

Reviews

50 Steps to Improving your Academic Writing

by Chris Sowton
Garnet Education 2012
978-1-85964-655-7

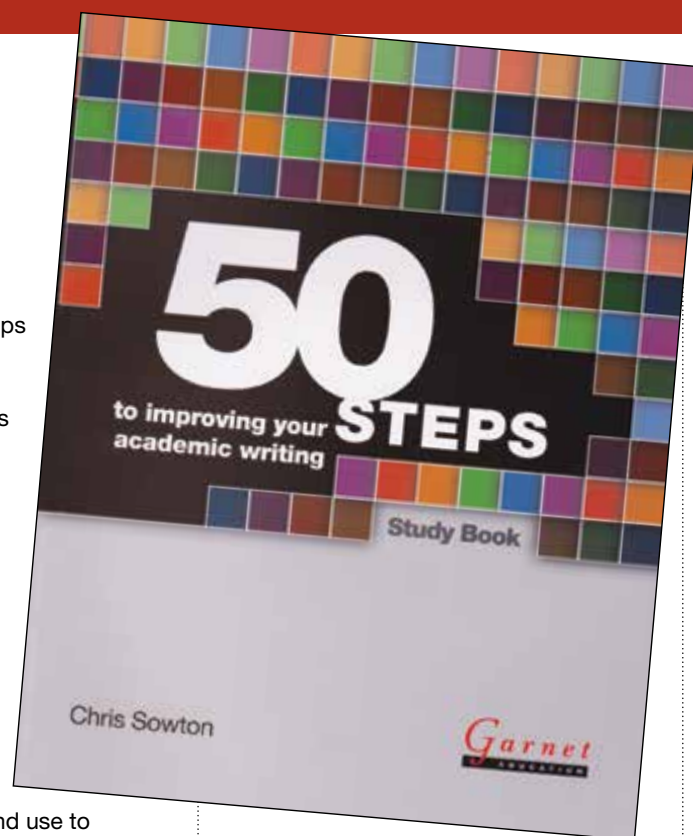
50 Steps to Improving your Academic Writing is a self-study guide and coursebook designed to aid learners in academic writing. Billed as suitable for upper-intermediate to native-speaker-level students (IELTS 5+ and CEF B2+), it works through every aspect of writing for EAP – or preparation for university – from research and writing style, to grammar and avoiding plagiarism. At first glance, the book seems extremely comprehensive and competent at what it claims to be and do.

From the point of view of structure, as suggested by the title the book is split into 50 steps, and each one has the same format: reflection, contextualisation, analysis, activation and personalisation. What stand out for me are the analysis and activation sections. These are well thought-out, useful and they are what I believe students will focus on when using this book by themselves. I found the contextualisation and personalisation sections a little disappointing. In the former, there are no clear answers to help the students (although these are included in the analysis – but will learners doing self-study realise that?) and the latter is a section that I feel will be glossed over by those same students. Having said that, there are clear answers at the back for the activation stage, and the final extension part points the learner to other useful units or appendices that are relevant, which is a lovely touch.

Looking in more detail, I feel that occasionally the language of the book doesn't lend itself well to learners of English – I've been teaching for 12 years and never once have I explained what *anaphora* or *antimetabole* are. In my opinion, the language needs to reflect the targeted reader, and there are surely

simpler ways to describe such concepts without sounding confusing. However, the biggest downfall is a lack of practice. Packed as it is with fantastic vocabulary, extremely useful writing tips and ways to enhance writing, there just are not enough practice exercises where learners can demonstrate their understanding, which, for me, is absolutely essential; especially for a self-study book.

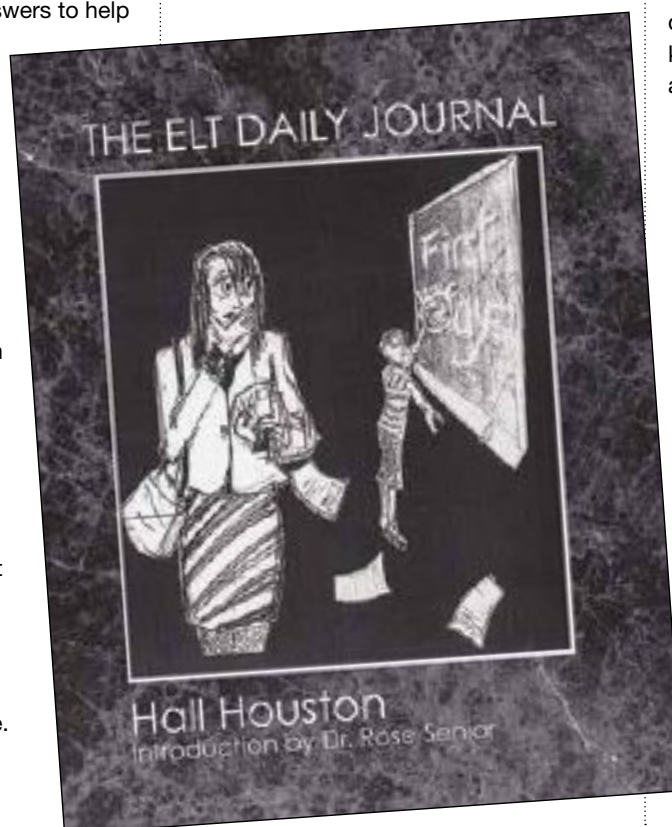
Even with this last point, this book is certainly of value. It is crammed with necessary, detailed information about what students need to show and use to improve their academic writing. I think it would work best as a companion to an academic English course or could even be useful in exam classes, but I think it needs guided assistance to make it really shine as it deserves to do.



The author has attempted to put everything about writing academically into one comprehensive volume and has done a sterling job – I think with some practice exercises it would be double the size, which might be impractical. It is a daunting task to help students with this kind of writing, and it is fairly successfully achieved.

Peter Fullagar
London, UK

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The ELT Daily Journal

by Hall Houston
Anthimeria Press 2013
978-1481-95739-7

Who doesn't remember starting out in the world of teaching? The first class of your pre-service training course, your first teaching practice, your first job: all memorable, often slightly nerve-wracking milestones. If you're lucky, you work somewhere that values professional development, with colleagues who help you discover the myriad of options that exist

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for it. If you're less fortunate, you muddle along and hopefully make those enriching discoveries yourself. Either way, *The ELT Daily Journal*, targeted at novice teachers, may be a valuable investment as you begin your journey.

This book aims to help new teachers make 'the transition from newly-trained teacher to independent-minded, reflective practitioner'. It is a journal and, as such, largely consists of lined paper for writing on. However, it is the features combined with this that make it stand out:

- At the bottom of each lined page is a useful box, containing an activity idea, a little 'something to ponder', a small piece of advice on what *not* to do in the classroom/staffroom or a top tip.
- At the back of the book is a section in which 'distinguished authors' answer the question: *What three tips would you give a new ESL/EFL teacher?*
- After the three tips section can be found a selection of useful resources for new teachers, including recommended books, periodicals, blogs, websites, webinars and organisations.

In essence, *The ELT Daily Journal* is a very simple idea. It's not trying to change the world, it's not earth-shattering, but it very effectively provides new teachers with a useful, reassuring resource to turn to. Also, all-importantly, as well as offering support in the form of ideas, tips and suggestions for further reading, it encourages reflective practice.

The only thing it lacks, in my opinion, is the voices of teachers who aren't 'distinguished authors': as a new teacher, it might seem a rather hopeless gap between you and the ELT glitterati. Contributions from ordinary everyday teachers would have nicely complemented this section or could have formed another small section.

That is, of course, a very minor detail. Overall, I would certainly have been very happy to have had this book when I did my CELTA or when I started my first job. Starting out is tough, and a book like this can help to bridge the gap between those difficult early days and becoming established in the profession.

Lizzie Pinard
Leeds, UK

Grammar Songs & Raps

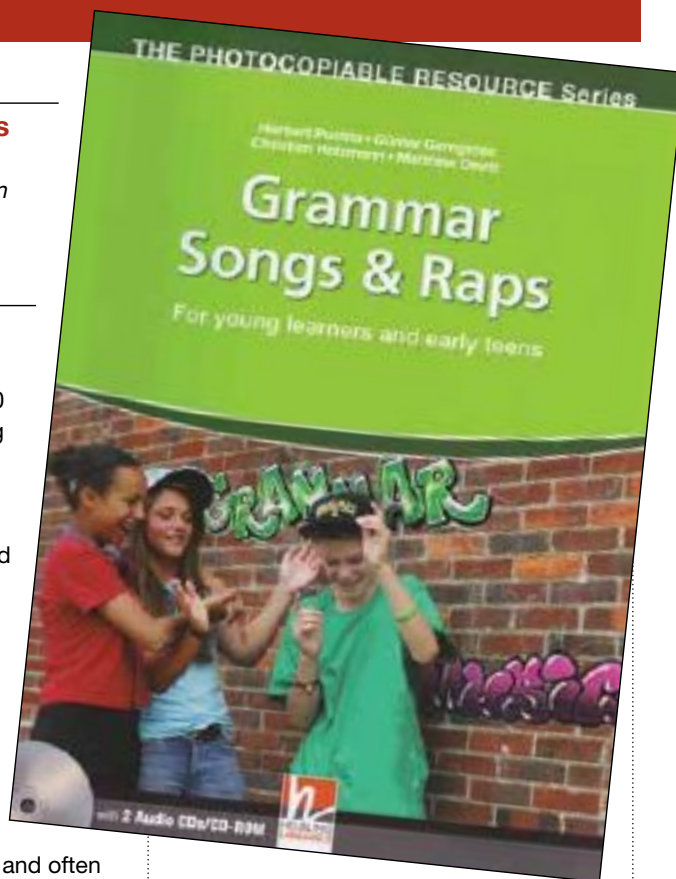
by Herbert Puchta, Günter Gerngross, Christian Holzmann and Matthew Devitt
Helbling Languages
978-3-85272-423-2

This book, which is for young learners and early teens, is a photocopiable resource of 140 pages with two accompanying CDs/CD Roms. Catchy foot-tapping, hand-clapping original tunes, rhyming lines and a grammar lesson all rolled into one have made this a popular addition to my elementary classroom. Truly the only disappointment was the fact that *Peggy Sue* and *Midnight on Blueberry Hill* were not similar to the original songs. I do like a bit of rock 'n' roll in my lessons (I have a closet karaoke habit) and often use popular music from the fifties through to the nineties; however, I find I have my work cut out preparing appropriate lessons. This book has made lesson planning less time-consuming. It is laid out in an easy-to-use way; the children pick up both the language focus and the 'serious' grammar element almost effortlessly; the songs are long enough that you don't find yourself repeating the same three or four lines; and there is the added element of a musical story.

I loved this book, my kids loved this book, and their class teacher, when she discovered the grammar (Italian schools are fixated on theory), was instantly converted. I teach years one and two, and it just so happened that we had a project about monsters in a forest. Lo and behold, one of the very first songs in the book: *There's a Monster in the Forest*.

The kids sang their hearts out, memorised it pretty quickly and drove everybody insane singing it over and over again. Seven weeks later at the end of summer term, some of my pupils participating in a local summer camp were still word-perfect and enthusiastically sharing the song with their fellow campers.

Each song has a teaching guide, clearly laid out with the language focus,



level, time required, materials needed and the answers; plus at least two worksheets, often three. There are also useful extensions, if you wish to use the song with other related language activities, flashcards and karaoke versions.

There is a Contents page at the front of the book but the Quick Reference Guide and the CD Contents List were at the back of the book. I would have preferred them at the front, too, because these pages are a great way of choosing a song appropriate not only to the language focus and level, but also with the right subject matter. The CD page gives the track number and length of song. The illustrations are simple, clear and entertaining.

Although, so far, I have only used two songs from this book, the second being *The Hungry Monster Rap*, I listen to the CDs in my car and have found myself wishing I had older children to practise the songs with.

Maybe next year.

Shona Margaret Hagger
Vergiate, Italy

Subscribers can get a 12.5% discount on this book. Go to the ETP website and quote ETPQR2172 at the checkout.

Request PDF | On Jan 1, 2012, Chris Sowton and others published 50 steps to improving your academic writing : study book | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. English, as it is used for academic purposes, can present problems for students whose educational background is not of a conventional nature. This chapter explores some common issues faced by students during their foundation year. It highlights some innovative, blended learning approaches used to support the often thorny development of a student's personal academic voice. View. Show abstract. 203 Answers 207 Glossary 225 Appendix Document list 237 Appendix Extension activities 244 Appendix Additional information 247 Appendix Useful hyperlinks 272 Introduction Purpose of this book 50 steps to improving your academic writing is primarily intended for students who are new to or inexperienced in academic writing It has been designed with one specific aim in mind: to provide the user with the. Structure of each step Each of the 50 steps has the same six parts, which are as follows: A Reflection: Evaluation of