

现代商务英语写作

Modern Business English Writing

吴尚义 王茹◎主编

张丽丽 顾越 韩红 田丽 刘雯◎副主编



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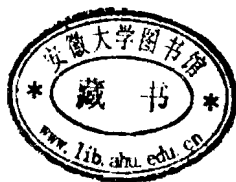
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内容提要

商务英语写作是商务英语专业学生的必修课程之一,也是他们将来从事国际商务工作必备的业务技能。本书突出实用性,把商务英语写作涉及的诸如商务业务知识、惯例和做法、信息传递的手段和方式、语言修辞等各方面因素和当今广泛的商务活动内容(包括货物贸易和服务贸易)融合渗透到了商务活动的各个实际操作环节。在选材方面,除采用传统外贸实例外,还涵盖了当代经济社会中各类公司间商务活动,具有很强的时代感和现实指导意义。

责任编辑:国晓健

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

现代商务英语写作/吴尚义,王茹主编. —北京:知识
产权出版社,2012.4

ISBN 978-7-5130-1177-8

I. ①现… II. ①吴… III. ①商务—英语—写作
IV. ①H315

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2012)第062248号

现代商务英语写作

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吴尚义 王 茹 主编

出版发行: 知识产权出版社

社 址: 北京市海淀区马甸南村1号

网 址: <http://www.ipph.cn>

发行电话: 010-82000893 转 8101

责编电话: 010-82000860 转 8385

印 刷: 北京富生印刷厂

开 本: 787mm×1092mm 1/16

版 次: 2012年4月第1版

字 数: 251千字

邮 编: 100088

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传 真: 010-82005070/82000893

责编邮箱: guoxiaojian@cnipr.com

经 销: 新华书店及相关销售网点

印 张: 12.5

印 次: 2012年4月第1次印刷

定 价: 36.00元

ISBN 978-7-5130-1177-8/H·079 (4102)

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前 言

商务英语写作是商务英语专业学生的必修课程之一，也是他们将来从事国际商务工作必备的业务技能。加入世界贸易组织以来，尤其是过去的三十多年中，我国与世界经济接轨的步伐大大加快，国家的经济活动也已远远超出传统的外贸范畴，扩大到了金融、保险、法律、海外投资等众多领域。2008 年全球金融危机之后，中国更是在抓住机遇，放开手脚创新发展。为适应中国经济高速发展的新形势，我们编写了这本商务英语写作教材，为学生提供更加全面、实用、与时俱进的商务英语写作知识，提高学生在各种商务环境下的商务英语写作技能。

本教材突出实用性，把商务英语写作涉及的诸如商务业务知识、惯例和做法、信息传递的手段和方式、语言修辞等各方面因素和当今广泛的商务活动内容（包括货物贸易和服务贸易）融合渗透到商务活动的各个实际操作环节。在选材方面，本教材除采用传统外贸实例外，还涵盖了当代经济社会中各类公司间商务活动，具有很强的时代感和现实指导意义。本教材的特点是强调商业活动双方之间的灵活互动，要在“知彼”的基础上进行恰当的写作，兼顾写作的形式与内容，以完成更加符合商业目标的商务英语写作。

本书共十四个单元，每个单元在第一部分介绍与本单元写作任务有关的业务基础知识、写作原则、写作步骤和注意事项，并附两篇典型范例，每篇范例后都标注难点注释和中文评述，通过详尽的分析加强学生对写作内容的理解和写作技巧的掌握。同时，每篇范例后还针对该篇写作的语言特点和写作重点提出问题，以促进学生对语言措辞的关注和恰当使用。第二部分为本单元的常用句型和表达方式。第三部分是与本单元内容相关的综合练习。在内容安排上，本教材除包含针对进出口业务主要环节的英语函电写作外，还包括涉及公司商务活动的其他常用写作形式，以通俗易懂、简明完整、清楚正确为写作原则，以达到良好沟通效果和商业目标为准绳。

为了便于教学，本书练习配有参考答案。使用单位的教师如欲取参考答案，请发邮件到 wangru@bwu.edu.cn。

本书对参考文献的原刊出单位和机构的支持，表示诚挚的谢意，对张娇、孟阳、刘薇、关凌、史哲、朱颖所做的资料收集整理工作，在此特致感谢。

由于编者水平有限，书中不妥及疏漏之处在所难免，恳请方家和读者不吝指正。

编 者

2011 年 9 月

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Chapter 1 An Overview of Business Writing

I . Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- understand what business writing involves;
- know the general process of effective business writing;
- understand the principles of effective business writing.

II . Text

i . Introduction

Business writing covers a wide range of written documents, from informal one-line emails to complex contracts covering hundreds of pages of legal English. Clearly, in a book like this, it will not be possible to cover every aspect in details, however, what this book will do is to give you an introduction into the most common types of business writing you are likely to meet.

Business writing is about communicating a message. Everybody in the business world has to be able to communicate with colleagues, customers, partners and so on. In an ever – increasing global workplace, much of this communication is likely to be with people from a different country and a different culture. English is the lingua franca in the business world.

As far as business is concerned, strong communication skills increase productivity. Written communication is about putting your thought and ideas into a form (a code) which can then be transmitted to another person. This may involve some sort of feedback or response, so communication involves more than one person—it is not only about writing the document, it is also about that document being received and understood and reacted upon. Misunderstandings can easily occur if the person receiving the message interprets the code in a different way to the sender. Therefore, a key responsibility of anyone producing written business communication must make sure that the message sent is as clear and unambiguous as possible. And to do this

successfully, it is necessary to think about the reader at all times.

Every business message is designed to achieve a specific business objective. Its success depends on what it says and to what extent it induces a favorable response from the reader. Thus, business writing has three functions: to inform, to persuade and to entertain.

Messages to inform are used to convey the vast amount of information needed to complete the day-to-day operations of the business—explain instructions to employees, announce meetings and procedures, acknowledge orders, accept contracts for services, etc. The major purpose of most of these messages is to have the receiver understand a body of information and concentrate on the logical presentation of the content.

In addition to providing information, some business messages must also influence the reader's attitudes and actions. These messages might include letters promoting a product or service and seeking support for ideas and worthy causes presented to supervisors, stockholders, customers, clients, and others.

To secure the desired response, it is necessary to have an adequate knowledge of the English language and an understanding of human nature. The writer should have an acquaintance with the particular interest and, if possible, the emotions of the reader. It seems easy enough, for example, to ask payment of a bill, but it is quite difficult to secure payment without offending the reader and losing his or her future patronage. No communication is wholly successful unless it retains the reader's goodwill and guarantees future cooperation.

You'd better know some basic patterns of business writing, then you can organize business messages either deductively or inductively depending on your prediction of the receiver's reaction to your main idea. However, learning to organize business messages according to the approaches that are outlined below will improve your chances of writing a document that elicits the response or action you desire.

1. Direct Good-news and Routine Messages

Good-news or routine messages follow a direct order (deductive sequence) — the message begins with the main idea. To present good-news or routine information deductively, begin with the major idea, followed by supporting details, and end with goodwill.

Routine inquiries and replies, favorable response to claims and adjustment requests, recommendation letters, good news about employment, congratulations, messages of appreciation, condolences, announcements, and greetings fall into this category.

2. Indirect Bad-news Messages

When the main message of a letter is bad news, you should usually write in indirect order. The indirect order is especially effective when you must say "no" to a request or when you

must convey other disappointing news. The main reason for this approach is that the negative messages are received more positively when an explanation precedes them. In fact, an explanation may even convince the reader that the writer's position is correct. In addition, an explanation cushions the shock of bad news.

The indirect plan consists of four parts: a buffer; reasons supporting the negative decision; a clear diplomatic statement of the negative decision; a helpful, friendly and positive close.

Bad-news messages include: bad news about orders such as back orders, substitutions, unfillable orders and non-confirming orders; negative answers such as denying cooperation with routine requests, declining invitations and request for favors, refusing adjustment of claims, complaints or rejecting a job application; conveying unfavorable news about people such as refusing to write recommendation letters, giving negative performance reviews and terminating employment.

3. Indirect Persuasion

Persuasion is the art of influencing others to accept your point of view. In all occupations and professions, rich rewards await those who can use well-informed and well-prepared presentations to persuade others to accept their ideas or buy their products, services or ideas. By persuasion, we mean reasoning with the reader—presenting facts with logic that supports the case. Persuasive messages aim to influence readers who are inclined to resist. To succeed, therefore, you have to begin by convincing them. In this approach, you should generally follow the indirect order plan. Open with words that set up the strategy—needs and appeals, emotion, logic, and credibility, and gain attention. Then present the strategy (the persuasion), using persuasive language and your viewpoint. End the letter by describing precisely what you would like to happen, restating how the audience will benefit by acting as you wish and making actions easy to take. Common types of persuasive messages are sales letters, claim letters and letters that request special favor or information.

A business message is considered to be successful when the receiver interprets the message as the sender intended and it achieves the sender's purposes. In order to meet these two objectives, seven C's principles and a positive attitude should be paid enough attention to.

1. Courtesy

Actual business correspondence reveals that special attention should be devoted to assuring the courtesy of business communication. By courtesy, we mean treating people with respect and friendly human concern. Effective writers visualize the reader before starting to write. They consider the reader's desires, problems, circumstances, emotions and probable reactions to their

request. Thus, courtesy doesn't merely need expressions such as please..., would you..., kindly ask you to..., etc., but to show tactfully in your writing the honest friendship, thoughtful appreciation, sincere politeness, considerate understanding and heartfelt respect. Compare the following example sentences:

Your letter of May 2 nd regarding payment of this order <u>has been received</u> .	Your letter of May 2 nd regarding payment of this order <u>has received our careful attention</u> .
We are sorry you have misunderstood us.	We are sorry we have made ourselves misunderstood.

2. Correctness

Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are basic requirements for business writing. In addition, correctness means choosing the correct level of language and using accurate information and data for different customers/clients.

3. Conciseness

Effective writing is concise—each word, sentence and paragraph counts. Conciseness means to write in the fewest possible words without sacrificing completeness and courtesy. Because a wordy message requires more time to write and read, business people put a high premium on conciseness in business messages. Conciseness will give emphasis to the message. Compare the following examples:

a long period of time	long time
at the present time	at present; now
due to the fact that	because
in accordance with your request	as requested

4. Clarity

Clarity tells the reader exactly what he or she wants and needs to know, using words and a format that make your writing totally understood. Short familiar words and simple short sentences rather than long difficult words and complex long sentences are better for this purpose.

Compare the following example paragraphs:

<p>Dear Ms. Yang,</p> <p>Mr. Liver yesterday called our agent David saying that the mistake was <u>his</u>. Therefore, we shall be repaid the <u>full amount</u> of our <u>subrogation</u> interest in this matter. If this is satisfactory to you, please sign the attached release and <u>forward it</u> along with the copy of our accident report.</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p> <p>F. Middleman</p>	<p>Dear Ms. Yang,</p> <p>Mr. Liver yesterday admitted his fault in your accident on January 12. His insurance company has agreed to repay us the full amount (\$ 2,000) for your damage. If this is satisfactory to you, please sign the attached release and forward it to us, along with the copy of our accident report.</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p> <p>F. Middleman</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

5. Concreteness

Business writing should be vivid, specific and definite, rather than vague, general and abstract, especially when the writer is requiring a response, solving problems, making an offer or acceptance, etc. For example, when we express some qualities or other situations of goods, we should use exact figures, specific time such as date, month, year even hour and minute, if necessary, and avoid words like good, long, yesterday, next month. Compare the following example sentences:

I've well received your letter yesterday.	I've well received your letter dated May 5 regarding prepayment of shoe order.
-------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------

6. Completeness

Business writing should include all the necessary information and data in the message because information and data can help senders get receivers' responses and achieve desired objectives. An incomplete message may result in increased communication costs, loss of goodwill, sales and valued customers, cost of returning goods and more time trying to make sense out of the incomplete messages. An outline helps for the writing to be full and complete.

7. Consideration

Your writing must create good impression to your reader. Try to put yourself in his or her position to give enough consideration to his or her varied wishes, demands, interest and difficulties. Emphasize the "You" attitude rather than the "I" or "We" attitude. Compare the following example sentences:

We would allow you a 2% discount for cash payment before Apr. 1 st , 2010.	You would be provided a 2% discount for cash payment before Apr. 1 st , 2010
We'd like to send our congratulations to you.	Congratulations to your great success in the China Export Commodities Fair!

8. Positiveness

In any business writing, especially when we intend to persuade someone to accept our idea, we need stress advantage of doing something rather than disadvantage of not doing something.

No smoking.	Thank you for not smoking.
This kind of unfortunate incident will not occur in the future.	Future transactions will be handled with the utmost care.
The color is guaranteed not to dull for three years.	The color is guaranteed to stay bright for three years.
We are withholding your shipment until we receive the payment.	We will deliver your order as soon as payment is received.

There are four Principles of Effective Business Writing as follows:

1. Use clear language

Make sure the reader will get the exact message you are sending. To do this, you need to be clear in your own mind about the purpose of the written document. You also need to think about how you express in your writing:

- Use simple words and phrases rather than complicated ones which may look “impressive” but do convey the message.

- Use simple paragraphs which focus on one topic or point, and start each paragraph with a “topic sentence” which helps the reader understand what the paragraph is about.

- Use pictures, diagrams, lists and examples where possible to clarify what you are trying to say.

- Use headings.

2. Use the right register

It is not enough to use simple language. Register is about using the right sorts of words and phrases for your audience. If you are writing to engineers, it is alright to use technical jargon. However, you should not use engineering jargon if you are writing to the finance department. Likewise, you should think about the formality of what you are writing. An email to a close colleague will be quite different in tone from an email to the managing director of a large foreign enterprise, even if both emails are essentially sending the same message (e. g. what time to meet for dinner).

3. Use “we” and “you”

Treat the reader as if they are sitting next to you. This means that you can call them “you” rather than “the supplier”, or “the customer”, or “the receiver”. Likewise, use “I” and “we” when you are writing about yourself or your organization.

4. Use correct titles and names

This is common courtesy, and may appear obvious. However, it is very easy to get titles and names wrong.

ii. The Process of Writing

People see business writing as a process. It can involve a number of stages as follows:

- Clarifying your aim
- Identifying our readers
- Generating ideas
- Organizing the ideas

- Sketching a synopsis
- Drafting your text
- Revising and editing
- Proofreading

These stages are not fixed. Depending on the type of writing and the writer, some may be left out, some may take weeks, and some may be done by other people. Good writers tend to follow certain strategies. Many of them think about what they want to say and get their thoughts and ideas down on paper before they write instead of being worried about individual words, phrases or grammar on the first draft.

iii. Attentions

All business writing in English will involve intercultural communication, which means that you are sending and receiving messages to and from another culture. Different countries have different cultures, and so do different companies and different professions. Culture is a key element that goes to make up a person's identity, and such needs should be treated seriously.

Culture is difficult to define in a simple way, but it refers to the beliefs, attitudes, norms and values that people have learnt from their surroundings. People in a particular community have certain ways of doing things which may be different to people from a different community. They have certain beliefs and behave in certain ways which may appear strange to people from the other community. Culture influences how they think and how they do things.

It is easy to put people from different cultures in a certain category to stereotype them. This somehow simplifies the problem, and helps us understand what we might expect. But it is important to realize that we are dealing with individual people, not cultures. In addition, people belong to different cultures at the same time. So a Chinese accountant may be influenced by his Chinese culture, but at the same time he is influenced by his professional culture. In this way, he may have certain things in common with other Chinese, but will also share many ideas and beliefs with his American counterpart.

Cultures can vary along different dimensions. For example, some cultures, such as the US, see individual efforts and achievements as most important; other cultures, such as Japan, might see the group as more significant. Cultures treat power in different ways too. In some cultures, it is expected that you do what your manager or boss tells you to do. In others, feedback and discussion may be the norm. Different cultures treat risk in different ways, with some cultures preferring to avoid risk by having lots of written rules and regulations, and others preferring more flexibility. And some cultures need to explain things explicitly, whereas others are

happy to understand what is happening from the context or situation. All of the above can have important consequences in intercultural communication. Within written business communication, culture can have some very specific implications.

1. Organization

Different cultures organize documents in different styles. Take a report on a particular technical problem in a manufacturing process for example, Some cultures might prefer a linear approach, for example, where things are arranged chronologically, so that the report might contain background information before its recommendations which are based on the information. Other cultures, on the other hand, might prefer to see the recommendations at the very beginning of a report, since these are what are required for further action.

When preparing for a certain type of business writing, some cultures might prefer to spend some time discussing relationships and going into details building on that relationship, other cultures might regard style and presentation to be of the most importance; Some cultures prefer a simple and short report, others might prefer a longer version where the writer has a chance to go into detail and show how much efforts have been made. The problem is that different readers have different understanding of what is meant by the word report, and become irritated and frustrated when things do not conform to their cultural expectations. Worse still, they may feel that important information has been ignored, or too much information has been included, or they are unable to find, what they consider to be, the relevant information.

2. Colorful language

When we write in our own language, we are encouraged to use idioms and metaphors — they help to make the text more interesting and often bring a message home in a way that other simple straightforward language cannot. Unfortunately, this often has the opposite effect on someone from another culture. A typical example of this is the US preference to mention sport in their business communication. These cultural idioms are difficult to translate, and can lead to misunderstanding. It is important to understand that the English we use for international communication is not the same as American or British English. It is an international variety which both sides can understand.

3. Dates

Dates can be especially confusing. In Germany, 6/5/2008 means sixth of May, 2008. In the US, it means fifth of June, 2008. So, we'd better always use the names of the months to avoid confusion, e. g. 6 May, 2008 or May 6th, 2008. Some cultures might use different calendar systems altogether. Some Islamic business people prefer to use the Islamic calendar, which

is quite different from the Western calendar. And of course New Year in the West is quite different from New Year in China.

4. Religion

Be aware that different cultures may have different systems and traditions. Wishing Happy Christmas or Hari Raya or Deepavali might not be appropriate for all your clients.

III. Exercises

i . Answer the following questions.

1. Compare academic writing with business writing, what differences can you identify?
2. What are the tips for effective business writing?
3. Why are communication skills important in business writing?
4. What is common writing process? Is there anything special in business writing process?

ii . Explain what you understand by culture, and why culture plays such an important role in influencing business communication.

Chapter 2 Enquiries and Replies

I . Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to :

- identify the difference between a general enquiry and a specific enquiry;
- write an effective enquiry letter;
- write an appropriate reply letter.

II . Text

i . Introduction

The enquiry letter is the most popular form in business correspondence, with which the buyer can express willingness to make a purchase of some goods or the seller intends to push the sale of its products. In practice, most enquiry letters start from buyers to enquire about the price, discount, delivery date, terms of payment, insurance and other relevant terms. Meanwhile, the buyer must often ask for samples, brochures, catalogues, price list as reference. Conversely, if the enquiry's issued by the seller to the buyer, it is in fact to consult the buyer's buying inclination.

Enquiries may be either dispatched by E-mail, fax, letter, cable or handed to the suppliers through personal connection. Obviously, E-mail and fax are used for most of the cases in modern business. Nowadays, for the sake of simplicity and efficiency, many companies choose to send a brief enquiry letter with a supplementary enquiry form as attachment by E-mail or fax the letter as well as the enquiry form instead of merely long paragraphs. In the case of customers of long-standing or repeat orders, the enquiry may be even simpler. Often a phone call or just an enquiry form by either E-mail or fax is enough.

Enquiries mean potential business, so any business should be happy to respond to a direct enquiry promptly and politely. The reply should cover all important points in the enquiry and try to provide necessary information at one time. This will create favorable impression to the buyer

and helps to materialize the order in the cooperation.

ii . The Process of Writing

If the enquiry is sent to the seller with whom you have not previously done business, this is a general enquiry to the new customer. General enquiries should follow these steps:

1. explain how the buyer obtained the seller's information;
2. introduce some detailed information of your own business: business scope, quantities needed, usual terms of trade and any other information that contributes to the supplier to decide what he can do for you;
3. ask for information and materials about the goods that interest you;
4. politely expect early reply and provide detailed contact, such as address, telephone, fax, E-mail, MSN or even QQ.

As a buyer, if you have the intention of buying the goods from your stable customers, you can send a specific enquiry including the name of the article, the quantity and other particulars as well. Actually, you are now asking for a quotation or an offer.

According to either general or specific enquiry, the seller should reply promptly and carefully. Any kind of reply should first start from thanks for the enquiry and then offer all the requested information soon afterwards. In attempt to respond to general enquiry, the seller should introduce as much information as possible, certainly covering answers to all questions in the enquiry. Strategically, the seller can provide catalogue and brochure no matter whether the buyer asks for them or not. This shows enough respect to the enquirer, potential buyer, and establishes trust easily. Usually, in reply to a specific enquiry, the letter should contain information such as price, specification, payment terms, discount, etc., better enclosed with a formal quotation sheet. However, as a buyer, if you receive an enquiry from the seller, enquiring about information such as acceptable price, requested quantity, etc., you should also respond promptly and politely because this provides convenience to the seller and guarantees better service for yourself.

iii . Attentions

If you want to receive the information as quickly as possible, you'd better send the letter to the company rather than to a certain person. If you address the enquiry to an individual, the letter may be delayed because of his or her absence. Anyway, an enquiry is made to obtain the information needed. It should be brief, reasonable, specific and courteous.

In return, the answer to an enquiry should be as prompt as possible. In order to create goodwill, a reply to an enquiry, especially to the first enquiry, should be handled with special

care. If the goods enquired are out of stock, the seller should inform the buyer of the reason and when the goods will be available. Meanwhile, the seller can introduce some of new products that maybe interest the enquirer.

iv. Sample Analysis

The following Two letters are written according to the guidelines mentioned above. Now read the letters and try to figure out how writing principles are applied in them. The questions after the letters might help you accomplish the task.

Sample 2.1 Enquiry about aluminum fittings

Receiver: admin@kmt.kz

Subject: Enquiry about aluminum fittings from Shanghai Meike Import & Export Co. Ltd.

Dear Sirs,

Would you kindly send us details of your aluminum fittings which you advertised in *Business Week* Oct. 11? We get your E-mail in this famous international magazine and are interested in your aluminum products.

We are Shanghai Meike Import & Export Co. , Ltd. (www.mk.com), specializing in importing and exporting aluminum products. With more than thirty years of experience in this line, our company has owned the foremost position in this field in China. There are more than 50 salesmen with professional experience in our company. And we have very good sales channels and distributors in nearly 50 major countries all over the world, such as France, USA, Australia and India. In 2009, our total sales volume was USD 8.5 million, two times of the previous year. We strongly believe it will be in the best interest of both parties to set up business relations.

Please quote us all the items listed on the enclosed enquiry form, giving your prices C I F Shanghai. Will you please also indicate delivery time, terms of payments, and discount details for regular purchases and large orders? Our annual requirements for metal fittings are considerable, and we may be able to place substantial orders with you if your prices are competitive and your delivery is prompt.

Your early reply will be highly appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us through Tel: + 86 - 21 - 85616666/5 Fax: + 86 - 21 - 85617631 MSN: meike@hotmail.com

Best regards,

Shanghai Meike Import & Export Co. , Ltd.

Henry Yang

Sales Manager