

A Writing Course for Business English

# 商务英语 写作教程

王晓英 编著



东南大学出版社

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## 内 容 提 要

本教程将各类商务文本的写作训练与商务英语的语言练习结合起来,针对商务活动的特殊性,将英语放在特殊的商务环境中,对已经较熟练掌握基础英语的使用者进行商务英语语言的再强化。本教程每一单元含语言复习和商务写作两个部分,将关键语言点和商务文本的介绍和写作训练加以归纳、提炼,使读者既能很好地掌握基本语言点,又能熟悉各类商务文本的体例和规范要求,较好地掌握各类商务文本的写作技能。

本教程适合各类学校英语专业、经贸专业、经贸英语专业的学生使用,也可供从事涉外经济贸易工作的人员及具有相当水平的自学者使用。

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# 前 言

进入 21 世纪,科技发展迅猛,经济高速增长,我们正经历前所未有的变革。从传真机到移动电话,从语音信箱到电子邮件,人们的交流手段也越来越迅捷、便利且形式多样,但是所谓的“信息高速公路”并没有取代最基本的交流手段,人们仍然需要用清晰易懂的语言文字来传达信息,表达思想,尤其在商务活动中,是否具有良好的商务写作能力仍然被视为从事商务活动人士的重要素质,也是商务活动能否成功的关键因素。

商务英语写作的重要性对于从事涉外经济贸易活动的人来说更是不待言说。随着经济一体化进程的加速,英语已经成为通用的国际性语言之一。中国人要在国际经济舞台上发挥越来越重要的作用和影响,掌握英语是最基本的要求之一;而掌握商务英语,具备良好的商务英语写作能力则是对从事经贸,尤其是国际经贸人员的具体要求。《商务英语写作教程》就是顺应我国对外经济的发展,满足越来越多的外资企业及涉外企业对掌握规范的商务英语写作的人才的需求而编写的。

本教程共分 13 个单元,每个单元含语言复习和商务写作两部分。其中语言复习并非像语法教材一样面面俱到,而是提炼出关键语言点及容易出错的地方加以强调,通过大量的以商务活动为内容的例句和练习,使学习者在复习巩固英语语言知识的同时,了解商务英语的特点,掌握丰富的商务英语常用语句和词汇,为成功的商务英语写作打下坚实的基础;商务英语写作部分包括各种实用商务文本的介绍与写作训练,如各类商务信函、备忘录、会议记录、商务报告等,也是通过提供大量的范文样本、写作建议、常用语句和写作练习,使学习者不仅熟悉各类商务文本的体例和规范要求,并能较好地掌握各类商务文本的写作技能。

在每个单元的语言复习和商务写作之后都附了一定量的练习,就已经学过的语言点和商务写作进行再训练、再强化,目的是使读者能够做到举一反三,提高使用语言和商务写作的实际能力。在本教程的最后,还附了本教程中主要练习的答案,目的是方便读者自学。

本教程适合各类学校英语专业、经贸专业、经贸英语专业的学生使用,也可供从事涉外经济贸易工作的人员及具有相当水平的自学者使用。

编者  
2001 年 7 月

# CONTENTS

## Preface

## Unit 1

<i>Language Review</i> NOUNS .....	1
1. Plurals 2. Possessives 3. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i> BUSINESS WRITING STYLE .....	4
1. Principles of Good Business Writing 2. Organization	
3. Electronic Mail 4. Writing Practice	

## Unit 2

<i>Language Review</i> PRONOUNS .....	13
1. Personal Pronouns 2. Relative Pronouns 3. Indefinite Pronouns	
4. Some Writing Problems Concerning Pronouns 5. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i> LETTER FORMAT .....	17
1. Parts of a Business Letter 2. Letter Styles 3. Punctuation Styles	
4. Envelope Addressing 5. Writing Practice	

## Unit 3

<i>Language Review</i> ADJECTIVES .....	28
1. Degree Forms 2. Placement of Adjectives 3. Articles	
4. Adjectives That Cannot be Compared 5. Prepositional Phrases	
6. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i> ESTABLISHING BUSINESS RELATIONS .....	33
1. Writing Suggestions 2. Sample Letters 3. Useful Expressions	
4. Writing Practice	

## Unit 4

<i>Language Review</i> ADVERBS .....	38
1. Adjective and Adverb Form Changes 2. Placement of Adjective and	
Adverb in Sentence 3. Prepositional Phrases 4. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i> REQUEST LETTERS .....	41
1. Inquiries 2. Orders 3. Useful Expressions 4. Writing Practice	

## Unit 5

<i>Language Review</i> VERBS .....	47
1. Tenses of Verbs 2. Moods of Verbs 3. Voices of Verbs	
4. Infinitives, Gerunds, and Participles 5. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i> REPLIES .....	51
1. Acknowledgments 2. Follow-Ups 3. Confirmations	

4. Order Acknowledgements 5. Writing Practice

## Unit 6

<i>Language Review</i>	<b>PREPOSITIONS</b> .....	60
	1. Prepositional Phrases 2. Preposition Combinations	
	3. Phrasal Prepositions 4. Ending Sentences with Prepositions	
	5. Unnecessary Prepositions 6. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i>	<b>QUOTATION, OFFER AND COUNTER-OFFER</b> .....	62
	1. Writing Suggestions 2. Sample Letters 3. Useful Expressions	
	4. Writing practice	

## Unit 7

<i>Language Review</i>	<b>CONJUNCTIONS</b> .....	68
	1. Coordinate Conjunctions 2. Subordinate Conjunctions	
	3. Correlative Conjunctions 4. Conjunctive Adverbs	
	5. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i>	<b>CREDIT AND COLLECTION LETTERS</b> .....	71
	1. Credit letters 2. Collection Letters 3. Writing Practice	

## Unit 8

<i>Language Review</i>	<b>SENTENCES</b> .....	77
	1. Sentence Structure 2. Kinds of Sentences 3. Run-on Sentences	
	4. Sentence Length 5. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i>	<b>COMPLAINTS, CLAIMS AND ADJUSTMENTS</b> .....	80
	1. Complaints 2. Claims 3. Adjustments 4. Useful Expressions	
	5. Writing Practice	

## Unit 9

<i>Language Review</i>	<b>CLAUSES AND PHRASES</b> .....	93
	1. Independent Clause 2. Dependent Clause 3. Prepositional Phrases	
	4. Infinitive Phrases 5. Gerund Phrases 6. Verb Phrases 7. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i>	<b>SALES LETTERS</b> .....	95
	1. Writing Suggestions 2. Sample Letters 3. Useful Expressions	
	4. Writing Practice	

## Unit 10

<i>Language Review</i>	<b>PARAGRAPHS</b> .....	103
	1. Qualities of Paragraph 2. Related Paragraphs	
	3. Kinds of Paragraphs 4. Review Exercises	
<i>Business Writing</i>	<b>JOB APPLICATION AND RESUME</b> .....	106
	1. Application Letters 2. Resume 3. Letters of Reference and Recommendation	
	4. Letters Declining a Job Offer 5. Writing Practice	

## Unit 11

<b>Language Review</b>	<b>PUNCTUATION (I)</b> .....	117
	1. Period 2. Question Mark 3. Exclamation Point	
	4. Review Exercises	
<b>Business Writing</b>	<b>SOCIAL BUSINESS LETTERS</b> .....	120
	1. Letters of Thanks 2. Letters of Congratulations 3. Invitations	
	4. Announcements 5. Useful Expressions 6. Writing Practice	

## Unit 12

<b>Language Review</b>	<b>PUNCTUATION (II)</b> .....	130
	1. Comma 2. Semicolon 3. Quotation Marks	
	4. Colon 5. Dash 6. Parentheses	
	7. Review Exercises	
<b>Business Writing</b>	<b>MEMOS AND MINUTES</b> .....	137
	1. Interoffice Memos 2. Minutes 3. Writing Practice	

## Unit 13

<b>Language Review</b>	<b>CAPITALIZATION, ABBREVIATION AND NUMBER</b> .....	146
	1. Capitalization 2. Abbreviations 3. Numbers 4. Review Exercises	
<b>Business Writing</b>	<b>BUSINESS REPORTS</b> .....	154
	1. Parts of a Report 2. Kinds of Reports	
	3. Formats of Reports 4. Writing Suggestions	
	5. Writing Practice	
	<b>KEY TO EXERCISES</b> .....	167

# Unit 1

## Language Review

### NOUNS

The names of people, places, and things are called nouns. A noun may be a single word or a group of two or more words that function together as one name. Nouns are often divided into various classes such as Common Nouns, Proper Nouns, Concrete Nouns, Abstract Nouns, Collective Nouns and Gerunds. Nouns have the properties, or characteristics, of person, number, gender, and case. Nouns can be used as subjects of sentences, direct and indirect objects of verbs, objects of prepositions, appositives and predicate nominatives.

#### 1. Plurals

- a. *To form the plural of a singular noun, ordinarily add -s to the singular form.*  
typewriter \ typewriters; office \ offices
- b. *If the singular form of a noun ends in **ch**, **sh**, **s**, **x**, or **z**, add -es.*  
miss \ misses; tax \ taxes
- c. *If the singular form of a noun ends in **y** and the **y** is preceded by a consonant, change the **y** to **i** and add -es. If the **y** is preceded by a vowel, add -s.*  
company \ companies; copy \ copies; journey \ journeys.
- d. *Many singular nouns form their plurals by changing vowel or vowels within the word.*  
man \ men; foot \ feet; mouse \ mice; tooth \ teeth; woman \ women  
But: German \ Germans
- e. *Many singular nouns ending in **f** or **fe** change the **f** or **fe** to **v** and add -es.*  
leaf \ leaves; wife \ wives; half \ halves  
But: safe \ safes; chief \ chiefs; proof \ proofs
- f. *When the compound is written as one word, form the plural at the end of the word; when the compound is written with either a space or a hyphen between the words, make plural the main word in the compound.*  
toothbrush \ toothbrushes; letterhead \ letterheads; footnote \ footnotes  
But: passerby \ passersby; sales manager \ sales managers; mother-in-law \ mothers-in-law; bulletin board \ bulletin boards; editor in chief \ editors in chief



g. *The plurals of letters, numbers, symbols, signs, and words regarded as words are formed by adding an apostrophe and -s. This is the only time that an apostrophe is used to form a plural.*

5 \ 5's; F.O.B. \ F.O.B.'s; \$ \ \$'s

h. *Some nouns are always or almost always singular and require singular verbs when they are used as subjects.*

equipment	education	advice	music	information	merchandise
weather	assistance	integrity	civics	attention	cooperation

i. *Some nouns are always or almost always plural in meaning and in usage.*

premises	pliers	scissors	trousers	thanks	remains
credentials	goods	auspices	riches	proceeds	belongings

j. *Memorize the correct plural forms of these personal titles.*

singular	: Mr.	Mrs.	Miss	Ms.	Dr.
plural	: Messrs.	Mmes.	Misses	Mses.	Drs.

## 2. Possessives

a. *To form the possessive of a noun add an apostrophe and -s; if the noun ends in -s, add an apostrophe only.*

woman \ woman's; children \ children's; ladies \ ladies'; boys \ boys';  
boss \ boss' or boss's

b. *To form the possessive of a compound noun, add the apostrophe or 's to the end of the word only.*

father-in-law's; policyholder's; general managers'; editor in chief's;

c. *Joint ownership is shown by making the last noun possessive. If each noun is made possessive, it indicates separate ownership of two or more items.*

Jack and Bill's car (two persons owning one car)

Jack's and Bill's cars (two persons owning two or more cars)

d. *There is an idiomatic use of the possessive in expressions involving time, amounts, or personification.*

one day's pay   four months' leave   a year's pay   season's greeting   today's weather  
for pity's sake   an hour's work   a dollar's worth   for conscience' sake   two weeks'  
work   a month's vacation

e. *With the exception of such nouns as those illustrated above, nouns that name inanimate objects should never be written or spoken as possessive. Use an of phrase instead.*

hood of the car   top of the desk   a one-week vacation   a three-year project

## Review Exercises

I. *Classify the following words according to Common Nouns, Proper Nouns, Concrete Nouns, Abstract Nouns, and Collective Nouns (some of them may be classified in more than one way).*

executive	Europe	paper	experience	committee
staff	Susan	desk	education	faculty
opportunity	smoke	majority	Lincoln Center	stone
accountant	document	secretary	Fulton Avenue	jury
customer	magazine	mechanic	commission	time
industry	friendship	security	Atlantic Ocean	honesty

II. *Indicate whether the following nouns are singular or plural, then give the singular form if the word is plural or the plural form if the word is singular.*

hunch	restaurant	choices	commander in chief	body
teeth	ratio	losses	Ms. Jones	shelf
M.D.'s	deer	staff	procedures	

III. *Correct any errors in the use of plurals in the following sentences.*

1. Several concerned citizens complained about the increases in taxes over the past two years.
2. All lunches are included in the total price for the five-day conference.
3. Ask Mary Ellen for the address where Mr. and Mrs. Jones are now staying; then send this package to the Jones.
4. Our sales representatives have already set up the displays of brushes and polishes.
5. Ms. Van Gleason requested that we post these notices on all the bulletins board.
6. Ask the Messrs. Jordans to attend next Wednesday's session.
7. Many passerbys crowded around the scene, creating a traffic snarl at rush hour.
8. This car dealer gives fair value for trades-in.

IV. *Choose the correct word in parentheses for each of the following sentences.*

1. Ask for a copy of (Steve and Laural's \ Steve's and Laural's) report to their supervisor on projected sales for next year.
2. The estimated income for my (Mother-in-law's \ Mother's-in-law) business next year is \$ 500,000.
3. Have you asked for (someone's else \ someone else's) opinion on this proposal?
4. Several (applicant's \ applicants') resumes were sent to Personnel.
5. ( Marthia's \ Mathias' ) suggestion was innovative and practical.
6. Westcott Lumber requested 30 (day's \ days' ) notice to submit its bid.

## BUSINESS WRITING STYLE

### 1. Principles of Good Business Writing

Good business writing involves using the same techniques and principles as are used in any good writings. Business people can't afford the time for, nor the expense of, a personal visit each time they want to transact business in various parts of the world, so they make phone calls, write letters, send faxes, or e-mails instead. Even telephone messages must be put in writing for understanding and formal confirmation by both sender and receiver and as a source for later reference.

In order to achieve good communication, the following five "Cs" principles should be taken into consideration.

**clarity** Message must be expressed clearly so that the reader will understand. To get this, we should keep in mind the purpose of our correspondence. A point that is ambiguous will cause trouble to both sides. You must have a clear idea of what you wish to convey to the reader. When you are sure about what to say, say it in plain, simple words. Good, straightforward, and simple English is what is needed for business communication. To make your message clear, you must present it in well-constructed sentences and paragraphs, and include necessary transitional words or expressions to link them up. The following are some ways to help to achieve clarity:

(1) use simple, short words and simple sentence structure

compare:	after	subsequent
	large	substantial
	use	utilize
	during	in the course of
	we enclose	enclosed please find

(2) avoid using words with different meanings

compare:	We shall take a firm line with the firm.
	We shall take a strong line with the firm.

(3) put together words with close relation

compare:	The L/C must reach us not later than 8 October for arranging shipment.
	The L/C must reach us for arranging shipment not later than 8 October.

	They bought a bicycle in Beijing in a small shop which costs \$ 25.00.
	They bought a bicycle for \$ 25.00 in a small shop in Beijing.

He was warned not to drink water even in a restaurant which had not been boiled.  
He was warned not to drink water which had not been boiled even in a restaurant.

(4) use active voice

compare: A telex was sent by us yesterday.  
We sent you a telex yesterday.

The application was completed by the student.  
The student completed the application.

The salary increase was received by all employees.  
All employees received the salary increase.

**conciseness** Clarity and conciseness often go hand-in-hand. It means saying things in the fewest possible words. A concise business writing should say things briefly but completely without losing clearness or courteousness. In short, say everything that must be said but do not waste your reader's time in words. Keep your sentences short, avoid unnecessary repetition, and eliminate excessive details. The following are some ways to help your writing be concise:

(1) shorten wordy expressions

compare: We have begun to export our machines to countries abroad.  
We have begun to export our machines.

For the amount of \$ 320 you can buy the motor.  
For \$ 320 you can buy the motor.

You have won due to the fact that you arrived early.  
You have won because you arrived early.

(2) use words to replace phrases or clauses

compare: In the event that you speak to Mr. Mood in regard to production, ask him to give consideration to the delivery schedule.  
If you speak to Mr. Mood about production, ask him to consider the delivery schedule.

We require furniture which is of the new type.  
We require new-type furniture.

For your information we enclose a catalogue.  
We enclose a catalogue.

**correctness** Correctness here refers to appropriate and grammatically correct language, factual

information and accurate reliable figures, as well as the right forms and conventions. Errors of fact, such as price quotations and delivery dates, are often oversights that are results of careless typing, inadequate proofreading, or too hasty correction of erasures. No excuse can make such errors acceptable in business letters. All facts should be checked and double checked. Errors can also be made because reference books are not consulted when necessary. Special attention should also be paid to names of goods, specification, quantity, figures, units, etc. The following are some ways to help your writing achieve correctness:

(1) verify spelling

(2) select correct words or phrases

compare:     Anyone can learn to type.  
                  Any one of us can learn to type.

                  Everyone is practicing comparison shopping.  
                  Every one of us is practicing comparison shopping.

(3) insert appropriate punctuation

compare:     “The Navy,” says Captain Mitchel Stern, “will have more missile carriers.”  
                  The Navy says Captain Mitchel Stern will have more missile carriers.

**concreteness**   To make the message specific, definite and vivid is the key point of concreteness. Whether you are writing an initial letter or a reply, you must make sure that your letter contains all the information your reader needs to act upon. Put yourself in the reader’s place. Avoid incomplete information. It is necessary to check the message carefully before it is sent out. The following are some ways to help your writing achieve concreteness.

(1) using concrete modifiers

compare:     The auditorium will seat approximately 1,000 people.  
                  The auditorium will seat 986 people.

                  I need the printout as soon as possible.  
                  I need the printout by 3 p.m. today.

                  The students completed a worthwhile project.  
                  The students cleared \$ 750 from their project.

(2) avoiding opinions or generalizations

compare:     Various aspects of this equipment make it a good choice.  
                  This machine is a good choice because it is more compact and less expensive than

any other one on the market.

These brakes can stop a car within a short distance.

These Goodson Power Brakes can stop a 2-ton car within 24 feet.

Our printer is faster than the leading competitor's model.

Our model X192 printer operates at a speed of 4,300 lines per minute.

**courtesy** Courtesy is not mere politeness. It means using good human relations skills. The courteous writer should be sincere and tactful, thoughtful and appreciative. Treat the reader with respect and friendliness and write as if you care about the reader. Never show your anger in a letter. If the occasion demands firmness, deal with it that way. However, it must be remembered that a letter may be firm and still be courteous. Courtesy is a positive value. It is not neutral or negative. Just because you have not insulted the reader is *no sign* that the tone of your letter is satisfactory. The tone must convey positive goodwill, positive warmth, and positive interest in the reader as a human being. For best results, and also as a *matter of courtesy*, answer letters promptly. The following are ways to make your writing be courteous:

(1) use proper expressions

Say **Thanks** when others do favor for you.

Say **Please** when you ask for something from others.

Say **Sorry** when you can not satisfy others' requests.

(2) use positive words and expressions instead of negative words and expressions

compare: The office is closed after 4.

The office is open until 4.

We cannot have these figures for you before next week.

We will have these figures for you next week.

We have found out that your delinquent with regard to your account by \$ 3.

We noticed that your account is short by \$ 3.

(3) write naturally and sincerely

compare: I had hoped that a favorable consideration on your request could be possible.

I am sorry we cannot approve your request.

I have pleasure in informing you.

I am pleased to tell you.

Please be good enough to advise us.

Please tell us.

(4) use “you approach”

Courtesy and tact are sometimes achieved by what is called a “you approach”. In other words, your letter should be reader-oriented and sound as if you share your reader’s point of view.

compare:      Please accept our apologies for the delay.  
                    We hope you have not been seriously inconvenienced by the delay.

                    I think your report was well done.  
                    Your report was well done.

                    We will accept bids until June 10.  
                    You may submit a bid until June 10.

## 2. Organization

A good business letter must be well organized. You must plan in advance everything you want to say; you must say everything necessary to your message; and then you must stop. A business writing is organized differently from other kinds of writing. It almost always follows the same format, which consists of three parts: introduction (or opening), body, and closing. Take the business letter writing as an example:

**opening**      The opening or introduction, is the headline of the letter. It starts with a clear-cut statement of what the letter is about, or the purpose of the letter.

Getting to the point immediately—presenting the message of your letter first, then developing details—is writing deductively. In negative letter, the process is reversed—the details are presented first, then the point of the letter is developed from the details. This is called writing inductively.

Keep the first sentence short and easy to understand and keep the opening paragraph short, probably not more than two or three lines. A short opening paragraph is easier to read, and it does not intimidate the reader.

There are instances in opening paragraphs when you do not get to the point immediately; these occur wherever the letter contains negative or bad news—refusing credit or telling a job applicant that he or she was not hired, for example. The details that explain the bad news are given first and, if possible, a substitute is offered. If a substitute cannot be offered, keep the opening statement neutral—sometimes even thank you will serve the purpose. By offering a substitute or a neutral statement, you can keep the tone of the letter positive. A rejection can be antagonistic; a substitution offers a positive, courteous solution to a situation that might otherwise be embarrassing to someone.

**body**            In the opening you have told the reader what the letter is about. The body of the letter develops the opening and adds any needed details. For example, the opening of a letter tells the reader that the order that was placed has been shipped. The body

adds the details of how it is being shipped—parcel post or delivery service; when it can be expected; and additional information—if the order is completed or if substitutions were made. It could tell how the billing will be done if payment did not accompany the order. The body contains all of the information that the reader needs to know to make decisions.

**closing** The closing is a short and courteous goodbye. It does not include anything that has not already been introduced. It makes action on the part of the reader easy. The closing is specific; it gives times and dates.

Avoid participial or fragment conclusions. There should be no “Hoping to hear from you,” or “With best wishes, I remain…”

The closing is the summary of the letter; it emphasizes the action that you want the reader to take; it states exactly what you want the reader to do, and it leaves the impression of courtesy. Like any goodbye, jog the reader’s memory if there is something that you want the reader to do, but keep the closing short and friendly.

Now read the following two sample letters. Notice the redundancies in the first that are eliminated in the second.

Dear Ms. Rodriguez,

I am very pleased with the invitation that I received from you inviting me to make a speech for the National Association of Secretaries on June 11. Unfortunately, I regret that I cannot attend the meeting on June 11. I feel that I do not have sufficient time to prepare myself because I received your invitation on June 3 and it is not enough time to prepare myself completely for the speech.

Yours truly,

× × ×

Dear Ms. Rodriguez,

I am pleased with the invitation to speak to the National Association of Secretaries. Unfortunately, I cannot attend the meeting on June 11.

I feel that I will not have sufficient time to prepare myself because I received your invitation on June 3.

I will be happy to address your organization on another occasion if you would give me a bit more notice. Best of luck with your meeting.

Sincerely yours,

× × ×



### 3. Electronic Mail

When you use a computer terminal to communicate either inside or outside your organization, you should not abandon the basic principles of business writing. You should still strive for clarity, conciseness, correctness, concreteness and courtesy as you would in more traditional forms of business writing. But when using electronic mail, there are a few additional provisions:

- (1) Keep your message short: You want your message to fit on one screen, whenever possible, thus keeping all important information visible at once.
- (2) Be sure your message is easy to answer: Let your reader know at the start what your subject is and what you want to be done.
- (3) Beware of electronic eavesdroppers.

### Writing Practice

I. *Compare the following pairs of sentences, choose the better one and state your reason.*

1. I have pleasure in informing you.  
I am pleased to tell you.
2. Please tell (or, inform) us.  
Please be good enough to advise us.
3. Will you kindly send us a reply before the end of the month for which a stamped envelope is enclosed?  
Will you please send a reply in the enclosed envelope before the end of the month?
4. I was informed that you had a typewriter for sale and would like to know if it is still on sale, if so, please advise me as to the price.  
If you still have the typewriter, which you offered for sale, please inform me of the price.
5. We are sorry that the merchandise is not up to the standard and we shall gladly make an exchange.  
It is not our intention to suggest that you should keep unsatisfactory merchandise, so we are willing to ask you to return it to us at once, and we will be glad to make an exchange.
6. Thank you for your remittance of January 30 for \$ 500.  
We have your remittance of January 30 in the amount of \$ 500, and wish at this time to thank you for it.

II. *Rewrite the following sentences to achieve conciseness.*

1. Please see that an inquiry is conducted to determine the reason.
2. We express our regret at being unable to fulfil your order on this occasion.
3. Payment of their accounts will be made by Johnson next week.
4. It is on the last day of June that the meeting will be held.
5. We are returning all the merchandise that is defective.
6. In the event that Model 404 is not available, please substitute Model 606.

III. *Rewrite each sentence in order to express its meaning more courteously.*

1. You have made a mistake. You should check the figures again.