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国际商务英语写作(二级)

WRITING IN BUSINESS ENGLISH

(Level Two)

中国国际贸易学会商务专业培训考试办公室 编

CHINA NATIONAL BUSINESS ENGLISH TEST

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国际商务英语写作

(二级)

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前 言

商务英语在我国快速发展,得到更加广泛的应用,社会各类机构、大专院校对商务英语的需求十分强烈。为了满足商务企事业单位对员工和应聘人员专业英语水平测评的需要,商务部国际贸易学会举办了全国国际商务英语考试,本系列教材就是专门为全国商务英语考试(二级)而编写的。本套教材组织了强大的编写专家队伍,他们分别来自对外经济贸易大学、广东外语外贸大学、上海对外贸易学院、黑龙江大学、东北财经大学、扬州大学等高等院校。编写组认真讨论了教材编写的理念和框架,对教材进行了反复修改润饰,最后定稿,送国际贸易学会商务专业考试办公室组织专家审定。

本系列教材依据《全国国际商务英语考试(二级)大纲》编写,各册教材具体如下:

1. 《国际商务英语听力(二级)》;
2. 《国际商务英语阅读(二级)》;
3. 《国际商务英语写作(二级)》;
4. 《国际商务英语翻译(二级)》;
5. 《国际商务英语口语(二级)》;
6. 《国际商务英语综合模拟实练(二级)》;
7. 《国际商务英语考试词汇手册(二级)》。

本系列教材的特点是具有很强的针对性,难度和题型都贴近考试,以实用和实训为导向,辅以理论要点讲解,并提供参考答案和录音光盘,适用于报考商务英语二级考试的考生作为培训和复习教材,也可用作大专院校商务英语、国际贸易、工商管理等专业学生提高商务英语水平的培训和自学教材,同时还可作为涉外企业各类从业人员的培训教材或辅导资料,以及广大商务英语学习者的自学教程和参考用书。本教材在编写过程中得到了国际贸易学会领导的大力关心和支持,中国商务出版社也组织了精干的专业人士审稿,并特别邀请英语教学专家 Maria T. Brewster 审订,充分保证了本套教材的出版质量,我们在此表示衷心感谢。同时,我们也十分希望广大读者能对本教材提出宝贵意见,以便我们今后改进。

对外经济贸易大学英语学院
博士生导师、教授 王立非
2009年7月

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Unit One Letters of Complaint

Lead-in

1. All of us are living in the world of constant business communication; we pay for daily necessities, for school education, for medical treatment, and even for entertainment. There are times, however, when the goods or services we pay for disappoint us. Please brainstorm the goods or services you are not happy with and make a list of the problems with these goods or services.
2. Examine these problems closely and identify their possible causes and the potential consequences these problems may cause.
3. How would you solve these problems? Certainly, a quarrel with the seller or service provider doesn't always work. A letter of complaint, as you will see, can communicate your dissatisfaction and facilitate the solution to your problem. If you are going to write such a letter, what are you going to include? Do you use a special language style when you write a letter of complain? In your view, what makes a good letter of complaint?

Sample Writing

In this section, you are given three sample letters of complaint. Read them carefully to get yourself familiar with letters of complaint, study the structural components and language features of the letters and pick out the useful words and phrases.

Sample for observation (1)

A Letter of Complaint

Dear Sir,

I'm writing to express my dissatisfaction with the deplorable attitude of one of your staff members.

When I received my phone bill two days ago, I found an error. There's an overcharge for two long-distance calls. When I called your Complaint Department to inquire, the girl answering my phone was very rude. She interrupted me again and again. There were even times she put the blame back on me. Needless to say, such a way of dealing with customers is unacceptable.

I would like to suggest that the service agent be disciplined and instructed on the proper way to deal with clients. And I hope you can resolve my problem and ask the agent to make a formal apology to me.

An early response would be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

×××

Sample analysis (1)

As shown above, a writer would write a letter of complaint to inform the target readers of an error in question and call for immediate solution. The writer of the above sample letter is complaining in three stages. Firstly, he briefly and strongly makes the complaint in the beginning, which is a norm with complaint letters. Secondly, he provides the details about the problem—the overcharge for two long-distance calls and the rude reception he met with the girl answering his call. Finally, the writer demands disciplining of the service agent and a formal apology. The letter is logically structured and written in a clear and direct way.

Useful words and expressions

1. deplorable attitude 令人遗憾的态度
2. staff member 职员
3. receive one's telephone bill 收到电话账单
4. overcharge 收费过高
5. inquire 询问
6. long-distance call 长途电话
7. put the blame back on 委过于
8. discipline 管教
9. make a formal apology to somebody 向某人正式道歉

Sample for observation (2)

Dear sir,

I'm writing to you to complain about the Interpretation course your agency offered in November.

Despite the promises you made in your advertisement, I'm discouraged to see you going back on your word time and again. I was promised an experienced teacher yet he was sick and the replacement was not as good as expected. I had expected a small class of 4 or 5 only to find as many as 30 students attending the class with me. To add insult to injury, I missed several classes because of the irregular schedule. As a result, I failed the recent Interpretation Examination.

I am sure you can understand my disappointment. I would therefore be glad if you could investigate this matter as soon as possible. Finally, I hope you will allow me to attend a new course free of charge.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

×××

Sample analysis (2)

A complaint letter should avoid aggressive or insulting expressions. For example, people usually do not use such an aggressive question as “Why can’t you get this right”. Instead, you may use “not as good as expected” and “you’d better...” and the like to soften the edge of tongue. The principle of politeness is also usually observed when you are trying to make your disappointment understood. In the sample above, “I would therefore be glad if you could investigate this matter as soon as possible” is a good sentence you may use in your future letter of complaint. If the situation is very serious, however, you may explicitly give a warning of legal actions.

Useful words and expressions

1. discouraged 气馁的, 沮丧的
2. irregular schedule 上课时间不固定

Sample for observation (3)

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing about the heating unit you installed for us on 15th May last year.

Unfortunately, the heating system exploded on 10th January this year, and blew a large hole in the roof, resulting in extensive damage to both our workshop and stocks.

I would like to remind you that we wrote to you on 9th December last year because it was making a strange noise, but you did not reply.

We must insist, therefore, that you replace the heating system immediately and pay for our damages worth US \$ 60,000. Unless we hear from you within 7 days we will take legal action.

Yours sincerely,

×××

Sample analysis (3)

You may find there is no essential difference between *sample 2* and *sample 3*, both of which are intended to make a complaint to get the problems resolved. However, the basic tone of *Sample 3* is much stronger in comparison with *Sample 2*. In the closing paragraph of *Sample 3*, as you can see, the writer uses “We must insist” and “Unless we hear from you within 7 days we will take legal action” to indicate that s/he is angry about the very serious problems. Obviously, severe tone is necessary if your sensible and polite requirements have been rejected or ignored by the seller or service provider.

Guided Writing

A letter of complaint, as you will see, mainly contains four parts, namely, making the

complaint, specifying the problem, making suggestions and demanding a reply. Accordingly, you can put the four parts respectively into the opening paragraph, middle paragraph(s) and ending paragraph.

In this section, you are going to go through the usual stages to write a letter of complaint. You are required to learn to write the letter stage by stage. For each stage, you will learn to analyze one student's version. Our analysis and an improved version will then be provided for reference.

Writing Task

Situation: You have bought a brand-new computer. But much to your disappointment, it doesn't work properly. Write a letter of complaint to the sales manager. Your letter may contain: 1) making a complaint; 2) describing the problems; 3) demanding compensation.

Stage 1: Writing the opening paragraph

Student version

Dear Sir,

Sorry to bother you but I have to write you this letter. You know I love your brand of computer very much because it is world-famous brand and has a very long history. So when I need a new computer I bought one from your company without hesitation. But I've found this new machine doesn't work well though I still like it.

Our analysis

In the opening paragraph, you should make your complaint directly instead of beating around the bush. In the student's version, however, the first few sentences are unnecessary. For example, the expression such as "I love your brand of computer very much" should be left out. On most occasions, one or two sentences are enough to get your ideas across.

Improved version

I am writing the letter to complain about a problem with the computer I bought from your company yesterday afternoon.

Our analysis

The improved version conveys the information in a clear yet economical way. Brevity and straightforwardness are good principles to observe when you write an opening paragraph because your reader is most likely too busy to read a long letter with any unnecessary information.

Stage 2: Writing the middle paragraph(s)***Student version***

Could you kindly solve my problems? My computer cannot be properly shut down no matter how hard I try, so I have to turn off the power directly. I hope you can send someone to have a look of the computer. Or can you exchange it for a new one for me? Otherwise I will not trust your company and you should return all the money I've paid for it.

Our analysis

There are at least three problems with the student's version. In the first place, the information is a bit illogically structured. Normally, the writer should describe the problem before demanding a solution. This version, however, asks for a solution before laying the problem bare. The illogical order would confuse readers.

In the second place, a letter of complaint is intended initially to complain. Therefore, the writer usually details the problem. Nevertheless, the student's version only refers to the problem in a short sentence. The lack of details may weaken the tone of complaint.

Finally, the language is somewhat colloquial or informal, which departs from the formal style of a complaint letter.

Improved version

The computer cannot be properly shut down when I got it back to the office. When I click the shutdown button, it seems that the machine gives no response. And I'm so annoyed with it.

It's obvious that you didn't carefully examine the machine before you sold it. I think your company should take full responsibility for selling me the defective machine. I insist that you give me a satisfactory reply. I do want you to give back my money as soon as possible.

Our analysis

Three improvements, as you may have found, have been carried out in response to the problems with the student's version. Firstly, the improved version is logically structured, putting the problem forth before demanding solutions. Secondly, the writer gives more details to the problem than does the student's version. The details help to fulfill the function of complaint much better. Finally, the language, by employing such expressions as "give no response" or "take full responsibility", sounds serious and formal.

Stage 3: Writing the ending paragraph***Student version***

I hope you can give me a reply as soon as possible.

Our analysis

Usually, business letters, including a letter of complaint, calls for a business or formal style. The student's version, however, sounds too colloquial to meet the serious formality of business letters.

Improved version

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Our analysis

The improved version, by adopting the expressions like "look forward to", brings about the effect of business formality.

Practice Writing

Write letters of complaint based on the situations given below. Write about 150 words for each letter. You may refer back to the samples, examples and patterns.

Situation One

You bought a digital camera yesterday, but the screen was found to turn black occasionally. You decided to make a complaint to the sales department officer of the supermarket where you had bought the camera.

Situation Two

You purchased a Desheng shortwave radio but the signal was weak and unstable. You brought it back to the store for a replacement only to be showed a cold shoulder by the sales assistant on duty at the time. Please write a letter of complaint to the manager of the store.

Situation Three

Your family took a trip to Nanjing arranged by Sunrise Tour Agency. You had been promised seven tourist spots yet two of them were cancelled due to the foul weather. You demanded some refund but got refused. Please write a letter of complaint to the Consumer Protection Agency.

Appendix One Format

Your Address

Your City, State, Zip Code

(Your e-mail address if sending via e-mail)

Date

Name of Contact Person (if available)

Title (if available)

Company Name

Consumer Complaint Division (if you have no specific contact)

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Contact Person),

Re (account number, if applicable)

On (date), I (bought, leased, rented, or had repaired) a (name of the product, with serial or model number or service performed) at (location, date and other important details of the transaction).

Unfortunately, your product (or service) has not performed well (or the service was inadequate) because (state the problem). I am disappointed because (explain the problem, for example, the product does not work properly, the service was not performed correctly, I was billed the wrong amount, something was not disclosed clearly or was misrepresented, etc.).

To resolve the problem, I would appreciate your (state the specific action you want—money back, charge card credit, repair, exchange, etc.). Enclosed are copies (do not send originals) of my records (include receipts, guarantees, warranties, canceled checks, contracts, model and serial numbers, and any other documents).

I look forward to your reply and a resolution to my problem and will wait until (set a time limit) before seeking help from the Consumer Protection Agency or the Better Business Bureau. Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (home and/or office numbers with area code).

Sincerely,

Your name

Enclosure(s)

Appendix Two Patterns

1. venture to write to/to complain about...
2. complain against sb. about...
3. be dissatisfied with...
4. put up with or bear...
5. awful/poor service
6. to one's regret
7. to remedy the situation
8. to solve/settle the problem
9. I am writing to you to complain about...
10. I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with...
11. There are some problems with the... that I wish to bring to your attention. For one thing, there is... For another...
12. I can hardly bear /tolerate /put up with it any more.
13. I hope that the authorities concerned will consider my suggestions and improve the situation as best as they can.
14. I sincerely hope that you will review your management system, with the view to providing better service to the public.
15. We think that you will now consider this matter seriously and make an effort to prevent the recurrence of this kind.
16. We will appreciate your willingness to make up for the loss.

Appendix Three Tips for middle paragraph writing

As you might have grasped, the middle paragraph(s) of a complaint letter normally fulfills two functions: specifying the problem in question and making suggestions about settling the problem. The two functions can often break down into three sub-stages, namely, detailing the problem or the cause of the complaint, describing the effect or consequences and making suggestions. The following examples may help you to have a rough idea of how to write a middle paragraph.

Problems or Causes

1. On 16 February 2009 we placed an order with your firm for 15,000 ultra long-life batteries. The consignment arrived yesterday but contained only 1,200 batteries.
2. Firstly, I had difficulty in registering to attend the event. You set up an on-line registration facility, but I found the facility totally unworkable.
3. You sent us an invoice for \$10,500, but did not deduct our usual 10% discount.
4. We have found 16 spelling errors and 2 mislabeled diagrams in the sample book.

Effects or Consequences

1. This error put our firm in a difficult position, as we had to make some emergency purchases to fulfill our commitments to all our customers. This caused us considerable inconvenience.

2. Even after spending several wasted hours trying to register in this way, the computer would not accept my application.
3. I am therefore returning the invoice to you for correction.
4. This large number of errors is unacceptable to our customers, and we are therefore unable to sell these books.

Suggestions or Solutions

1. I am writing to ask you to make up the shortfall immediately and to ensure that such errors do not happen again.
2. Could I please ask you to look into these matters?
3. Please send us a corrected invoice for \$9,479.
4. I enclose a copy of the book with the errors highlighted. Please reprint the book and send it to us by next Friday.

Unit Two Letters of Apology

Lead-in

1. When you hurt or cause a loss to others, you are expected to apologize in one way or another. A letter of apology, for example, can often help set the problem right, save a valuable partnership and rebuild your credit in the eyes of the injured party. Please look back on a few occasions when you caused pain or trouble to others and need to make an apology.
2. Suppose you miss the deadline for delivering some goods and mean to write an apology letter, what shall you include in the letter?
3. Brainstorm the solutions which can settle the problem and rebuild your trustworthiness.

Sample Writing

In this section, you are given two sample letters of apology. Read these samples carefully, get yourself familiar with the structural components and language features of a letter of apology, and pick out the useful words and phrases.

Sample for observation (1)

Dear Ms. Qiu Yu,

I am writing to apologize for the inconvenience you have experienced with our internet service.

Having been away on a business trip, I didn't see your file until early this morning. Clearly, your May 20th request for a change in service somehow slipped through the cracks. The explanation I can offer is that some key staff of our department has been changed recently. Fresh to the job, the person responsible for your service must have overlooked your complaint.

I have instructed our Installation department to contact you by the end of this week. They will see that your new router will be installed in time.

I sincerely appreciate your request, which has alerted us to our problem. Out of our appreciation of you as our customer, we are going to provide you free service for three months. Your account won't be billed until October of this year.

Ms. Qiu Yu, let me assure you what happened to you will never occur again and we will continue our commitment to providing you and all of our customers with high-quality service.