

英 文 書 札 指 南

GUIDE TO LETTER WRITING

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A GUIDE TO LETTER WRITING

BY

LI UNG BING

THE COMMERCIAL PRESS, LIMITED
SHANGHAI, CHINA
1934

(三七一九)

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A GUIDE TO LETTER WRITING

版權所有翻印必究

編纂者 李文彬

發行兼印刷者 上海河南路
商務印書館

發行所 上海及各埠
商務印書館

每冊定價大洋柒角 外埠酌加運費函費

庚戌年三月初版
中華民國十八年十二月十七版
中華民國二十三年一月國難後第一版
中華民國二十三年九月國難後第二版

PREFACE

This book has been prepared for Chinese young men who have entered upon a business career and can no longer attend a school.

It opens with treatises on composition, capitalization, punctuation, directions, materials, etc., which are accompanied by Chinese translation. It is hoped that between the English and Chinese, no student will experience any difficulty in arriving at the correct meaning. Model letters are not translated but notes are appended in Chinese to explain such idiomatic expressions as are thought to be beyond the apprehension of a young student of English. To him, Rules for Correct Construction of Sentences, Words Often Misused, and Sentences Suitable for Letters, which are among the appendices, may also prove of help.

In this connection, acknowledgment is made of the material aid that has been received from Dr. Fong F. Sec and other friends.

L

MARCH, 1910.

編輯大意

是編專爲學習英文者。練習書札之用。而於社會交際。商界貿易爲尤宜。

全書分爲六篇。首總論。所以明綱領也。次書札結構。所以正體裁也。次書札通例。所以美形式也。次書札分類。所以示途徑也。此四篇者。爲習書札之要端。故特詳譯漢文。以資初學研究之用。

其次二篇。則爲交際書札。啓事書札。皆所以示之模範。知所遵循。中西習俗不同。文法亦異。若直譯之。轉多扞格。故僅舉其程式。釋其意義。指其宜忌之方。辨其異同之點。學者果細心體察。審慎從事。自鮮貽誤。

初學爲書札者。所積未富。下筆時往往沾滯。且音訊常通。而先後措詞。毫無變易。亦未免自慚寒儉。故以書札摘句殿於各篇。學者得此。可悟選詞之法。運用既熟。不難左右逢源。

英文簡語至多。而用於商業者尤夥。撮舉大要。藉見一斑。欲觀其全。當俟續集。

此外有英文造句法。英語勘誤表。習書札者。均宜熟習。稍一疏忽。便貽笑柄。故與前件。並爲附錄。略示津涯。未敢云備也。

宣統二年正月

編者識

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

With increased facilities for communication, most of the world's business to-day is done through correspondence, and usage has developed a phraseology which is peculiar to this kind of writing. This phraseology or commercial language is, nevertheless, subject to the recognized rules which govern the correct use of the English language. Familiarity with these rules and a constructive command of English, constitute the first requisite of a correspondent. To be able to write an English letter well is undoubtedly the desire of many Chinese students of English. The only path to reach this goal, however, is through grammar—a short cut does not exist. Before taking up the subject of letter writing, therefore, let us consider a few of the more important rules of English grammar.

SENTENCES

A sentence is a combination of words making a complete sense. The most essential parts of a sentence are its subject and predicate.

With respect to the manner of construction, sentences may be divided into three kinds: viz.; Simple, Complex, and Compound.

A simple sentence consists of a single independent proposition. A complex sentence is composed of one principal and one or more subordinate clauses. Each

subordinate clause has its own subject and predicate but does not make a complete sense if taken apart from the principal clause. Subordinate clauses are modifiers, either adjective or adverbial, qualifying words contained in the principal, or another subordinate clause.

A compound sentence consists of two or more simple or complex sentences, linked together by a conjunction. The coördinate sentences composing a compound sentence are called members.

PARAGRAPH

A paragraph is a combination of sentences dealing with the same topic, arranged in the grammatical order. It is to a sentence as the latter is to a word. Good taste requires that sentences in a paragraph, as far as possible, should vary in length and in the manner of construction. As the form of a sentence can be readily changed without affecting the meaning, this can easily be accomplished.

As a rule, the opening sentence, giving utterance to the leading thought and introducing the subject of the paragraph, should be short and simple. Once the subject is introduced, let the succeeding sentences follow the line of thought in their logical order. Dislocation and digression should be avoided. A long sentence summing up the views already expressed is most appropriate for the closing up of the paragraph.

To maintain consecutiveness, words such as *therefore, hence, consequently, moreover, thus, however, besides.*

at the same time, etc., are used to a great extent. Their use, however, is not compulsory, especially in cases where there is a natural connection between sentences without the aid of any of them.

PUNCTUATION

Punctuation is the skillful insertion of certain points between words and sentences so as to enable the reader more clearly to understand the meaning. Its importance cannot be exaggerated, for it is often the only means of preventing misunderstanding. It is related that the enrolling clerk of the United States Congress once in copying a bill admitting "all foreign fruit-plants" free of duty, omitted the hyphen between the words "fruit" and "plant" but inserted a comma in its place. As a consequence, all foreign fruits and plants instead of fruit-plants were, for a year after the bill became effective, admitted free. In this case, the misuse of a little comma meant the loss of thousands of dollars to the United States Treasury.

The punctuation marks in use are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. The Comma (,) | 7. The Brackets ([]) |
| 2. The Period (.) | 8. The Parenthesis (()) |
| 3. The Semicolon (;) | 9. The Dash (—) |
| 4. The Colon (:) | 10. The Quotation Marks (" ") |
| 5. The Interrogation Mark (?) | 11. The Apostrophe (') |
| 6. The Exclamation Mark (!) | 12. The Ditto (,, or „) |

HOW TO USE A COMMA

I. A comma is used to separate the short members of a compound sentence when they are connected by

conjunctions.

There was a sudden fall in the price of these securities yesterday, and buyers were, consequently, very wary.

2. A comma is used to separate the clauses of a complex sentence except where the connection is very clear, or when the qualifying clause or clauses are very short:

The buyers were instructed to reserve their orders, prices were so very high.

3. An inverted or transposed clause must be divided by a comma from the rest of the sentence.

When you have completed the work, you may send in your account.

4. Clauses, phrases, and words that occur between other parts of a sentence and interrupt the connection must be separated by commas.

The prices at which the goods have been supplied, as we have already remarked, were for prompt cash.

5. Similar expressions in series must be separated by commas.

He has been a good servant here; patient, sober, honest, and industrious.

6. A complex subject of several parts, which require commas between them, or one ending with a verb, must be separated from its predicate by a comma.

Ranges and groups of lofty mountains, deep valleys, through which run rapid streams, and numberless lakes, set in the midst of grand old forests, are the characteristics of this primitive region.

7. Words taken in pairs have a comma after each pair.

By night or by day, at home or abroad, asleep or awake, he is a constant source of anxiety to his father.

8. When a verb is omitted, to avoid repetition, a comma takes its place.

Reading maketh a full man; confidence, a ready man; and writing, an exact man.

9. Words or clauses denoting opposition of meaning, or contrast, must be separated by commas.

Did he act wisely, or unwisely?

10. An appositional phrase must be set off by commas from the word or words which it qualifies.

Chang Tien-ho, the captain of the ship, will wait upon you for instructions.

11. Words or phrases used independently are set off by commas.

To say the least, it is unfa'

12. Commas should be placed after absolute phrases.

The sun having set, we all went home.

13. An equivalent word or expression introduced by *or*, and explanatory phrases, must be separated by commas.

Double-entry bookkeeping, or the art of recording business transactions in a systematic manner, was first employed by the Venetians.

HOW TO USE A PERIOD

1. A period should be placed at the end of every sentence, other than an Interrogative or an Exclamatory.

2. A period should be placed at the end of every abbreviation.

NOTE. When a sentence ends with an abbreviation, one period suffices.

Our usual rate of interest is 5 per cent.

HOW TO USE A SEMICOLON

1. Members of a compound sentence, especially when the conjunction is omitted, are set off by semicolons.

Our confidence in the success of this undertaking is not the idle dream of enthusiasts ; it is founded on reason and based upon science.

2. Semicolons are also used to separate successive clauses in a complex sentence, when such clauses have a common dependence.

If we have stated our claim correctly ; if we have reasoned it out clearly ; if we have proved our right to the remuneration we request, how can you withhold your remittance ?

HOW TO USE A COLON

The colon is less used than formerly, its place being taken by the semicolon and the period. It, however, is often used at the end of the expressions *as follows*, *the following*, *these*, *these words*, or parts containing these or their equivalents, when they introduce a series of particulars or a direct quotation.

Our quotations are as follows :—

HOW TO USE AN INTERROGATION MARK

The interrogation mark should be used after every sentence containing a direct question.

When several questions are grouped into one sentence, and the meaning is not complete until the last one is asked, use but one interrogation mark.

HOW TO USE AN EXCLAMATION MARK

An exclamation mark should be used after words or sentences which express an emotion.

HOW TO USE THE BRACKETS

The brackets are used to inclose an explanatory phrase or clause in such a way as not to interrupt the connection of the parts of the sentence.

Inclosed please find draft, value one hundred dollars [\$100] in payment of your account.

HOW TO USE A DASH

A dash is used to denote a change in the construction or meaning of a sentence, an interruption, a hesitation, or words and clauses used parenthetically.

HOW TO USE THE QUOTATION MARKS

The quotation marks are used to denote the exact words quoted from another speaker or writer.

A quotation within a quotation is denoted by single marks (" ' ' ").

HOW TO USE THE APOSTROPHE

The apostrophe is used to denote the possessive case of a noun. Its other use is to denote the omission of a letter or letters; as *I'll* for *I will*, *It's* for *it is* and the like. These words should be used very sparingly in commercial correspondence.

HOW TO USE THE DITTO

The ditto is used to avoid repetition of a word or words which appear above.

CAPITALIZATION

The rules for using capitals are few and can be easily remembered. They are as follows:

Begin every paragraph with a capital letter.

Begin every sentence with a capital letter.

Begin each proper noun with a capital letter.

Begin the words, *North, South, East, West*, and their compounds and abbreviations with capital letters, when geographically applied.

Begin the names of the Deity and Heaven when referring to the Supreme God, or the pronouns used for the former, with a capital letter.

Begin adjectives derived from proper nouns with capital letters, like *Chinese, English*, etc.

Begin each line of poetry with a capital letter.

Begin all titles of books with a capital letter.

Begin the name of any historical event with a capital letter, like the *Taiping Rebellion*.

Always capitalize the pronoun *I* and the interjection *O*.

Begin the names of the months, as *June, December*, etc., with a capital letter.

Begin the names of the days of the week, as *Monday, Tuesday*, etc., with a capital letter.

NOTE It is not necessary to capitalize the words denoting the seasons of the year.

Begin the salutation, as, *Sir, Dear Sir, My dear Sir*, etc., and the complimentary close, *Yours truly, Very truly yours*, etc., with a capital letter.

NOTE. When the phrase, *My dear Sir*, is used, the second word, *dear*, need not begin with a capital letter.

No capital letter should ever appear in the middle of a word.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations in the English language are numerous. It is best to employ none in a formal letter. Usage, however, allows the use of the following:

1. Of titles attached to names; as, *Rev., Dr., Mrs., Hon., Esq., M.D., LL.D., H.E.* etc.
2. Of chronological terms; as, *Feb., Aug., Dec.*, etc.
3. Of geographical names; as, *U.S.A., Mich., N.Y.*, etc.
4. Of titles of orders and societies; as, *Y.M.C.A.*, etc.

For List of Abbreviations employed in Commercial Correspondence, see Appendix A.

SPELLING

Bad spelling is one of the worst faults of a correspondent and stamps him as a very careless man. To spell correctly is as important as to write well, for excellent composition only tends to make bad spelling

more conspicuous. When you are in doubt as to how a word should be spelled, consult a dictionary. Dictionaries are so cheap and accessible nowadays, there is no excuse whatsoever for letting a word go misspelled. The habit of consulting a dictionary should be cultivated at an early age.