

校企合作系列丛书



应用英语专业

Practice Course for Business English Correspondence

外贸英语函电实训教程

主编 · 姜 妹



WUHAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

武汉大学出版社

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前 言

教育部〔2006〕16号文中提出：“要积极推行与生产劳动和社会实践相结合的学习模式，把工学结合作为高等职业教育人才培养模式改革的重要切入点，带动专业调整与建设，引导课程设置、教学内容和教学方法改革。”基于这样的指导思想，与企业合作共同开发紧密结合生产实际的实训教材就成了当务之急。本书是与麦克莱博科学仪器有限公司合作开发的，编写内容秉承语言与技能并重的原则，契合实际外贸业务，重视实践教学环节的技能训练，有助于教师开展实训指导。

本书按照外贸业务流程，将外贸业务分为七大项目，每个项目又分解为若干学习任务，以任务驱动教学，每个项目后都设计了相关的实训任务，以帮助学生更好地掌握相关技能，真正实现教、学、做一体化，提高学生的外贸信函写作水平。每个项目由九个部分组成，包括学习目标、项目简介、写作指导、学习任务、项目总结、句型及例句、练习、项目实训和拓展资源。

七大项目的体例结构如下：

- ① Objectives——学习目标；
- ② Introduction——项目简介；
- ③ Writing Guide——写作指导；
- ④ Tasks——学习任务；
- ⑤ Summary——项目总结；
- ⑥ Sentence Patterns and Examples——句型及例句；
- ⑦ Exercises——练习；
- ⑧ Practice——项目实训；
- ⑨ Extended Resources——拓展资源（创业常识、外贸知识等）。

七大项目完成后，设计了一个完整业务的学习，该业务由真实案例改编而成；最后设计了供学生练习的综合实训项目，可从总体上把握外贸业务流程及信函的写作技能。本书注重实用，以使学完本书即能走上外贸业务员的工作岗位。

本书由上海行健职业学院商务外语系姜妹老师担任主编并负责全书的统稿和审稿，苏州职业大学外国语学院李媛媛老师担任副主编。具体编写分工为：姜妹老师负责 Project 1~4, Case Study, Comprehensive Practice 共 6 章的编写，李媛媛老师负责 Basic Knowledge of Business Letter Writing, Project 5~7 共 4 章的编写。麦克莱博科学仪器有限公司总经理林洪海先生长期从事外贸业务一线工作，在本书的编写过程中提供了很多建



设性的意见和建议,并且参与了本书的终审工作。

编者的好朋友汤海燕女士从事外贸一线工作近 20 年,为本书提供了很多第一手资料。编者长期从事商务英语的教学,并且于 2009—2010 年在上海传诚服装有限公司挂职锻炼,从事外贸单证员、跟单员和业务员相关工作,积累了一定的外贸工作经验,为本书的编写奠定了一定的基础。

本书主要适用于高等职业教育商务英语、国际贸易、国际商务等专业的教学,也可作为应用型本科相关专业和国际贸易从业人员的参考用书。

本书在编写过程中,参考了大量的相关书籍和资料,在此向作者表示衷心的感谢。由于时间仓促,书中难免有不足、疏漏甚至错误之处,敬请广大读者不吝赐教,提出宝贵意见和建议,以完善本书。编者邮箱:jiangmei109@126.com。

编 者

2014 年 4 月

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Basic Knowledge of Business Letter Writing

Objectives

- (1) To know the writing principles of business letters.
- (2) To learn the form and structure of business letters.
- (3) To learn how to address an envelope.

Introduction

As a kind of goal-oriented writing, business letters can be defined as the letters used to support the goal of buying and selling goods or service. In today's highly developed and toughly competitive society, communication between individuals and groups is becoming increasingly frequent and important. Millions of business letters are now being sent by fax or E-mail to carry out business routine efficiently. Basically speaking, a business letter has the following two main functions: information function & interpersonal function.

Writing Principles of Business Letters

1. Courtesy

Courtesy is an important language feature of practical English writing for international business, especially for international business letters. It is a favorable card, helping to strengthen your present business relations and to establish new ones.

Compare:

A: *Unfortunately we cannot fill your order because you failed to send your check.*

B: *We shall be glad to fill your order as soon as we receive your check.*

The difference of the effect between the two sentences is self-evident. Sentence **A** is blunt and abrupt, while sentence **B** is courteous and polite.



Compare:

A: *We are sorry that you misunderstand us.*

B: *We are sorry that we didn't make ourselves clear.*

In sentence **A**, the party of the author is to put the blame on the customer for something, but in sentence **B**, the party of the author takes the initiative to bear the responsibility.

Here, courtesy not only means politeness, but also means thinking about the interests of the other party.

There are a lot of language styles or ways to express courtesy, some of which will be introduced for your reference as follows:

(1) Change the commanding tone into requesting tone, that is, change the imperative sentence into general question with the word "will" or "would" at the beginning.

e. g.

Tell us more detailed information on your requirements.

Will (Would) you (please) tell us more detailed information on your requirements?

(2) Use mitigation to avoid overemphasizing your own opinion or irritating your partner.

In order to avoid overemphasizing your own opinion or irritating your partner, you should use mitigation, such as: ① We are afraid that. . . ② We would say. . . ③ We may (might) say. . . ④ We would think. . . ⑤ It seems (would seem) to us that. . . ⑥ We would suggest that. . . ⑦ As you are (may be) aware. . . ⑧ As we need hardly point out that. . . ⑨ It appears that. . . etc. .

e. g.

① *We cannot deliver the goods all at one time.*

I'm afraid we cannot deliver the goods all at one time.

② *You must cut down your price by 10%.*

We would suggest that you cut down your price by 10%.

③ *We have not yet had your reply.*

It appears that we have not yet had your reply.

(3) Passive voice should be used accordingly. Sometimes passive voice appears more courteous than active voice because it can avoid blaming the doer of the act.

e. g.

① *You made a very careless mistake during the course of shipment.*

A very careless mistake was made during the course of shipment.

② *You didn't enclose the price list in your letter.*

The price list was not enclosed in your letter.

(4) Try to avoid using the words with forcing tone or arousing unpleasantness. Some words or expressions such as "demand" which has the forcing tone, should not be used, but should be changed into "request".

e. g.

① *We demand prompt shipment from you.*

We request prompt shipment from you.

② *We are disgusted with your manner of doing business.*

We are not completely satisfied with your manner of doing business.

③ *We must refuse your offer.*

We regret that we are unable to accept your offer.

We are sorry that we are not in a position to accept your offer.

④ *We want you to assist us.*

Your assistance would be appreciated deeply.

(5) Use the words or expressions with the meaning of joy, thanks and regret, etc. .

① Expressions about joy and willingness:

a. It is with pleasure that we have reached an agreement on all the terms.

b. We shall feel happy if you can deliver all the goods in one time.

② Expressions about thanks:

a. Thank you for your inquiry of July 8.

b. Your early reply will be highly appreciated.

③ Expressions about regret:

a. We are extremely sorry that we could not answer your letter in due time.

b. We regret to say that we haven't received your L/C in time.

2. Consideration

Consideration emphasizes You-attitude rather than We-attitude. When writing a letter, keep the reader's requests, needs, desires, as well as his feelings in mind. Plan the best way to present the message for the reader to receive.

The following points are necessary for writing a letter to embody consideration:

(1) You-attitude

Take the receiver's attitude, i. e. You-attitude, and avoid taking the writer's attitude, i. e. We-attitude.

Compare:

We-attitude: *We allow a 2 percent discount for cash payment.*

You-attitude: *You earn a 2 percent discount when you pay cash.*

We-attitude: *We are pleased to announce that. . .*

You-attitude: *You will be pleased to know that. . .*

(2) Focus on the positive approach

Negative: *We do not believe you will have cause for dissatisfaction.*

Positive: *We feel sure that you will be entirely satisfied.*

Negative: *Your order will be delayed for two weeks.*

Positive: *Your order will be shipped in two weeks.*



3. Completeness

A business letter should include all the necessary information.

An outline helps for the letter to be full and complete. It is essential to check the message carefully before it is sent out.

In order to verify the completeness of what you write, five “ws” (who, what, where, when and why) and one “h” (how) should be used.

4. Clarity/Clearness

The writer must try to express his meaning clearly so that the reader will understand it well. To achieve this, he should try to:

(1) Avoid using the words which have different understanding or unclear meaning.

e. g.

As to the steamers sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco, we have bimonthly direct services.

The word “bimonthly” has two meanings; twice a month, or once two months. The reader will feel puzzled about the meaning.

Rewriting:

a. We have two direct sailings every month from Hong Kong to San Francisco.

b. We have a direct sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco every two months.

(2) Pay attention to the position of the modifier. The same modifier will lead to different implication and function when it is put in different position of the sentence.

e. g.

a. *We can supply 50 tons of the item only.*

b. *We can supply only 50 tons of the item.*

In the first sentence, “only” is used to qualify “the item”, meaning the supply is only this item, not other one. But in the second sentence, “only” is used to qualify “50 tons”, meaning the supply is only 50 tons.

(3) Pay attention to the object of pronoun and the relations between relative pronoun and antecedent.

e. g.

They inform Messrs Smith & Brown that they would receive a reply in a few days.

In this sentence, what does the second “they” refer to, the subject “They” of the main clause or “Messrs Smith & Brown”? This can’t be explained clearly. It will be clear if you change the sentence into:

They inform Messrs Smith & Brown that the latter would receive a reply in a few days.

5. Conciseness

Conciseness is often considered to be the most important writing principle, and it enables to save both the writer’s and the reader’s time.

(1) Avoid using wordy expressions.

e. g.

I wish to express my hearty gratitude to you for your kind cooperation.

Rewriting:

Thank you for your cooperation.

(2) Avoid unnecessary repetition.

e. g.

We have begun to export our machines to the foreign countries.

Rewriting:

We have begun to export our machines.

e. g.

We wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of May 2 with the check for \$ 200 enclosed and wish to thank you for the same.

Rewriting:

We appreciate your letter of May 2 with the check for \$ 200 enclosed.

6. Concreteness

Make the message specific, definite and vivid.

Compare:

You are kindly requested to ship the goods to us as soon as possible.

Please ship the goods to us no later than December 15.

Compare:

We wish to confirm our telex dispatched yesterday.

We confirm our telex of July 2, 2007.

7. Correctness

Correctness refers not only to correct usage of grammar, punctuation and spelling, but also to standard language, proper statement, and accurate figures as well as the correct understanding of commercial jargons.

Structure of Business Letter

1. Standard Parts

A typical business letter usually has seven standard parts, from the top to the bottom: letterhead, date line, inside name and address, salutation, body of the letter, complimentary close, and signature.

(1) Letterhead/Stationery/Return Address

Letterhead includes the sender's company's name and address, postcode, telephone number,



fax number, telex number, cable address, E-mail address, website address, logo, etc. .

Position : Usually letterhead is printed in the up-center or at the top left margin of a letter writing paper.

Functions ; The letterhead has two functions.

- ① to identify where the letter comes from;
- ② to provide the receiver with the first impression of the sender's company.

Example 1

CHANGSHA RONGHAI SUPERHARD MATERIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Gaotang, Shaping, Laodaohe Town, Kaifu District Tel: 86-512-69230919

Suzhou 215011, Jiangsu, China Fax: 86-512-69239018

E-mail: ronghai@rh-diamond.com URL: http://www.rh-diamond.com

Example 2

MINNESOTA MED-EQUIP Subsidiary of Minnesota Wire & Cable Co.

1835 Energy Park Drive Tel: (612) 644-1880

St. Paul, MN 55108 Fax: (612) 644-1890

USA Internet: mme@mwccmme.com

The Second Page Heading

Contents of the second page heading:

- ① the name of the receiver;
- ② the page number;
- ③ the date of the letter.

Examples:

Mrs. Sarah D. Regan

2

May 12, 2007

Note:

Never use a second page heading solely for your complimentary close and signature.

(2) Date Line

When some transactions must be checked, it is convenient for the sender and the receiver to find the relevant letters with the date. And sometimes it is the key to settle the disputes in the transaction.

Position : Two or four lines below the letterhead (either on the right or on the left), depending on the style you decide to use.

Question : What is the difference between British form and American form?

11 September (,) 2007—British form

September 11, 2007—American form

Notes:

① Remember that the ordinal suffix for date such as “st” “nd” “rd” and “th” can be omitted, for example, write September 1 for September 1st.

② The month should always be written in full and not abbreviated, for example, do not write Oct. for October; don't write 07 or '07 instead of 2007 for the year.

③ Avoid writing figures for the dates, for example, 9/10/2007, since it could easily be confusing. Because according to the English form which follows the order of day, month and year, such figures could be taken as 9 October 2007, while the U. S. practice is to read it in the order of month, day and year, so the figures could also be taken as September 10, 2007.

(3) Inside Name and Address

The inside name and address is the receiver's name and address.

Position: at the left margin about two or four lines spaces below the date line.

Note: Mr., Mrs., Miss, and Ms. —the ordinary courtesy titles are used to address to one person. Mr. for a man, Mrs, Miss, and Ms. for a woman.

Although some women prefer the traditional title: Mrs. or Miss, when unsure about her preference or the marriage status, you are safe to use Ms. .

(4) Salutation

Function: Salutation is the polite greeting with which the writer begins the letter. It serves the same purpose as saying "Hello" on the telephone or to someone you meet.

Position: Usually written two or four lines below the inside name and address or the attention line.

The following table shows some common salutations:

<i>Salutation</i>	<i>People to Address</i>
Dear Mr. × × ×	men
Dear Mrs. × × ×	married women
Dear Miss × × ×	unmarried women and girls
Dear Ms. × × ×	women, marital status unknown
Dear Prof. × × ×	professors
Dear Sir (s)	no specific reference, formal
Gentlemen	no specific reference, formal
Ladies and Gentlemen	no specific reference, formal
To Whom It May Concern	You don't know yet who will get the letter
(Dear) First name only	close friend, informal

(5) Body of the Letter

This is the main part of the letter. It expresses the writer's ideas, opinions, purpose, and wishes, etc., and so it should be carefully planned.

Position: two lines below the salutation, or below the subject line, if there is one.

Notes:

① Write simply, clearly, courteously, grammatically, and to the point.



② Paragraph correctly, confining each paragraph to one topic.

③ See that your writing is accurate and the display artistic. Aim at an attractive and pleasing appearance for your letter. Margins especially are important, since they serve to “frame” your letter.

④ If there has been previous correspondence, the reply letter will refer to it in the first paragraph. The writer's plans, hopes and expectations will be expressed in the last paragraph.

(6) Complimentary Close

Complimentary close is merely a polite way of ending a letter. It is placed two or four lines below the last line of the body of the letter. It is in keeping with the salutation.

The most commonly used sets of salutation and complimentary close are:

Formal:

Dear Sir(s),

Dear Madam,

Dear Mesdames,

Yours faithfully,

(or: Faithfully yours,)

—very commonly used in Britain

Dear Sir(s),

Dear Madam,

Dear Mesdames,

Yours truly,

(or: Truly yours,)

—very commonly used in America and Canada

Semi-formal:

Dear Mr. Henry, (:)

Yours sincerely,

(or: Sincerely yours,)

Informal:

The receiver's first name

Sincerely,

Cordially,

Best regards,

As the salutation and complimentary close are merely a matter of courtesy and don't mean anything to the message, they can be omitted in the simplified style used nowadays.

(7) Signature

Every business letter must be signed. The signature indicates the approval of the responsibility for the contents of the letter.

Unsigned letters have no legal authority.

Notes:

① It is common to write the name of the writer's firm or company immediately below complimentary close. Then the person who dictates the letter should sign his name, by hand and in ink, below it. Since hand-written signatures are illegible, the name of signer is usually typed below the signature, and followed by his job title or position.

- ② Never sign a letter with a rubber stamp. For example;

Yours faithfully,
The Overseas Co., Ltd.
John Smith —hand-written signature
John Smith —type-written signature
Personnel Director

- ③ Type-written signature lines do not include the courtesy title “Mr. ”. They may include the courtesy title of a woman to indicate how the woman would prefer to be addressed. For example;

Yours sincerely,
Jane Smith
Miss Jane Smith
Sales Manager

2. Optional Parts

The optional parts can be added or reduced according to the concrete situation.

(1) Reference Number

The reference number is used to indicate the file number of the writer's and the receiver's letter. It is usually positioned two lines below the letterhead.

If the company uses a reference number in the previous letter, the writer should quote this number after the notation “Your ref:” in the reply letter. If the writer's letter has a file number to refer to, it is written after “Our ref:”. For example:

Your ref: XT/0901

Our ref: 0425/FXY

(2) Attention Line

Attention line is used when the writer of a letter addressed to an organization wishes to direct the letter to a specific individual or section of the firm. It generally follows the inside address. For example:

Attention: Mr. Smith

Attention: The Sales Manager

(3) Subject Line

Subject line is actually the general idea of a letter. It is inserted between the salutation and the body of the letter. It calls the receiver's attention to the topic of the letter. For example:

Subject: Replacement of Order No. 0065

Re: Our Contract No. 2345

Chinese Pure Silk Products

LATE DELIVERY UNDER CONTRACT CT1096

(4) Reference Initials

The reference initials may include the initials of the signer followed by that of the typist of the



letter. It follows the signature and is usually placed at the left margin. For example:

FX Y/zs

FX Y:zs

FX Y * zs

The initials of the signer come first, all in capital letter, and the initials of the typist, in lower-case letters.

If the writer and the typist are the same person, the initials are omitted.

(5) Enclosure

If documents, catalogues, price lists, etc., are sent with a letter, it is necessary to add "Enclosure" or its abbreviation "Encl." or "Enc.", at least two lines below the signature or the Reference Initials. For example:

Enclosure: 1 Invoice

Encl. : Price List

Enclosures: 4 Samples/Enclosures (4)

Encls. : Certificate of Insurance

Invoice

Packing list

(6) Carbon Copy Notation

When copies of the letter are sent to others, write c. c. below the signature or enclosure at the left margin. For example:

c. c. Mr. G. Well

(Mr. G. Well is the person who will receive the copies of the letter.)

c. c. Miss J. Cooper

c. c. The Osaka Trading Company

(7) Postscript

If the writer wishes to add something he forgot to mention or for emphasis, he may add his postscript two lines below the carbon copy notation. For example:

P. S. The samples will be mailed to you tomorrow.

Try to avoid using P. S. since it may suggest that the writer failed to plan his letter well before he wrote it.

Forms of Business Letters

1. Full Block Form

In the full block form, every part of a letter is typed from the left margin. It is convenient to be typed with a typewriter but the layout is not so beautiful.