

English for Study Purposes

Unit 2B: Improving Writing

Student's File EFSP 2.1

Read More Week – Rewrite

Let us now look at some not very good examples of student work, and see how we can improve them.

The first is a speech by the President of the Student Association encouraging students to join in a 'Read More Week'.

Good morning, Principle, teachers and fellow-students. Student Association will held a activity, called 'Read More Week.' It starts in next week. We have just over the second-term test, and all of us want to relax. Reading is a kind of relax we recommended to our schoolmates.

- First of all, let's look for spelling mistakes. Principle and principal have been confused.
- Secondly, look at verbs. 'will held' is an impossible mixture. 'We have just over' does not work; in fact the actual verb seems to be missing. A present perfect verb consists of have + past participle. 'we recommended' is past for no reason.
- Thirdly, articles. Activity starts with an a sound, so we need an. Student Association is not a pure proper noun, so we need The. The same is true of the Read More Week.
- Fourthly, prepositions. It starts in June, but not in next week. It starts today, tomorrow, next week. No preposition is necessary.
- Fifthly, nouns: a kind of relax - but relax is a verb. We need relaxation.
- Sixthly, structure and flow. There is rather an awkward jump between the third and fourth sentences. Some sort of bridge is needed to make the paragraph run more smoothly.

Let's rewrite with all this in mind.

Good morning, Principal, teachers and fellow-students. I'm happy to be able to tell you that the Student Association is organising an exciting activity: the Read More Week. It will start next Monday. This is just the right time for it as we have just finished our second-term tests, and want to relax. Reading is one of the best forms of relaxation, and we strongly recommend it to you.

Student's File EFSP 2.1**Read More Week – Rewrite (cont...)**

Sentence 1:

spelling corrected

Sentence 2:

the style is made more persuasive. The present continuous tense is used to show this is happening now.

Sentence 3:

repetition of week is avoided. Also, if the activity only lasts a week it sounds a bit strange to say it will happen next week.

Sentence 4:

a bridge between the timing and the end of the tests is supplied. There were probably many tests so the plural is chosen.

Sentence 5:

has been made stronger, and as this is a speech directed to students, 'you' is used.

Student's File EFSP 2.2

Surface Errors and Topic Sentences

Paragraph 2

Reading include books, magazines, newspaper... etc. These materials would widen our knowledge. They are not only cover our textbook areas. But also some common sense that can't learnt from textbooks. Surely we want to acquire more knowledge not only textbook, especially higher form students. You would found that common sense learn from reading is useful in examination. To acquire this knowledge, we should start reading materials, since we are young, including our junior schoolmates.

What are the problems here? Apart from surface grammatical errors, the paragraph lacks a clear topic sentence. The first sentence is supposed to set the tone for what follows, but the first sentence here is very unimportant. 'Knowledge' is repeated too much (and the writer probably means 'general knowledge' rather than 'common sense'). The paragraph is not connected to the one that came before it. And the writer gives the impression of writing before thinking.

'Surely we want to acquire more knowledge' is a nice rhetorical question. But then we find not only textbook. We want to acquire a textbook? And then, especially higher form students. So higher form students are a form of textbook we want to acquire. Obviously none of this makes any sense at all. Noun phrases put loosely together form a list or all refer to the same thing, e.g. John, my friend, a handsome boy.

Here in this second paragraph, what the writer means is:

Surely we, especially the higher form students, want to acquire more knowledge than that found in textbooks?

Having thought about age, the writer then decides that we should start acquiring this knowledge when we are young, so the paragraph ends up telling us to read more, especially when we are young.

Student's File EFSP 2.2

Surface Errors and Topic Sentences (cont...)

How can we fix all this? One way would be to expand the first paragraph (or insert a new second paragraph expanding the comments on relaxation).

What is more enjoyable than sitting comfortably with an interesting book? We can enter a world of imagination, romance and adventure. We can travel through space, visit foreign countries, and meet new friends. Reading is a very pleasant activity.

Reading is also very useful to us, especially if we read widely. Surely we don't want only to acquire textbook knowledge? If we read books, magazines and newspapers, we can improve our general knowledge and widen our experience of life. This is something we need to do at every age, young or old, in Form 1 or Form 7.

If you tried to correct the surface errors, you may have spotted:

✘	✔
include newspaper	includes newspapers
would	can
are not only cover	cover not only
areas. But	areas, but
learnt	be learnt
You would found	You will find
learn	learnt/gained
examination	examination
start reading materials	start reading widely
since we are young	when we are young

Student's File EFSP 2.3 More Problems!

Paragraph 3

Also read more can improve our writing technique in both English and Chinese. The technique, including grammar vocabulary, sentences structure, etc. This also help us a lot during examination.

Frankly, this is getting worse. Ideas are just being thrown out, not organised into paragraphs. The first sentence has a verb (read) as its subject (!), and the second has no main verb. In the third sentence, there are also spelling and agreement problems.

In the writer's second paragraph there was a reference to examinations. Here is another. Perhaps we can try to create a unified paragraph on this topic. Gradually the speech is gaining some structure.

Introduction of topic
Reasons to support the idea:
relaxing
enjoyable
educationally valuable
can improve exam results

Even if you are very examination-oriented, reading will bring you great benefits. Of course, people with wide general knowledge write better examination answers, and reading is probably the best way of improving your English and Chinese. If you read a lot, your grammar and vocabulary will steadily grow better, and your examination marks will go up.

This revised paragraph has some connectives in it, and removes etc. which is a useful abbreviation for notes, but inappropriate for formal writing, and hardly ever used in speech.

Student's File EFSP 2.3 More Problems! (cont...)

Actual errors:

✘	✔
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read more • The technique, including • grammar vocabulary • sentences structure • This help....examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading skills • These include ('These' refer to 'writing techniques') • grammar, vocabulary • sentence structure (the same as grammar?) • These can help....examinations

Student's File EFSP 2.4 Where's the Content?

Paragraph 4

As the points we mentioned above. We found that reading is very useful. It does not only help us in examination. It also help us in build up our common sense. If you are attracted by some well-know people. You should read more, so that you can attract people as people attract you.

Sentences 1, 3, 5 are not actually sentences.

The paragraph has no writing. It begins, quite unnecessarily, summing up earlier points, and then suddenly switches to the idea of well-known and attractive people being connected to reading. The actual connection, though, is very unclear, and no real argument is communicated. Frankly, there seems no reason for this paragraph to exist.

A possible rewrite might be:

Let me sum up what I've said so far. Reading is very useful. It not only helps us in examinations, but also in building up our general knowledge. If you are attracted by some well-known people, you should read more so as to be more like them. (?)

The paragraph is now grammatical, but highly unsatisfactory.

Paragraph 5

In the following week, there is a 'Read More Week'. These included newspaper, magazines and English story books reading. In library, there is a book show. Students can borrow the suitable books for themselves. Also there is a new book arrangements; all of us can find books more easily.

The writer/ speaker now gives us some details of the Week's activities. Some details came in the first paragraph, and one wonders why the writer split the information up. It seems to lead to unhelpful repetition. In general there is much content in the paragraph.

Student's File EFSP 2.4 Where's the Content? (cont...)

Surely some more interesting ideas could have been thought up. One does not get the feeling that the student is trying his/her best.

So there are some very good reasons why you should participate enthusiastically in our Read More Week. The school will be full of exhibitions and displays of good reading material/books, fiction and non-fiction, magazines and newspapers. There will be talks giving advice on reading, and lots of opportunities to buy books at a discount. The library is being specially rearranged to make it even easier for you to find books that suit your taste.

Surface errors:

✘	✔
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the following week • there is • These included • newspaper, magazines and English story books reading. • In library • there is • the suitable books for themselves • there is a new book arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next week • there'll be • It will include • This overlong noun phrase is both wrong and clumsy. 'newspaper, magazine and English story book' reading is correct, but still clumsy. A new sentence is needed. • In the library • there'll be [There'll be... in the library] • suitable books books, according to their taste? • arrangement (clumsy)

Student's File EFSP 2.5 Developing a Topic

Paragraph 6

On matters of magazines and newspaper. we held a current affairs quiz competition on next Friday. We hope that in the following week schoolmates would read more newspapers to competed for the rewards of the competition.

This is, at least, a paragraph on one topic - though the idea could well have been developed further.

There'll be quite a few competitions for you to take part in, with some lovely prizes. And I must tell you about the big Current Affairs Quiz, which will take place at the end of the week. Just read the newspaper every day and take a look at some news magazines, and you'll be able to answer the questions and win a prize.

This sounds a bit more persuasive now.

Errors:

Sentence 1 is not a sentence and needs completely rewriting.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • held • quiz competition • on next Friday • in the following week • schoolmates • would • competed • rewards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will hold • we don't need both • don't use 'on' with 'next'
next Friday • during the week • you/ all of us • will • compete • prizes |
|--|---|

Student's File EFSP 2.6 Conclusions

Paragraph 7

After the Read More Week. There is Easter holiday. We hope that every of our schoolmates would find their interest in reading, rather than playing games, watches TV or just read textbook. In the end-term, teacher would recommended some students who read more to the Education Department. They would get a reward. We hope that our schoolmates would read more after the introduction of Read More Week.

The writer does make some sort of effort to conclude, but the result is rather clumsy, and yet again, there is almost no sign of proof-reading.

After the Read More Week, term ends, but we hope that you'll go on reading throughout the Easter holidays. Add reading to your list of holiday activities: sports, television, revision, and reading. Our teachers will be watching us and asking us about our reading, and at the end of the school year, the Principal will recommend ten students to the Education Department, and they will receive special awards. So, I hope that for all these reasons you'll make full use of the Read More Week and really become a keen reader!

It does not seem particularly sensible to ask people to give up games and TV, so this has been modified. The Education Department scheme has been made a bit more precise. The paragraph is now clearly all on the topic of what comes after the week itself. A more energetic final sentence has been produced.

Errors:

✘	✔
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week. • There is Easter holiday • every of our schoolmates • would • find their interest in • playing games, watches TV or just read textbook • in the end-term • teacher • would recommended • more (than what?) • would (is it doubtful?) • would read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week, • there comes the Easter holiday • all of you/us everyone • will • spend their time on • parallelism - playing games, watching TV and reading textbooks. • in the final term at the end of the school-year • the teachers • will recommend • widely/a lot • will • will read

Student's File EFSP 2.7 Student Essay 1

Here are two more student essays for you to proof-read, discuss and improve.

The first is on the same topic we have just been looking at.

1. Principal, teachers and fellow students. Good morning. Today, I'm very glad to have this opportunity to speak to you all. I'm the President of the Student Association and our topic discuss today is reading.
2. As being back to school everyday, our most target is to increase our knowledge for the preparation of the future. As we know that only study and learning new knowledge from our textbook are insufficient. The most effective way is to read, including any kinds of books and newspaper as well.
3. As we all know that, syllabus set by Education Department can not get reach to the level as technology of it were out-dated. Also we found that most of the students in Hong Kong are not willing to increase their general knowledge. From these above, Student Association is holding an activity Read More Week to solve those problem.
4. Read More Week activity is organised by the cooperation of Student Association and our school library. Our target is to encourage students to read more, and of course more widely. Every week, we borrows books as much as possible from other schools' library and public library as a convention centre. Students can come to the library and read any of books they like. Public libraries, except borrow it back to home, only let readers to stand while reading. But our convention centre of books let students sit in the library only sign their names while borrowing. In addition, prizes will be given out to those reading much books students at the end of the school term, if they given a book report to librarian after reading a book report to librarian after reading a book each time.
5. Besides, library will help students to order newspapers. Students not need to buy by themselves and can easily take it from library. As I mentioned before, reading especially, reading newspaper can increase our knowledge. Mostly, we can know more about the local and also international news from it. Nowadays, some countries fought to teach other to increase their controll of land. China and US starting a trade war. In Hong Kong, the rate of student suicide increased greatly. From newspaper, we can know not only knowledge, but also public affairs as well.
6. In conclusion, we are not studying only for examination or getting good results. We should take action now to increase our knowledge, prepare ourselves for future as many and many of difficulties we have to face. Reading more and more widely is one of the effective way. We hope all the students will take actions from now on, read more and more widely. Thank you.

Student's File EFSP 2.8 Student Essay 2

This essay discusses whether or not the parents of teenagers should be held legally responsible for the acts of their children, and be punished when they do wrong.

1. The teenager's problems become more serious and the figures is increasing. We sometimes hear that they taking soft drugs, fighting, illegal gambling, and even murdering. Who has the responsibility to this? The parents? The teenagers themselves?
2. First of all, we need to identify the age of these people. In my view, people below sixteen are children. They are under the control of their parents and they need protection too. I mostly support this topic parents are held legally responsible for their children.
3. When a couple plans to have a baby, they must think deeply first. They don't just have enough money or place but they want to have time. Also, they need to concern everything their children. I can see some couples who are too young. Maybe they think that a baby will bring them more happiness. Of cause, a baby is so cute and lovely. However, they ignore a thing that the baby will grow up. They will become a teenage from children. They are going to join the society to communicate with others.
4. When a person who is in teenage he or she is undering the greenhouse of their parents. If their parents give enough sunlight, water and minerals to them, they will became a healthy, strong plants. Otherwise, they cannot stand for the storm or bad whether while they go outside. I think the parents have the most responsibility to take care of their children until they become adults. Children are so young that they cannot determine what is wrong or right, which thing can do and which cannot. Therefore, their parents need to teach them and make guidance. If the children commit crimes, it means the parents fail to control and supervise.
5. I think if the parents are held legally responsible for their teenage children, they will put more effort and time on them. It may avoid the occurrence of the teenage committing crimes. On the other hand, we have to identify clearly of the law.
6. However, we also want to think about that there are some single-parent two or three jobs. Then, why can they have enough time to concern about their children? They are not willing to ignore their children but they really cannot to do so! It is more important for them to earn more money to improve more their living rather than to teach them not to commit crimes. The only thing that they can do is to wish or hope their children not to do.
7. Also there are teenagers who are hard to teach. They think their parents are trouble. Their parents teach them many times, but they don't listen to. Sometimes, I think we let them to face challenge on their own and afford the results of what they did is better than to look at them for 24 hours.
8. As a result, there are different views on this topic, we need to think about deeply, but, at last, I really think that the parents have the most responsibility because they bring their babies into the world.