

英语读本

# 外经贸英语函电

上海对外贸易学院  
甘 鸿 编著

修订本

REVISED  
EDITION

ENGLISH FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
BUSINESS  
COMMUNICATION

上海科学技术文献出版社

Revised Edition

**English For  
International Business Communication**

修 订 本  
**外 经 贸 英 语 函 电**

(英 语 读 本)

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# 前 言

《外经贸英语函电》——“English for International Business Communication”是上海对外贸易学院的一本主要教材，广泛使用于各专业和各种培训班。上海市和各省、市有关的高等院校也多有采用，深受各界读者欢迎。自1990年3月由上海科学技术文献出版社出版以来，发行量逐年增加，迄今已达10余万套（含汉语译本）。

《外经贸英语函电》的特点是侧重于实例，且与实际业务紧密结合，使学者通过实例举一反三，学以致用，学会撰写符合规格的外经贸英语函电和草拟有关业务的合约、协议。它既是教材又是外经贸工作者与客户进行通讯联系的极好参考材料。

随着我国深化改革和进一步对外开放，对外经济贸易出现了新的形势，经营对外经济贸易的单位越来越多。因此，根据形势发展需要，编者对原教材进行了增补删节，改编成修订本，使能更有效地为培养外经贸人才服务。

为了便于自学，编者仍把本书的主要部分，如正文、信函、电报、电传和传真，以及合约、协议等汇集成汉语译本，附习题答案，与英语读本配套出版，供对照参考。

修订本《外经贸英语函电》在原来的基础上作了如下改进：一、文字力求简朴；二、每一单元的结尾附有书信指导，以帮助学者如何避免易犯的错误，撰写得体的英语信函；三、增补国际常用的表格式信用证和传真通讯知识；四、合资经营和补偿贸易采用新的协议书，此两协议书连同代理合约均有汉语译文；五、每一单元有附加习题，在汉语译本中没有答案，可由教师随意决定使用。

本书经王兴孙副院长、陈忠培副院长和张伟民教授审阅，并提出宝贵意见，特此表示感谢。

由于编者水平有限，书中错误或不妥之处在所难免，敬希使用本书的读者指正。

上海对外贸易学院

甘 鸿 编著

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## Unit One

# BUSINESS LETTER-WRITING

### Essentials of Business Letter-writing

Broadly speaking, the functions of a business letter may be said to be (1) to ask for or to convey information; (2) to make or to accept an offer; (3) to deal with matters concerning negotiation of business. In addition, there are letters with no other purpose than to remind the recipient of the sender's existence.

Letter-writing does not differ from any other form of creative writing. Good English is one of the important bases of good business letters. What you write should be free from grammatical blemishes, and also free from the slightest possibility of being misunderstood. There are certain essential qualities of business letters, which can be summed up in the Three C's, i. e. (1) Clearness; (2) Conciseness; (3) Courtesy.

#### 1. Clearness

First of all, make sure that your letter is so clear that it cannot be misunderstood. A point that is ambiguous in a letter will cause trouble to both sides, and further exchange of letters for explanation will become inevitable, thus time will be lost.

Next, when you are sure about what you want to say, say it in plain, simple words. Good, straightforward, simple English is what is needed for business letters.

#### 2. Conciseness

Clearness and conciseness often go hand-in-hand and the elimination of wordy business jargon can help to make a letter clearer and at the same time more concise.

A concise letter is not necessarily a short one. Sometimes a letter dealing perhaps with a multiplicity of matters cannot avoid being long. If conciseness conflicts with courtesy, then make a little sacrifice of conciseness. Generally speaking, you will gain in clearness and conciseness by writing short sentences rather than long ones.

A letter can be made clearer, easier to read and more attractive to look at by careful paragraphing. A paragraph for each point is a good rule.

### 3. Courtesy

It should hardly be necessary to stress the importance of courtesy in your correspondence. One of the most important things is promptness. Punctuality will please your customer who dislikes waiting for days before he gets a reply to his letter.

It is nearly always wrong to doubt a statement made in good faith by the other side and even worse to contradict it. Differences are bound to occur in business, but with diplomacy and tact they can be overcome and settled without ill will on either side.

Before we go on to the detailed structure of the business letter there is one general principle, on which the American writers lay great emphasis, that is, the 'you' attitude. In our letters we should always keep in mind the person we are writing to, see things from his point of view, visualize him in his surroundings, see his problems and difficulties and express our ideas in terms of his experience.

## Layout of Business Letters

Although formality in business letter-writing is rapidly giving way to a less conventional and more friendly style, the layout or mechanical structure of a letter as it is called still follows a more or less set pattern determined by custom and not resulting from any deliberate plan. Choice of layout is a matter of individual taste, but it is better to follow established practice, to which the business world has become accustomed. A good plan to make correct practice habitual is to adopt one form of layout and to stick to it.

The modern business letter is nearly always typed. It has long been customary to set it out in the semi-indented style (Example. 1). Many people regard this as the most attractive of all letter styles. The blocked inside name and address is liked because it is compact and tidy. This style appeals to most readers. They like the indented paragraphing and claim that it makes for easy reading. Others dislike the indentations because, they claim, they waste the typist's time. So the blocked style (Example. 2) has now come to be much more widely used than before.

The open style of punctuation in the inside name and address is often used with the modern letter style, but is not essential to it. Closed punctuation can also be used if preferred.

The business letter consists of seven principle parts; (1) the letter-head, (2) the date, (3) the inside name and address, (4) the salutation, (5) the message, (6) the complimentary close and (7) the writer's signature and official position.

### 1. The Letter-head

The letter-head expresses a firm's personality. It helps to form one's impression of the writer's firm. Styles vary considerably, but they all give similar information and besides the name and address of the firm may include telephone numbers, telegraphic addresses, the telegraphic codes used, telex numbers, and the kind of business carried on.

### 2. The Date

Always type the date in full, in the logical order of day, month, year, e. g.

12th October, 19... or 12 October 19...

For the day, either cardinal numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.) or ordinal numbers (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.) can be used, thus:

1st March 19... or 1 March 19...

3rd April 19... or 3 April 19...

29th October 19... or 29 October 19...

The day can also be written after the month, for example:

March 1st, 19...

October 29, 19...

In this way, a comma must be used between the day and the year.

To give the day in figures (e. g. 12/10/19...) is in bad taste, and it may easily cause confusion because in Britain this date would mean 12th October 19..., but in the United States and some other countries it would mean 10th December 19...

### 3. Inside Name and Address

The usual practice is to set out the name and address of one's correspondent at the head of the letter, as in Examples 1 and 2. However, in official (i. e. Government) correspondence, it is sometimes placed at the foot, in the bottom left-hand corner.

Where the appropriate head of department is known, address the letter to him by his official title, thus:

The Sales Manager

The Hercules Engineering Co., Ltd.

Brazennose Street

MANCHESTER M60 8AS

England

When addressing a correspondent personally by name, take care to spell the name correctly.

English addresses may have the following parts: (Not all addresses have all the parts)

- (a) name of house
- (b) number of house and name of street
- (c) name of city or town
- (d) county or state and its post-code
- (e) name of country

In order to avoid ambiguity, when you write letters to other countries, always include the name of the country, even if the city mentioned is the country's capital. Here is an example:

The Vice President  
The Eagle Press Inc.  
24 South Bank  
BIRMINGHAM  
Alabama  
U. S. A.

The courtesy titles used in correspondence are Mr. (or Esq.), Mrs., Miss, Messrs. and Mmes. But there are certain rules of using these titles. Esq. (for Esquire) is legally restricted to certain classes of persons in America (e. g. judges, magistrates, barristers). For addressing a single person Mr. or Esq. is used in England. Mr. always precedes the name, Esq. always follows the name, separated from it by a comma, e. g. Mr. John Hayling or John Hayling, Esq. The latter form is considered more polite, but as the Americans never use it, we recommend our readers to make 'Mr.' the rule. Mrs. (for mistress) is used for a married woman and Miss for an unmarried woman. In recent years it has become customary to use Ms. as the courtesy title for all women, married or unmarried, and many women, particularly career women, strongly object to being addressed as Mrs. or Miss.

In our correspondence the use of Mr. and Messrs. as the courtesy titles is common. However, Messrs. (abbreviated from the French Messieurs) as the plural form of Mr. is used only for companies or firms, the names of which include a personal element, e. g.

Messrs. J. Harvey & Co.

Messrs. MacDonald & Evans

It is not used in any of the following cases:

- (a) When an individual is addressed:

J. A. Simpson, Esq.

The Chief Accountant

Lloyd, Harris & Brown

Edward Collins & Co., Ltd.

- (b) When the title is impersonal:

Utility Furniture Co.

Cabinet Industries Ltd.

(c) When a courtesy title is already included:

Sir James Murphy & Co.

Dr. H. Willis & Co. , Ltd.

(d) When the title begins with The:

The Robinson Furniture Co.

The Grayson Electric Co. , Ltd.

#### **4. The Salutation**

The salutation is the greeting with which every letter begins. The customary greeting in a business letter is Dear Sir, or Dear Sirs (when a partnership is addressed). But the Americans usually use Gentlemen instead of Dear Sirs. Note that you cannot use Sirs alone and that Gentlemen cannot be used in the singular. In American letters a colon is always placed after the salutation, e. g.

Dear Mr. White:

Quite often now companies are owned and/or managed by women, and it is more and more customary to use the greeting: Dear Madam or Sir, if the writer is not sure whether the letter will be read by a man or a woman.

#### **5. The Message**

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

(a) What is your aim in writing this letter?

(b) 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 reminders:

(a) Write simply, clearly, courteously, grammatically, and to the point;

(b) Paragraph correctly, confining each paragraph to one topic;

(c) Avoid stereotyped phrases and commercial jargon.

#### **6. The Complimentary Close**

The complimentary close, like the salutation, is purely a matter of custom and a polite way of bringing a letter to a close. The expression used must suit the occasion. It must also match the salutation. The following salutations, with their matching closes, are the ones most commonly used in the modern business letters:

<u>Salutation</u>	<u>Close</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Dear Sir(s) Dear Madam	Yours faithfully	Formal — used as standard practice in Britain, but Americans object to using this as the complimentary close.
Dear Mr. Harris	Yours sincerely	Informal — used between persons known to each other, or where there is a wish to dispense with formality.

“Yours respectfully”, at one time used in letters to superiors, is now obsolete. Avoid ending letters with “I am, We are, I remain, etc.” These phrases are old-fashioned.

“Yours faithfully” is obsolete in America. “Yours truly” or “Sincerely yours” is usually used.

### 7. The 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. To “sign” with a rubber stamp is a form of discourtesy.

### Miscellaneous Matters

#### (a) References

Reference numbers and letters enable replies to be linked with earlier correspondence and ensure that they reach the right person or department without delay. Failure to quote your correspondent’s reference causes inconvenience. Many letterheads provide spaces for references, e. g.

Your ref:

Our ref:

Where the letter-head does not provide for it, the reference may form part of the first paragraph of the reply letter:

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your letter, reference ALM/PS, of 15th September. Or the reference may be typed as a heading:

Dear Sir:

Your Ref: ALM/PS

Thank you for your letter of 15th September.

#### (b) “For the attention of ...”

This phrase is used where the writer of a letter addressed to an organization



wishes to direct it to a particular member. It is typed two line-spacings above the salutation, underlined, and centred over the body of the letter;

The Secretary  
The Ajax Electrical Co. , Ltd.  
Fernhall Drive  
REDBRIDGE, Essex IG4 5BN  
England

For the attention of Mr. T., Waterhouse

Dear Sir;

(c) Subject Headings

There are two kinds of subject headings—main headings and paragraph headings.

1/. Main Headings—The heading is typed two line-spacings below the salutation, underlined, and centred over the body of the letter. It helps to ensure that the letter is passed to the right person or department without delay, e. g.

Your Order No. 3456

A heading will be appropriate if one has already been used by your correspondent, in which case your reply should carry the same heading, or if you are beginning a correspondence likely to lead to a number of letters on the same subject.

2/. Paragraph Headings — The heading is placed at the beginning of each paragraph to show what subject this paragraph is dealing with. Block capitals may be used, followed by a full stop (though some prefer a colon, or even a dash) to emphasize the distinction between heading and text. Main heading does not take a full stop.

Paragraph headings may be useful, but it is better to confine each letter to one subject if possible, because different subjects may need attention by different departments or different persons.

(d) Enclosures

When there is something enclosed with the letter, type the word “Enclosure”, or an abbreviation of it (Encl. ) in the bottom left-hand under the identification marks, with a figure indicating the number of enclosures, if there are more than one.

(e) “Per Pro. ” Signature

Per Pro. is the abbreviation of per procuracionem, which is a Latin phrase denoting agency. Strictly speaking, only a partner is entitled to sign the name of his firm, but for convenience authority to sign is often given to a responsible employee by a document