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财经类研究生英语核心教材



# 商务 英语写作 教程

Business English  
Writing

雷春林 主编 陈 洁 主审



对外经济贸易大学出版社

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NEW WORLD



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# 商务英语写作教程

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商务英语写作教程

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## 商务英语写作教程

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# Preface

本书是“新世界财经类研究生英语核心教材”之一的《商务英语写作教程》。全书共分十个单元，内容涉及商务信函、备忘录、会议记录、新闻稿、商务报告、商务合同、履历、广告以及研究论文的写作，其主要特点是侧重应用文体的训练和范文教学，注重规范化和实用性。

商务题材的选择主要从学习者的需求出发。考虑到他们在未来求职择业或受聘工作期间都会面临如何用英语进行书面沟通，比如撰写简历、公文、商务信函和其它涉外文书等，所以书中安排的内容尽量贴近他们的实际工作。另外，随着中国的入世及经济全球化趋势的加强，研究生也有越来越多的机会参与国际学术活动和交流，因此编者在本书最后安排了研究论文写作的相关内容。

鉴于本书的学习者已经具备了基础的英语写作能力，所以教程不再从传统写作方法上的词、句或段落展开，而是引用了大量的范例，通过对范例的阅读、比较与分析，使读者能够体会并逐渐掌握各种商务体裁文章的结构、脉络、承启、以及其中分析问题和解决问题的方式等。同时，书中对各种文体的格式规范进行了详尽的论述，希望读者能活学活用，在规范框架的前提下，进行自己的写作实践练习。

考虑授课需要，本书的编写基本采用英语，其中主要标题处给出相应的中文，方便及时查找。国内外已有越来越多的研究表明，阅读与写作有着密不可分的关系，所以建议学习者花 ([时间进行广泛阅读，不仅集中在教程本身，还要有课外阅读。本教程学习时间为一学期，可安排每周2课时，18周完成。当然，教师可以根据学生的实际情况，灵活选择内容和安排教学进度。

本书的编者主要是从事高校商务英语写作教学工作的教师，有的还对大型跨国公司的 ([员工进行过写作培训。在本书的编写过程中，我们参考了国内外许多著作和一些跨国公司的网站及文献，在此向这些著作者表示衷心的感谢。本书在编写过程中得到上海对外贸易学院国际商务外语学院陈洁教授的悉心指导，得到对外经济贸易大学出版社的大力支持，对此，向他们致以诚挚的感谢！

由于编者水平有限，书中定有不足和谬误之处，恳请读者批评指正。

编者  
2008年2月

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# Overview of Business Writing (商务写作概论)

## Learning Objectives (学习目标)

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- ✓ know the functions of business writing;
- ✓ tell the difference between academic writing and business writing;
- ✓ understand the style of business writing;
- ✓ identify the strategies to achieve an appropriate tone;
- ✓ develop business writing skills by reading samples.

## 1.1 Introduction (概述)

In today's highly competitive marketplace, good communication matters more than ever. Writing, as an important communication skill, is the primary basis upon which your work, your learning, and your intellect will be judged — in college, in the workplace, and in the community.

Basically, writing is using words to communicate thoughts. Business writing is communicating for a business purpose — to get a job done. The success of business writing depends on what it says and to what extent it induces a favorable response from the reader. Business writing has three functions: to inform, to request or persuade, and to build goodwill. When you inform, you explain something or tell the reader something, for

example, a job description, an annual report, etc. When you request or persuade, you want the reader to act, for example, a performance appraisal, a request to deviate from current working procedure, etc. When you build goodwill, you create a good image of yourself and of your organization, for example, a memo of congratulations, a thank-you letter, etc. Most business messages have one or more of the three functions.

Business writing is briefer and more concise than many other types of writing. It has some generally accepted formats and practices. Good business writing skills are becoming increasingly crucial to organizational success and professional advancement.

## 1.2 Academic writing and business writing (学术写作与商务写作)

Business writing differs from academic writing in a certain way. If writing is analogous to traveling, when you do essay writing, you usually lay out your foundation and proceed to expound on your thesis — allowing the essay to grow and develop as you take your reader, step-by-step, through your thinking process, your journey. However, business writing is usually not like this. It is not a travelogue of your journey, allowing the reader to travel with you; rather, it is a detailed account of the end of the journey and a description of the milestones. For example, if you are writing a report about a business decision, you do not describe all the intricacies of the peaks and valleys of your journey to reach that decision. You do, however, give your reader a report on your decision, an overall view of the trip, and a listing of the alternatives with an explanation as to why they were discarded.

Consider the following sentence which is recommended to student writers in a textbook about academic writing:

*As a third-year college student majoring in history who has already acquired a bit over ten thousand dollars in student loan debt, I find McPherson and Schapiro's rejection of Clinton's national service plan to be short-sighted and insensitive to the experiences of many college students who are struggling to put themselves through school only to face enormous financial burdens upon graduation.*

If you look at the sentence: it consists of 61 words in terms of length; it is a complex sentence with a main clause and at least one subordinate clause in terms of structure; noun-based phrase, such as “rejection” is used in the sentence, instead of using the verb “reject”, etc. All the stylistic variables suggest that this sentence does satisfy the requirements for a

“good” academic sentence.

However, you probably will never read a sentence like the one above in a business document. Business writing is not graded in the academic sense. Getting an A, B, or C is not the payoff. The stakes are much higher. Getting the job done, getting a raise, and getting a promotion are the payoffs in business writing. Business readers do not want to know what is going on inside a writer’s mind. Instead, they want writers to propose plans or recommend actions that will benefit the company, and to do so as concisely as possible.

### 1.3 Business writing style (商务写作风格)

Style is how you express the content of your writing. It is not only the words you choose but the way in which you link them together in sentences and paragraphs. Style may include punctuation, grammar, tone, length, organization, etc.

It is generally accepted that good style in business writing is less formal, more friendly, and more personal than the style usually used for term papers. Nevertheless, good business writers may have several styles. For example, when choosing a level of formality for a specific document, you will find an e-mail to your boss complaining about the delays from a supplier will be informal, perhaps even chatty; while a letter to the supplier demanding better service will be more formal.

The following Table 1.1 illustrates the features of different levels of style.

**Table 1.1** Different levels of style (from *Business and Administrative Communication*, 2006)

Feature	Conversational style	Business style	Term paper style
Formality	Highly informal	Conversational; sounds like a real person talking	More formal than conversation would be
Use of contractions	Many contractions	OK to use occasional contractions	Few contractions, if any
Pronouns	Uses I, first-and second-person pronouns	Uses I, first-and second-person pronouns	First-and second-person pronouns kept to a minimum

continued

Feature	Conversational style	Business style	Term paper style
How personal	Personal; refers to specific circumstances of conversation	Personal; may refer to reader by name; refer to specific circumstances of readers	Impersonal; may generally refer to readers but does not name them or refer to their circumstances
Word choice	Short, simple words; slang	Short, simple words but avoids slang	Many abstract words; scholarly, technical terms
Sentence and paragraph length	Incomplete sentences; no paragraphs	Short sentences and paragraphs	Sentences and paragraphs usually long
Grammar	Can be ungrammatical	Uses standard edited English	Uses standard edited English
Visual impact	Not applicable	Attention to visual impact of document	No particular attention to visual impact

The following rules also help us understand an effective business writing style, although they may change depending upon the company and rhetorical situation.

1) Use shorter sentences. For example, “Shanghai Research Inc. conducted the interviews”.

2) Use simpler sentence structures. For example, “The product name must meet the following tests” (Not, “If we want the product to sell well in the Northwest and eventually in select international markets as well as to compete with distributors of similar name brands, the name must meet the following tests”).

3) Use active voice. For example, “The term, ‘Cascade’ conjures images of nature.” (Not, “Images of nature are associated with the term, ‘Cascade’.”).

4) Write from the point of view of the company. For example, “The company must change the name of its bottled water product.” (Not, “I recommend that the company change the name of its product.”).

5) Write more univocally. For example, “The company must change the name of its bottled water product.” (Not, “Even though Larry in the Advertising Department and Sue in Public Relations disagree, the company must... etc.”).

6) Identify the agents of actions unless there is a good reason for hiding agency. For example, “The sales representatives adopted a new approach.” (Not, “A new approach was

adopted.”).

7) Avoid nominalizing verbs. For example, “The managers decided to change the name of our project.” (Not, “The managers made a decision that . . . etc.”).

8) Recommend action rather than refer to individual mental states. For example, “we recommend names that parallel the age-old and pure qualities of the product.” (Not, “We believe you should use. . . ,” or “We think,” “We imagine,” “We presume,” etc. ).

9) Avoid qualifiers that weaken recommendations or express doubt. For example, “We recommend that your company avoid ‘earth surface’ words.” (Not, “We tentatively recommend that your company, if at all possible, avoid ‘earth surface’ words.”).

## 1.4 Tone in business writing (商务写作的语气)

Tone in writing refers to the writer’s attitude toward the reader and the subject of the message. The overall tone of a written message affects the reader just as one’s tone of voice affects the listener in everyday exchanges.

Business writer should consider the tone of their messages, whether they are writing a memo, letter, report, or any type of business document. Tone is present in all communication activities. Ultimately, the tone of a message is a reflection of the writer and it does affect how the reader will perceive the message.

The writer should consider the following questions when preparing to write:

- 1) Why am I writing this document?
- 2) Who am I writing to and what do I want them to understand?
- 3) What kind of tone should I use?

### 1.4.1 Purpose of writing (写作目的)

You should take time to consider the purpose of your document in order to determine how you should express the message you wish to convey. Obviously, you want the message to reach your audience, and you will probably want the reader to take some action in response to your message. When you consider the message and how you wish to express it, the tone of your message will become apparent.

For example: Sally is writing a job acceptance letter to an employer but is unsure of the tone she should take in the message. She has decided to accept the position. When she asks herself, “What is my intent upon writing”? She answers, “I want to accept the position,

thank the company for the offer, and establish goodwill with my new co-workers.” As she writes the letter she quickly assumes a tone that is appreciative for the offer and enthusiastic about beginning a new job.

#### 1.4.2 Target audience (目标读者)

Who is your audience? Whether it be an employer or a fellow worker, it is essential that you consider your reader before writing any document. Your message will be much more effective if you tailor the document to reach your specific audience. The message you wish to express must be written in a way that will effectively reach the reader. The tone that you use to write the document directly affects how the reader will interpret what is said.

For example: Joe is writing a cover letter for a position as a Sales Representative for a newspaper. He is unsure that he will be able to succeed at such a position, and uses phrases such as “I hope that you will contact me. . .”, “I know that my qualifications are not very impressive, but. . .”, etc. The reader is likely to interpret these phrases to mean that Bob isn’t really qualified for the position or that he doesn’t really want the position.

Clearly, Joe is not assuming an appropriate tone. He must consider that: he is applying for a position as a Sales Representative; he wants the employer to ask him to come in for an interview; the employer will look for highly motivated and confident individuals. If Joe were to consider these things he may rewrite his cover letter to include such phrases as “You can reach me at 555 - 2233”, “I look forward to hearing from you”, “My qualifications make me an excellent applicant for this position. . .”, etc. The tone of the message has changed drastically to sound more confident and self-assured.

#### 1.4.3 Ways to achieve an appropriate tone (达成适当语气的方式)

The business writer should strive for an overall tone that is confident, courteous, and sincere; that uses emphasis and subordination appropriately; that contains nondiscriminatory language; that stresses the “you” attitude; and that is written at an appropriate level of difficulty.

##### 1.4.3.1 Be confident (自信)

You can feel confident if you have carefully prepared and are knowledgeable about the material you wish to express. The manner in which you write should assume a confident tone as well. As you prepare business documents, you want the reader to do as you ask or to accept your decision. In order to make the document effective, you must write confidently.

Consequently, a confident tone will have a persuasive effect on your audience. The reader will become more inclined to accept your position, and will notice the confidence that you have. Employers are inclined to hire individuals that appear confident and sure of their abilities.

This does not mean, however, that you should appear overconfident. This can easily be interpreted as arrogant or presumptuous. For example, you'd better not write "You must agree that I am qualified for the position", instead, "My qualifications in the areas of accounting and customer service meet your job requirements" sounds better.

#### 1.4.3.2 Be courteous and sincere (礼貌和真诚)

A writer builds goodwill for him or her by using a tone that is polite and sincere. It is important to strive for sincerity in tone because without sincerity, politeness can sound condescending.

Consider the words and phrases you use in your document and how your reader will likely receive them. If you are respectful and honest, readers will be more willing to accept your message, even if it is negative. For example, you'd better not write "You didn't read the instructions carefully, thus your system has shut down", instead, "The system may automatically shut down if any installation errors occur" sounds much better.

#### 1.4.3.3 Use appropriate emphasis and subordination (恰当的强调及主次关系)

You can help your readers to understand which of your ideas you consider most important by using emphasis and subordination. You can choose from a variety of strategies to emphasize an idea or to subordinate it.

To emphasize an idea, place it in a short sentence. A short and simple sentence will most effectively convey an important idea. You can provide further explanation, sufficient examples, or evidence in following sentences. To subordinate an idea, place it in a compound sentence. Compare the following two passages:

*Smoking will no longer be permitted in the building. The committee on employee health and safety reached this decision after considering evidence from researchers and physicians on the dangers of second-hand smoke.*

*The committee on employee health and safety has finished considering evidence, and they have reached the decision that smoking will no longer be permitted in the building.*

Usually, ideas placed in the first paragraph of a document receive the most emphasis,



followed by information placed in the last paragraph. You can subordinate an idea by placing it in the middle paragraphs of your message because these paragraphs receive the least emphasis.

Also, use active voice to emphasize the person or thing performing an action (for example, “Scientists have conducted experiments to test the hypothesis.”) and passive voice to emphasize the action that is being performed (for example, “Experiments have been conducted to test the hypothesis.”) Sentences in active voice are generally — though not always — clearer and more direct than those in passive voice. In most nonscientific writing situations, active voice is preferable to passive for the majority of your sentences. Even in scientific writing, overuse of passive voice or use of passive voice in long and complicated sentences can cause readers to lose interest or to become confused.

In addition, the amount of space that you devote to an idea will help convey the idea’s importance to the reader. Present ideas that you want to emphasize in more detail than you do ideas that you want to subordinate.

The language you use to describe your ideas can also suggest how important that idea is. Use phrases such as “most important”, “major”, or “primary” when discussing ideas you want to emphasize (for example, “Our primary consideration must be cost.”) and phrases such as “a minor point to consider” or “least important” to discuss ideas you want to subordinate (for example, “A minor point to consider is appearance.”).

Repeating important ideas is a good way to emphasize them as well. Be careful not to overuse this strategy; you will lose your readers’ interest if they believe you are needlessly repeating information. Any information that stands out from the rest of the text will be emphasized. Bolding, underlining, capitalizing, indenting, and highlighting will convey emphasis to your reader. Do not use this strategy frequently or the design effect will be lost.

#### 1.4.3.4 Use non-discriminatory language (使用非歧视性语言)

Nondiscriminatory language is language that treats all people equally. It does not use any discriminatory words, remarks, or ideas. It is very important that the business writer communicate in a way that expresses equality and respect for all individuals. Discriminatory language can come between your message and your reader. Make sure your writing is free of sexist language and free of bias based on such factors as race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disability. Here are a few suggestions:

- 1) Use neutral job titles. For example, use “chairperson” instead of “chairman”.
- 2) Avoid demeaning or stereotypical terms. For example, use “When orders are received from the office, they are filled within 24 hours” instead of “After the girls in the