

English Correspondence for Foreign Trade

英语写作 外贸函电

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副主编 彭倩倩 张琴芳




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前 言

随着世界经济一体化的发展,中国和世界的交流合作日趋广泛和深入,对国际商务人才的需求也与日俱增,因此,培养一批在对外经济贸易工作中能够处理和撰写国际商务信函的高素质英语应用型人才已成为当务之急。

本书以进出口贸易的流程、环节为主线,讲授当代国际商务英语信函写作的方法和要领,并通过典型范例和详细说明,向学生提供标准的国际商务信函写作模式。同时,通过信函实例,介绍了常用商务英语词汇、表达方式和句型结构。针对课文中的重点和难点所设计的练习题,旨在帮助学生巩固所学知识,提高解决问题的能力。

本书是我们在多年教学实践的基础上,经过充分的调研和讨论而编成,内容符合国际贸易实际,实用性强,可供普通高校英语专业和外贸专业教学使用,也适于自学。

编 者

2010年5月

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Chapter 1

Fundamentals of Business Letters

Lead-in

Today, almost all the business communities recognize with one consent—the significance of essential communicating skills, for all business activities rely on satisfactory exchange of information. The written mode of communication has always been popular in business as it generally provides a more permanent record of the messages transmitted. Among various written media including letters, memos, reports, instructions, notices, meeting agendas, minutes and others, business letters are the most frequently used and remain an indispensable part of business communication.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the functions of business letters.
- Know the principles of business letter writing.

Functions of Business Letters

Although many of business activities can be handled over the phone or in person, business letters remain an indispensable and essential part of business communication since business letters are one of the best ways to ensure your message is accurately received, particularly if you are discussing technical or highly detailed information. Without them, it would be impossible to carry out many ordinary business activities. They serve a variety of business functions.

First of all, business letters serve as a means to elicit and exchange business information and help establish and maintain business relations. They are used

to make or answer inquiries and offers, confirm sales and purchases, request materials or information, answer customers' questions, maintain good public relations, and fulfill other relative business functions.

Business letters also function as written records fully recognized by the courts. Letters of agreement are often drawn up between companies and independent suppliers or consultants. Job offers made through the mail are regarded as legally binding on the sender. If you accept in writing, your letter is a binding contract of employment.

Furthermore, business letters are a part of a company's permanent record. They can be used to verify bookkeeping and inventory entries. If you have a question about a customer's order, or about the details in an agreement, you can check your file copy of the letter. You cannot do the same with an oral communication unless you record every outgoing and incoming call.

Business letters can act as formal or informal public relations material. They help to build goodwill between you and your clients, creditors, suppliers, and other public groups. Your letter represents you and your firm to people you may never meet personally or call on the phone. How you express yourself and the appearance of your letter form an impression in the reader's mind of you and your business.

Therefore, every business letter fulfills more than one purposes and it deserves considerable care and attention.

Writing Principles of Business Letters

Business letters play an important role in the development of goodwill and friendly trade relationship. They should be friendly and courteous, easy to read, and easy to understand. In writing a business letter, there are certain principles for you to follow. These principles provide guidelines for style and presentation and choice of content. Called "Seven C's", they are: consideration, courtesy, completeness, concreteness, clarity, conciseness, and correctness.

1. Consideration

Consideration means that you prepare every message with the receiver in

mind and try to put yourself in his or her place. Your letters should help create a good impression and avoid leaving unfavorable impression or offending others. Try to give the consideration to the receivers' wishes, demands, interest and difficulties by adopting their viewpoint. Emphasize the "You-attitude" rather than the "We-attitude" in business correspondence, and you will find the best ways to express your better understanding and present the message ...

Compare the following pairs of sentences:

We-attitude

We allow you 2 percent for cash payment.

We regret our inability to serve you at this time.

Since you failed to make the down payment, we could not keep the room reservation for you after 6:00 p. m.

You-attitude

You earn 2 percent for cash payment.

Perhaps next time we can send you what you require.

The reservation was automatically cancelled since the down payment was not received before 6:00 p. m.

2. Courtesy

Courtesy is not merely politeness with mechanical insertions of "please" and "thank you". Rather, true courtesy needs to use tactful tone and respectful expressions to show the honest attitude, thoughtful appreciation, sincere politeness, considerate understanding and heartfelt respect.

Answer letters promptly, for punctuality will please your recipient who hates waiting for days for a reply.

Adopt the right tone in writing. Before you begin to write, think carefully about the way in which you want to influence your customer, and then express yourself accordingly, being persuasive, firm, or apologetic.

Avoid courtesy blunders in your letters. Discrepancy often occurs in business, but it should be handled and settled with diplomacy and tact without ill will on either side. Never show your anger in a business letter. Avoid suspicion, accusation and talking down. Never use irritating, offensive and belittling statements.

Compare the following pairs of sentences:

Poor	Better
We are sorry you have misunderstood us.	We are sorry we didn't make ourselves understood clearly.
You obviously ignored our request that you return the report by registered mail.	We did request that you return the report by registered mail.
In an establishment as large as ours, we ...	Please notice that it is our common practice to ...

3. Completeness

Completeness means your message contains all facts that the receiver needs for the reaction you desire.

See to it that all the matters are discussed, and all questions are answered. An outline helps the letter to be full and complete. Keep in mind the following guidelines for completeness: why do you write the letter, what are the facts supporting the reasons, whether have you answered the questions asked or not, what the reader has expected, and when desirable, give something extra.

4. Concreteness

Concreteness means being specific, definite, and vivid rather than vague and general.

Concreteness is always stressed, especially for letters calling for a specific reply, such as trade terms, shipment, packaging, specifications and characters of goods, figures and dates.

The following guidelines can help us write concretely: use specific facts and figures; put action in verbs; prefer active voice to passive voice; choose vivid, image-building words; pay attention to word order, putting modifiers in right place.

Compare the following pairs of sentences:

Vague	Concrete
Please send your proposal to us as soon as possible.	Please send your proposal to us before October 10.
There is a big market potential for your products in China.	The estimated annual market demand for your products in China

The sample will be sent to you by
our retailer.

is about 600 tons.
Our retailer will send you the sam-
ple.

5. Clarity

Clarity means getting your message across so that the reader will not misunderstand what you are trying to convey.

A business letter is effective only when it communicates the necessary ideas to its readers with clarity. Be certain about what you wish to say, express it in plain, simple words, and present it in well-constructed sentences and paragraphs, if necessary, in tables or graphs. Avoid ambiguity and expressions that are liable to misunderstanding. Accurate, straight-forward, and simple English is preferred in business letters.

6. Conciseness

Conciseness is saying what you have to say in the fewest possible words without sacrificing completeness and courtesy.

In business correspondence, conciseness means increased effectiveness and decreased costs. It helps to save both the writer's and the recipient's time and energy. A business letter should be precise and to the point. To achieve conciseness, try to keep your sentences short, eliminate excessive details, and avoid wordy expressions and redundancies. What's more, careful paragraphing can make a business letter easier to read. It is a good rule to confine each paragraph to only one point or topic.

Compare the following pairs of sentences:

Wordy	Concise
at the present time	now
due to the fact that	because
Attention should be called to ...	Please note ...
Please be advised we have received your L/C.	We have received your L/C.
They attend the fair for the purpose of finding a business partner.	They attend the fair to find a part- ner.
The writer wishes to extend grateful	Thank you for your letter of March

thanks to you for the letter you 15.
send us on March 15.

7. Correctness

The term correctness, in addition to proper grammar, punctuation and spelling, also means appropriate tone and accuracy of information.

Using the right level of language can help convey the real message without causing offence even if it is a letter of complaint or an answer to such a letter.

Accurate information is of primary concern to business writers since business letters involve the rights, the duties, and the interest of both parties. Accurate figures and exact terms are particularly important as they are the basis of all kind of business documents. Therefore, we should neither overstate nor understate, because overstatement might throw you in an awkward position while understatement would lead to less confidence and hold up trade development.

Words and Expressions

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| fundamental <i>n.</i> 原理,原则;基本知识 | consultant <i>n.</i> 顾问,商议者,咨询者 |
| community <i>n.</i> 团体,社区,社会,共同体 | binding contract 具有法律约束力的契约 |
| with one consent 一致同意,一致赞成 | verify <i>v.</i> 核实,查证,校验 |
| communication <i>n.</i> 交流;通信;传达 | bookkeeping <i>n.</i> 记账,簿记 |
| indispensable <i>adj.</i> 不可或缺的,必不可少的 | inventory <i>n.</i> 存货;详细目录;财产清册;总量 |
| elicit <i>v.</i> 得出,探出,诱出 | entry <i>n.</i> 登记;申报;记录;项目;账目 |
| inquiry <i>n.</i> 询盘,询问 | query <i>n./v.</i> 问题;质问,询问,质疑 |
| offer <i>n.</i> 报盘,发盘 | goodwill <i>n.</i> 善意,亲切,友好关系 |
| confirm <i>v.</i> 确认,确定 | client <i>n.</i> 顾客,客户 |
| public relations 公共关系 | creditor <i>n.</i> 债权人 |
| fulfill <i>v.</i> 履行;实现,完成 | represent <i>v.</i> 代表;象征 |
| draw up 草拟,起草 | courteous <i>adj.</i> 有礼貌的,谦恭的 |
| supplier <i>n.</i> 供应商,供货商 | courtesy <i>n.</i> 礼貌,礼仪,礼节 |

guideline <i>n.</i> 指导路线, 方针, 指标	trade terms 贸易条款; 贸易术语
consideration <i>n.</i> 考虑周到, 体谅	shipment <i>n.</i> 装船, 装运, (船) 运输
concreteness <i>n.</i> 具体性	packaging <i>n.</i> 包装, 装箱
clarity <i>n.</i> 清楚, 透明	specification <i>n.</i> 规格, 规范; 技术说明
conciseness <i>n.</i> 简明, 简洁	modifier <i>n.</i> 修饰语, 修饰成分
correctness <i>n.</i> 正确性	ambiguity <i>n.</i> 模棱两可, 歧义, 含糊
completeness <i>n.</i> 完整, 完整性	be liable to 易于……的, 易受……的
business correspondence 商业通信, 业务书信	straightforward <i>adj.</i> 直接的, 直截了当的; 诚实的
tactful <i>adj.</i> 机智的; 得体的; 老练的	precise <i>adj.</i> (言语等) 清晰的; 精确的, 准确的
promptly <i>adv.</i> 迅速地, 敏捷地	to the point 中肯, 扼要
punctuality <i>n.</i> 准时	eliminate <i>v.</i> 除去, 排除, 删除
accordingly <i>adv.</i> 相应地; 因此, 于是	redundancy <i>n.</i> 赘言, 冗长不必要的话
persuasive <i>adj.</i> 有说服力的, 易使人信服的	overstate <i>v.</i> 夸张, 夸大
blunder <i>n.</i> 愚蠢的错误, 谬误	understate <i>v.</i> 低调陈述, 保守地说
diplomacy <i>n.</i> 外交, 外交手腕	
belittling <i>adj.</i> 轻视的, 贬抑的	

Practice Guide

I. Discussion.

1. How do you understand the functions of business letters in international business?
2. What are the seven writing principles that we should observe when we write a business letter? What is the implication of each principle?

Exercises

I. Rewrite the following sentences to make them concise and effective.

1. The plant is successful in terms of production.

2. We wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 5.

3. It is inevitable that oil prices will rise.

4. We require cameras that are of a new type.

5. It should be noted that this is the best price we can offer in this season.

6. We allow you 3 percent discount for cash payment.

7. There is a need for more careful inspection of all welds.

8. Our normal practice is that we usually insure shipments for the invoice value plus 10%.

9. We are informed that similar goods of American origin have been sold here at a level about 30% lower than you.

10. He will fly to Germany next week for the purpose of meeting Mr. Stwartz in person.

11. There appears to be a tendency on the part of investment bankers to become more cautious.

12. This product not only is welcome for its reasonable price, but also for its fine quality.

Chapter 2

Layout of Business Letters

Lead-in

A good business letter can play an important role in trade, increase friendship and obtain complete understanding between the parties involved. Business letter-writing is one of the necessary business skills. To write an effective business letter, you need to know not only the basic structure and the format of a business letter, but also the addressing of an envelope.

Learning Objectives

- Know the parts of a business letter.
- Know the format of a business letter.
- Know how to address an envelope.

Elements of a Business Letter

The contents of a business letter can be divided into two parts: basic parts and optional parts. The basic parts are those that must appear in a business letter while the optional parts might appear when needed.

The following table shows the basic and optional parts of a business letter.

Basic Parts of a Business Letter 基本部分	Optional Parts of a Business Letter 可选部分
(1) Letterhead 信头	(8) Reference 案号/备查
(2) Date Line 日期行	(9) Attention Line 经办人
(3) Inside Address 封内地址	(10) Subject Line 事由/主题行
(4) Salutation 称呼	(11) Identification Line 作者/打印人

(Continued)

Basic Parts of a Business Letter 基本部分	Optional Parts of a Business Letter 可选部分
(5) Body of a Letter 正文 (6) Complimentary Close 结尾谦称 (7) Signature 签名	(12) Enclosure 附件 (13) Carbon Copy 抄送 (14) Postscript 附言

The following letter is designed to illustrate the position of each part mentioned above. After that, all the elements will be introduced one by one with more details and examples.

Messrs. William & Sons 58 Lancaster House, Manchester, England	(1) Letterhead
March 20, 2010	(2) Date Line
Our Ref. No. Your Ref. No.	(8) Reference
The National Transport Co. 120 Broadway Street Rangoon, Burma	(3) Inside Address
Attn: Mr. Takabayashi, General Manager	(9) Attention Line
Dear Sirs,	(4) Salutation
<u>Sub: Lab Instruments</u>	(10) Subject Line
Your firm has been recommended to us by Messrs. Charles Evans Ltd., Birmingham, with whom we have done some business for the past two years.	(5) Body of a Letter
We are thinking of getting a supply of lab in- struments. Please furnish us with a catalogue, price list and brochure, if available.	

We are looking forward to your early reply.

Yours faithfully, (6) Complimentary Close

John Smith (7) Signature

JW/ns

(11) Identification Line

Encl. :

(12) Enclosure

CC: our branch office

(13) Carbon Copy

P. S.

(14) Postscript

1. Basic Parts of a Business Letter

(1) Letterhead 信头

The letterhead expresses a firm's personality and is generally printed on the firm's stationery. It helps to form the impression of the writer's firm. Styles vary considerably, but they all give similar information, usually containing all or some of the following elements: the company's name and address, postcode, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address, even web address. They may be positioned in the center, or at the left margin for the block style, or flush at the right margin for the indented style.

(2) Date Line 日期行

Business letters should have the correct date typed under the letterhead. The date should be typed or written in full, not in abbreviated form since the date records when the letter is written and may serve as an important reference. It is usual to show the date in the order of day/month/year (British practice), or month/day/year (American practice).

Regarding the date line, pay attention to the following points:

- A. YEAR should be typed in full. Avoid abbreviation. For example, 2003 cannot be replaced by 03.
- B. MONTH is preferably spelled out in letters, to avoid confusion. For example, 12/11 can be November 12 or December 11.
- C. For the day, either cardinal numbers or ordinal numbers can be used. However, there is a growing tendency to omit the ordinal suffixes (e. g. -st, -nd, -rd and -th). So the recommended forms for the date are as