

高职高专英语实训系列教材

外贸函电实用英语

*Practical English for
Business Correspondence*

→ 主编 贺雪娟



高等教育出版社
HIGHER EDUCATION PRESS

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前 言

随着世界经济一体化进程的加剧,中国在国际经济活动中的表现越来越活跃,在国际经济中的地位越来越重要,市场急需一批具有扎实英语语言功底同时具备相关商务知识的综合应用型人才。外贸函电作为国际商务往来经常使用的联络方式和应用工具,受到广大从事商贸活动人士的青睐和重视。为帮助学习者正确掌握外贸函电的基本知识,并能在实际工作中娴熟地运用,笔者根据自己多年从事外贸的经验编写了这本《外贸函电实用英语》教材。本书可供高职高专商务英语、国际贸易及相关专业的高年级学生学习使用,也可供广大从事国际商贸工作,希望提高商务沟通能力的人士使用。

本书的特点如下:

1. 内容丰富。本书选材范围广,不仅向学习者介绍了惯用的商务英语信函的写作,还编排了各种各样的实例范文和国际贸易活动中所需的整套单证,并在每章节中插入了一个与主题相关的国际贸易知识点,使学生在英语函电的学习过程中了解相关的商务知识得以正确表达,以提高读者的应用能力。

2. 实践性强。《外贸函电实用英语》是一门实践性较强的课程,本教材在课文内容的编写中打破了传统的“理论+课后作业”的结构,采取了“理论+课堂课外实践”的体例,每章均精心设计了一个与主题相关的,仿真程度高、可操作、可检测的真实场景或案例供学生进行课堂实践,使实践与理论的教学比例达到7:3,突出了职业教育的特点。

3. 仿真性高。本书的素材均选自涉外企事业单位商贸活动中的往来信函,内容更具真实性。编者除对个别文字进行修改之外,基本保留了信函的原貌。在实训项目的设计中,要求学习者模拟进出口业务双方的角色,撰写系列函电,每个项目对目标、内容都有明确的规定和要求,使学习者一目了然进行实践实训。

4. 时代感强。本书的素材均系近几年外贸企业公司的真实函电,涉及纺织、电子、工业品等领域,突出了我国在对外贸易的主要创汇产品,书中编排的整套单证均系目前国家外贸活动所需的、符合UCP600规定的单证,时代感强,可借鉴性优。

5. 使用方便。本书按72个学时来编写,共编有10个章节,每章的内容既连贯,又相对独立,特别在实践实训环节的编写上方便灵活使用,教师可根据学生的程度适时调整学时,并根据学时适当调整讲授内容,学习者可根据自身的需求分章节学习和实践。

使用本书的教师和学习者可在长沙民政职业技术学院外贸函电精品课程网站(210.52.82.59/wyjp/)或中国外语网(www.cflo.edu.cn)上查阅或下载本书的练习和试题答案。

本书由贺雪娟担任主编,覃蔚、王治、刘玉丹、陈懿、高涛、李琰参与了本书的编写和整理,对外经济贸易大学陈小泉教授对本书进行了审阅,在此表示感谢。

在编著过程中,本书编者参考了一些国际贸易公司的真实信函,同时借鉴了许多优秀的教材,在此向他们表示诚挚的谢意。由于作者水平有限,书中不妥之处在所难免,欢迎同行专家和广大读者不吝赐教。

编 者

2007年5月

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Unit 1

An Introduction to Business Correspondence

商务信函简介



AIMS & REQUIREMENTS

- ☞ To enable S.S. to master the principles of business letter writing.
- ☞ To enable S.S. to know the structure of business letters.
- ☞ To enable S.S. to know the layout of business letters.
- ☞ To enable S.S. to know the envelop addressing of business letters.

Principles of Writing Business Letters

Business correspondence is also called business letters. Generally speaking, the principles are as follows: appropriate layout, logically connected ideas, correct grammar, spelling and punctuation marks, suitable style and tone, and tactfully organized information. Specifically speaking, the essential qualities can be summed up in 7 C's: Clarity, Conciseness, Courtesy, Consideration, Completeness, Concreteness and Correctness.

1. Clarity

First of all, make sure that your letter is so clear that it cannot be misunderstood. If it is ambiguous, further exchange of letters for explanations will become inevitable, thus it wastes both time and money. Next, when you are sure about what you want to say, say it in plain, simple words.

- (1) **Pay attention to choosing the concise and accessible expressions and trying to avoid using the words or sentences equivocal in meaning.**

e.g. As to the steamer sailing from Shanghai to Los Angeles, we have bimonthly direct services.

The basic meaning of this sentence is “we have direct sailings from Shanghai to Los Angeles”, but the word “bimonthly” has two meanings, one of which is “twice a month” and the other of which is “once every two months”. You’d better not use words like “bimonthly” which have double meanings, but use words that can express your idea clearly as the following:

- a. We have a direct sailing from Shanghai to Los Angeles every two months.*
- b. We have a direct sailing from Shanghai to Los Angeles semimonthly.*
- c. We have two direct sailings every month from Shanghai to Los Angeles.*

- (2) **Pay attention to the position of the modifier. The same modifier will lead to different implications and functions when it is put in different positions of the sentence.**

e.g. 1) We can supply 50 tons of the item only.
2) We can supply only 50 tons of the items.

In the first sentence, “only” is used to qualify “the item”, meaning the supply is only this item, not something else. But in the second sentence, “only” is used to qualify “50 tons”, meaning the supply is only 50 tons.

- (3) **Pay attention to the object of the pronoun and the relations between the relative pronoun and the antecedent.**

e.g. They informed Messrs Smith & Brown that they would receive a reply in a few days.

In this sentence, what does the second “they” refer to, the subject “They” of the main clause or the “Messrs Smith & Brown”? This cannot be explained clearly. It will be clear if you change the sentence into:

They informed Messrs Smith & Brown that the latter would receive the reply in a few days.

In this sentence, “the latter” is used to clearly refer to “Messrs Smith & Brown”, so no misunderstanding would appear.

- (4) Pay attention to the rationality in logic, the variety in sentence structure, the compactness in plot and coherence in meanings.**

2. Conciseness

Conciseness is often considered to be the most important writing principle and language feature. It can save both the writer’s and the recipient’s time. Conciseness means you should clearly express your idea in a short and pithy style of writing as possible as you can without sacrificing completeness, concreteness and courtesy. To do so, the following guidelines must be observed:

- (1) Make a long story short and try to avoid wordiness.**

Make it a rule, to use less words and pithy sentences to express your meaning clearly and concisely. Try to use a word or a phrase to express your idea as much as possible instead of using long sentences or clauses.

e.g.

You shouldn’t use:

at this time →

I want to take this opportunity to tell you

that we are grateful to you →

You’d better use:

now

Thank you.

Compare the following pairs of sentences, you will find which is concise in each pair.

e.g.

a. wordy: I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for your kind cooperation.

b. concise: Thank you for your cooperation.

a. wordy: In compliance with your request, we immediately contacted ABC Co., Ltd., San Francisco, and now wish to inform you of the result as follows.

b. concise: As requested we immediately contacted ABC Co., Ltd., San Francisco, with the following result.

- (2) Avoid using the general or out-of-date commercial jargon and try to express your idea in modern English.**

1) Avoid the unusual words and try to use everyday expressions.

e.g.

You shouldn't use:

initiate →

inst. →

You'd better use:

begin

this month

- 2) Avoid the out-of-date commercial jargons and try to use modern English.

e.g.

Out-of-date commercial jargons

acknowledge receipt of →

be in receipt of →

as per →

at an early date →

at this time, at present

at the present →

We are in receipt of →

We beg to acknowledge →

at your earliest convenience →

express one's heartfelt

gratitude to you for ... →

Modern English

Thank you for ..., I received ...

Thank you for ..., I received ...

as, according to ...

soon, give a specific date

now

Thank you for ... or We have received

We have received

as soon as you can

Thank you for ...

(3) Avoid unnecessary repetitions.

Some necessary repetitions can be used to emphasize a certain point of view or an important fact, but unnecessary repetitions, especially the repeat of the same matter without any reason not only looks wordy, but also makes the readers uninterested. So unnecessary repetitions in writing must be avoided.

e.g. *We have begun to export our machines to the foreign countries.*

The word "export" in the above sentence means "selling the machines to foreign countries". If you add "to foreign countries", it unnecessarily repeats the meaning of "export". So, the sentence should be changed into:

We have begun to export our machines.

(4) Control the number of the words, and build effective sentences and paragraphs.

Generally speaking, the average length for sentences should be 10 to 20 words, not over 30. Usually a paragraph consists of no more than 10 lines because short paragraphs encourage the readers to finish reading over the passage.

e.g. *In your letter of April 8, in connection with our order No. 135, we are enclosing herewith as per your demand, a certificate to the effect that the quantity delivered is less than ordered.*

This sentence is wordy, repetitive and confusing. You will gain a better result if you rewrite the above sentence as follows:

As requested in your letter of April 8, concerning our order No. 135, we are enclosing a certificate of short delivery (weight).

3. Courtesy/Polliteness

To achieve courtesy, one of the most important things is promptness, especially when a reply is given to a customer's letter, do it without any delay. Next, avoid irritating, offensive or belittling statements. Besides, use diplomacy and tact to overcome differences. Courtesy consists not only in using polite phrases like "please", "thank you", but also in showing your consideration for your reader.

e.g. *"We have received with many thanks your letter of 20 May, and we take the pleasure of sending you our latest catalog. We wish to draw your attention to a special offer which we have made in it."* is better than *"You will be particularly interested in a special offer on page 5 of the latest catalog enclosed, which you requested in your letter of 20 May."*

4. Consideration

Consideration means you should be considerate to your readers. It is the quality that enables us to refuse to perform a favor and at the same time keep a friend, to refuse a customer's request without killing all hopes of future business. If you cannot meet your customers' needs or requests, you should show your interest in and concern for their requests, use positive sentences instead of using negative sentences, and stress what you can do, but don't stress what you cannot do.

e.g. *"You earn 2 percent discount when you pay cash. We will send you the brochure next month."* is better than *"We allow 2 percent discount for cash payment. We won't be able to send you the brochure this month."*

5. Completeness

A business letter is complete when it contains all the facts the reader needs. Completeness is necessary for several reasons:

- (1) Complete messages are more likely to bring the desired results.
- (2) They can build goodwill between buyers and sellers.
- (3) Complete messages can help avoid costly lawsuits.

As you strive for completeness, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- (1) Write down all the points you wish to cover and then arrange them in a logical order.
- (2) If your letter is a reply, underline those parts which require information and answer all the questions asked.

6. Concreteness

Writing concretely means being specific, definite and vivid rather than vague and general. Try to use specific facts, figures and active verbs, then choose vivid, image-building words.

e.g. *We wish to confirm our fax dispatched yesterday.*

Like “today” and “tomorrow”, the word “yesterday” is a vague and general concept. It is not suitable to be used here. The sentence should be changed into:

We confirm our fax of July 2nd, 2006.

7. Correctness

Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are also required in business letter writing. It also means the correct level or style of language for the reader and the accurate facts and figures.

e.g. *The goods supplied are exactly equal to the sample.*

It is very difficult to guarantee that the goods supplied are exactly equal to the sample. The sentence may be changed into:

a. *The goods supplied are similar in quality to the sample.*

b. *The sample represents as nearly as possible what we can supply.*

c. *The sample is the nearest in size to the goods you need.*

II

Structure of Business Letters

Sample

① Letterhead (信头)

② Ref. No. (发文编号)

Date (日期)

③ Inside Name and Address (封内名称和地址)

④ Attention Line (注意项)

⑤ Salutation (称呼)

⑥ Subject Line (事由标题)

⑦ Body of the Letter (信文)

.....
.....
.....

⑧ Complimentary Close (结尾敬语)

⑨ Signature (签名)

⑩ Reference Notation (经办人代号)

⑪ Enclosure (附件)

⑫ Carbon Copy (抄送)

⑬ Postscript (附言)

1. Letterhead

Letterheads include the essential particulars about the writer — his/her name and postal address, fax number and e-mail address. Good quality paper and a neat, well-balanced letterhead combine to enhance the prestige of the firm that uses them.

2. Reference and Date

Most letterheads provide for reference letters and numbers. When one firm writes to another, each will give a reference, and they mark “Our ref:” and “Your ref:” to avoid confusion.

Always type the date in full, in the logical order of day, month, year. For the date, either cardinal numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) or ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.) can be used, e.g. *12th October, 2006* or *12 October, 2006*.

To give the date in figures (e.g. *12/10/2006*) is in bad taste, and it may easily cause confusion because in Britain this date would mean 12th October, 2006, but in the United States and some other countries it would mean 10th December, 2006.

3. Inside Name and Address

The preferred position for the correspondent’s name and address is the upper left-hand side of the sheet, three or more line-spacing below the line of the date, depending on the length of the letter.

Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., and Messrs are the ordinary courtesy titles used for addressing correspondents.

It is the usual practice to type the inside name and address in blocked paragraph form at the left-hand margin of the letter. This can give the letter a tidy appearance.

4. Attention Line

The phrase “For the attention...” or simply “Attention” is used where the writer of a letter addressing to an organization wishes to direct it to a particular official. It is typed two line-spacing above the salutation, underlined and, except with the fully-blocked letter-style, centered over the body of the letter,

e.g. *“For the attention of Mr. Smith”* or *“Attention: Mr. Smith”*

5. Salutation

The salutation is the complimentary greeting with which the writer opens his letter. The particular form used depends upon the writer’s relationship with his correspondent. To some extent it settles the form of the complimentary close; the two must always be in keeping with each other.

For ordinary business purposes, Dear Sir (or Dear Madam for single or married

women) is used for addressing one person, and Dear Sirs or Gentlemen (or Mesdames) for addressing two or more, as where a letter is addressed to a firm.

The salutation always appears on a line by itself, conventionally three line-spacing below the inside name and address, followed by a comma or no punctuation.

6. Subject Line

Often useful as a time-saver is the practice of including at the head of a letter a short title announcing the subject-matter, especially where correspondence is considerable.

The heading belongs to the letter and so is typed two line-spacing below the salutation, underlined and, except with the fully-blocked letter-style, centered over the body of the letter.

7. Body of the Letter

This is the part that really matters. Before you begin to write, you must first of all consider the following two points:

What is your aim in writing this letter?

What is the best way to go about it?

Since the main purpose of the letter is to convey a message, the letter should be written in language that is easily understood. The following serves as a reminder:

Write simply, clearly, courteously, grammatically, and to the point;

Paragraph correctly, confining each paragraph to one topic;

Avoid stereotyped phrases or commercial jargons.

8. Complimentary Close

The complimentary close, like the salutation, is purely a matter of convention and a polite way of ending a letter. The expression must be appropriate to the occasion and be in keeping with the salutation.

The following are the usual matches used in modern business letters:

Salutation	Close	Occasion
Dear Sir(s), Dear Madam, Dear Mesdames,	Yours faithfully, (or: Faithfully yours,)	Formal — very commonly used in Britain.
Gentlemen Dear Sir, Dear Madam, Dear Mesdames,	Yours truly, (or: Truly yours,)	Very commonly used in America and Canada.
Dear Mr. Henry,	Yours sincerely, (or: Sincerely yours,)	Informal — used between persons known to each other.

9. Signature

The signature is the signed name or mark of the person writing the letter or that of the firm he or she represents. It is written in ink immediately below the complimentary close. Because a signature is the distinguishing mark of the one who uses it, the same style must always be adopted.

The written signature and the typed signature must correspond exactly.

Always sign your letter by hand. Never use a rubber stamp.

10. Reference Notation

This notation is typed two spaces below the typed signature, and shows only the initials of the typist. If the dictator's name is not typed in the signature area, the reference notation shows the initials of both the dictator and the typist. The following examples are acceptable forms of reference notations:

RGB rgb FMA/RBG FMA/rbg FMA: rbg

11. Enclosure

Two line-spacing below the reference notation the writer may indicate one or more enclosures in the letter by following any one of these examples:

Enclosure: Price List

Enclosures

Enclosures 4

Encl. As stated

Enc.

12. Carbon Copy

There are two types of carbon copy notations. The first is indicated by "cc" followed by the names of the persons who will receive copies of the letters. This notation is typed on the original and carbon copies.

The second type of copy notation is specified on the copy only by the abbreviation "bcc" (blind carbon copy) and the recipient's name. No one other than the recipient of the "bcc" and you will know his or her receipt of a copy of the letter.

Notations for "cc" and "bcc" would look like this in your letter:

cc Shanghai Branch Office

bcc Mr. Jones

Full names and addresses may be given to help mailing or filing.

13. Postscript

If the writer wishes to add something he forgot to mention, he may type his afterthought two spaces below the copy notation. The adding of a P.S. should, however, be avoided as far as possible, since it is usually a sign of poor planning. Here is an example:

P.S. I, on behalf of my company, sincerely invite you to attend the Guangzhou Fair.

III

Letter Styles of Business Correspondence

There are several acceptable styles for business letters. The four most popular forms are indented style, full-block, modified block and semi-block.

1. Indented Style

The main feature of this style is that each line of the "Inside Name and Address" should be indented 2-3 spaces, and the first line of each paragraph should be indented 3-8 spaces.



Sample

Beijing Textiles Import & Export Corporation

8 Guanghua Road

Beijing, China.

Tel: 010-66838128 Telex: 010-33587118 Cable: 8898

Our ref. No.

Your ref. No.

January 30, 2004

The Pakistan Trading Company,

15, Broad Street,

KARACHI, Pakistan.

Gentlemen,

First Inquiry

We learn from a friend in San Francisco that you are exporting Nylon Bed-sheets and Pillow Cases. There is a steady demand here for the above-mentioned commodities of high quality at moderate prices.

Will you please send us a copy of your catalogue, with details of your prices and terms of payment. We should find it most helpful if you could also supply samples of these goods.

Yours very truly,

BEIJING TEXTILES IMPORT & EXPORT CORP.

(Signature)

Zhang Dahua

General Manager

2. Full-Block Style

Every line in the full-block style begins at the left margin, and the open style of punctuation has been adopted. For example, a complete absence of punctuation marks from the date, the salutation, the complementary close, and from the ends of lines forming the inside name and address, except the full-stops to mark abbreviation.

Sample

GUANGZHOU ELECTRONICS PRODUCTS
IMPORT & EXPORT CORPORATION
11 Beijing Road, Guangzhou
People's Republic of China
Tel 3456182 Telex 8371 GUELCO CABLE 2284

Ref. GEC 9667

June 21 2004

Ocean Electronics Products Import Corp.
130 Clifford Street
LONDON W 1 England

Dear Sirs,

Re: Chinese Electronics Products

We have obtained your name and address from the London Chamber of Commerce, who has told us that you wish to import electric goods from China.

We manufacture electronic appliance of the kind illustrated in enclosed catalogue, which we hope will be of interest to you. Also enclosed for your reference, is our latest price list.

Should you be interested in any of our product, please let us know and we will provide you with a quotation. In the meantime, should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

We look forward to hearing from you soon, and to the possibility of doing business with you in the future.

Yours faithfully,

(Signature)
Liu Sheng-feng
Sales Manager

Encs: as stated