

writing business letters

**an introduction
for foreign learners
by A B Kench**

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preface

As the business letter is not generally considered to be a form of literature in the sense that essays, novels, plays, and poetry are, it does not require a literary mind nor any particular literary talent.

There are those who despise the business letter for its set phrases. They say the language is stereotyped and lacking in originality. They forget, however, that the busy executive cannot sit back in his chair and dreamily dictate a letter as though composing a sonnet. For him the set phrases are time-savers that have the added value of being understood by all.

In this book students will learn some of the most common of these phrases. They will then be able to write a business letter in English that is both comprehensible and professional.

ABK

introduction

This book is divided up into six sections each containing five model letters. These letters are introduced by a short dialogue in which the reason for writing the letter is made clear. They are immediately followed by Letter Practice exercises made up of ten letters based on the preceding model. At the end of each section there are two or three pages of notes on the five model letters. These should clarify any point that has not come out in the dialogues. At the halfway stage – after three sections – there is a short test in which students are asked to fill in the spaces left open in twelve letters with suitable words or phrases.

dialogues

Although each dialogue is used to introduce the model letter following it, the content is not a detailed discussion of the letter itself. These short conversations between Mr Johnson and his secretary include comments on other members of the staff, customers, the work of the Company, and from time to time a little humour. They help students to get an idea of how the head office of a company runs.

model letters

These models introduce the new phrases to be learnt. As the book progresses, the letters become slightly longer and include many of the phrases that have already been dealt with. Thus the models continually revise and keep fresh in the mind of the students those phrases essential to the writing of a business letter.

letter practice exercises

There are ten guided letters to be dictated – or typed out – after each model letter. They are guided in the sense that the student has only to connect up the words given by supplying a preposition, article, conjunction, etc., here and there. They should be done immediately after the model letter, so that the teacher may correct any mistakes and explain any point that needs clarifying.

In a secretarial school these letters may be typed out during class. Students may then add the address, date, salutation, etc. They may also be given for homework. It is useful after the first section has been done to give a selection of letters for homework: letter practice 1, number 5; letter practice 2, number 4; letter practice 3, number 3 and letter practice 4, number 2, for example.

The variety of subjects in these letters is intended to show that phrases are not confined to one use and to one type of letter only: 'In view of' may be used in any letter – 'In view of the present economic situation', or 'In view of the demand for stands at this year's exhibition', or 'In view of this customer's inability to settle his account'. The phrase 'We are interested in' is as valid in 'We are interested in importing Italian wine' as it is in 'We are interested in attending the next meeting' or 'We are interested in opening a new branch'.

There are 300 letters to be dictated. In these, repetition of the phrases to be learnt ensures their assimilation, and the constant recurrence of the essential words: catalogue, brochure, agreement, contract, draft, plan, project, proposal, etc. allows students to learn and remember them without effort.

prologue

During the June–August summer holiday period most firms find themselves temporarily short-staffed. This is at present the case at the offices of Phillips & Henderson, a large firm of manufacturers, exporters and importers of furniture.

One of the first of the Company's executives to be affected is Mr Johnson, the Marketing Manager. In addition to his own work, Mr Johnson now has to deal with correspondence normally taken care of by other members of the staff. As if this were not bad enough, he is to be without his secretary, who has just gone on holiday for three weeks. Her place is taken by Miss Watt, a young shorthand typist who has been sent along from the main typing pool.

Although Miss Watt is a very pleasant and friendly girl, if rather chatty at times, she is not an experienced secretary. At first Mr Johnson is philosophical about this since he believes that an inexperienced secretary is better than no secretary at all. After a few days, however, he realises that Miss Watt is not only intelligent and quick to learn, but also remarkably efficient considering the short time she has been with him.

contents

preface	page v
introduction	vi
prologue	viii
section a	
dialogue, model, letter practice 1	1
dialogue, model, letter practice 2	4
dialogue, model, letter practice 3	7
dialogue, model, letter practice 4	10
dialogue, model, letter practice 5	13
notes on letters 1 – 5	16
section b	
dialogue, model, letter practice 6	18
dialogue, model, letter practice 7	22
dialogue, model, letter practice 8	25
dialogue, model, letter practice 9	28
dialogue, model, letter practice 10	31
notes on letters 6–10	34
section c	
dialogue, model, letter practice 11	36
dialogue, model, letter practice 12	41
dialogue, model, letter practice 13	45
dialogue, model, letter practice 14	49
dialogue, model, letter practice 15	52
notes on letters 11–15	55
test	57
section d	
dialogue, model, letter practice 16	60
dialogue, model, letter practice 17	64
dialogue, model, letter practice 18	68
dialogue, model, letter practice 19	72
dialogue, model, letter practice 20	76
notes on letters 16–20	80

section e

dialogue, model, letter practice 21	83
dialogue, model, letter practice 22	86
dialogue, model, letter practice 23	90
dialogue, model, letter practice 24	94
dialogue, model, letter practice 25	98
notes on letters 21–25	102

section f

dialogue, model, letter practice 26	105
dialogue, model, letter practice 27	110
dialogue, model, letter practice 28	114
dialogue, model, letter practice 29	118
dialogue, model, letter practice 30	123
notes on letters 26–30	127

test

130

list of phrases and structures used in the letters

133

section a

dialogue 1

Mr Johnson Miss Watt?

Miss Watt Yes, that's right. Mrs Duncan has sent me to work here.

Mr Johnson Yes; I asked her to send someone to take the place of my secretary while she's on holiday. Pleased to meet you, Miss Watt. Do sit down.

Miss Watt Thank you.

Mr Johnson Have you been here long?

Miss Watt Since nine o'clock.

Mr Johnson No, I mean have you been with the Company long?

Miss Watt Since nine o'clock. I started this morning. Mrs Duncan says she'll be along in a minute to introduce me.

Mr Johnson That's hardly necessary now is it?

Miss Watt Not really, no.

Mr Johnson Well, now, let's start work, shall we? I'd like you to send a copy of our latest catalogue and price list to Barnes & Co.

Miss Watt What would you like me to say?

Mr Johnson Just the usual. Er... Dear Sirs.

Miss Watt Dear Sirs.

Mr Johnson We have pleasure... in enclosing... a copy of our latest catalogue... and price list. Yours faithfully... S. Johnson.

Miss Watt Is that all?

Mr Johnson Yes, that's all.

Miss Watt It's quite easy really, isn't it?

model 1

Phillips & Henderson Ltd

*Lincoln House 146 - 152 Dean Street,
Westbury-on-Thames
Telephone 53429*

10th June 19..

Messrs F. Barnes & Co.,
24 Bedford Street,
Watford,
Herts.

Dear Sirs, .

We have pleasure in enclosing a copy of our latest catalogue
and price list.

Yours faithfully,



S. Johnson
Marketing Manager

Enc.

letter practice 1

Dictate the following:

- 1 We/pleasure/enclosing/copy/latest illustrated catalogue/price list.
- 2 We/pleasure/enclosing/copy/brochure 'Holidays in the Sun'.
- 3 /draft plans/Leeds plant modernisation project.
- 4 /copy/product information brochure P.t.22.
- 5 /two invitations/official opening/Industrial Trade Fair/next month.
- 6 /up-to-date list/agents/Central and South America.
- 7 /copy/Annual Report/Chairman's Statement.
- 8 /comprehensive list/our stockists/Manchester area.
- 9 /photographs/our stand/British Book Fair/last month
- 10 /copy/product information and retail price leaflet.

dialogue 2

Mr Johnson Miss Watt

Miss Watt Yes, Mr Johnson.

Mr Johnson Could you come in a moment, please?

Miss Watt Yes, of course.

Mr Johnson I've just received an invitation to attend the official opening of the Fabrics for the Home Exhibition next month.

Miss Watt Oh, that's nice!

Mr Johnson Yes ... er ... well, this is the letter from the Secretary enclosing the invitation. Will you acknowledge it, please?

Miss Watt Yes, Mr Johnson. What shall I say?

Mr Johnson Say ... Dear Sir.

Miss Watt Dear Sir.

Mr Johnson We thank you for your letter ... 10th June ... enclosing an invitation ... to the official opening ... of the Fabrics for the Home Exhibition ... next month. Yours etc.

Miss Watt Yours etc.?

Mr Johnson Yes; that means Yours faithfully, S. Johnson.

Miss Watt Oh, yes, of course. Is this letter urgent?

Mr Johnson No, it isn't urgent; but I'd like to have it this morning. By the way, Miss Watt, don't forget to include the reference this time. What's your first name?

Miss Watt Jennifer, but most people call me Jenny.

Mr Johnson Then put SJ/JW.

model 2

Phillips & Henderson Ltd

Lincoln House 146 - 152 Dean Street,

Westbury-on-Thames

Telephone 53429

SJ/JW


11th June 19..

The Secretary,
Fabrics for the Home Exhibition,
Exhibition Road,
Birmingham, B40 1NT.

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of 10th June, enclosing an invitation to the official opening of the Fabrics for the Home Exhibition next month.

Yours faithfully,



S. Johnson
Marketing Manager

letter practice 2

Dictate the following *

1 We thank you/letter/24 September/enclosing/copy/revised contract.

2 We thank you/letter/15 January/enclosing/draft/new agreement.

3 /details/new scheme for training apprentices.

4 /agenda/next meeting/Finance Committee.

5 /copy/draft plan/reorganisation of the export division.

6 /photocopy/Dr Middleton's article 'Launching a New Product'.

7 /export figures/half year—January-June.

8 /quotation/installation/new heating equipment/Newcastle factory.

9 /copy/new import regulations.

10 /invitation/reception/new branch office/next week.

*date to be supplied in Nos 3 – 10

dialogue 3

Mr Johnson Good morning, Miss Watt.

Miss Watt Morning, Mr Johnson.

Mr Johnson How are you this morning?

Miss Watt Fine, thanks; and you?

Mr Johnson Quite well, thank you. Well, today I think we'll begin with a letter to Spain.

Miss Watt That'll be nice. I've been to Spain.

Mr Johnson Have you? Well ...

Miss Watt Yes; to the Costa Brava. Glorious, it was. Very hot, though.

Mr Johnson Well, anyway. The position is that we have decided to start importing Spanish furniture to sell to retailers here. First, however, we want to establish contact with a few Spanish manufacturers.

Miss Watt Yes, of course.

Mr Johnson Now I want you to write to the firms on this list and ask them for their catalogue, price list, and export terms f.o.b.

Miss Watt What shall I say – after 'Dear Sirs', that is?

Mr Johnson Just say: We are interested ... in importing ... Spanish furniture ... and would be pleased ... to receive a copy ... of your latest catalogue ... price list ... and export terms f.o.b. Yours etc

Miss Watt Anything else besides this, Mr Johnson?

Mr Johnson No, not for the moment.

Miss Watt I'll go and start on it straight away, then. Well, after coffee, anyway.

model 3

Phillips & Henderson Ltd

Lincoln House 146 - 152 Dean Street,

Westbury-on-Thames

Telephone 53429

SJ/JW

12th June 19..

The Sales Manager,
Garcia y Jimenez S.A.,
Plaza San Juan,
Córdoba,
Spain.

Dear Sirs,

We are interested in importing Spanish furniture and would be pleased to receive a copy of your latest catalogue, price list, and export terms f.o.b.

Yours faithfully,



S. Johnson
Marketing Manager