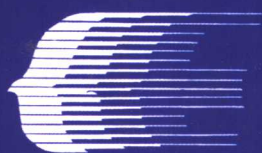




*A COURSE IN COMMERCIAL ENGLISH WRITING*



# 商务英语写作

*A COURSE IN COMMERCIAL ENGLISH WRITING*

胡鑑明 编著



华南理工大学出版社

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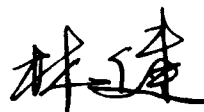
## Preface

By the time this book is available to readers, China may probably become a new member of WTO. With more and more international business opportunities, the use of English is a challenge to many Chinese companies and their staff.

*Commercial English Writing* is a timely book on the use of written English in the business world. Unlike some textbooks on the same topic, it is full of examples from the Pearl River Delta and Hong Kong. It can be the textbook to college students, to people taking a special course on Business English; and it should be a reference book on every Chinese company's bookshelf. And it not only has practical applications, but also is very useful academically for faculty teaching Business English, as the way the materials are presented in this book is based on the author's experience in teaching.

During the past 10 years of preparation for this book while teaching at Wuyi University, Professor Hu Jianming received many feedbacks from his students. He incorporated these feedbacks into this book. Since he is one of the most popular faculty members on campus, I anticipate that this book will be heavily welcomed by readers.

I congratulate Professor Hu Jianming on the completion of this book. And I wish readers find out more benefits from this book than what I briefly mentioned above.



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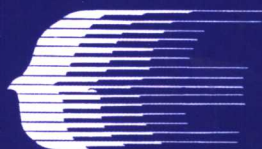


■ 责任编辑 胡 元 詹志青

■ 封面设计 吴俊卿 ■



# A COURSE IN COMMERCIAL ENGLISH WRITING



- 训练正确、得体地起草商务信函、文件的能力，通过外贸活动在不同交易环节、交易条件下的书面沟通能力的仿真实践，打破简单给练习答案的常规。
- 通过各种各样的外贸单证、文件实例，使读者有货真价实的原装资料可资借鉴。
- 为了适应电子沟通手段在现代化国际商业贸易活动中的应用，专章介绍 e-mail 及 faxes，详细说明了其优缺点、写作规范及与正规商务信函的互补作用，体现了鲜明的时代感。

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# PART ONE



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

(绪论)

### Section 1

#### Definition of Commercial English

Commercial English is a special term given to English by non-English speaking nations for international trade. In Britain, it is called Commercial English or Commercial Correspondence or Commercial Letter. In the USA, it is usually called Business English, Business Correspondence or Business Letter.

In English speaking countries, all correspondence needed both in domestic and foreign trades is written in English. However, in non-English speaking countries correspondence for international trade is also needed to be written in English because English is widely used in this field.

Is Commercial English a special kind of English? No, it is not. Commercial English is but standard English adapted to specific business purposes. Few international business transactions can be carried through successfully without correspondence at some point. For example, letters must be written to customers, salesmen, agents, suppliers, bankers, shipping companies and many other people concerned. They cover every conceivable phase of business activities. Commercial letters, including cable, telex, e-mail and faxes are the firm's silent salesmen, representing its close contact with the outside world. Hence, the need of efficient letter-writing in English is very essential and indispensable in international trade.

Since the implementation of the policy of reform and opening to the outside world, many coastal cities in our country, have become more and more industrialized and commercialized. Activities in foreign trade have been increasing steadily. Thus, qualified personnel in international trade is urgently needed, and that is why this course in Commercial English is offered to English majors in universities.

Being adapted to specific business purposes, Commercial English has some special technical terms of its own, such as interest (利息), discount (折扣), Cash on Delivery (COD, 货到付款), Free alongside Ship (FAS, 船边交货价), Cost, Insurance, Freight and Commission (CIFC, 成本、保险费、运费及佣金在内价/到岸价), Letter of Credit (L/C, 信用证) etc. In order to master Commercial English well, we should familiarize

ourselves with these terms.

There always exists intense competition in international markets. The use of Commercial English is, to a certain extent, the kind of tool, which brings you success and profit. That is why people say Commercial English has dollars-and-cents value. Never should we forget that keeping in close contact with a client is to keep a piece of property.

## Section 2

### How to Write Good Commercial English Letters

In writing good Commercial English letters, the following eight requirements are considered to be a “must”. They are also called the eight “C” s.

#### 1. Clearness (清楚)

Clearness means

- a. One sentence for one meaning only.
- b. There must be a logical relationship between relevant sentences. No reversion or repetition is allowed to appear.

The underlined words in the following three examples show what are not clear enough and how they should be changed to get rid of ambiguity.

#### Example 1

“Fluctuation in the exchange rate after the date of contract signing will be for the buyer’s account.”

Changed into:

“Any increase or decrease in the exchange rate after the date of contract signing will be for the buyer’s account.”

#### Example 2

“They have also a decided advantage in regard to freight.” (运费方面有优惠)

The word “freight” has different meanings

- (a) “freight” charges
- (b) cargo
- (c) transportation

So the above sentence should be changed into:

“They have also a decided advantage in regard to freight charges.”

#### Example 3

“They informed Messrs. Smith and Richardson that they would receive an answer in a few days.”

The second “they” is confusing. So, the sentence should be changed into:

“They informed Messrs. Smith and Richardson that the latter would receive an answer in a few days.”

- c. In a simple and direct way.

Please compare the following two letters telling the same thing.

—Before being simplified (90 words):

Your letter of July 5, in which you informed us that the goods did not arrive on time and that three of the videorecorders were damaged beyond repair, has been carefully noted.

It is not necessary for us to tell you how much we regret this matter, and we assure you that we shall send you three videorecorders of the same kind to replace those damaged in transit (在运输途中).

Thank you for calling this to our attention and hope we may have your further orders in the near future. We remain.

Yours faithfully,

—After being simplified (43 words):

In your letter of July 5, we were sorry to learn that our shipment did not arrive on time.

Three videorecorders are being shipped immediately to replace those damaged in transit.

Thank you for calling this matter to our attention.

Yours faithfully,

Through simplification, the original letter is cut short by 50% of its length. It is more simple and direct.

## 2. Conciseness (简短)

Being concise means all the words/sentences and paragraphs in a letter must be clear-cut and straight forward. So it is with an e-mail or telex or fax.

In order to achieve conciseness, we should pay attention to the following three aspects.

(a) Using simple words instead of phrases or sentences.

— “soon” instead of “in the near future”

— “Please” instead of “Will you be kind enough to...”

— “now” instead of “at the present moment” etc.

(b) Using simple sentences instead of complex ones.

— “We are pleased to tell you that...” for

“It gives us much pleasure to inform you that...”

— “We will fill your order soonest.” for “We will execute your valued order expeditiously.”

— “We do not expect prices to rise soon.” for

“We do not anticipate any increase in prices in the near future.”

(c) Avoiding repetition of words in a same sentence.

— “Please quote your best price for your best quality.”

Changed into:

“Please quote your lowest price for your best quality.”



— “How do you account for the fact that the account is not correct?” Changed into:

“How do you explain the fact that the account is not correct?”

Being concise does not mean that only simplicity is required in Commercial English writing. If all sentences in a letter are very simple, the letter will be monotonous (单调的) and boring (令人厌烦的). Sometimes, a better collocation (搭配) of long, medium-sized and short sentences in a paragraph will be desirable (可取的).

#### Example

“We regret that you have not yet delivered the garments we ordered a month ago (中句). They are now urgently needed (短句). The customer for whom we ordered the goods threatens to cancel the order unless he receives them during this month (长句). Please deliver them at once (短句).”

#### More simplified expressions for reference.

Come to a decision — decide

Express a preference for — prefer

Owing to the fact that	} ... Because ...
Due to the fact that	
For the reason that	

At your earliest convenience — soon, promptly

Please advise us — Please let us know

As a matter of fact — in fact

Be in possession of — have

By means of — By

In accordance with your request	} ... as requested
Complying with your request	
In compliance with your request	

Dated July 7 — of July 7

### 3. Correctness (正确)

Correctness includes the correctness of forms of writing, of grammar, spelling and of punctuation, particularly of figures.

In order to be correct, the following four questions should be very carefully considered:

- (a) Is the accuracy of all factual information beyond question?
- (b) Are all the statements in strict conformity with policies and decrees (政策法规)?
- (c) Is the letter free from grammatical errors; spelling errors or misleading punctuation?
- (d) Are the commercial terms correctly used?

—The correct use of words is a very important part of correctness.

For example, Some nouns are only used in singular form, such as advice (忠告) (except as instructions)

correspondence (通信)  
information (情报/资料)  
merchandise (商品)  
literature (宣传用印刷品)  
dozen (打, 指实数)

Some nouns, such as the names of commodities, are used as collective nouns, not using the plural form. Such as

aluminiumware (铝制品)  
bambooware (竹器)  
chinaware (陶瓷器皿)  
enamelware (珐琅铁器/搪瓷器皿)  
footwear (鞋类)  
flatware (盘碟类)  
hardware (五金器皿)  
glassware (玻璃器皿)  
ironware (铁器)  
kitchenware (厨房用具)  
tableware (餐具)

**Note:**

“Ware”, as a collective noun is used in compound words, it means “制品”, while its plural form “wares” means commodities (商品). e.g. He sold his wares cheap. (他卖的商品很便宜。)

jewellery/jewelry (珠宝类)  
confectionary (糖果类)  
machinery (机器类)  
drapery (布匹)  
hosiery (袜类)  
perfumery (香水)  
stationery (文具)  
porcelain (瓷器)  
pottery (陶器)  
earthware /earthenware (陶器)

(但 ceramics 作陶瓷器解时, 动词用复数式, 而 crockery 作陶瓷器解时, 则动词用单数式。)

produce (农产品)  
underwear (内衣类)  
furniture (家具)

When relating to quantity, the following expressions should be used:

a piece (pieces) of  
 an article (articles) of ... } piece 及 article 都译为“件”。  
 a kind of ... etc.

**Some other nouns often occur in Plural form in Commercial English. They are:**

arrangements (安排、准备, 用于 make arrangements 作安排)

chemicals (化学药品)

circumstances (情况)

conditions (情况、条件)

contents (内容)

customs (海关、关税)

details (细节)

funds (资金) 但作“基金”解时, 用单数 Fund。

exports (输出品, 即 exported goods)

imports (输入品, 即 imported goods)

instructions (指示、规定事项、通知、说明)

means (手段、资产、经济能力) 作“手段”解时, 单复数都是 means. e.g. Is (Are) there any other means to do it? (办这件事还有其他手段吗?) 但作“资金”解时一般用复数动词。e.g.

This company's means are small. (这间公司资产不多)

particulars (详细情况)

(when used in singular number, “particular” means “细节”、“细目”)

proceeds (款项、收益、货款)

terms (条件、条款)

thanks (谢意) etc.

**The correct use of punctuation is also important in Commercial English.**

The following are some examples.

(a) Not using a full-stop after the receiver's name and address

e.g. China Power Company

Kowloon, Hong Kong

(b) Not using a full-stop after the signature at the end of a letter

e.g. Yours truly,

Stephen Zhang

(c) A colon is used after the salutation

e.g. “Dear Sirs:” “Gentlemen:”

(cf) “Dear Paul,” “Dear Mother,”

(d) Using a comma to separate an address or a date.

e.g. “No.1751 Fifth Ave, Manhattan, New York” “July 21, 1999”

(e) Some very often seen abbreviations do not have any full-stop after each letter, such as:

e.g. “USA”