

外贸函电

Business Correspondence in International Trade



主编 王美玲



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本书编写的主要目的是帮助国际贸易、商务英语、国际营销等专业的学生提高英语书面交流能力。全书总体介绍了当前外贸沟通中的通行做法和外贸英文写作技巧,尤其是商务传真和商务电子邮件的广泛使用,以及国际商务活动往往发生在非英语母语者之间等新变化对传统的商务函电写作所产生的影响;商务内容除系统地介绍传统的对外贸易各环节的商务信函写作外,还涉及多种代理等新形式国际合作;本书还介绍了外贸工作中公司间和商务伙伴间往来的礼仪性信函,适应国际商务环境中对人际关系沟通能力和写作技能的要求;此外,鉴于商务报告写作在国际贸易商务环境中的重要性,本书介绍了常见的几种商务报告写作技巧。

本书既可以作为高等院校国际经济与贸易专业和国际商务英语专业的本专科教材,也可以作为全国外销员经贸英语考试的参考书,以及从事外贸行业工作人员的案头资料,以备不时之需。

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PREFACE

前言

本书在遵循外贸函电课程知识体系原则的前提下,从基础性、实用性、综合性和新颖性的角度出发,介绍商务环境客观要求的国际英语应用能力、商务知识运用能力和现代通信手段使用技能等国际商务沟通能力。全书旨在培养国际商务人士的书面沟通能力。

本书既可以作为高等院校国际经济与贸易专业和国际商务英语专业的本专科教材,也可以作为全国外销员经贸英语证书考试和商务英语证书考试的参考书以及从事外贸行业工作人员的案头资料,以备不时之需。

根据高校外贸函电课程的课时分配,本书共分16章,主要内容包括以下4个方面:①英文信函、传真、电子邮件的写作原则、格式、特点和技巧;②按照外贸业务的磋商及实施过程,介绍各类外贸函电的写作方法和技巧;③商务工作中常见的公司之间和商务伙伴之间往来的礼仪性信函;④申请书和个人简历等求职与留学申请材料以及商务报告的写作技巧。每章教学内容基本包括商务知识简介、示例、常用表达法、写作指南和练习5个部分。另外,本书后面的附录不但方便教学选用,还为自学提供参考,包括章后练习参考答案、美式英语和英式英语在商务写作中的一些差异以及进出口贸易单证样本。

本书的主要特色在于:①具有时代气息和前瞻性。系统介绍商务信函写作技巧,突出新通信媒介方式传真及电子邮件的写作特点和商务礼仪,反映当代英语教学理论以及国际商务通用语言教学新范式的研究动态。②突出教学目标和教学方法。示例的选用遵循“怎样写、写什么、为什么写”的大前提,强调商务写作要言之有物而不哗众取宠。③内容包容性大、实用性强。全书不仅涵盖了直接进出口业务环节信函写作的基本组成部分,还涉及反映中国对外贸易现状的其他贸易方式,如抵偿贸易和加工贸易等。同时,还专章分别介绍商务礼仪往来、求职和留学申请材料以及商务报告等常见商务写作体裁的写作技巧。④练习设计丰富多样。以“设计一起草—修改”写作过程理论为指导,本着服务好中国英语学习者的精神,坚持以学生为中心的教学理念,精心设计难易程度不同的练习,让学习者通过单项技能和综合能力的训练,综合运用外贸基本知识和英语

语言。

全书由王美玲总体设计并负责修改与审定。其中，第1~11章以及附录由王美玲执笔，第12~13章的初稿由高云执笔，第14章的初稿由王依执笔，第15~16章的初稿由John Shepherd执笔。在本书的校稿过程中，得到了John Shepherd、李巧和李文琪的大力协助，在此一并向他们表示衷心的感谢。

受作者水平有限，错谬在所难免，敬请同行批评和斧正。

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CHAPTER 1

Rules of Good Business Writing

Section 1

Introduction

Changes have taken place in dynamic business environments over the past two decades and produced new features of efficient and effective business documents. Firstly, English is and will be used by Chinese business professionals to communicate more with non-native English speakers than with native English speakers. Secondly, more options of communication media are available. Faxes and emails, in addition to traditional postal letters, have become central to corporate communication media, whereas telegrams (cables) and telexes are little used. Furthermore, business faxes and emails have developed distinctive features; 1) they are closer to those of spoken language and further away from those of traditional formal business letters, and 2) there are medium-related structural parts and protocols[⊖]. Unlike telegrams and telexes, faxes and emails also make the communication process direct, i. e. rarely involving intermediaries (e. g. secretaries and translators). All these changes imply a tendency towards being less formal. Business faxes tend to be less formal than business letters, but more formal than business emails. Some formal formulaic expressions such as “Yours faithfully” in business letters are not considered so appropriate in emails. Current business letters tend to be less formal than traditional ones, and international English has gained wide acceptance. College and university students need to be made aware of these changes, particularly their impact on current basic business communication requirements.

This opening chapter aims to introduce the essentials of good business writing so that you can improve your future job performance. Thus, you will learn about the primary importance of accomplishing the purpose in each message, the power of plain English, the value of being courteous, the tendency towards being less formal, and the necessity of cultural awareness. There now follows a detailed discussion of these points.

1. Efficient Message Exchange

All business writing activities are purposeful. Whatever the medium of delivery (e. g.

⊖ protocol 礼仪

postal letter, fax, or email), a general purpose in business correspondence is to influence your reader to take some action or adopt a certain attitude (e. g. goodwill). The success of a message is judged in terms of the extent to which it gains agreement from its targeted reader. A successful sales message gets its reader to agree that a product or service is worth buying; a collection letter to be effective should convince the debtor that payment of his/her bill is the wisest policy; an application letter attempts to win agreement from the prospective employer that the applicant is well qualified to get the job for which he/she is applying. Therefore, you need to keep the purpose in mind through the whole process of writing, i. e. planning, drafting and reviewing.

The clearer the purpose is, the better your writing will be. Good business correspondence follows a three-part pattern to develop around the purpose of the writing. The **opening paragraph** should act as orientation only, telling your reader what the **main body** will be about, whereas the **closing paragraph** should indicate the action your reader should take in a clear, concise way. Your opening and closing paragraphs in letters, faxes and reports should have a maximum of four to six lines. Significant in business writing is a one-sentence paragraph in opening and closing[⊖].

Example 1: Useful openings

- 1) *We wish to acknowledge receipt of your fax dated 7 January.*
- 2) *Your fax dated 7 January has been received.*
- 3) *Thank you for your fax dated 7 January.*
- 4) *With reference to our previous correspondence of (DATE)...*
- 5) *We regret to inform you that...*
- 6) *In your fax of 7 January you asked about...*
- 7) *My colleagues and I agree that the concerns you mentioned in your fax of 7 January need further discussion.*
- 8) *At long last the revised XYZ model is now available. You will be pleased to know that a delivery is already on its way.*

Example 2: Useful endings

- 1) *If you have any questions, please contact me.*
- 2) *We look forward to hearing from you.*
- 3) *Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.*
- 4) *As soon as we receive your response we will...*
- 5) *Thank you for taking the time to write.*

⊖ 这是一个完全倒装句，起强调作用。

- 6) I need your answer by 29 March.
 7) You can count on our full support.
 8) I look forward to receiving your approval and to many more years of good relations.

The main body is responsible for the content of messages. This part provides information/answers, and/or requests information/action/favors, and possibly negotiates. Negotiating can take the varied forms of apologizing, offering something in return/incentives, or expressing comments. To make these purposes of writing clear, efficient paragraphs in the middle part require all necessary information to be included and presented in a logical and coherent way. And a clear topic sentence (主旨句) gives a paragraph more sense. Please pay attention to the **bolded** parts in **Example 3** and understand how the connections between sentences are strengthened.

Example 3: Effective paragraph

① *The Human Resources Department has a number of high-level positions for which current employees may apply. **These positions**, which are in marketing, personnel, and production, must be filled immediately. **Therefore**, interviewees will be scheduled within the next two weeks.* ② *If you are interested in **applying** for one of these positions, please come to the Human Resources Department to see the list and read about the required qualifications.*

Note: This paragraph is made efficient by a **summary statement** at the beginning and coherent by effective use of **repetition** (e. g. “these positions”), and **links**[⊖] (e. g. “therefore”). The second part ② can also stand as a separate paragraph, according to the rule of “one idea, one paragraph” in business writing.

It is worth mentioning here that links, or connecting words and phrases, are effective signposts[⊖] in enabling readers to follow an argument, a debate, a refusal or an explanation. Links appropriate to different situations, or rather, purposes, are introduced below (see Table 1-1):

Table 1-1: Connecting words and phrases

Purpose	Formal	Informal
comparison	similarly, in comparison, likewise	again, still
time	eventually, formerly, subsequently	then, next, after, later, since, while
same direction	furthermore, moreover, in addition	and, firstly, secondly, thirdly, besides, also
contrast	however, nevertheless, on the contrary	but, still, yet, meanwhile, on the other hand
illustration	to illustrate, in other words	for example
conclusion	therefore, accordingly, in conclusion	so, as a result, to sum up, in short
emphasis	in any event, to be sure	of course, naturally, obviously

⊖ links; connecting words and phrases 连接词

⊖ signpost 指向标

2. Plain Language

As discussed above, business writing aims to communicate for a shared purpose (e. g. ultimately concluding a business deal), rather than to impress the reader with your literary^① style. Plain language can improve the level of readability and the qualities of being concise, brief and sincere. Some principles of plain English^② are selected here:

1) Instead of low frequency^③ words, choose easy-to-read ones:

Use	Avoid	Use	Avoid
end	terminate	improve	ameliorate
help	assist	determine, find out	ascertain
fill	replenish	as you requested	as per your request
use	avail/utilize	speed up	expedite
belief	assumption	send	forward
contact you again	revert to you	start, begin	implement, commence, initiate
lessen, ease	alleviate		

2) Instead of long phrases, use one word where appropriate:

Use	Avoid	Use	Avoid
soon	in the very near future	without	in the absence of
if	in the event that	considering	in view of the fact that
even though	in spite of the fact that	for	for the purpose of
about/regarding	with regard to	meanwhile	in the meantime
now	at this point in time/for the time being	because	due to the fact that
receive	acknowledge receipt of	although	notwithstanding the fact that
separately	under separate cover	often/usually	more often than not

3) Avoid empty, redundant^④ or old-fashioned expressions:

Avoid	Choose
As a rule, we generally approve all such requests.	We generally approve all such requests.
Enclosed please find the information as per ^⑤ your request.	Enclosed is the information you requested.
We would ask you kindly to advise us of your itinerary ^⑥ concerning the above-mentioned meeting at your earliest convenience.	Could you please let us know your travel schedule before 8 September?

① literary style 文学(体裁)风格

② Please access <http://www.sec.gov/investor/pubs/englishhndbk.htm> for more about plain English.

③ low frequency words 使用频率低的词汇

④ redundant 多余的

⑤ as per 按照(*English Dictionary for Advanced Learners of American English* 2002 和 *Cambridge International Dictionary of English with Chinese Translation* 2001 均未列入此词)

⑥ itinerary 旅行日程

(To be continued)

Avoid	Choose
Please be informed that [⊖] the installation of the above-mentioned procedures to fully equip your reception desk with a state-of-the-art [⊖] switchboard should be executed by skilled personnel. We would therefore kindly suggest the possibility of offering you a complete package of installation, training and maintenance.	We would like to show you how you would benefit from our complete package [⊕] , including installation, training of your receptionist staff and maintenance.

4) Avoid abstract nouns and complicated sentences; instead, use action verbs and break longer sentences into shorter ones:

Avoid	Choose
come to a decision	decide
have a discussion	discuss
make a reconciliation	reconcile
It will be our constant aim to. . .	We will try to. . .
It should be noted that. . .	Please note that. . .
It has been decided that, due to the present situation of the company concerning a decrease in sales, coupled with the increasing costs of raw materials, radical cost savings are to be implemented by each division.	The company is facing a decrease in sales and an increase in the cost of raw materials. Therefore, each division must implement cost savings.

5) Avoid elaborate language:

Avoid	Choose
You are cordially invited to take advantage of this attractive offer.	You are invited to take advantage of this attractive offer.
We sincerely desire to have the pleasure of serving you.	We hope to serve you.
Through the courtesy of . . . , we got to know your name and address.	We were given your contact information by

As discussed above, you should keep your own writing simple and short, despite a lingering belief that business language tends to be elaborate. A formal style does not mean unnecessary fossilized[Ⓢ] flowery language or the use of highly complex sentences. These would actually not only affect the readability, but also damage goodwill and sincerity, which a formal style should aim to establish and maintain. Research shows that sentences of 7-20 words have clear meanings, while 27-word sentences or longer tend to be less understandable.

Current business communication tends to be less formal. Generally speaking, business faxes

⊖ “Please be informed that” is four wasted words, in ordinary English meaning “please let us know”.

⊖ state-of-the-art 最新水平的

⊕ package 一揽子(服务)

Ⓢ fossilized; old fashioned, time-worn 陈腐的

tend to be less formal than business letters, but more formal than business emails. On the one hand, some formulaic expressions[⊖] such as “Enclosed please find the market survey report”, “Yours faithfully” in business letters are not seen as appropriate for business emails; on the other hand, contractions such as “It’s”, “doesn’t”, “you’re” which are commonly used in emails, would not be seen as acceptable in traditional formal business letters.

3. Courtesy

Courtesy is a virtue of all business documents. In your business message, you can develop courtesy by putting yourself in your reader’s shoes. Imagine how you yourself would like to be treated and shown consideration and respect.

The ideas and the words you use to convey ideas create an impression on the reader. Therefore, remember to create a positive feeling by presenting your message from his/her point of view. This is known as “You-Attitude”. A mechanical use of more you’s than we’s and I’s can help to some extent, and, more significantly, you need to be sympathetic to the reader’s needs, wishes, interests, and problems in his circumstances. In so doing, you can build goodwill into your writing. The following example can make this point more meaningful.



Example 4 : An email extract

Dear Director Li

A change in my final examination schedule makes it impossible for me to keep our appointment on June 20. When I should be talking with you, I’ll be taking an exam in International Economics.

I hope this change will not seriously inconvenience you. Please accept my apologies.

Will you be able to fit me in at a new time? The final exam week ends on July 6. Please choose any later date that is convenient for you.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours

Note : This email would most likely create a sympathetic feeling from the prospective employer because of the positive feeling it creates.

To create a positive feeling, you need to avoid words that may put the reader on the defensive[⊖], and instead focus on the positive. In other words, tell what you can do, not

⊖ formulaic expressions 程式化语言

⊖ on the defensive; prepared to protect yourself against attack or criticism 防御姿态, 提防

what you cannot do. (see Table 1-2).

Table 1-2 :Negative vs positive or neutral feelings

Avoid the negative	Choose the positive
Don't miss this chance.	Take this chance.
We have no alternative but. . .	We are, however, able to. . .
I am unable to. . .	I wish I could. . .
If you do not provide us with the necessary payment by 8 October we regret that we will have to cancel your subscription [⊖] .	If you can pay the necessary amount by 8 October, we will be delighted to renew your subscription.
You should fill in the necessary details and return the papers to us directly, otherwise these figures will not be included in this year's catalogue.	Could you please fill in the necessary details and return the form to us by tomorrow? Then your figures will be added to this year's catalogue.
We regret that you feel dissatisfied and upset with our Free Phone service and apologize for the inconvenience this caused you last week.	I have read with concern your comments on our Free Phone service. Thank you for letting me know your opinion and suggestions for improvement.

The “**you-attitude**”, showing empathy with your reader, putting yourself in his/her place, also creates a **conversational tone**. Think of your reader as if he/she were sitting across from you and you were having a friendly chat. In doing so, your objective is to write simple, direct, and straightforward messages so as to make the reader clearly understand the purpose and obtain the reaction you want from him/her. The following advice can help you achieve a conversational tone:

- 1) instead of third-person pronouns, use personal references; e. g. say “We are pleased to grant your request” instead of “The undersigned is pleased to grant your request”.
- 2) instead of the passive voice, use the active voice to emphasize the action agent[⊖]; e. g. say “Our Shipping Department is processing your order” instead of “Your order is now being processed by our Shipping Department”.
- 3) instead of indirect questions, use direct questions; e. g. say “Can we pay against these receipts?” instead of “Please inform us whether payment against these receipts will be acceptable”.

Furthermore, the positive feeling and impression created by a “you-attitude” approach implies the importance of a **polite tone**. Here are some examples of how to produce a politer tone:

- 1) Use could, would, or might to make what you write less blunt.
That is impossible. →Unfortunately, that would not be possible.
- 2) Do not present your ideas too strongly.
There is no possibility of meeting that deadline. →We would find it extremely difficult

⊖ subscription 订阅
⊖ action agent 施事者

to meet that deadline.

3) Present your ideas more as opinion than as fact.

Your conclusions are incorrect. → We feel that these conclusions may be incorrect.

4) Avoid using negative words.

The proposal was rejected. → I am afraid that the proposal was not acceptable.

5) Do not go to extremes with politeness.

We would be very pleased to get your kind information. → Please send us information on your products.

6) Questions can often be used in making suggestions or expressing opinions.

How do you think this method would work? → Wouldn't this method be better in a situation like this? / Would this method not be better than...?

7) Use qualifiers[⊖].

We are not completely satisfied with your quotation. → We have some doubts as to whether the color can be changed.

Besides producing a polite tone in your message, you also need to remember that it is polite and courteous always to reply and respond promptly. Being polite is always important in business. It is necessary in general to reply as soon as possible to any business communication, and always to reply, even if the response is a negative one (expressed courteously).

4. Cultural Awareness

The message is the message received. When communicating across cultures in varieties of English, failure to communicate is largely due to lack of awareness of cultural differences. That is to say, the actual misunderstanding in intercultural communication can take place outside the scope of the style of different varieties of English. Or rather, much of the failure is due to not putting yourself in the position of your reader. Once again, adopting a "you-attitude" approach is the key to successful intercultural communication. This "you-attitude" approach requires you to keep the following points in mind:

- 1) You cannot assume that the reader of your message will interpret the words you used in the same way as you intended. If a British person received a letter from an American which began: "I would be quite interested to meet you", he/she would be surprised, because the British person would interpret **quite** to mean "fairly, but not that much", but the American would understand it as "very". Another good example is given here. The American expression "canceled check" means "a check paid by the bank", while

⊖ qualifier 修饰语

the British expression “cancelled cheque” means “a cheque that is stopped or voided”. Thus, it is important for you to be aware of the differences between American and British business letters.

2) You cannot assume that the reader knows as much about the topic or the abbreviations in the message as yourself. Instead, you need to ①expand your message by adding as much information as possible so that the reader does not receive too little information, for example, RMB ¥ 2,000,000 (RMB 100 = EUR[⊖] 10), and ②use widely accepted abbreviations only.

3) When you find it hard to understand the message, do not try to interpret the message by forcing your meaning onto it. Instead, ask the sender immediately to restate it in other words.

Therefore, you need to raise awareness of cultural differences so as to avoid miscommunication[⊖] in English intercultural business communication. The more you learn about your reader, the better the outcome for your communication and cooperation.

Section 2

Guide to Writing

The following general guidelines will be useful to your English business correspondence by letter, fax and email.

1. Write concise and purposeful messages[⊖].
2. Write to communicate rather than to impress with your writing[⊗].
3. Do not write confused, overlong, or pointless messages.
4. Place primary information upfront[⊕] in organizing sentences, paragraphs and the whole message.
5. Keep your writing clear and completely readable by:
 - 1) following the rules of “one idea, one sentence”, “one topic, one paragraph”, “one subject, one message”.
 - 2) using summary sentences, words of repetition, and connecting words and phrases to make meanings stand out.
6. Use plain language.
7. Be natural, human and sympathetic.

⊖ EUR (also €), short for euro 欧元

⊖ miscommunication 交流信息不对称

⊖ 要简明和言之有物。

⊗ 要传达信息，而不要哗众取宠。

⊕ upfront (adj./adv.): frank, honest and not trying to hide anything; in writing, put the message early, at the beginning.

- 1) Adopt a "you-attitude"
 - 2) Aim at a conversational tone
 - 3) Be polite, friendly and less formal.
8. Consider cultural differences.

Section 3

Exercises

I. Fill-in task.

Directions: This exercise is designed to give you an opportunity to sample business faxes. To complete this exercise, you need to know the specific meaning of some business terms, such as credit, balance, consignment. Complete the following fax, using one word from the box in each blank.

explain	command	possibly	message	possible	number	credit
deliver	delivered	can	able	bill	request	ones
balance	creditor	order	equal	delivery		

FAX MESSAGE^①

TO: Q & S Electrical Distributors

ATTN: Jane P Deighton, Sales Manager

TEL:

FAX:

31 August 2012

FROM: QuickStep Lighting

TEL:

FAX:

Pages 1 of 1

Dear Ms Deighton

Order No. PK 2173

We received a consignment^② of light bulbs from you today, against the above ①.

Could you sort out the following points, please?

1. 4 boxes of 100W standard bulbs arrived broken. Could you please arrange a ② note or replacement?

① Numbers of telephone and fax in this fax message are omitted.

② consignment (一批) 托运的货物