

Correspondence in
International Trade
(New Version)



新编国际贸易 函电

张干周 郭社森 主编



ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY PRESS
浙江大学出版社



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Correspondence in International Trade (New Version)

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前 言

2006年,浙江大学出版社策划并组织全省高校一线教师编写了一套实用性强、适合于培养应用技术型高级人才需求的教材,《国际贸易函电》便是该套教材中的一本,教材出版以来,作为培养国际贸易应用型人才的全英文教材,历经几次印刷,在全国许多高校使用。

随着我国经济的快速发展,对外开放和交流进一步深入,对外贸易稳步增长;同时,随着现代网络和通信技术的快速发展,对外贸易开始由传统的贸易形式向多样化的贸易形式转变,网络电商、微商的发展更是高歌猛进,面对新的发展形势,为了适应市场发展的需求,我们组织了长期从事一线教学的教师,通过与外贸企业工作人员的沟通和交流,结合新形势下国际贸易行业对外贸人才的要求,组织对《国际贸易函电》进行了全面彻底的修订,重新编写了这本《新编国际贸易函电》教材。

本教材是一本融英语语言知识、英语写作知识和国际贸易知识于一体的语言应用教程,同时也是一本职业技能提高教程。本教材旨在帮助学生了解贸易业务的各个环节,学习和掌握英语在各业务环节中的应用。《新编国际贸易概述》共有18章,重点涵盖了国际贸易业务磋商过程中各个环节的往来函电,涉及商务写作概述、资信调查、建立业务关系、询价与回复、报价与促销、还盘、订货与回复、支付、包装、装运、货运单证、保险、投诉与处理、代理、会展、招标与投标、签订合同、电子商务等。

国际贸易既有货物贸易,也有服务贸易。目前,我国许多企业在国际市场上,在对外承包大型工程项目方面越来越活跃,承包的项目也越来越多,为此,我们在教材中增加了会展、招投标的内容。同时,随着国际贸易形式的多样化,本教材也涵盖了电子商务等方面的E-mail函电的写作内容。

本教材的主要特点是突出了知识性、应用性、职业性。为了便于课堂教学和自学,帮助学习者更好地了解、掌握和运用国际贸易函电的相关知识,本教材通过实例系统地讲解了国际贸易函电的格式和写作技巧,每一章都列明该章节的学习目标,安排有案例分析、背景介绍、样信、写作模板、关键词汇和短语、实用句型结构等几个部分。为了便于读者学习、操练和检测,巩固和拓展相关知识,每一章的最后都配有课后练习,增加了补充阅读材料,教材的后面附有参考答案。使用本教材时,需要熟读范文,掌握各种文体格式的要求,结合写作模板,勤加练习,这样就一定能够为国际贸易函电的写作奠定坚实的基础。

本教材作者在编写过程中吸取众家之长,搜集了许多有关函电的具体实例,参阅了许多国际贸易和国际商务函电写作方面的资料,咨询了部分外贸公司从业人员,在此特表示衷心

的感谢。

本书编写分工分别为：周映负责第一章，郭社森和张干周共同负责第二、十三、十四、十五、十六、十七章，曹晓明负责第四、五、六、十八章，李贞负责第十、十一、十二章，薛媛负责第三、七、八、九章，全书由张干周负责通稿工作。

由于编者的水平有限，书中错误或不妥之处肯定不少，敬请广大读者和专家批评指正。

编者于杭州

2015年8月

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Chapter 1

Overview of Business Writings

商务写作概述

1. Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand the essentials of business letter writing.
- Get to know the principles of business letter writing.
- Know the structure of business letters.
- Know the format of business letters.

2. Case Study

Compare the following two letters, suppose you were a sales manager in an export company, when you receive the following two letters from separate companies simultaneously, which one would you prefer to keep in contact and make quotation?

Letter 1

Dear Charles Smith,

We have received your letter dated at an early date. We are interested on the woman shirts you mentioned.

It will be grateful for you to send 5 samples with various sizes (XS, S, M, L, XL) in pink. We will ask for quotation by airmail if the samples could be satisfied.

The bank of your city will give you any information about credit.

We insist on a prompt answer to our letter.

Yours friendly,

[Signature]

Letter 2

Dear Charles Smith,

We have received your letter dated on Sept. 16th, 2014. We are interested in the woman shirts you mentioned.

I should be grateful to you if you could send 5 samples with various sizes (XS, S, M, L, and XL) in pink to us. We will ask you to send a quotation by airmail if the samples could be satisfactory.

You may obtain any infomation, if needed, regarding our credit from the Bank of your city.

We await your early reply.

Yours friendly,
[Signature]

Generally, good English is one of the basics for good business letters. Meanwhile, some writing principles are also vital.

3. Introduction

Business writing is very important in foreign trade. Despite increased dependence on technology, such as video-conferencing and voice-mail, telegrams, telexes and cables, the most frequent type of business communication is the written document. Effective business writings will benefit the international trade.

It is estimated that close to 100 million business letters are written each workday. Although it is recognized that the style of modern business letters tends to be something like a piece of conversation by post, many executives prefer a written document to other forms of communication, for it is a formal communication tool. Not only can it serve as a contract, but it provides a permanent record. In this way no one is required to rely on memory. You never know what will happen with a verbal conversation. What is more, improvements in communication technology have also increased the delivery of writing. Obviously, written communications are cheaper than other ways. Beyond time zones, business letters are more effective, especially through e-mail or fax. This is why it is important for learners of business communications to master the skills of writing a good business letter, whose function is to get or to convey business information, to make or to accept an offer, and to keep various businesses moving, especially in companies of foreign concerns.

Good English is one of the bases of good business letters, specially, free from grammatical errors. Thus, a business letter can be challenging to write, because you must consider how to keep your readers' attention. Therefore, every business letter could be considered a sales letter. Simply speaking, writing a business letter is like any other document. First, you must analyze your reader and determine your purpose. Then, gather information, create an outline, write a draft, and revise it. Finally, get to the point quickly and present your information clearly. There are certain essential principles of business writings.

4. Principles of Business Letter Writing

Many times, business letters are adverts for companies, which leave significant impressions to customers. Different criteria for good business letters are provided, for example, the "ABC" principle, which stands for Accurate, Brief and Clear. This book would introduce seven "Cs",

i.e. correctness, clarity, conciseness, courtesy, completeness, concreteness and considerateness. These are principles of business letter writing widely accepted.

Correctness

Correctness here not only refers to the correct grammar rules, contents and the forms, but also accuracy in style, language and typing. No excuse can make any errors acceptable in business letters, because it concerns the rights, benefits, responsibilities of both sides. Incorrectness cause inconvenience, disputes, and may destroy the relationship between both sides.

On one hand, to choose the right words, that is, to choose the words that can most closely convey the meaning is one of the ways to improve the readability of your business writings. Try to write free from the slightest possibility of being misunderstood. For the changing international market, the letter is expected to express the writer's commands and principles absolutely, so as to help the receiver to make decisions quickly, rather than wasting time. Of course, flowery words and jargon are not included in the right words. In business letters, the date, specification, price, quantity, discount, commission and figures are very important, for they are usually the central points of disputes.

On the other hand, the right tone is also significant. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, tone is the use of accent and inflection to express a mood or emotion. Often, it is not what you say, but how you say it. In writing any letter, it is always a good idea to think about your tone so that you do not risk upsetting the reader. Usually, mistakes with tone can be avoided by using the following techniques:

- Place more emphasis on the reader than yourself.
- Avoid extreme cases of humility, flattery, and modesty.
- Avoid condescension.
- Avoid lecturing.

In a word, in order to eliminate mistakes, the more urgent the matter is, the more carefully the letter should be checked and rechecked.

Clarity

A point that is ambiguous in a letter will cause trouble to both sides, and further exchange of letters for explanation will become inevitable, thus time will be lost. In this way, clarity is often considered to be one of the main writing principles and language features.

To achieve clearness and clarity, you may give your letter a heading if it can help to draw the addressee's attention. You must have a clear idea of what you wish to convey in the letter, such as the purpose, the attitude, and the matter concerned. Only a clear mind can express clearly. While drafting an outline, pay attention to the organization, as it is a key to effective business writing. There is altogether 14 parts in a business letter. A separate paragraph for each point, if necessary number each of them, is a good rule. Thus, the recipient may find each point so clear

that it can't be misunderstood. Second, you should study the reader's interest and the level of the reader's understanding, and try to imagine how he will feel about what you write. For this reason, business letter must be clear and easily understood. It is said that more than twenty words in a sentence makes reading harder. Thirdly, avoid making the idea confusing by writing the exact and brief words. The following are some tips:

- Use small and short words instead of big and long-winded words when they are synonyms.
- Use simple words instead of complicated phrases.
- Use short sentences instead of long and prolix sentences.
- Except for emphasis, try to avoid using unnecessary words like adjectives, adverbs and phrases.
- Do not use words hard to understand, such as colloquialism, slang and commercial jargon.
- Do not use words having more than one meaning in a sentence.

Conciseness

Clarity and conciseness often go hand-in-hand. Today businessmen are very busy, so clear and concise letters, without sacrificing completeness, are becoming more and more popular. A concise letter is not always a short one. It is found that a succession of short sentences, however, has a disagreeable jerky effort and the best letters are those which provide a mixture of sentences of varying length. A concise letter should be written in a simple and natural way, directly and to the point. Avoid wordiness, flowery words, redundancies and the over frequent use of such conjunction as "and" "but" "however", etc.

Courtesy

Here, courtesy not only means politeness, but also means thinking about the reader's interest, by expressing your enthusiasm, consideration and friendliness. So while writing, put yourself in your reader's shoes, and find out what really concerns him. An honest and professional manner may gain you cooperative partner.

Firstly, promptness is very important. No one likes to wait endlessly for a reply. So if you cannot respond promptly, write and explain why and when you will write again.

Secondly, a warm and friendly tone is more suitable to letter writing. It helps you keep a friendly relationship with the partner and continue to develop your trade relationship.

Thirdly, as the buyer and the seller have both common and contradictory interests, keep in mind the distinction. While writing, express your principles clearly and shows the position of equality and mutual benefit. Any virtue overdone will bring with it some undesirable effort.

Fourthly, pay special attention to names, titles, and genders. Never make mistake on the spelling of the recipient's name, his job title, or gender. It is a basic way to show your respect and courtesy.

Completeness

In business letters, keep in mind that all the information should be covered to help the reader to understand the purpose. Try your best to answer all the questions and requirements put forward by the readers. Incompleteness will lead to the counterpart's unfavorable impression of your firm. If it is urgent, or if other firms can provide him more detailed information, he may give up the deal. Sometimes, incompleteness will even cause unnecessary disputes and lawsuit. There is a way to verify the completeness of what you write, that is five "Ws" (who, what, where, when and why) and one "h" (how). So try to check and recheck the letter.

Concreteness

It is required to be specific, definite and vivid in business letters in the principle of concreteness. Thus you should try to provide specific facts, figures, time and active verbs. The following example is vague, general and abstract: The goods will be delivered soon. However, it is better to express like this: The goods under you order No.1010 for fans will be delivered this afternoon and will reach you in about 10 days.

Considerateness

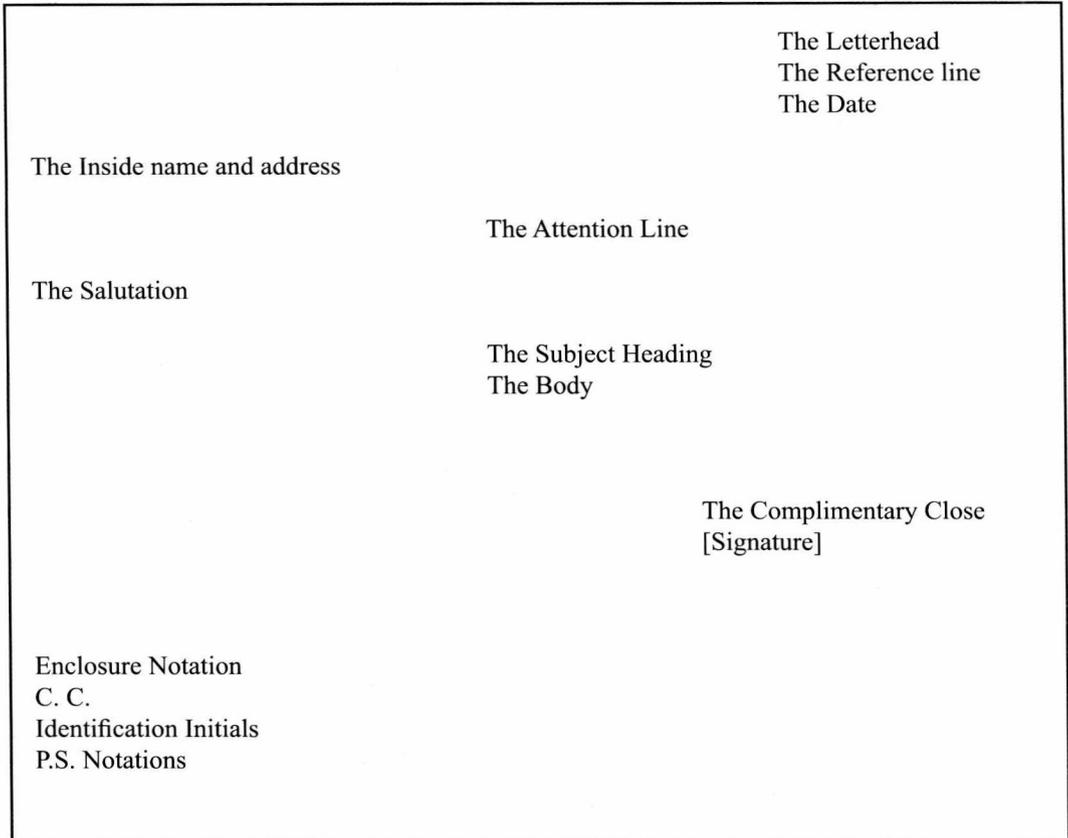
Considerateness means you should be considerate of the recipients. Try to lay great emphasis on the "you- attitude" rather than "we-attitude". In business letters, you should always remember the person to whom you are writing and try to write in a way to make the recipients feel comfortable. Pay much attention to the recipients' requests, needs, desires, even their feelings. If you fail to meet your customers' demands, you should provide the reasons and show your concern about them. Positive sentences are preferred instead of negative ones. Meanwhile, never push your reader to do something.

To summarize, while writing business letters, you should try to obey all the seven "Cs" principles. Business letters are related with the success of business, thus a high standard of layout, structural frames, protocols are required. Business letters represent you as well as the company you worked for.

5. Structure of Business Letters

Structure of business letters can be divided into two parts: the essential part and the optional part. The essential part consists of seven components, namely, the letterhead, the date, the inside name and address, the salutation, the body of the letter, the complimentary close and the signature. Your company may have specific requirements that you must use. For instance, a company might have a particular way of presenting a salutation or may use a specific type of letterhead. Because a business letter is an effective way to communicate a message, its format should allow readers to quickly grasp information. This information should stand out as the

document is scanned. Remember, a business letter reflects your professionalism. There are altogether 14 items, which are listed in the order that they normally appear:



Example

	Beijing Textiles Imp.& Exp.Corp. 11 Renming Road Beijing 10005, China Telephone: 86-10-6252-0620 Fax: 86-10-6252-0620 E-mail: textile@ 126.com
	Our Ref. _____ Your Ref. _____
	Date: December 12, 2014
Messrs Ronald & Co. 87 Eastcheap London, E.C. 3, England	

Attention: Export Department

Dear Sir,

Sub: Detailed information of cotton bed-sheets

Edward Cullen informs us that your company is exporting all cotton bed-sheets. We are particularly interested in your products, and would like to have more detailed information on all of your commodities, including various ranges of sizes, colors and prices, and also samples of the different qualities of material used.

We are large dealers in textiles in China and believe there is a promising market in our area for moderately priced goods of the kinds mentioned.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

(Manager)

Beijing Textiles Imp. & Exp. Corp.

Ref. No.

Enclosures

C. C. our Shanghai Branch Office

P.S. We require payment and discount not less than 200 dozen of individual items.

The Letterhead

In many companies, the letterhead are often printed, containing the company's name, address, postcode, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address, website, the addresses of branches or a logo of the company etc. The letterhead is the point of reference of the writer's company for the recipient. As the first and most obvious part of a company's business letter, the letterhead has a function to convey a favorable impression of the writer's firm. The order should be:

- Name and address of the firm.
- Postcode.
- Telephone numbers.
- Fax numbers.
- E-mail address.
- Website.

If the letterhead stationery is not used, the format of the letterhead shall be:

Weavewell Woolen Co. Ltd.
113 Park Avenue New York,
New York 10007
Tel: 224-4980 Fax: 897877
E-mail: master@gmail.com

If the letterhead stationery is used, the format of the letterhead shall be:

CMC INTERNATIONAL ENGINEERING CO., LTD.		
Our Ref.	Page(s) No.	Date:
No.178, Guang'anmen Wai Street, Beijing, China		Post Code: 100055
Tel: 0086-10-62520620		Fax: 0086-10-62520621
Baghdad Office: Al-Andlus Q. - Mahala 611-Zukak 77-House		

The Date

Every letter should be dated. Date should be placed two or four spaces below the letterhead. The date is vital, because it plays an important role of evidence of the communication. Remember to write the date in full, in the logical order of day, month, year. For the day, either cardinal numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) or ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.) can be used, but cardinal numbers are preferred. The day can also be written after the month, in this way, a comma must be used between the day and the year. The month should not be abbreviated or represented by figures.

- September 6, 2014—American form
- 6th September, 2014—British form

It is unwise to give the day in figure (e.g. 6/9/2014) for the various ways of writing dates in different countries. It may easily cause confusion because in Britain this date would mean 6th October 2014, but in the United States and some other countries it would mean 9th June 2014.

It should be mentioned that sometimes the computer year-month-date sequence is adjusted in the expression of e.g. 20140906.

The Inside Name and Address

The inside name and address of the receiver is typed at the left-hand margin and two to six spaces below the date. But in official (i.e. government) correspondence, it is sometimes placed at the foot, in the bottom left-hand corner. The town should be in capital letters. In order to avoid ambiguity, when you write letters to other countries, always include the name of the country, even if the city mentioned is the country's capital. English addresses may have the following parts (not all addresses have all the parts):

- Name of person addressed

- Title of person addressed
- Name of organization
- Name and number of house
- Name and number of street
- Name of city or town
- Country or state and its post-code
- Name of country

When the receiver is a company, the inside name and address should be written as follows, for example:

The Space Engineering Co. Ltd.
858 Mountain Place
LONDON N.W. 34
England

At this point one must pay attention, when the firm is named after one or more persons, e.g.: James, Jone Co., You can write Messrs. James & Co.

When the receiver is an individual in the company, the person's name should be preceded by the courtesy title.

- Mr./Messrs (plural)
- Mrs. — for mistress, used for a married woman
- Miss — for an unmarried woman
- Ms. — for all women, married or unmarried, particularly career women, who strongly object to being addressed as Mrs. or Miss

When the receiver holds special title and official position, such as Professor, Colonel, Marketing Manager, you may use the academic title or the title of a person's position, for example:

Ms. Sarah Davis
Sales Manager
The Acme Shoe Co. Ltd.
21 Sunny Road
Telex System, Inc.
Shenzhen Branch P. O. Box 350
P.R. China

The Salutation

You begin your letter, with the salutation, the polite greeting. To some extent, the salutation settles the form of the complimentary close. The salutation is conventionally placed two lines below the address, and before the body of letter. The function of a salutation is not only showing politeness, but also a double check to the recipient that the message is indeed intended for him. The following are some common usages.

“Dear Madam or Sir” or centered in a line “to whom it may concern:”.

If you are not certain whether a man or woman manages the company, you’d better use “Dear Madam or Sir”, which often followed by a comma.

“Dear Sir/Dear Madam (Dear Sir/Dear Mesdames)” is often followed by a comma, but not a name.

Americans prefer to use Gentlemen, but it cannot be used in the singular followed by a colon. One may also use “Ladies and Gentlemen”.

When use Miss/Mr./Mrs./Ms., a person’s surname should always be followed.

The Body of the Letter

The body of a business letter should begin two lines below the subject line, if there is one, or the salutation. It is the actual message of the letter. As mentioned above, the body of the letter should be written according to the seven important principles: correctness, clearness, conciseness, courtesy, completeness, concreteness and considerateness. It should be planned and paragraphed carefully. Usually, the first paragraph refers to the previous correspondence and the last one to future actions and plans. There should be only one topic in each paragraph. The next two questions may help you conceive the letter. What is the purpose of writing the letter? And what is the best way to start writing it? The body of the letter is the most important part, and it deserves our special attention.

For example, in a reply, its date and reference number should be mentioned to remind the reader, e. g. Thank you for your letter 458GW/gp of October 23, 2014.

The Complimentary Close

Like the salutation, the complimentary close is merely a matter of custom and a polite way of bringing a letter to a close. It is placed two lines below the last line of the body of the letter. A comma can be either used or omitted.

- Yours faithfully, / Faithfully yours, — formal in Britain
- Yours truly, / Truly yours, — commonly used in America and Canada
- Yours sincerely, / Sincerely yours, — if you don’t know the recipient’s gender
- Best wishes/ Best regards/ Yours, — informal used between close friends or persons known to each other.

The Signature

All letters must be signed, because signed letters have authority. You may sign name in ink (a rubber stamp is a form of discourtesy.) and type your name, job title or position below the signature. A typed name makes the signature legible.

If the signature is on behalf of a certain organization or a certain person with special authority, the letter P.P.(per procuracy) can be placed before the full name of the organization or the person, for example:

Sincerely yours

P. P. Smart Trading Co. Ltd.

[Signature]

Mr. Dugmore

P.P.J.Fisher

Marketing Manager

The Optional Parts

Here are some optional parts which could be used in an appropriate way. They are the reference line, the attention line, the subject heading, the enclosure notation, the C.C. line, the identification initials, the P.S. notations.

The Reference Line

The reference line includes a file number, the goods type, department code or the initials of the signer of the letter to be followed by the typist's initials and etc. This enables replies to be linked with previous correspondence in business communication and ensures that they reach the right person or department without delay.

(1) Many letterheads provide spaces for references, above the inside address, for example:
Your ref: DNM-023/025

Our ref.: 007A/GAZ/fsh

(2) The reference may form part of the first paragraph of the reply letter:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter, reference ALM/PS, of 25th September.

(3) Or the reference may be typed as a heading:

Dear Sir,

Your Ref: BEF/PS

The Attention Line

If the letter is urgent, and the writer wishes an organization to direct it to a particular member, this phrase is used. It is typed two line-spaces above the salutation, underlined, and sometimes centered over the body of the letter, for example:

The Secretary

The Ajax Electrical Co., Ltd.

Fernhall Drive

REDBRIDGE, Essex IG4 5BN

England

For the attention of Mr. T. Waterhouse

It has many other forms, such as Attention: Plan Department; Attention of Mr. Lin Wei;