

*English Correspondence on  
International Trade and Economics*

# 涉外经贸英语函电

(修订版)

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# 前 言

本书自 1997 年出版以来,作为国内许多高校的教材和外贸工作者的自学手册,受到了广大读者的热烈欢迎。正是由于他们的鼓励,编者本着精益求精的原则,决定修订此书以求与时俱进。修订后的版本,形式更加清新,内容更加翔实。譬如,第一章中外贸函电的常用格式,我们用书信实例进行了演示;第六章根据外贸业务的信息化和互联网的发展重新做了编写,着重介绍了传真和电子邮件,并将原内容作为附录附于书后,供读者参考;第十三章中的补偿贸易,我们用浅显易懂的讲解进行了说明;为了加强口语练习以满足新时期形势发展的需要,在每一章课后练习中我们添加了口语练习;另外,由于时局的变化,部分国家改变了首都,很多跨国公司的经营状况也发生了很大的变化,我们在附录中也都作了相应的修订。

本书共分 14 章,每一章包括简介、样信、注释、典型句例及练习等几个部分。书后备有附录,内容包括业务术语,国家、首都、港口,英文单证,电报和电传以及练习参考答案等。

在本书修订过程中,中国银行山东省分行资深专家、高级经济师周宇治先生认真修改了本书并提出宝贵建议,中国海洋大学经贸系戴桂林、高金田主任给予了大力支持;在资料收集和整理过程中,得到了于德荣、赵明轶、徐桂荣、王胜哲等老师的大力协助;国际著名的语言学博导张德禄教授、著名的经济学教授陈国恒先生及在华工作的 Alain Fix 先生也对本书提出了很多宝贵意见,在此一并致谢。

参加本书编写的有张德玉、张媛、王美玲、宁爱花(第一章、第二章、第六章、第七章、第十四章),李雅静、李永芳、李京梅、姜泉(第三章、第四章、第五章、第十一章、第十二章、第十三章),付秀梅、张园园、姜宝(第八章、第九章、第十四章),张建闻、陈慧卿(第十章及附录)。

由于时间仓促,编者水平有限,书中难免存在不足之处,敬请使用本书的师生和各位同仁不吝指正。

编者

2006年2月

# Contents

1	Business Letter-writing 商务信函写作 .....	(1)
2	Establishing Business Relations 建立贸易关系 .....	(31)
3	Enquiries and Replies 询盘与答复 .....	(61)
4	Offers and Counter-offers 报盘与还盘 .....	(84)
5	Conclusion of Business 成交 .....	(111)
6	Business Fax and E-mail Writing 商务传真和电子邮件写作 .....	(136)
7	Terms of Payment 付款条件 .....	(177)
8	L/C Amendment and Extension 改证及展证 .....	(201)
9	Packing and Shipment 包装及装运 .....	(216)
10	Insurance 保险 .....	(237)

11	Claims and Adjustments	
	索赔及理赔·····	(256)
12	Agencies	
	代理·····	(282)
13	Compensation Trade	
	补偿贸易·····	(300)
14	Joint Venture	
	合资企业·····	(332)
	Appendix I Country, Capital and Main Port(s)	
	附录一 国家、首都及主要港口·····	(377)
	Appendix II Useful Business Terms	
	附录二 常用贸易术语·····	(389)
	Appendix III Key to the Exercises	
	附录三 参考答案·····	(396)
	Appendix IV Documents	
	附录四 单证·····	(452)
	Appendix V Résumé and Application Letter	
	附录五 个人简历和求职信·····	(467)
	Appendix VI Telegrams & Telexes	
	附录六 电报和电传·····	(471)
	References	
	参考文献·····	(507)

# 1

## *Business Letter-writing*

### Introduction

Today almost all the business communities recognize with one consent the significance of essential communicating skills, for all business activities rely on the satisfactory exchange of information. That is why courses in commercial communication have been offered and delivered in many colleges and universities, especially in those of business education.

Commercial communication, which is a vital factor in making the circle of business run swimmingly and efficiently, may a-

adopt a number of forms, inclusive of letters, memos, reports, telegrams, telexes, faxes, e-mails, resumes, and printed forms that are employed for specific purposes. The objectives are to secure complete understanding between the parties involved, and draw out the responses required. As the business letter is one of the most frequently used ones in commercial communication, to write effectively, you should be familiar with and follow certain essential qualities of business correspondence, which can be summed up in the Seven C's, i. e. Clearness, Conciseness, Courtesy, Consideration, Completeness, Concreteness, and Correctness.

## 1) Principles of Good Communication

### ① *Clearness*

You must express yourself clearly to make sure that the message conveys exactly what you wish to say and is not liable to any misunderstanding. Avoid vague and ambiguous expressions.

When you are certain about what you want to say, express it in plain, simple words, or present it in well-constructed sentences and paragraphs, and include necessary transitional words or expressions to link them up. Good, straight-forward, and simple English is what is needed for commercial correspondence.

Lack of clarity indicates that you are uncertain, confused, or insincere. It is, in most cases, due to careless use of words or syntactic and contextual faults.

### ② *Conciseness*

Clarity and conciseness often go hand in hand in commercial

correspondence. Conciseness needs to include any information that is to the point, but to leave out those statements that do not bear on the subject. In other words, the true sense of conciseness lies in that you say everything that must be said but do not waste your reader's time in words or phrases that can be spared. Say things briefly but completely without sacrificing clarity or courtesy. To achieve conciseness of your letter-writing, try to keep your sentences short, avoid unnecessary wordiness or repetition, and eliminate excessive details.

Paragraphing carefully can make a business letter clearer, easier to read and more attractive to readers. It is a good rule to confine each paragraph to only one point or topic.

### ③ *Courtesy*

Courtesy in letter-writing refers to employing good human relation skills. It consists, not in using polite phrases, such as “your esteemed order”, “your kind enquiry”, but in demonstrating your consideration for your correspondent. Treat the reader with respect and friendliness and sincerity, and be tactful, thoughtful and appreciative.

Avoid irritating, offensive or belittling statements. Answer letters promptly, for punctuality will please your recipient who hates waiting for days before he obtains a reply to his letter. Sometimes, discrepancy may occur in business, but with diplomacy and tact it can be overcome and settled without ill-will on either side. Never show your anger in a business letter.

And you must also adopt the right tone. Before you begin to write, think carefully about the way in which you want to influ-

ence your customer. Ask yourself, “What do I write this letter for?” and then express yourself accordingly, being persuasive, apologetic, firm and so on. The right tone may arouse good will, warmth and interest in your reader.

#### ④ *Consideration*

Consideration is another rule of good business communication. The letters you send out must create a good impression. Put yourself in your reader’s shoes. Try to imagine his reaction to your letter, that is, consider how he will feel about what you write. Plan the best way to present the message for your reader to receive. Try to imagine that you are receiving rather than sending the letter. Emphasize the “You” attitude rather than the “I” or “We” attitude. The “You” attitude simply means that you should show respect for your reader’s feelings and attitudes. If you have the reader’s interests in mind, you will be able to write clearly so that no misunderstanding will emerge. The “You” attitude requires that you should make the “reader-centeredness” obvious in the very wording of the letter, and this calls for special effort on your part.

One more point is, try to understand and respect your reader’s point of view and resist the temptation to reply as if you could not be in the wrong. If your correspondent sends you a rude letter, try your best not to reply in similar sharp terms, answer him courteously instead.

#### ⑤ *Completeness*

As a commercial communication should be concise, it must

include all the relevant information. Make sure that it does not lack any necessary data which your reader needs to act upon. A business letter that has an incomplete message or information is annoying and costly because it holds up business transactions and duplicates work.

One of the best ways to assure completeness is to put yourself in the reader's place and ask yourself constantly, "What are his needs, his wishes, his interests, his problems, and how can I meet them?"; "If I were to receive a letter of the kind I propose to write, what would be my own feelings?"; "Would it answer my questions?"; "Are there any points that need additional elaboration?" Before you send the letter, check the message carefully.

#### ⑥ *Concreteness*

Make your message specific, definite and vivid. In your letter, you should use either loose or periodic sentences. Use expressions with precise meanings. When you acknowledge a letter, refer to the date, subject and reference number (if any). Avoid using vague expressions but concrete words.

#### ⑦ *Correctness*

As applied to a business correspondence, correctness refers to appropriate and grammatically correct language, factual information and accurate reliable figures. Special attention should also be paid to the form and convention, as well as to the content, such as the name of article, specifications, quantity, unit.

Errors frequently occurring in business letter-writing are those with pronouns, adjectives, articles, verbs, adverbs, con-

junctions and participles. There are some errors of fact, too. These mistakes are often the result of inattention and carelessness. For instance, errors in price quotations and delivery dates are often oversights caused by careless typing, insufficient proof-reading, or too hasty correction of erasures.

Errors may also occur if reference books are not consulted when necessary. This failure may result in misspelled names or words, and errors in the diction.

It is discourteous to include errors in business letter-writing. Therefore, every effort should be made to ensure the accuracy of business communication in various aspects. All the facts and information should be checked and rechecked. Careful attention to details, conscientious proof-reading, and the use of reference books will contribute to the reduction of errors in business letter-writing.

## 2) Format and Structure of the Business Letter

### **Layout and Format**

Although formality in business letter-writing is rapidly giving way to a less conventional and more friendly style, its layout still follows more or less a set pattern determined by customs and conventions. Although the choice of layout is a matter of individual taste, it is safer to follow those established practices to which the business circle has got used, in order to avoid confusion and save time for both the addresser and the addressee. It is a good plan to adopt one form of the established layouts and to stick to it so as to make the correct practice habitual.

There are, as a matter of fact, several acceptable formats for business letters, all serving for the same purposes — to tell the reader at a glance when, where, and by whom the letter was written, exactly for whom it's intended, and how its writer should be addressed in reply. However, there are three main most popular patterns in current use — the conventional indented style, the modern blocked style and the modified block style. Following the traditional British practice the indented style takes in the first line of each paragraph in the body of the business letter. Many people regard it as the most attractive of all letter styles, for it appeals to them and makes for easy reading, but others dislike it because, they claim, it wastes the typist's time. So the blocked style has now come to be much more widely used than before, because it is compact and tidy. Its most striking characteristic is the commencement of all typing lines, inclusive of those for the date, inside name and address, salutation, caption and complimentary close, etc. at the left-hand margin. As to the modified block style, it has combined the above two's advantages, and it is used in highest frequency.

## Sample Letters

### I. The Indented Style

23 Eastern Hongkong Road

Qingdao, 266071 P. R. China

Room 305 Building E, Economy & Trade College

(0086)-532-85901559

Letterhead

July 12, 2005

Date

ABC Company, Ltd.  
144-17 38 Ave. First FL  
Flushing, NY 11356-5930

Inside Address

Attention: Mr. Paul Elisma

Attention Line

Re: Excursion 1

Reference Line

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Salutation

SUBJECT: JULY 14'S EXCURSION

Subject Line

We inform you that some of our students want to have an excursion in your company this week as discussed before.

The name list of the students will be enclosed in the letter.

Please give us a confirmation about the timetable.

Looking forward to having your reply before July 13. **Body**

Sincerely yours,

Complimentary Close

Li Yajing, Associate Professor  
Economy and Trade Department  
Ocean University of China

Author, Title

Department

Organization Name

LYJ: ml

Reference Initials

Encl. Name list

Enclosure Notation

cc Foreign Affairs Office; Executive Office

Copy Notification

II. The Blocked Style

23 Eastern Hongkong Road

Qingdao, 266071 P. R. China

Room 305 Building E, Economy & Trade College

Letterhead

(0086)-532-85901559

July 12, 2005

Date

ABC Company, Ltd.

Inside Address

144-17 38 Ave. First FL

Flushing, NY 11356-5930

Attention: Mr. Paul Elsma

Attention Line

Re: Excursion 1

Reference Line

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Salutation

SUBJECT: JULY 14'S EXCURSION

Subject Line

We inform you that some of our students want to have an excursion in your company this week as discussed before.

The name list of the students will be enclosed in the letter.

Body

Please give us a confirmation about the timetable.

Looking forward to having your reply before July 13.

Sincerely yours,

Li Yajing, Associate Professor  
Economy and Trade Department  
Ocean University of China

Complimentary Close

Author, Title

Department

Organization Name

LYJ:ml

Reference Initials

Encl. Name list

Enclosure Notation

cc Foreign Affairs Office; Executive Office

Copy Notification

Placement of the date on the left-hand side of the paper may cause inconvenience when particular letters are required from the files. So some companies which use the blocked style of layout prefer a date position on the right-hand side of the paper. Thus the modified block style comes.

### III. Modified Block Style

23 Eastern Hongkong Road

Qingdao, 266071 P. R. China

Room 305 Building E, Economy & Trade College

(0086)-532-85901559

Letterhead

July 12, 2005

Date

ABC Company, Ltd.

144-17 38 Ave. First FL

Flushing, NY 11356-5930

Inside Address

Attention: Mr. Paul Elisma

**Attention Line**

Re: Excursion 1

**Reference Line**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Salutation**

SUBJECT: JULY 14'S EXCURSION

**Subject Line**

We inform you that some of our students want to have an excursion in your company this week as discussed before.

The name list of the students will be enclosed in the letter.

**Body**

Please give us a confirmation about the timetable.

Looking forward to having your reply before July 13.

Sincerely yours,

**Complimentary Close**

Li Yajing, Associate Professor  
Economy and Trade Department  
Ocean University of China

LYJ:ml

**Reference Initials**

Encl. Name list

**Enclosure Notation**

cc Foreign Affairs Office; Executive Office

**Copy Notification**

### **Essential Elements of a Business Letter**

Whether the indented style, the blocked style or the modi-