



## Developing Writing Skills in Spanish

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*Developing Writing Skills in Spanish* is the most recent book in a series published by Routledge press which includes *Developing Writing Skills in French*, *Developing Writing Skills in German*, *Developing Writing Skills in Italian* and *Developing Writing Skills in Chinese*. It is not clear which philosophy of learning unifies all these texts, besides the fact that the most recent texts offer a variety of samples of the written language.

*Developing Writing Skills in Spanish* states that it is developed for students at an intermediate or advanced level of Spanish but the level of difficulty of this text precludes its use by intermediate level Spanish language students. Instead, it seems to be more suitable for advanced level of Spanish language students only or those who may have completed survey courses in Spanish and Latin American literature. It may be even suitable for students who have taken some type of linguistics course and wish to concentrate on the structure of the language instead of its practical use, though the book, mercifully, is free of much linguistics jargon. This book has been designed as a classroom text; however it may also be suitable as a supplement or reference text for teachers of Spanish as a second language preparing classes for intermediate and advanced students. It could also be used successfully by teachers of advanced Spanish heritage students to prepare these classes.

The book is divided into nine chapters plus an introduction and an answer key: Chapter 1. *El texto narrativo* (narrative writing); Chapter 2. *El texto descriptivo* (descriptive writing); Chapter 3. *El texto expositivo* (expository writing); Chapter 4. *El texto argumentativo y la escritura académica* (academic writing); Chapter 5. *El texto periodístico* (journalistic writing); Chapter 6. *El texto publicitario* (persuasive writing and advertising); Chapter 7. *El texto jurídico y administrativo* (legal and administrative documents); Chapter 8. *El texto científico-técnico* (scientific and technical writing); Chapter 9. *Consejos adicionales para escribir correctamente* (revising, refining and proofreading). A companion website to the book can be found at URL: <http://www.developingwritingskills.com>. This site contains a

teacher's guide as well as free-access additional activities (*actividades web*) which enhance the content of each unit.

The book has some aspects that are useful to students in traditional Spanish language and literature or Spanish for academic purposes programs since parts of chapter one (narrative writing) and chapter 3 (expository writing) and 4 (Argumentative and academic writing) provide useful materials to learn how to write academic essays. The large variety of examples is a plus for the book since many advanced Spanish texts concentrate only on literary samples and this one provides selections from other sources. The answer key index provides answers to many of the highly specialized exercises, some of whom depend on context and style for the correct answer.

From the point of view of the emphasis in languages for special purposes, the book suffers from a lack of practical organization. The division of the book in chapters which emphasize all kinds of writing, though of great value to students of linguistics, is not particularly useful for students who need to use Spanish in a particular career. Students in Spanish for Business for example have to plow through chapters such as chapter 7 (legal and administrative documents) to find materials which are needed by business students who are learning how to write business letters. Chapter 8 Scientific and technical writing may not be of full use to students of Spanish for medical personnel because they will never have to write a scientific essay in Spanish since most papers on medical topics are written in English. A course for Spanish for medical personnel would have to concentrate on other more practical aspects of patient interaction.

The fact that the book is written by three authors who are instructors of Spanish in educational institutions as different as Oxford University and the Official School of Languages at University Carlos III in Madrid is a plus for the book because it provides varying perspectives on how these materials will work. At the same time, it is not clear if any of the three are speakers of Latin American Spanish instead of Peninsular Spanish, which is a large factor in selecting books to use in the United States where students will deal predominantly with Latin Americans.

In conclusion, *Developing Writing Skills* in Spanish includes a wealth of information on grammar, syntax and vocabulary. The tools and techniques they offer for writing and editing texts are useful for students at an advanced level of Spanish. The exercises on writing conventions, word choice, syntax and grammar are useful as are the many reference lists and tables with

specialized vocabulary, transition words and other useful expressions. On the other hand, the organization of the book in chapters which stress the different linguistic aspects of written Spanish instead of career related topics makes it difficult for teachers of languages for special purposes to find the materials they need.

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