

# Learn Humbly

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Mr. Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) was a famous scholar in the Bei Song Dynasty (960-1127). Although he was very outstanding in literature and had a high ranking position, he was very humble about learning from others. His famous article *Zuiwongting* (Toast Pavilion) is a very short and beautiful piece that people praise and read aloud to this day. That article was edited according to a logger's suggestion.

When Ouyang Xiu was the mayor of Tuzhou City, his best friend, Monk Zhixian, built a pavilion for him on top of Langya Mountain (located in Tuzhou, Anhui Province). Mr. Ouyang Xiu named the Pavilion *Zuiwongting*, and wrote an article to remember the event. He copied his article many times and posted it on the streets in hopes that when people walked by they could give him suggestions to improve it.

People were all praising his beautiful article, except an old woodcutter who said his article was too wordy. Therefore, Mr. Ouyang Xiu read his article aloud to humbly ask the old man where the article was too wordy. The article began with, "There are mountains surrounding Tuzhou. East is the Wulong Mountain, West is Dafeng Mountain, South is Hua Mountain, and North is Baimi Mountain; the Southwest

direction has several mountains, a beautiful forest covers the area..." The old man said that this was the wordy place. "When I cut wood on the South Heaven Gate, Dafeng Mountain, Wulong Mountain, Baimi Mountain, and Hua Mountain can all be seen with one turn of my body. The mountains are everywhere!"

Mr. Ouyang Xiu said, "You are right." He then changed the beginning of his article to, "Mountains surrounded the Tu." Now we read this short but beautiful opening every time.

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