



外贸英语函电

(第三版)
世纪版

兰 天 编 著



东北财经大学出版社

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读者信箱:dufep@mail.dlptt.ln.cn

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第三版前言

《外贸英语函电》一书,自1991年问世以来,已经修订一次,连续重印10次。作者在此特别感谢广大读者给予的信任和支持。正是由于读者的鼓励,才使得作者不断精益求精,以期读者朋友奉献一本好书。

此次修订,重点是加大了注释中的内容,增加了原书中所没有的常用商业英语的词汇辨析及一词多译,以提高学生的应用能力;针对工作实际应用,作者收集了各种贸易方式的合同,如买卖合同、代理合同、寄售合同、补偿贸易合同、来件装配合同、聘请合同、合资经营企业合作合同、合资企业合作合同、技术合作合同及技术转让和设备材料进口合同,并对合同进行了详细的注释,列举了许多合同用词及用法。此次修订最大的特点是对各章中的每封样信做了精确翻译,以期让读者掌握商业英语书信中专业术语的准确表达法和中英文标准商业书信的对照写法;并对全部练习作出了参考性答案,在编写习题答案时,作者特别注意引导读者活学活用,所以有些答案是多个的,这样便于读者通过学习掌握多种用法。

在此,我要特别向老师曲清德先生表示崇高的敬意,由于曲清德先生的关爱和鼓励,我在学业上取得了点成绩。此次承蒙老师的信任,独立完成本书的大幅度的修订工作。我祝亲爱的老师身体健康,晚年愉快!

本书修订再版是作为对至爱读者的回报。由于作者水平有限,书中难免有错误,敬请诸位不吝赐教。

兰 天

2000年9月

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Business Letter-Writing

Essential Qualities

The business letter is the principal means used by a business firm to keep in touch with its customers; often enough it is the only one and the customers form their impression of the firm from the tone and quality of the letters it sends out. Good quality paper and an attractive letter-head play their part in this, but they are less important than the message they carry. Business does not call for the elegant language of the post, but it does require us to express ourselves accurately in plain language that is clear and readily understood.

Writing plainly does not mean that letters must be confined to a mere recital of facts, in a style that is dull and unattractive. When we write a letter we enter into personal relationship with our reader. Like us he has feelings and we cannot afford to disregard him. This is a necessary reminder because many people who are warm and friendly by nature become reasons of quite another sort when they sit down to write or dictate a business letter. They seem to think that business letters call for a special kind of "Business English". They forget that they are "holding a conversation by post" and make us of impersonal constructions that produce a cold and aloof tone. They prefer to write "Your letter has been received" or "We are in receipt of your letter" rather than "We have received your letter", and "Your complaint is being looked into" rather than "We are looking into your complaint". They often refer to themselves as "The Writer" and say "The Writer visited your showrooms", when they should say "I visited your

showrooms". Personal conversations, with the emphasis on you and I or we, help to produce the warm and friendly tone more suited to letter-writing.

The whole secret of good business letter-writing is to write simply, in an easy and natural way — like one friendly human being talking to another. Make your letters then, sound as much as possible like good conversation. You wouldn't say on the phone "It is regretted that the goods cannot be delivered today". You would say "I am sorry we cannot deliver the goods today", so why not say it when you write a letter?

Some Rules of Good writing

1. Study your reader's interests

The letters you send out must create a good first impression. To achieve this, "put yourself in your reader's shoes" and try to imagine how he will feel about what you write. Ask yourself constantly, "What are his needs, his wishes, his interests, his problems, and how can I meet them?"; "What would be my own feelings, if I were to receive a letter of the kind I propose to write?" Try to imagine that you are receiving rather than sending the letter and emphasize the "You" attitude rather than I or We.

2. Adopt the right tone

If a letter is to achieve its purpose, its tone must be right. Before beginning to write, think carefully about the way in which you want to influence your reader. Ask yourself, "What do I want this letter to do?" and then express yourself accordingly, being persuasive,

apologetic, obliging, firm and so on, depending on the effect you want to produce.

3. Write naturally and sincerely

When you write or dictate a business letter, try to feel a genuine interest in the person you are writing to and in his problems. Say what you have to say with sincerity and make sure that it sounds sincere. Express your thoughts in your own words and in your own way. Be yourself. Write so that what you say would sound natural if read over the telephone.

4. Avoid wordiness

Make it a rule to use no more words than are needed to make your meaning clear. Businessmen today have many letters to read and welcome the art of letter that is direct and to the point.

5. Write clearly and to the point

First be quite clear about what you want to say and then say naturally and without frills, in language your reader will understand just as if you were in conversation with him. For the most part, keep your sentences short and avoid the overfrequent use of such conjunction as “and”, “but”, “however”, “consequently”, the effect of which is to make sentences long.

6. Be courteous and considerate

Courtesy consists, not in using polite phrases (your kind inquiry, your esteemed order, your valued custom, and so on), but in showing your consideration for your correspondent. It is the quality that enables us to refuse to perform a favour and at the same time keep a

friend; to refuse a customer's request for credit without killing all hope of future business.

Deal promptly with all letters needing a reply. Answer them on the day you receive them if you can. It is discourteous to keep your correspondent waiting for an answer. If you cannot deal promptly with a letter seeking information, write and explain why and say when you will write again. This creates an impression of efficiency and helps to build good will.

Try to understand and respect your correspondent's point of view and resist the temptation to reply as if you could not be in the wrong. If his suggestions are stupid and his criticisms unfair, reply with restraint and say what you feel tastefully and without giving offence. If he send you a rude or sharp letter, resist the temptation to reply in similar terms. Instead, answer him courteously; you lower your dignity if you allow him to set the tone of your reply.

As the buyer and the seller have both common and contradictory interests, it is very important to keep in mind the distinction between certain overlapping concepts: Courtesy overdone may amount to obsequiousness. Sincerity overdone may amount to naivete. In short, any virtue overdone will bring with it some undesirable effect, and propriety is the watchwork in distinguishing the right course from the wrong.

7. Avoid commercial jargon

Avoid using state and round about phrases that add little or nothing to the sense of what you write. Such phrases were at one time common, but they have no place in modern business letter.

8. Write effectively

In business letter-writing you should use simple language, which calls for a plain style—a style that is simple, clear and easily understood. Use plain, familiar words and prefer short words to long if they will do just as well. Wherever possible, prefer the single word to the elaborate phrase. Express yourself in simple language so that your message is clear at first reading.

Be consistant in writing a business letter. Avoid repeating in the same sentence an important word with different meaning.

But in your efforts to avoid repetition don't make the apposite mistake of confusing your reader by using different words to express exactly the same thing. Don't say in the same letter that goods have been sent, forwarded, and despatched, and if you begin your letter by refering to a firm, don't change it as you go along into a "concern" or a "business", or an "organization". If you do, you will leave your reader wondering whether something different is intended.

Preciseness is also required in a business letter. Use expressions with precise meanings. When acknowledging a letter, refer to it by date, subject and reference number (if any). When refering to dates mention the month by name and avoid using instant or inst. (for the present month). ultimo or ult. (for the past month) and proximo or prox. (for the next month). Avoid using vague expressions but concrete words.

9. Avoid monotony

In a business letters you should use either loose sentences or period, or sentences which will make your message vivid. Short sentence are preferable to long ones, because short sentences are easily

understood. A succession of short sentences, however, has a disagreeable jerky effect and the best letters are those which provide a mixture of sentences of different length. Sometimes you wish to emphasize some words, then you may place them at the beginning of the sentence. For example, I met your director yesterday (normal order). Yesterday, I met your director. (emphasizes yesterday)

Emphasis is also achieved by using "it is", "it was" to introduce statements, e. g. Unfortunately, the goods did not arrive in time. (normal order). It was unfortunately that the goods did not arrive in time (emphatic order).

10. Plan your letter

Many business letters are short and routine and can be written or dictated without special preparation. Others must first be thought about and planned. First jot down all the points you wish to cover and then arrange them in logical order to provide the plan for a letter that will read naturally and fluently. If your letter is in reply to one received, underline those parts which seek information or on which comment is necessary. This will ensure that your reply is complete.

11. Pay attention to first and last impressions

If your letter is one sent in reply to another, refer in the opening paragraph to the letter you are answering, but avoid the sort of old-fashioned phrases, such as "We are in receipt of your letter...", "We have for acknowledgement your letter ...". Although they are grammatically correct, they tend to be dull and monotonous, worn threadbare form over-use.

If a letter has been well planned and follows a logical sequence, a brief observation will usually be enough to provide the kind of ending

needed. A word of caution! Avoid the kind of ending introduced by a participle. Thanking you in anticipation and similar endings are no longer used in modern letter-writing. They mean nothing and serve no useful purpose.

12. Check your letters

Be careful to create a good first impression with each of your letters. Before signing, check it for the accuracy of its contents and test its general suitability against such questions as these.

- a. Is its appearance attractive; is it well laid out?
- b. Is it correctly spelt and properly punctuated?
- c. Does it cover all essential points and is the information given correct?
- d. Is what I have said clear, concise and courteous?
- e. Does it sound natural and sincere?
- f. Does it adopt the reader's point of view and will it be readily understood?
- g. Is its general tone right and is it likely to create the impression intended?
- h. Is it the kind of letter I should like to receive if I were in the reader's place?

If the answer to all the questions is "yes" then the letter will take the first step in creating good will and you may safely sign and send it.

Chapter One

Business Letters

Section One

The Structure and Layout of a Business Letter

一般英语商业书信从结构上可分为:

(一) 信头(The Heading)

书信中发信人的地址和发信的日期等称为信头。目的在于使受信人一看就知道发自何方、何处、何时,也便于复信时参考。

外贸商号的信笺,都印有信头(Letter Head),包括发信人的姓名、地址、网址、电子信箱、电报挂号、电传挂号、电话号码、经营项目(商品种类及经销代理等),有些甚至将注册商标和公司董(监)事、副经理等姓名,亦一并印在信头上,打信时只需在日期线(Date Line)上填写日期就够了。有些信头上,发信人注明编号和查号,希望对方复信时能指明原信号码,以便查阅原件。

用印有信头的信笺打信,信头部分除在指定的部位打上日期外还可以打上发文号(即编号、查号等)。打日期要注意下列各点:

1. 年份应完全写出,不能用(00)来代表(2000)。

2. 月份要写英文名称,不能用数字来代替。如(3/9/99)等不能在正式函件中使用。

3. 月份名称可用缩写,如 Aug. 代替 August; Oct. 代替 October; 但 May, June, July 本身很短,不再减缩了。

4. 日期有时用 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ..., 11, 12, ..., 21, 22, 23, 24, ..., 31

等,有时用 1st, 2nd 3rd, 4th, 5th, ..., 11th, 12th, ..., 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th..., 31st. 日期最好用基数字, 不用序数字。

日期有下列几种写法:

1) June 5, 2000

2) 1st October, 2000

3) 30 Nov., 2000 (30 November, 2000)

4) November 30th, 2000

注意: 月份和日期之间不要用标点点开, 年份之前, 必须用逗号点开。日期可用 1, 2, 3, 4, 或用 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th. 但各国各地习惯不同, 不可一概而论。

发文编号办法, 各公司不同, 这里不谈了。

遇有特殊情况, 一时找不到印好信头的信笺, 用白纸写信时, 须将发信人地址及日期一并写在右上角(即写日期的位置上端), 格式如下:

(a) 136 Tower Street,
Toronto 4, Canada.

May 17, 1999

(b) P. O. Box No. 1752.
London, England.

Jan. 15, 1999

(c) 6 and 7 Clifford Street
London, SW463IY, England

Jan. 15, 1999

(d) P. O. Box 1079
Beijing, China
Jan. 15, 1999

说明:

1) (a)(b) 是缩行式, 每行向右至少让出二格或三格空位; (c)(d) 是平头式, 每行取齐。