

FOREIGN TRADE
ENGLISH LETTERS, TELEGRAMS
AND TELEXES
BOOK ONE

对 外 贸 易
英 语 书 信、电 报 和 电 传
上 册

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THE FIRST ENGLISH SERIES
FOR FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND TRADE
《对外经济贸易英语丛书》之一

前 言

函电是培训外贸工作者的一门必修课程，尽管我国相当一部份对外贸易是在出口商品交易会上通过口头洽谈达成的，但是书信、电报和电传在对外贸易中仍然起着主要的作用。而且随着对外贸易的发展，需要更熟悉函电写作的行家里手。

近年来，我国与世界各国的贸易迅速发展，函电在书写形式和语言风格上也经历着显著的变化，旧的商业套语已不时新，而代之以简明，开门见山的用语，因此，我们原编的函电辅助教材已不适应当前形势的需要，特予改编，并定名为：《对外贸易英语书信、电报和电传》。

我们改编的主要目的，在于帮助学员和读者学习怎样运用现代英语的语言风格来书写有效的书信、电报和电传。我们在书写发往国外厂商的函电中，尽力避免使用过时的商业套语，但对有些国外厂商发来的函电中，仍有意保留一部份陈旧的套语，以利学习时加以比较和鉴别。

本书是对具有一定的英语和外贸业务知识的学员和外贸工作者编写的，大部分函电实例选自各有关进出口公司的档案资料，经过删节、加工和改写，使读者学有所用，用有范例。

本书在编写过程中，承广东省各外贸公司提供了所需的素材；编者并从北京对外经贸大学、上海对外贸易学院出版的书刊及其他中外书刊中借用了一些例子，特此表示感谢。

本书经广州对外贸易学院外语教学部付教授梁润森审阅定稿。编者对广州对外贸易学院付教授左章金和英国专家 Elaine Morgan 所提宝贵意见，表示衷心感谢。

由于编者水平有限，时间仓促，本书缺点、错误在所难免，尚请读者和专家们指正。



鄺汉臣 吴明忠
1988年10月于广州

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CHAPTER 1

Layout of a Business Letter

Format. The layout of a letter is the arrangement of its parts according to a common format or style, including how the spacing is used to centre the letter on the page. Most organizations adopt a standard format; when you begin work, you should obviously use the format of your organization. The most common formats are illustrated in figures 1, 2, and 3.

Generally, the letter paper is white and of good quality, although the design of the letterhead depends on the organization, and so its typeface, colour, etc. may vary. The standard size is 28cm x 21.6cm; envelopes are 11cm x 23.5cm. When sending a business letter, you should make sure that there are no grammatical or typing errors; the letter should also be well centred on the page-i. e., neither squashed up at the top nor ending right at the bottom of the page. Never send out a letter with visible corrections on the page. If you are not satisfied with the way a letter has been typed, do it again, or, in case someone else has typed it for you, take it back and explain how you want it done. A sloppy, badly typed letter implies a sloppy, badly run organization.

The parts of a letter: The parts of a business letter are as follows.

1. **Letterhead:** The letterhead includes the name, postal and telegraphic addresses, telephone and telex numbers of the organization. It is usually artistically designed and printed at the top of the page.

Weavewell Woolen Co. Ltd.

Victoria Street

London EC 4X 1SF

Tel, 01-1737-431 Telex, 9325194 Cable, WEAWEWELL, London

Figure 1: Semiblock Style

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38152

December 18, 19-

Mr. Joe Claiborne, Office Manager
Swallows Insurance Company
5983 Naplewood Cove
Memphis, TN 38117

Dear Mr. Claiborne,

As you requested, I am sending you some samples of letters that illustrate various styles. I am glad to be able to help you in this way in the preparation of your new correspondence handbook.

This letter illustrates the semiblock style. Sometimes called the modified block with indented paragraphs.

Terminology with reference to letter styles differs widely; the basic formats, however, are standard.

This rather conservative format would be suitable for use at your insurance company, although I do not recommend it. Although the indentations effectively separate the paragraphs they are unnecessary as there is always a blank line space between paragraphs.

Yours sincerely,

Binford H. Peeples
Professor

Figure 2, Full-block Style

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38152

December 18 19-

Mr. Joe Claiborne
Office Manager
Swallows Insurance Company
5983 Maplewood Cove
Memphis TN 38117

Dear Mr. Claiborne

This letter illustrates the use of the full-block style.

Use of this style is growing in popularity because of the ease with which it may be typed.

Some persons object to this arrangement because everything begins at the left margin; they prefer the date and closing lines to be centered or back-spaced from the right margin to balance the letter. Other people prefer this style because they think it is more business like.

Notice that open punctuation is generally used in this style. This means that commas, full stops and colons are not used for the date, address or closing line.

Yours sincerely

Binford H. Peebles
Professor

Figure 3, Modified-block Style

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38452

December 18 1961

Mr. Joe Claiborne,
Office Manager,
Swallows Insurance Company,
5983 Maplewood Cove,
Memphis, TN 38117

Dear Mr. Claiborne

This letter illustrates the style known as the modified block.

Should you decide to adopt this style, I would recommend that the date and closing line begin at the centre point of the page. They can also be back-spaced from the right margin, (as in this example) but some people find this method rather time consuming.

In all the styles illustrated so far, standard punctuation has been used; this refers to the date, address, salutation and closing line. Normal punctuation is, of course, used in the body of the letter.

As you may have noticed by now, there is no precise answer as to the best letter style; it is purely a case of personal preference. Each organization chooses its own style, and its employees should follow it.

Yours sincerely

Binford H. Peeples
Professor

2. Reference Number (Reference Initials): The reference number is generally used as a useful indication for filing, so it must be easily seen. Because of this, it is often placed two lines below the letterhead.

In some incoming letters, you may find it at the end of the letter on the left margin, two lines below the signature.

It may consist of a number and/or the initials of the person sending the letter and the initials of the person typing the letter. So, if John Smith is the sender of a letter and Louise Brown the typist, John's initials will come first, in capital letters, then a bar, then Louise initials in small letters: JS/lb. If Louise Brown sends and types the letter, the reference will be LB/lb. The reference number is set out like this,—Our ref. 386 JS/lb or JS/lb 386.

The reference number of the letter under reply should also be included, if any, as it serves as a guideline for filing by the recipient. So, if George Williams sent a letter to John Smith, typed by Grace Peters, the reference on John Smith's reply would look like this:

Your ref, GW/gp

Our ref, 386 JS/lb

3. Date. Every letter should be dated—never send out a letter which isn't dated. The position of the date below the letterhead depends on the length of the letter, but it should never be less than two lines. The position of the date (either on the right or the left) depends on the style you decide to use.

Note that there are different ways of writing the date,

August 10, 19- (American form)

10th August, 19- (British form)

It is unwise to abbreviate the name of the month nor show the date in figures like 10/8/19-or 8/10/19-as this may cause some confusion. This is because the British and the Americans do not read the day and the month in the same order. If you are giving information, such as shipping or delivery or appointment dates, it is vital that the date should be correct, so it is better to write it out in full.

4. Inside Address. The inside address of the receiver of the letter is usually placed on the left-hand side two to eight lines below the date line, depending on the length of the letter. When the receiver is a company, the inside address is written thus:

The Acme Shoe Co. Ltd.

369 Piccadilly
London, WN OBH
UK

Messrs. Harrison & Co.
501 Mountain Place
Anytown

"Messrs" is the plural of "Mr.", and is used only when the firm is named after one or more persons, e.g. Harrison, Smith Co.; Brown & Sons; White Bros., etc.

When the letter is addressed to an individual in the company, the person's name should be preceded by the courtesy title -Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms. If you are not sure whether or not the woman to whom you are writing is married, use Ms. This title is now perfectly acceptable, especially in view of the fact that many career women prefer it.

Sometimes, his or her position—Director, Manager, etc. is given in addition to the company's address thus.

Ms. Sarah Davies

Sales Manager

The Acme Shoe Co. Ltd.

369 Piccadilly

London, WIN CBE

UK

If the letter is addressed to the company but directed to the attention of an individual, the inside address is written thus:

The Acme Shoe Co. Ltd.

369 Piccadilly

London, WIN OBH

UK

ATTN: Mr. Paula R. Scott

Accounts Department

(ATTN = Attention = For the attention of)

If you do not know either the name or the position of the person who should deal with your letter, you should have some idea of which department—Sales Department, Advertising Department, etc. the letter should go to. In this case, address it to the attention of the relevant department.

The Acme Shoe Co. Ltd.

369 Piccadilly

London, WIN OBH

UK

Attention: Accounts Department

5. **Salutation**: A business letter should always begin "Dear...". It should be typed two to four lines below the address, and should match the name on the envelope and inside address, although the whole name should not be written, e. g. if the person you are writing to is William T. Holmes, his name on the envelope and inside address will be typed exactly in that way. However you do not write the salutation as "Dear William T. Holmes". You may write either "Dear Mr. Homes" if you don't know him very well, or "Dear William" if you do know him. If you haven't been able to discover the name of the person to whom you are writing and you know only the person is a man or a woman, write "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam". If you're addressing your letter to the company as a whole, write "Dear Sirs" or "Gentlemen".

6. **Subject Line**: This comes two lines below the salutation, either beginning at the left margin or in the centre, depending on which style you are using. The subject line helps the reader to obtain quickly the gist of the letter. It is especially useful if two companies have a lot of correspondence with each other on a variety of subjects, as it immediately tells what the letter is about. It is also useful as a guide for filing. It should be underlined and can begin with or without the word "Re," or "Subject," but should always denote what the letter is about, e.g.

Re: Sewing Machines

Subject: Our Contract No. 92125. Your L/C No. 91897

Sewing Machines

Sewing Machines

7. **Body of the Letter**: This should begin two lines below the subject line, if there is one, at least two lines below the salutation if there is no subject line. Business letters should be typed by using single spacing, and two spaces should be left between each paragraph. Do not vary the spacing between paragraphs in order to make sure that your letter is nicely balanced on the page. Instead, vary the spacing between letterhead and reference number, date and inside address, inside address and salutation the last line of the body of letter and complimentary close, complimentary close and typewritten name. Leave a margin of 1 1/2 inches (3.8cm) on the left hand side and 1 to 1 1/2 inches (2.5 to 3.8 cm) on the right-hand side of the paper.

8. **Complimentary Close**: This is placed two or four lines below the last

line of body of the letter. It should match the salutation. If you are writing a very formal letter which begins "Dear Sirs" you should end it with "Yours faithfully". "Yours sincerely" is now a generally accepted ending to any business letter. "Yours truly" is also widely used. If the salutation is "Dear Mr. Jones" or the like, "Sincerely," is suitable, "Cordially" may be used when it is desired to show personal or business friendship. You may also end with "Best regards" or "Best wishes" if you know the person very well.

9. Signature. All letters must be signed. Unsigned letters have no authority. The letter should be signed by the person who is sending it. A business letter is signed in different ways according to the degree of responsibility assumed by the one who signs it. If the letter is signed by one who can write on his own responsibility, only the personal name and title are required. If it is signed by one who has authority to sign for the organization or department but does not have responsibility to act on his own, the name of the organization appears first, followed by the person's signature with or without the name of the department.

Compare the following examples:

1) Yours sincerely,

(Signature)

(Typewritten Name)

Manager

2) Yours sincerely,

(Signature)

(Typewritten Name)

Manager, Shipping Department

3) Yours sincerely

J. B. Smith & Co.

(Signature)

(Typewritten Name)

4) Yours sincerely

J. B. Smith & Co.

(Signature)

(Typewritten Name)

Marketing Department

The person's name is typed beneath the signature so that the name is legible to the reader — sometimes people's handwritten signatures can be very difficult to read. The signature should be written in the space between the complimentary close or the company name and the typed name—a space of

at least four lines should be left. A rubber stamp should never be used in place of a handwritten signature, as it is not acceptable in a court of law.

10. Enclosure: If any documents, catalogues, price lists, etc. are sent with a letter, this fact should be pointed out by writing "Enclosure" or its abbreviation "Enc" at least two lines below the typed-name or title below the signature or two lines below the reference initials to facilitate checking up on sealing and opening the envelope and for record purpose. The marking may be in any of the following ways:

Enclosure

Enc.

Enc., as stated

Encs; 2

If there is more than one enclosure, "Encs" should be used and the number mentioned. If the enclosures have not been mentioned in the letter you should indicate clearly what they are.

Encs; 1 catalogue

1 price list

11. Carbon Copy: Carbon copy is usually abbreviated to cc or c.c. Copies of letters are sometimes given to relevant people who need to know the information contained in the letter. For example, you may have more than one person dealing with sales to a particular customer- in this case all the people dealing with the sales to that customer should get a copy of any correspondence sent. Many companies now simply photocopy their letters, taking the view that time is more valuable than the cost of photocopying paper. Carbon copy paper also has a disadvantage in that it is thin and unsuitable for long storage in files- photocopying paper is stronger and lasts longer. Copies may be given to people in both companies involved in the correspondence, and this should be indicated in the following way, -

cc Mr. John Smith - ABC Co (Sales Manager)

Mr. Bill Withers - ABC Co (Salesman)

Mr. Peter Hall - DEF Co (Salesman)

Mr. Simon Adams-DEF Co (Saleman)

Sometimes, people distribute "blind" copies within their company - this simply means that they give someone a copy of a letter, but do not indicate this fact on the letter itself or this fact is specified on the copy only by the abbreviation "bcc" (blind carbon copy) and the recipient's name. Copies should be indicated at least two lines below enclosures, if any, or at least two lines below the typed name or title, if there are no enclosures.

12. Postscript: Postscript (PS) is a common feature in personal letters, but tends not to be used so much in business letters. If you wish to either draw someone's attention or clarify a point, use "NB:". This may either be used in the body of a letter immediately after the point has been made,

"...our agent will contact you. (NB, he will return on April 10)..."

or at least two lines below the last line of the letter,

(NB, Our agent will return on April 10)

Note that you should never use "NB" or "PS" just because you have forgotten to include something in the body of the letter. If you realise you have forgotten to include something, the whole letter should be retyped.

In business letters, it is now used only as a device to draw the reader's attention to an emphatic point, which is either deliberately left out from the body of the letter for presentation as a PS or repeated in it as mentioned above.

Second and Succeeding Pages: If your letter is going to be longer than a page, remember to leave at least six blank lines at the bottom of the first page which should, of course always, be typed on letterhead.

The second and succeeding pages shouldn't be typed on a letterhead. Some companies have "second sheets" which have a short form of the letterhead along the top of the page, other companies simply use blank paper of the same quality for the second sheet. The name of the addressee, the page number and the date should be typed at the top of the second and succeeding pages four to six lines down,

Smith & Co.

...2...

May 5, 19-

A business letter should never be typed on both sides of the paper.

How Should a Letter Look on the Page. Every letter should be well balanced on the page-not too low nor too high. A rough guideline as to spacing will follow, but everyone should use their common sense when spacing a letter-a short letter of only a few lines should not be too near the top of the page, leaving a huge gap below the signature. If a letter is long and takes up more than one page, make sure that you leave a space of 6-8 lines at the bottom of the first page. Put this sign...1... in the bottom right hand corner to indicate that the letter will continue, or, if you wish, in the centre of the page. Number the second page like this...2...either in the top right hand corner or in the middle. A second page should never look like this;

Yours sincerely

J. Smith

Manager

There should always be a few lines of the body of the letter above the closing line and signature.

Don't send out a letter with visible corrections on it; you should type it again. Always check a letter carefully for typos (typing errors) before signing and sending it.

Addressing the Envelope. The address on the envelope should begin one third of the way across the envelope from left to right and half way down from top to bottom.

You may sometimes have to write to someone who is only temporarily at a certain company and who will then return to his original address. While he is in his temporary position, you should write to him "care of" (c/o) the company he is staying with.

Mr. C.E. Smith
c/o China National Chartering Corporation
P.O. Box 592
Beijing
China

If you ask someone to take a letter to someone else for you, you should write as follows.

Mr. C.E. Smith

By kindness of Mr. (Mrs. or Miss or Ms.)... or

Through the courtesy of Mr. (Mrs. or Miss or Ms.)...

The address of the envelope should agree with the inside address. It should be written in the following order: -

Name

Title/position/department

Company name

Street address

Town

County/province

Country

The country may be underlined if you wish.

The Opening Paragraph. The over-formal and complex business language of an earlier time has now largely been dispensed with in favour of clear and simple language. You should avoid using old fashioned terms such as "We are in receipt of your favour of the..." at the beginning of a letter. The opening paragraph is usually short and concise; if you are replying to

a letter you should mention it's date and reference number,

Thank you for your letter BP/hl/003 of January 10...

Many thanks for your letter of February 11.

In reply to your letter of March 3,...

Further to our letter of April 2,...

If you are writing a first letter to a company (i.e. you are not replying to one from them) begin with a clear, straight-forward sentence to indicate immediately what the letter is about.

We have begun a new system of manufacture which we feel may be of interest to you...

Three months ago we completed a two-year programme of...

Go on to give clear details of the information you want to communicate.

The Closing Paragraph. This is usually a simple sentence which brings the letter to a polite close. It stands as a paragraph by itself. You should be careful to strike the right note.

If, for example, you are trying to get someone to do something for you or buy something from you, you may say "We look forward to hearing from you soon". If you are giving someone information about something you hope they will buy for you, you can say "Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information" but if you are asking them to send you some information, you wouldn't say this. Instead you could say "We would be grateful if you could send us this information as soon as possible". Here are other possible ways of ending a letter,

If you need further details/particulars/information, please let us know.

Should you require any further details/information/particulars, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to hearing from you soon/in the near future.

An early reply would be highly appreciated.

Thank you for your interest in our company/our product.

Should there be anything else we can do to help, please let us know.

If you can provide any further/additional information, please let us know/ please do not hesitate to contact us.

We would be most grateful if you would give this matter your earliest attention.

The complimentary close should follow the closing paragraph.

You should not thank anyone in advance for something that you hope they will do for you—only thank them for that they have already done.

Note that such phrases as;

Hoping to hear from you soon, we remain...are old fashioned.

EXERCISES

1. Arrange the following in proper form as they should be set out in a letter;

- 1) Sender's name: Guangdong Foreign Trade Development Corporation
- 2) Sender's address: 779 Dongfeng Dong Road, Guangzhou, China
- 3) Sender's cable address: 5527GFTDC
- 4) Sender's telex address: 44388 GDFTC CN
- 5) Date: September 15, 19--
- 6) Receiver's name: H.G. Wilkinson & Co. Ltd.
- 7) Receiver's address: 245 Lombart Street, Lagos, Nigeria
- 8) Subject: Sewing Machines
- 9) The message:

We thank you for your letter of September 3 enquiring for the captioned goods.

The enclosed booklet contains details of all our Sewing Machines and will enable you to make a suitable selection.

We look forward to receiving your specific enquiry with keen interest.

2. Address an envelope for the above letter.

NOTES:

1. layout ['leiaut] n. (格式)
2. format ['fɔrmæt] n. (版式)
3. spacing ['speisiŋ] n. 间格 (字间、行间)
4. illustrate ['iləstreit] v.: explain by examples, pictures, etc. (插图说明)
5. typeface ['taɪpfeɪs] n. (铅字印出的字样)
6. vary ['vɛəri] v.: become different (改变)
7. grammatical errors (语法上的错误)
8. typing errors (打字错误)
9. squash ['skwɒʃ] v.: press flat or into a small space (压挤)
10. visible ['vɪzɪbl] a.: that can be seen (可见的)
11. correction; sth. put in place of what is wrong (涂改之处)
12. be satisfied with... (对...感到满意)
13. in case (如果)
14. sloppy ['slɒpi] a.: not done with care (草率的)
15. imply [im'plai] v. involve the truth of sth. not definitely stated (含有...的意思)

16. a sloppy, badly run organization (管理马虎的公司)
17. letterhead ['letəhed] n.: sheet of paper with printed name and address of a business firm (信头)
18. postal address (邮件寄递的地址)
19. telegraphic address (电报挂号)
20. telex number (电传号)
21. artistically [a: 'tistikəli] ad.: beautifully (美观)
22. design [di 'zain] v. make designs for (打图样; 设计)
23. semiblock ['semiblək] style (半平头式)
24. Memphis ['memfis] 孟斐斯 (美国田纳西南部一城市)
25. Tennessee [,tenə 'si:] (田纳西 (美国东南部一州, 略作 Tenn.))
26. new correspondence [,kəris 'pɒdəns] handbook (新的尺牍手册)
27. modify ['mɒdifai] (改良)
28. indented paragraph: a paragraph with the first line started farther from the margin than the others (缩行的段落)
29. terminology [,təminɒlədʒi] n.: the system of terms belonging or peculiar to a science, art or specialized subject (专门名词; 术语)
30. with reference to: about (关于)
31. differ ['difə] from: be distinguishable from (与...不同)
32. conservative [kən 'sə:vətiv] a. (保守的)
33. insurance company (保险公司)
34. indentation [,inden 'teiʃən] n. (缩行)
35. effectively [i 'fektivli] ad. (有效地)
36. separate ['sepəreit] v. (分开)
37. a blank line space between paragraphs (段与段之间的空行)
38. full-block style (全平头式)
39. popularity [,pɒpjə 'lærɪti] n. quality of being popular (受爱好)
40. object [əb 'dʒekt] to (反对)
41. left margin: the margin on the left-hand side (左边的留空)
42. center v. (放在中间部位)
43. backspace v.: the method of adjusting the position of a word in typing by moving the carriage of the typewriter back one or more spaces with the spacer key (按退格键使滚筒及纸倒退一格或数格)
44. business like (像业务书信)
45. open punctuation [,pə ŋ ktju 'eiʃən] (开放式的标点)
46. colon ['kəʊlən] n. punctuation mark (:) in writing (冒号)
47. modified-block style (改良平头式)
48. time consuming: to waste time (浪费时间)