find that the teacher will give you the subject or perhaps a choice of subjects, although he will sometimes leave the choice of topic entirely up to **you**. Such topics will be on subjects which all of the class can handle immediately. They will be general in nature, dealing with experiences which are common to all of us. The teacher may ask you to relate some interesting experience you have had, describe a person or a place **you** know well, or explain some activities or tasks in which you regularly engage. Often, he may

give you a brief quotation, ask you to think it over for a few minutes, and then ask you to write a paragraph or two commenting on it.

Whatever you are asked to do, get started at once. Take a little time to think over what you are going to say, of course; but, think with a pencil in your hand. As ideas come to you, write them down in well-formed sentences if you can, but in fragments and phrases if you must. You might indicate, by underlying, which **ideas are** most important. Any outline, regardless of its form, will be of great value to your writing.

When you do this kind of writing, the clarity and purpose of your preliminary thinking and planning are especially important. Generally, your **alotted** time will be a single period perhaps 40-50 minutes, and you must allow some of that time for thinking as well as writing. If the topic is a difficult one, you may need to spend even more time thinking than writing in order to know how you will arrange and compose your ideas. Remember that in a short piece of writing, too many ideas can be fatal. It is best to present one or two ideas, carefully formed and expressed. If you try to say too much, your writing will read like a catalogue or a telephone directory. Have one or two ideas and state them strongly and clearly with examples and illustrations.

Also, there will be little time for revising and writing. Even so, if you can, allow some time near the end of the period for reading over what you have written and for correcting whatever weaknesses or errors you see. Most of the time, though, the paper that you hand in at the end of the class period will be the first draft, pretty much as you wrote it.

You must decide before you begin writing about how long it will take you to say what you want to say. The first few times you try impromptu writing, you may misjudge your time and write much less than you intended, or try to write more than you **alotted** time for. However, don't worry, for as you gain experience, impromptu writing will come more and more easily to you.

Make your writing as lively as you know how. Write in the way which is entirely natural to you, of course; but use anecdotes, examples, and illustrations whenever you can. Above all, be clear. Some students do their best writing in impromptu compositions because they do not have time to get so worried over the assignment that they no longer think like themselves. They write the way they think and so sound spontaneous. Later, with practice, they can learn to say more, and say it better, in a considered composition.

When writing an impromptu composition, make yourself as comfortable as possible. Be sure that you know what you want to say. Plan your time as carefully as possible. And go to work.