
Effective English
in
Business

AURNER

EFFECTIVE ENGLISH IN BUSINESS

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SECOND EDITION

PUBLISHED BY THE
SOUTH-WESTERN PUBLISHING COMPANY
CINCINNATI NEW YORK CHICAGO DALLAS SAN FRANCISCO

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION

During the five years since the publication of the first edition, *Effective English in Business* has been the beneficiary of continuous testing and checking in college and university classrooms and in the demanding atmosphere of business offices. Both as a college text and as a practical guide and source book for businessmen, the first edition has earned a wide and gratifying acceptance.

The Preface to the first edition ventured a pronouncement so amply confirmed by the development of events that it deserves restatement:

It is no longer necessary to suggest to college administrators the need for college training in business correspondence. The need, more than evident on all sides, is pressing, continuous, and increasing.

Within the curricula of our large universities the subject has demonstrated its value. To the collegiate schools of business, expert training in business correspondence has become indispensable, for without a mastery of this tool of modern business, graduates are caught unprepared in a great business fundamental—clear communication.

Colleges which do not maintain separate schools of business now realize that their graduates, most of whom will enter into some direct or indirect relation with business, are as much in need of training in the essentials of business correspondence as are the graduates of the collegiate schools of business.

Much of the second edition has been rewritten. Numbers of new illustrations and examples have been freshly drawn from the heart of current business events. Three new chapters have been prepared: Chapter V, *How to Use the Dictionary*; Chapter XVI, *Basic Data Analysis* (for sales writing to the consumer); and Chapter XXIX, *How to Dictate a Business Letter* (the art of handling materials for letter talking). Many other chapters have been extensively recast to keep pace with swift-running business changes.

To add even greater effectiveness to course procedure and outcomes, the material of the first twelve chapters has been

reorganized to deal with fundamentals according to a new unfolding plan that considers (1) the external structure of the letter; (2) the internal structure, beginning with the word and proceeding through the sentence, the paragraph, and the complete composition. Then follows a carefully revised chapter on the *Psychology of Tone and the Crucial YOU Attitude* in which new emphasis is given to the increasingly important role of psychology in handling business problems by means of the written word.

In the second half of the volume dealing with advanced types of communication, the consumer-selling function has, in the second edition, been made the core subject. The new organization, adopted after extensive experimentation in the classroom, introduces the advanced phases of work with sales writing to the consumer, and continues with logical progression through credits, collections, adjustments, and personal sales writing (applications). Each chapter supplies liberal amounts of general business background and such knowledge of specialized business operation as seems necessary to complete for the student the problem situation. This plan offsets the difficulty that now and then arises from the fact that the student may lack the business background that he needs.

Three new reference sections—II, *Correct Addresses of, and Salutations To, Special Groups*; IV, *Striking Off the Shackles of the Stock Phrase*; and VI, *Footnotes, Quotations, and Bibliography in Reports and Formal Papers*—will, it is believed, prove valuable additions for both student and business executive. All other reference material has been revised and checked.

The second edition of *Effective English in Business*, like the first, has been prepared to fill the need for adequate training in the written word at the college level. The author believes, as a result of his experience as a business consultant and in professional counseling with businessmen in their efforts to improve their correspondence, that effective business expression is, for the most part, a planned effort to solve a given business problem by influencing another person to think and to act as one wishes him to think and to act.

Attacking the problem of effective business writing in a comprehensive way, the second edition accepts the thesis that under-

standing and co-operation among men can come only from the clearest exchange of intelligent opinion and agreement; that business enterprise can be carried on only through clear communication of thought; and that, accordingly, effective expression is the obvious need not only of the topflight business leaders but also of the junior executives, and all members of the staff. The author believes that at least half of the solution of each challenging business problem rests in the manner and the method of expression with which the problem is approached.

This edition continues to recognize the diverse requirements of employers in differing types of business and profession; the variable forms and modes and styles of writing that may be called for, with emphasis upon those aspects of expression that are important to the student, no matter what his occupation may be. As a matter of fact, of all the forms of personal written communication, the business letter most nearly approaches the *universal*.

It seems logical, therefore, to suggest that if a university or college administration prescribes English composition as a fundamental requirement, which in its form of pure narrative-descriptive-persuasive-expository expression not more than five per cent of our college graduates will ever use, then by the same reasoning the administration might wisely consider prescribing, as a fundamental requirement, specific technical training in the dominant forms of business letters and reports—a form of composition that ninety-five per cent or more of all college graduates will be forced to use, simply as a matter of existing in our industrial society.

Now it is conceded that one of the larger purposes of education is to prepare students to do more effectively the desirable things that they will be called upon to do in their life work. Under such a test *business* writing ranks high in the list of preferred requirements. In it are both social and practical values. Everyone, without reference to occupation, is called upon to write letters; some, indeed, earn their entire livelihood by such means. Accordingly, we are forced to the obvious conclusion that the study of business correspondence—the one universal type of writing—should not be limited to those who are certain of business activity, but should be made equally available to all

others, no matter what may be the college course they select. It is in fact not too much to hope that a systematic study of the subject may help the individual to find the right niche in life and to effect a happy socio-business adjustment; and that it may as a by-product give both the student and the maturer businessman a new pleasure in the native language and its literature and an appetite for further culture through reading.

Year by year the business letter has adapted itself to the accelerated tempo of the modern age. Time-economy and business efficiency have been the potent pressures that have molded the letter into its modern power and precision—when it comes from the hands of the experts. Let it be remembered, however, that letters reproduced in this or any other book are presented as illustrations of methods and specific principles and, by the nature of things, are not always flawless. Under no circumstances should they be taken as models for imitation.

Even in the hands of the experts the writing of business letters is neither a finished art nor an exact science. No letter, therefore, can be taken as finality in either style or content; but superior letters can be used as valuable illustrations of how the experts once achieved their objectives at the time they wrote. One may safely venture the definition that a superior business letter is one that has served well the purpose for which it was originally intended.

If education were merely the crystallizing of action into a few forms, this volume could be made simply a compilation of frozen “models,” indexed for quick reference. But education is the painstaking process of training the judgment, and training the judgment is a slow process. As he analyzes a series of business problems and creates the messages those situations demand, the student forms one judgment, another judgment, and yet another, until he discovers a fundamental truth that is a principle. This principle he may depend upon. He himself has worked it out. Gradually he understands that although a set of “rules” may be enough for solving *one* situation, a set of fundamental principles is necessary to handle a great number of situations. At the end of study of this volume, it is hoped that he will have developed the power to deduce correct procedure from the general principles he has learned.

The Five Major Aims of the Book. Just as the primary aim of the course is to develop power in the use of the language for business purposes, so the primary aim of this book is to develop this power to the greatest degree under the driving force of a high level of interest. Materials supplied in the following pages will implement these five major aims:

I. To develop sureness in the use of the basic tools with which the student must work—words. As a means to effective business letters and all the related forms, it is necessary to teach principles of grammar, accuracy of spelling and punctuation, and the writing of well-knit sentences and clear paragraphs.

II. To acquaint the student with primary business procedures, principles, and broad policies through the motivated medium of business letters and related forms.

III. To establish in the mind of the student the central principles underlying effective letters and to provide liberal practice in applying these principles. As a standard of expectancy the student should be able at the end of the course to tell good letters from bad and to give sound reasons for his decisions. He should, moreover, be able to produce workmanlike letters of his own.

IV. To familiarize the student with simple business problems and to train him in solving them by letter. This objective suggests a liberal exercise of the student's power of analysis and judgment, under the teacher's guidance.

V. To give the student an understanding of people: how they act, why they act as they do, and how their favorable response may be won. Through studying business letters, and writing them, and testing their effect on others, the student learns how people react to certain vital approaches, suggestions, and stimuli.

The English of business is forever new in its presentation. Covering every significant phase of present-day business writing, giving effect to the evident relationship between good English and good business, its materials are inherently fresh, vivid, and forceful. These materials should reflect and interpret the potentialities of the letter not merely as a transmitter of information—a thin concept, indeed, of modern correspondence—but also as a powerful stimulator of friendlier business relations.

In specific discussions the second edition recognizes the complexity of human psychological relations; shows that when business transactions come off successfully, vital problems in human relations must be met and solved by those who "close the deal." In its less simple forms the English of business involves the sensitive and delicate transmission of facts, sentiments, and emotions. The manner in which these facts, sentiments, and emotions are transmitted is, in many cases, quite as important as—sometimes more important than—the pure information vouchsafed.

The subject of this book is human contact. Directly or indirectly, each chapter unfolds a vital phase of human relationship and instructs further in the art by which businessmen negotiate and get along with each other over great distances, with a standard of ethics—be it said for the record—no worse than that of society as a whole.

Thus we become involved in a complex phenomenon. This phenomenon is *an intricate web of human relations bound together by a system of sentiments, emotions, and realities*. Whether we want to or not, we must deal with this intricate web of human relations and with the inevitable emotions in which it is intertwined. We must deal with both the rational and the emotional, with both fact and feeling. Perhaps, in the final analysis, our single most pressing obligation is to interpret clearly to the student the complex way in which facts may have an impact upon human feeling and in which human feelings may, in turn, seriously affect the interpretation of fact.

When we assume the responsibility of teaching individuals the art of calling forth different kinds of human responses, we are dealing with human relations in a vital way. And when we deal in human relations in a significant and systematic frame of instruction, we are by that fact involved in a phase of social science, a phase at least as objective and scientific as any other extant.

Because business communication in its broader definition is as basic and as functional in the modern scheme of distribution as any one of the other major divisions, it will ultimately come into a position in direct parity with the subject of marketing. The fact of the matter is that business correspondence of necessity deals with all the marketing functions. Frequently the

business letter offers the sole channel through which a marketing function can be discharged. And if it is not the sole channel, it is much of the time the preferred channel. For this reason it is necessary *to weld around the marketing functions the equally important function of effective letters* in particular and effective expression in general, in order that we may bring about the end-result of efficient business operation.

As we approach the completion of a new phase of our subject, in which business correspondence takes its place as an integral division of the social science of distribution, it becomes clear that we must create our own phrases to describe what is going on; and to do this is not easy.

We may, however, restate the single fundamental proposition that is now well beyond debate: The study of business correspondence and its associated interests is a fundamental, functional activity with a basic and important body of subject matter which, because of its substantive nature, may rightly be termed both quantitative and qualitative. The final mastery of the subject must, in the judgment of the author, stress the development of a mature psychology, a competent grasp of objectives, superior workmanship in handling the basic tools of the writing craft, and an adult desire to co-operate toward the end that both business and society may some day become better.

It is the aim of the second edition of this volume to assist toward these objectives, both through precept and through example.

ROBERT RAY AURNER

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is difficult to reflect in words the measure of indebtedness that the author feels to those whose contributions to the preparation of this volume have been so valuable.

Sincere appreciation is extended to those teachers, students, businessmen, and professional associates who have been so generous in their constructive criticism and helpful suggestions. Gratitude goes to the many skilled and experienced teachers who, testing the material through continuous use during the past five years under classroom conditions and requirements, have suggested valuable improvements to make this book a more effective teaching instrument; to those students, past and present, from the author's classes

at the University of Wisconsin and other universities, who have submitted illustrative material and who have given opportunity for checking of methods and testing of results; to those businessmen who have contributed many practical items relating to business strategy and the newer developments of commerce; and to those professional associates who, in connection with the author's work as business consultant, have willingly shared some of their valuable materials for use in the second edition. Most of the suggestions for improvement have been introduced in the second edition. It is the author's hope that, as a result, the new **EFFECTIVE ENGLISH IN BUSINESS** will be found even more acceptable.

For valuable assistance and painstaking care in developing certain source materials, grateful acknowledgment is expressed to Miss Dorothy Cook. For her accurate and generous secretarial help it is pleasant to be able to record here the sincerest thanks.

Special acknowledgment is made to the following sources for permission to use certain materials: Addressograph-Multigraph Corporation; American Airlines, Inc.; American Writing Paper Company; R. W. Baxandall, and the Dean W. Geer Company; J. L. Beven, President, Illinois Central System; Cleveland Trust Company; Crocker-McElwain Company; Dartnell Corporation; Dictaphone Corporation; R. M. Fleming, University of Cincinnati; L. E. Frailey, Chicago; Gruen Watch Company; Ketchum, MacLeod & Grove, Inc.; Life, Incorporated; John T. McCutcheon and the *Chicago Tribune*; G. & C. Merriam Company; National Cash Register Company; The Milwaukee *Journal*; E. B. Petersen, University of Wisconsin; R. L. Polk & Co.; Ralph W. Smith; Miss Hyla M. Snider, Connecticut College; Standard Oil Company of Indiana; Dr. Daniel Starch, Consultant, New York; Time, Incorporated; Transcontinental & Western Air, Incorporated; United States Post Office, Washington; Whiting-Plover Paper Company; H. B. Young, Pennsylvania State College.

Other credits appear in later pages of the book.

With a view to ever-increasing effectiveness, it is unnecessary to add that suggestions from those who are using the new volume are more than welcome.

ROBERT RAY AURNER.

FOREWORD

By RALPH STARR BUTLER, PH.D.

Vice-President, General Foods Corporation

In the ordinary educational curriculum there are many subjects that the student "takes" without realizing their exact educational import. I suspect that English is such a subject.

In the lower grades English is taught to provide students with reasonable facility in the common medium of expression. In the higher schools, although the value of English as a tool is not overlooked, emphasis is ordinarily placed on English as a part of the student's cultural equipment.

A student who passes through elementary school and secondary school may have devoted one quarter of his entire school experience to the study of English, and few college students can escape at least one year of instruction in English. If all this emphasis on English bore proper fruit, we should expect the schools to turn out a highly literate product. As a nation we ought to excel in accuracy and effectiveness of expression, as well as in an intelligent appreciation of literature. As a matter of fact, I am afraid we cannot point to these desirable results of the teaching of English.

There may be many reasons for this lack of results. I should like to point out one reason that is seldom given. Although teachers know why they teach English, the great majority of students do not know why they study it. Or, at least, they so fail to relate the study of English to their personal interests and prospects that too often they approach the subject with distaste and leave it with pleasure. For such students let me provide a point of view.

Of all the subjects that are studied from the first grade through to the end of an academic college course, English is the most practical. Skill in the use of English is almost the only skill that a student can take from an ordinary educational course that has a definite bread-and-butter value in after life. No other kind of skill acquired in school makes a more important contribution to the solution of the problem of earning a living.

This is equally true whether the living is earned with the hands or with the brain, whether in a profession or in the great field of

business. Speaking for business only, I cannot too strongly urge the fundamental importance of English in any course of training. The young man or woman in business who can speak and write accurately, clearly, and forcefully has an enormous advantage over the one who lacks this equipment.

It is difficult to tell just what qualities insure success in business. Loyalty, honesty, industry, and imagination are required in business as in any other vocation. In addition there seems to be required some penchant for trade, that cannot be acquired—one has it, or one doesn't have it. No one entering business can foretell whether he is or is not to achieve large results. All he can do is to try to develop the necessary moral and mental qualities, and to acquire the particular kinds of skill demanded by business. Among all those kinds of skill, no other approaches the importance of skill in the use of the written and spoken word. Training in English is the one absolutely indispensable kind of training that business demands.



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HOW TO USE PUNCTUATION SIMPLIFIED

On the next two pages will be found a highly condensed quick-reference punctuation table for easy consultation and for the use of those who find convenient an instant source of punctuation information in easily accessible space. This table is of special value to executives, secretaries, and stenographers who use this book continuously as a reference.


DIRECTIONS

For continuous reference (1) open the book at the back cover, (2) put a rubber band around the front cover and the body of the book, (3) stand the book upright, (4) place it at the right or left of the working space on the desk, and open at a convenient angle.


PUNCTUATION

[Page References Refer to *Effective English in Business*, Second Edition]


PERIOD: Page 189

- 
- {
1. At the end of a sentence.
 2. After all initials and after most abbreviations (C.O.D., Inc., E. J. Blackwood. But: PWA, TVA).
 3. To separate hours from minutes in writing time (2:45 p.m., but see also COLON).


COMMA: Pages 189-192

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- {
1. To separate a nonrestrictive subordinate clause from the rest of the sentence (clauses often introduced by words like if, unless, since, because, etc.).
 2. To separate co-ordinate clauses joined by one of the pure conjunctions (and, but, for, or, neither, nor).
 3. To point off an introductory adverbial phrase containing a verb.
 4. To point off a dependent word or word group that breaks the direct continuity of the sentence.
 5. To set off parenthetical words, phrases, and clauses.
 6. To point off words or word groups used in a series when there are at least three units.
 7. To point off words used in direct address or in explaining other words.
 8. To point off sentence elements that might be wrongly joined in reading if there were no comma.
 9. To separate numbers (1,000,456,567).
 10. Before a short quotation.


SEMICOLON: Page 193

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- {
1. Between independent groups containing commas.
 2. With a series of clearly defined units, upon each of which special emphasis is to be laid.
 3. Between clauses of a compound sentence when the conjunction is omitted.
 4. In front of such words and phrases as "namely," "viz.," "for example," "for instance."

COLON: Pages 193-194

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- {
1. After the salutation of a letter.
 2. Between two independent groups having no connecting word between them, the first group pointing forward to the second.
 3. After forward-looking expressions.
 4. Before a long quotation.
 5. To separate the hour and the minutes in indicating time (2:45 p.m.).

QUESTION MARK: Page 194

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- {
1. After every direct question.
 2. After a question in abbreviated form (What is your opinion of the New York Central? the Pennsylvania? the Lehigh?).
 3. In parentheses (?) to denote doubt or uncertainty.

EXCLAMATION POINT: Page 194

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- {
1. After exclamatory sentences or expressions.

SIMPLIFIED

DASH: Pages 194-197

—

1. Sometimes in sales letters for emphasis—to put a sharp stop in the path of the reader.
2. To indicate the omission of letters and figures: "He summoned Mr. A—."
3. To set off parenthetical expressions with more than ordinary emphasis: "These binding contracts—and let no one underestimate their importance—must be fulfilled to the letter."

PARENTHESES: Pages 194-197

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1. To indicate technical references and like material.
2. To enclose words or expressions that have only indirect bearing upon the thought and are parenthetical in nature.
3. To set off figures following amounts expressed in words.

BRACKETS: Page 197

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1. To insert something into the written material of another writer.
2. Sometimes for special purposes to block off purely independent material.

APOSTROPHE: Pages 197-198

'

1. To indicate possession.
2. To indicate the omission of letters in a contraction.
3. To indicate the plurals of abbreviations, letters, figures, words.

QUOTATION MARKS: Pages 198-199

DOUBLE

“ ”

SINGLE

‘ ’

1. Before and after a direct quotation.
2. To enclose the title of an article published in a periodical.
3. Single quotes are used to indicate a quotation inside a quotation.
4. In quotations of more than one paragraph, quotes are used at the beginning of each paragraph and at the end of the last paragraph.
5. When a quotation mark and another mark of punctuation appear together, the following appropriate rules should be applied.
 - (a) Place the period or the comma always inside the quotation mark.
 - (b) Place the colon or the semicolon always outside the quotation mark.
 - (c) Put any other mark inside when it is part of the quotation.
 - (d) Put any other mark outside when it refers to the entire sentence, of which the quotation is only a part.

OMISSION MARKS, OR ELLIPSES: Page 199

● ● ●

OR

* * *

1. To signify the omission of letters or words in quoted material.
 - (a) Three marks or dots are used when the omitted portion does not end on a period.
 - (b) Four marks are used when the omitted portion does end on a period.