



商务英语函电

Communicating in International Business

王美玲 主编 李金萍 [英国]John Shepherd 副主编



中国商务出版社
CHINA COMMERCE AND TRADE PRESS

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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，以介绍客观商务环境对国际英语应用能力和商务知识运用能力的要求，以及对现代通讯手段使用技能等国际商务沟通能力的要求为主线，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本专科教材，又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，也可以作为从事外贸业务工作人员的案头资料，以备不时之需。

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，突出新通讯媒介方式，如传真及电子邮件的写作特点和商务礼仪。（2）突出教学目标和教学方法——在选用示例时遵循“怎样写”要服从“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）内容包容性大和实用性强——内容不仅涵盖了传统外贸业务信函写作的基本组成部分，还增加了个人简历、求职留学申请、商务礼仪往来以及商务报告等常见商务写作体裁。

根据高校外贸函电课程的课时分配，本书共分15章，主要内容包括以下四个方面：（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间和商务伙伴间往来的礼仪性信函；（4）申请书和个人简历等就业以及留学申请材料写作技巧。每章教学内容包括商务知识简介、示例、常



用表达法、写作指南和练习五个部分，同时，书后附有自学篇，既供自学之用，也便于教学选用。自学篇包括电子邮件进出口业务磋商案例（A）和常用标准购销合同样本（B），教学内容包括内容简介、课文和练习三个组成部分。书后还附有附录：（A）跟单信用证和国际商贸业务单据样本参考和（B）美式英语和英式英语在商务写作中的一些差异，供参考之用。

本书的编写人员都是多年从事外贸函电教学的国际贸易专业和英语语言专业的国内外教师。编写人员的分工如下：王美玲（第1—2章，第11—12章）、乔颖（第3—4章）、邢凯（第5章）、李金萍（第6—10章）、张德玉（第13章）、John Shepherd [英国]（第14—15章）、张鹏（自学篇A，自学篇B）、刘素媛（附录A）、侯萍萍（附录B）。全书由王美玲组织编写，并进行总体设计和负责修改与审定。同时，李金萍、John Shepherd和乔颖等老师也大力协助校读书稿，为提高本书的质量作出了贡献。

由于水平有限，书中可能存在不足和欠妥之处，敬请同行批评和斧正。

编者
2007年9月

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Chapter One

Rules of Good Business Writing

商务写作基本原则

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 the traditional postal letters, have become central to corporate communication media, whereas the telegram (cable) and telex are in little use. 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^①. Unlike the telegram and telex, the fax and email 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

① protocol 礼仪



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 purpose to accomplish 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. 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 readers. A successful sales message gets its readers 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 applies. 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, the better your writing. 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 readers what the main body will be about, whereas the closing paragraph should indicate the action your readers 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^②.

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, ...
- 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.
- 5) As soon as we receive your response we will ...
- 6) Thank you for taking the time to write.
- 7) I need your answer by 29 March.
- 8) You can count on our full support.
- 9) 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/favours, 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 paragraph(s) in the middle part require all necessary information to be included and presented in a logical and coherent way. And a clear topic sentence gives a paragraph more sense. Please pay attention to the **bolded** parts in **Example 3**

② 这是一个完全倒装句,起强调作用



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**, interviews 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**^③(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^④ 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:

Table 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 |

③ links: connecting words and phrases 连接词

④ signpost 指向标

续表

| Purpose | Formal | Informal |
|--------------|--|---|
| 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 |

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^⑤ style. Plain language can improve the level of readability and the qualities of being concise, brief and sincere. Some principles of plain English^⑥ are selected here:

1) Instead of low frequency^⑦ words, choose easy-to-read ones:

| Use | Avoid |
|---------------------|---------------|
| end | terminate |
| help | assist |
| fill | replenish |
| use | avail/utilize |
| belief | assumption |
| contact you again | revert to you |
| lessen, ease | alleviate |
| improve | ameliorate |
| determine, find out | ascertain |

⑤ literary style 文学(体裁)风格

⑥ Please access <http://www.sec.gov/investor/pubs/englishhndbk.htm> for more about plain English

⑦ low frequency words 使用频率低的词汇



| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| as you requested | as per your request |
| speed up | expedite |
| send | forward |
| start, begin | implement, commence, initiate |

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

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

3) Avoid empty, redundant^⑧ 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 ^⑨ your request. | Enclosed is the information you requested. |

⑧ redundant 多余的

⑨ 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)

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>We would ask you kindly to advise us of your itinerary^① concerning the above-mentioned meeting at your earliest convenience.</p> | <p>Could you please let us know your travel schedule before 8 September?</p> |
| <p>Please be informed that^② the installation of the above-mentioned procedures to fully equip your reception desk with a state-of-the-art^③ switchboard should be executed by skilled personnel. We would therefore kindly suggested the possibility of offering you a complete package of installation, training and maintenance.</p> | <p>We would like to show you how you would benefit from our complete package^③, including installation, training of your receptionist staff and maintenance.</p> |

4) Avoid abstract nouns and complicated sentences, but 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 shall try to ... |
| It should be noted that ... | Please note that ... |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>The company is facing a decrease in sales and an increase in the cost of raw materials. Therefore each division must implement cost savings.</p> |

① itinerary 旅行日程

② “Please be informed that” is four wasted words, in ordinary English meaning “please let us know”

③ state-of-the-art 最新水平的

④ package 一揽子(服务)



5) Avoid flowery 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 come to know your name and address. | Through ..., we come to know your name and address. |

As discussed above, you should keep your own writing simple and short, despite an enduring belief that business language tends to be elaborate. A formal style does not mean unnecessary fossilized^⑭ 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 tend to be less formal than business letters, but more formal than business emails. On the one hand, some formulaic expressions^⑮ 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.

⑭ fossilized: old fashioned, time-worn 陈腐的

⑮ formulaic expressions 程式化语言

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 point of view. 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 1: 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^①, and instead focus on the positive. In other words, tell what you can

① on the defensive: prepared to protect yourself against attack or criticism 处于防御姿态, 处于守势



do and not what you cannot do for a positive feeling (see Table 2).

Table 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 ^⑰ . | If you 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 FreePhone service and apologise for the inconvenience this caused you last week. | I have read with concern your comments on our FreePhone service. Thank you for letting me know your opinion and suggestions for improvement. |

The **you-attitude** 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^⑱, e. g. say "Our Shipping Department is processing your order" instead of "Your order is now being processed by our Shipping Department".

⑰ subscription 订阅

⑱ action agent 施动者, 行为的执行者