

21世纪高等学校国际经济与贸易系列规划教材

International Business
Correspondence



国际商务信函

主编 吴仁波 刘昌华



ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY PRESS
浙江大学出版社

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前 言

国内经济与国际经济的进一步融合,需要越来越多的高级国际商务人才。在涉外经贸活动中,国际商务信函是一种常用的英语应用文体,具有联络业务、沟通交流的作用。熟练应用国际商务信函与客户沟通洽谈是国际商务与国际贸易人才必备的技能。

“国际商务信函”是国际贸易、国际商务、工商管理、电子商务及商务英语等专业中实践性、操作性很强的核心课程之一,是一门将英语和国际商务活动各个主要环节紧密结合的课程。本书呈现了国际商务信函的相关知识,力图让读者掌握国际商务的整个流程。

本书分四个部分共16单元,第一部分(第1单元)是全书的导入,介绍了国际商务信函写作的基本要求;第二部分(第2~8单元)依次介绍做成一笔交易的主要环节:建立业务关系、资信调查、询盘、发盘、还盘、订单及其履行和促销;第三部分(第9~13单元)是国际商务交往中通常必须明确的主要条款:支付(支付方式、催开信用证与修改信用证)、包装、装运、索赔与理赔等;第四部分(第14~16单元)介绍其他信函的写作,包括:主要贸易方式、撰写商务合同及杂项。

每个单元包括内容简介、正文信函、生词解释及关键词语的用法、常用的专业句型、写作技巧、补充阅读材料、练习等7个部分。附录分别介绍了外贸业务中常用的贸易方式、产品分类、组织机构、职务,贸易术语、货币价格、结算与保险,品质、重量、包装、标记、运输、单据和世界港口,合同、商务谈判、检验和索赔等专业词汇以及常用的缩写词。

本书主要有以下四个特点:

1. 结构的完整性。读者能比较清晰地看到一笔交易的整个信函沟通过程。第2~13单元,每个单元的样信中都有1~2封信主要围绕Yantai Xiangyu Import & Export Corporation与Dastech International Inc.之间有关苹果的特定交易展开。此外,每个单元还有数封其他公司之间的业务信函,从而使读者能看到外贸业务的多样性与复杂性。

2. 内容的时代性。本书内容取材真实,反映了当今进出口业务的现实状况与最新变化。书中很多实际应用范例都是从编者的实际工作经历或对外贸公司的调研中筛选出来的第一手资料,因此能反映交易的实际过程和真实情况,有助于消除学生“学无以致用”的担忧,提高其学习的积极性。

3. 知识的实用性。信函中涉及的重点词汇和短语都以斜体加粗的形式突出

显示,并在“Words, Phrases and Notes”中列出其英文、中文释义,有的还加上了中英文对照的例句,使学生能够举一反三。读音复杂的重点词还加注了音标。

“Commonly Used Sentences”以双语形式提供了大量实用的专业写作句型。另外,本书的绝大部分内容用英文编写,有助于培养学生直接用英语思维的习惯和提高其英语的实际应用能力。

4. 语言的准确性。吴仁波老师从事外贸实务工作十余年,又有十几年的外贸教学经验,发表过专业论文几十篇,从而保证了书中每个专业细节的把握;刘昌华老师为英语专业本科毕业,主要从事大学英语教学,对书中英语的表达方法进行了严格把关。因此,学习者可以通过学习本书掌握地道的国际商务信函的格式、行文方法 and 专业术语。

此外,正文的信函结构完整,每封信都包括国际商务信函的7个主要组成部分,目的是培养学生良好的写作习惯。但是为了节省篇幅,信函选读中的信函都删掉了信头和信内名址等内容。

本书的编写工作凝结了编者将近一年的辛勤劳动。吴仁波负责全书的设计、资料的查找以及全书的统稿;刘昌华负责全书的打字以及文字的润色。北京大学博士研究生吴唯伊参加了附录的编写和全书的文字及格式的校对工作。

本书适合国际经济与贸易、国际商务、工商管理、电子商务及商务英语等专业的学生,外贸工作者及所有需要同外商进行沟通的从业人员参考使用,可以作为各级院校的教学用书、公司培训用书以及自学参考用书。

本书的编写受益于山东工商学院经济学院国际商务教研室主任姜书竹老师的鼓励,并且得到了浙江大学出版社的大力支持,编写过程中参考了多种同类教材,在此一并表示深深的谢意。

由于编者水平有限,书中不妥、偏颇甚至错误之处在所难免,敬请各位读者、专家批评指正,以便充实与完善。

编 者

2016年3月

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PART I

LEAD-IN OF BUSINESS LETTER WRITING

UNIT 1

Fundamentals of Business Letter Writing

In today's highly developed and toughly competitive society, communication between individuals and groups has become increasingly frequent and more important. It serves to convey information, to express ideas or to exchange feelings.

Business communication refers to all the messages that are sent and received for business purposes. Messages can be transmitted either in oral media (such as face-to-face talk, communication through telephone, voice mail, teleconference) or in written and electronic correspondence. Compared with oral communication, written forms can secure more complete understanding between the parties concerned and be kept permanently as a record of each transaction. There are many types of written communication such as letter, e-mail, fax, memo, etc.

Business letters (mainly refer to electronic business letters) are the principle means used by firms to keep in touch with their trading partners. Effective business letter writers can help increase their company's sales and profits by establishing good relations with other companies. In addition, proficiency in business letter writing may help the writer gain more self-confidence and more success in business.

To write an effective international business letter, one needs to have a good command of English and the knowledge concerning business theory, trade terms, psychology and skills in salesmanship.

I. Principles of Writing Business Letters



A good business letter leaves a good impression on the reader and brings about more business opportunities. There are seven principles which can be summed up as 7C's, i.e. Clarity, Courtesy, Concreteness, Correctness, Conciseness, Completeness and Consideration.

1. Clarity

The writer should express his ideas and requirements clearly by distinct and understandable wording so that it can not be misunderstood. An ambiguous point in a letter may cause trouble to both sides, and further exchange of letters for explanation will become inevitable. Therefore, when

you are sure about what you want to say, say it in simple and common words in a straightforward tone.

2. Courtesy

First, Courtesy means promptness in replying a coming letter. Punctuality will please your customer who dislikes waiting for days before he gets a reply to his letter. The sooner you can reply, the better. It is a usual practice to reply within 48 hours.

Second, Courtesy means trying to solve problems in a polite way. When writing to your correspondent, it is necessary for you to be sincere, thoughtful and appreciative.

3. Concreteness

Business letter writing should be specific and definite rather than general and abstract, especially when the writer is requiring a response, solving problems, making an offer or acceptance, etc. You need to use specific facts, definite figures and time to stress concreteness.

4. Correctness

Correctness refers not only to the correct usage of grammar, punctuation and spelling, but also to the standard language, proper statement as well as the correct understanding of commercial jargons. In addition, you should be careful especially when you are giving information regarding dates, specifications, prices, quantities, discounts, commissions, units and figures, etc. A minor mistake in these respects sometimes will lead to the result of your making no profit or even losing out.

5. Conciseness

Conciseness refers to the usage of the fewest possible words to express your ideas. On the one hand, you should avoid the wordy statement, but use short words and sentences, so don't write those unnecessary words, expressions and sentences. On the other hand, you should avoid those out-of-date words or jargons. Sometimes you need to write a long letter, write it in paragraphs. A paragraph for each point is a good rule.

6. Completeness

A good business letter should include all the necessary information and data to convey the message in detail to the readers and answer all the questions and requirements put forward by the readers. An incomplete message may lead to increased communication costs. Besides, it is considered complete when all necessary elements are included such as the letter-head, date, inside name and address, salutation, body, complimentary close and signature, etc. The incomplete information will fail to enable the tradesmen to seize the business opportunities.

7. Consideration

Consideration emphasizes that the writer should focus on you-attitude instead of we-attitude. When writing a business letter, keep the reader's request, desire and his feeling in mind. You need to put yourself in the reader's shoes, look at things from the reader's point of view, understand the reader's problems, emphasize the reader's benefits and take the positive attitude.

II. Components of Business Letters



When writing a business letter, you need to follow a standardized layout. Generally speaking, a business letter should consist of the following seven principal parts: the letter-head, date, inside name and address, salutation, body, complimentary close, and signature. Depending on the type of the letter, some optional parts may also be included.

1. Indispensable Parts

(1) Letter-head

Letter-head is always placed on the top of a letter. It gives information about the writer's company—name, postal address, telephone number, fax number, website and e-mail address. It helps the reader to identify and know how to get in touch with the writer, and it is usually printed on the top of a letter paper.

Sample of a letter-head:

ABC IMP/EXP CORP
5 Jianshe Road, Yantai, Shandong Province 264000, P.R.China
Tele: xxxxxxxx Fax: xxxxxxxx E-mail: xxxxxxxx

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

(2) Date

The date refers to the accurate year, month and day to write the letter. It is usually typed one or two lines below the last line of the letter-head. Please pay attention to the following key points when writing the date:

There are different ways in writing the date depending on the writer's taste such as:

25th Dec. 2015

Dec. 25th, 2015

25 Dec. 2015

Dec. 25, 2015

In the first three cases, a comma may or may not be used between the month or the day and the year. But in the last case, a comma must be used to separate the day and the year.

Don't write a date in figures such as 7/6/2015 which may cause confusion. In USA, it would mean July 6, but in UK, it would mean 7th June.

(3) Inside Name and Address

Inside Name and Address refers to the receiver's information which is usually put at the upper left-hand of the sheet, starting two or three lines below the last line of the letter-head. The information usually includes:

- ① Receiver's name and title;
- ② Company name;
- ③ The specific address and post-code of the company.

(4) Salutation

Salutation is the greeting with which every letter begins. It depends on the writer-correspondent relationship of the letter.

① If the two sides are of close relationship and know each other, use that person's courtesy title and last name, e.g. "Dear Mr. Smith", or "Dear Mrs. /Miss Jones", and even "Dear John". Sometimes some special titles may be used as the salutation. e.g. "Dear Prof. Park", or "Dear Dr. Clinton".

② If the two sides are new friends and don't know each other, use such salutations as "Dear Sir", "Dear Sirs", "Dear Sir or Madam", or "To Whom It May Concern". But the Americans usually use "Gentlemen" instead of "Dear Sirs".

NOTE 1: You can not use: SIRS or GENTLEMAN

NOTE 2: In American letters a colon is placed after the salutation, while in British letters a comma is added such as:

Dear Mr. Zhang: (American style)

Dear Mr. Zhang, (British style)

(5) Body of the Letter

This is the most important part in a letter. The message is written to convey some information to the recipient. Before you begin to write, you need consider the following two points:

What is the purpose of writing this letter?

What is the best way to present the letter?

The body of the letter generally consists of the following parts:

① Opening or Introduction

The opening is actually the background of a letter. It indicates the referring letter, contract or Letter of Credit to which response will be made.

② Details

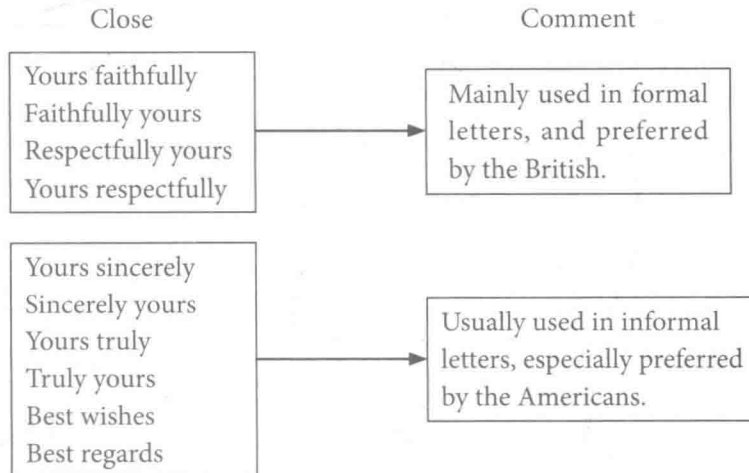
Details refer to the problems or requirements, etc., which will be put forth by the letter.

③ Close

Close refers to a short ending which must be made politely. It is of vital importance to keep friendly relations between the two sides since business development is hindered by a discourteous letter close.

(6) Complimentary Close

Complimentary close is a polite way to bring the letter to a courteous ending. The following expressions are the complimentary closes which people most commonly use in business letters:



(7) Signature

The signature is the signed name writing the letter or that of the company the writer represents. It usually consists of the following contents:

- ① The name of the company that the writer represents;
- ② Manual signature of the writer;
- ③ Typed name of the writer;
- ④ The writer's job title.

Please note that manual signature should be in black or blue ink. The name should be written out in full, as initials may be misleading or confusing.

For instance,

Shanghai A & A Imp & Exp Corp

James Wong

Manager

2. Optional Parts

The above-mentioned seven parts are indispensable for a business letter. Depending on different purposes, a letter may include one or more of the following parts.

(1) Reference Number

Reference numbers allow replies to be linked with earlier correspondence and ensure that they reach the right person or department without delay. It's used to avoid confusion and

inconvenience in handling letters. Reference numbers are used in the following three ways:

① A reference number is usually given after the letter-head and written as "Our ref. " or "Your ref."

② The reference may form part of the first paragraph of the reply letter. *e.g.*

Thank you for your letter, reference US001, of 6 July...

③ The reference may appear as a subject heading. *e.g.*

Dear Sir,

Your Ref: US001, of 6 July

Thank you for your letter of 4 May.

(2) The Attention Line

The attention line is usually used when the writer of a letter wants the letter to be handled by a specific individual or section of the firm. It is often underlined, typed in capitals between the inside name and address and the salutation. You can use such expressions as "Attention:", "Attention of", or "For the Attention of". For example:

ATTENTION: DR. BLAKE WOOD

Or Attention: Dr. Blake Wood

(3) Subject Heading

People usually use a brief phrase for a subject heading to define what the letter is going to talk about. It can be either placed under the salutation or above it. There are two types of headings: a main heading and paragraph headings.

① Main Heading

Main heading usually consists of the key words or wording of the letter which are typed below the salutation and are usually underlined. *e.g.*

Re: Your L/C No. AC100

② Paragraph Heading

Paragraph heading is placed at the beginning of each paragraph to show what subject this paragraph is dealing with.

For example:

PACKING TERMS: The goods are to be packed in drums, lined with soft materials, each containing 60 small boxes.

PAYMENT TERMS: Our usual terms of payment are D/P at sight or T/T.

SHIPMENT TERMS: Shipment should be effected before the end of March.

Transshipment and partial shipments are not allowed.

(4) Identification Marks

The identification marks are made up of the initials of the person who dictated the letter and those of the secretary or typist. The initials usually are in capital letters, and the two parts are separated by a colon or a slant. For example:

WL/be WL: be

(5) Enclosures

Enclosure is something that is sent together with the letter or e-mail, etc. If an enclosure or attachment accompanies the letter, type the word “Enclosure” or shortened “Enc.” or “Encl.” in the bottom left-hand. If more than one copy is enclosed, you’d better give the figure indicating the number of enclosures. Here are examples:

Enclosure

Enc. 1: 3 price lists and 1 catalogue

Enc. 2: Packing list in duplicate

(6) Carbon Copy

Carbon copy means a letter or an e-mail will be sent to another relevant person or organization. There are two types of carbon copy notations. The first is indicated by “cc” and the “cc:” is followed by the name of the persons who will receive copies of the letters. The second type of copy notation is specified on the copy only by the abbreviation “bcc” (blind carbon copy) and the recipient’s name. For this type, no one other than the recipient of the “bcc” and you will know he or she has received a copy of the letter.

Notations usually appear like this in letters:

cc the sales manager

bcc Mr. Edward Clinton

(7) Postscripts

A postscript may be used in the following situations:

- ① It is an afterthought as a sign of poor planning in formal letters or the writer has forgotten something in a letter written manually, but this point has been meaningless nowadays since most of the letters are typed.
- ② Some executives occasionally add a postscript in pen and ink to add a personal touch to the typewritten letter.
- ③ Writers of sales letters often withhold one last convincing argument for emphatic inclusion in a postscript.

Examples:

P.S. ...to see you at the Annual Sales Meeting on May 12.

P.S. This kind of furniture sells fast. It enjoyed the greatest popularity in a customer evaluation in May 2015.

The following example illustrates how a letter is customarily arranged. Please pay attention to the place of each element relative to the others. The italic parts are optional depending on the purpose of your letter.

YANTAI XIANGYU I & E CORPORATION

71 Jianshe Road, Zhifu District, Yantai, P.R.CHINA

Tel: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Letter-head

Ref. No.US01 _____ Reference Number

July 16, 2015 _____ Date

DASTECH INTERNATIONAL, INC.

101 Cutter Mill Road

Great Neck

New York 11025

USA

Inside Name and Address

For the Attention of Mr. Robert Edward _____ Attention Line

Dear Sirs, _____ Salutation

Your Order No. 48 for Fuji Apples _____ Subject Heading

Thanks for your letter of July 10 and we are glad to know that you are interested in our Fuji Apples.

.....

We are looking forward to your prompt reply. _____ Body

Yours truly, _____ Complimentary Close

Zhong Liqing

Manager

Signature

DS/al _____ Identification Mark

Encl. _____ Enclosure

CC: Ms Lee in Beijing _____ Carbon Copy

P.S. ...to see you at the Annual Sales Meeting on July 20. _____ Postscript