



全国优秀畅销图书

外贸英语函电

(第四版)

2004

兰 天 编 著

FE 东北财经大学出版社
Dongbei University of Finance & Economics Press

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第四版前言

每一次修订都是对至爱读者的回报。

《外贸英语函电》一书,从1991年问世以来,已经历了几次大规模的修改,15次印刷。作者在此特别感谢广大读者给予的信任和支持。正是由于读者的鼓励,才使得作者不断精益求精,以期为读者朋友奉献一本好书。

此次修订,除了保留原来的大部分章节之外,在章节上还是做了很大的调整。

第三版(世纪版)中的第十五章(电报),第十六章(电传)和第十七章(电子函件)全部删掉,取而代之的是经贸合同的写作技巧、其他主题的信函范例和求职信及简历的写作指导。本版延续了原来书中受广大读者欢迎的特点,即注释中的内容丰富,采用词汇辨析及一词多译法介绍常用商业英语词汇;各章中的每封样信包括新增加的部分都做了精确翻译,以期让读者掌握商业英语书信中专业术语的准确表达法和中英文标准商业书信的对照写法;对练习做出了全部的参考性答案,在编写习题答案时,作者特别注意引导读者活学活用,所以有些答案是多个的,这样便于读者通过学习掌握多种用法;作者还收集了各种贸易方式的合同,如买卖合同、代理合同、寄售合同、补偿贸易合同、来件装配合同、聘请合同、合资经营企业合作合同、合资企业合作合同、合作企业合作合同,以及技术转让和设备、材料进口合同,并做了详细的注释,列举了许多同义词及用法。

在此我要特别向老师曲清德先生表示崇高的敬意。由于曲清德先生的关爱和鼓励,我在学业上不断取得成绩。我祝亲爱的老师身体健康,晚年愉快!

由于作者水平有限,书中难免有错误之处,敬请诸位不吝赐教。

兰 天

2004年1月

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Business Letter-Writing Essential Qualities

The business letter is the principal means used by a business firm to keep in touch with its customers; often enough it is the only one and the customers form their impression of the firm from the tone and quality of the letters it sends out. Good quality paper and an attractive letterhead play their part in this, but they are less important than the message they carry. Business does not call for the elegant language of the post, but it does require us to express ourselves accurately in plain language that is clear and readily understood.

Writing plainly does not mean that letters must be confined to a mere recital of facts, in a style that is dull and unattractive. When we write a letter we enter into personal relationship with our reader. Like us he has feelings and we cannot afford to disregard him. This is a necessary reminder because many people who are warm and friendly by nature become reasons of quite another sort when they sit down to write or dictate a business letter. They seem to think that business letters call for a special kind of "Business English". They forget that they are "holding a conversation by post" and make us of impersonal constructions that produce a cold and aloof tone. They prefer to write "Your letter has been received" or "We are in receipt of your letter" rather than "We have received your letter", and "Your complaint is being looked into" rather than "We are looking into your complaint". They often refer to themselves as "The Writer" and say "The Writer visited your showrooms", when they should say "I visited your showrooms". Personal conversations, with the emphasis on you and I or we, help to produce the warm and friendly tone more suited to letter writing.

The whole secret of good business letter writing is to write simply, in an easy and natural way-like one friendly human being talking to another. Make your letters then, sound as much as possible like good conversation. You wouldn't say

on the phone "It is regretted that the goods cannot be delivered today". You would say "I am sorry we cannot deliver the goods today", so why not say it when you write a letter?

Some Rules of Good Letter Writing

1. Study your reader's interests

The letters you send out must create a good first impression. To achieve this, "put yourself in your reader's shoes" and try to imagine how he will feel about what you write. Ask yourself constantly, "What are his needs, his wishes, his interests, his problems, and how can I meet them?"; "What would be my own feelings, if I were to receive a letter of the kind I propose to write?" Try to imagine that you are receiving rather than sending the letter and emphasize the "You" attitude rather than I or We.

2. Adopt the right tone

If a letter is to achieve its purpose, its tone must be right. Before beginning to write think carefully about the way in which you want to influence your reader. Ask yourself, "What do I want this letter to do?" and then express yourself accordingly, being persuasive, apologetic, obliging, firm and so on, depending on the effect you want to produce.

3. Write naturally and sincerely

When you write or dictate a business letter, try to feel a genuine interest in the person you are writing to and in his problems. Say what you have to say with sincerity and make sure that it sounds sincere. Express your thoughts in your own words and in your own way. Be yourself. Write so that what you say would sound natural if read over the telephone.

4. Avoid wordiness

Make it a rule to use no more words than are needed to make your meaning clear. Businessmen today have many letters to read and welcome the art of letter that is direct and to the point.

5. Write clearly and to the point

First be quite clear about what you want to say and then say naturally and

without frills, in language your reader will understand just as if you were in conversation with him. For the most part, keep your sentences short and avoid the over frequent use of such conjunction as “and”, “but”, “however”, “consequently”, the effect of which is to make sentences long.

6. Be courteous and consideration

Courtesy consists, not in using polite phrases (your kind inquiry, your esteemed order, your valued custom, and so on), but in showing your consideration for your correspondent. It is the quality that enables us to refuse to perform a favor and at the same time keep a friend; to refuse a customer's request for credit without killing all hope of future business.

Deal promptly with all letters needing a reply. Answer them on the day you receive them if you can. It is discourteous to keep your correspondent waiting for an answer. If you cannot deal promptly with a letter seeking information, write and explain why and say when you will write again. This creates an impression of efficiency and helps to build good will.

Try to understand and respect your correspondent's point of view and resist the temptation to reply as if you could not be in the wrong. If his suggestions are stupid and his criticisms unfair, reply with restraint and say what you feel tastefully and without giving offence. If he send you a rude or sharp letter, resist the temptation to reply in similar terms. Instead, answer him courteously; you lower your dignity if you allow him to set the tone of your reply.

As the buyer and the seller have both common and contradictory interests, it is very important to keep in mind the distinction between certain overlapping concepts: Courtesy overdone may amount to obsequiousness. Sincerity overdone may amount to naivete. In short, any virtue overdone will bring with it some undesirable effect, and propriety is the watchwork in distinguishing the right course from the wrong.

7. Avoid commercial jargon

Avoid using state and round about phrases that add little or nothing to the sense of what you write. Such phrases were at one time common, but they have no place in modern business letter.

8. Write effectively

In business letter writing you should use simple language, which calls for a plain style—a style that is simple, clear and easily understood. Use plain, familiar words and prefer short words to long if they will do just as well. Wherever possible, prefer the single word to the elaborate phrase. Express yourself in simple language so that your message is clear at first reading.

Be constant in writing a business letter. Avoid repeating in the same sentence an important word with different meaning.

But in your efforts to avoid repetition don't make the opposite mistake of confusing your reader by using different words to express exactly the same thing.

Don't say in the same letter that goods have been sent, forwarded, and dispatched, and if you begin your letter by referring to a firm, don't change it as you go along into a "concern" or a "business", or an "organization". If you do, you will leave your reader wondering whether something different is intended.

Preciseness is also required in a business letter. Use expressions with precise meanings. When acknowledging a letter, refer to it by date, subject and reference number (if any). When referring to dates mention the month by name and avoid using instant or inst. (for the present month), ultimo or ult. (for the past month) and proximo or prox. (for the next month). Avoid using vague expressions but concrete words.

9. Avoid monotony

In a business letters you should use either loose sentences or period, or sentences which will make your message vivid. Short sentence are preferable to long ones, because short sentences are easily understood. A succession of short sentences, however, has a disagreeable jerky effect and the best letters are those which provide a mixture of sentences of different length. Sometimes you wish to emphasize some words, then you may place them at the beginning of the sentence. For example, I met your director yesterday (normal order). Yesterday, I met you director. (emphasizes yesterday)

Emphasis is also achieved by using "it is", "it was" to introduce statements, e. g. Unfortunately, the goods did not arrive in time. (normal order).

It was unfortunately that the goods did not arrive in time (emphatic order).

10. Plan your letter

Many business letters are short and routine and can be written or dictated without special preparation. Others must first be thought about and planned. First jot down all the points you wish to cover and then arrange them in logical order to provide the plan for a letter that will read naturally and fluently. If your letter is in reply to one received, underline those parts which seek information or on which comment is necessary. This will ensure that your reply is complete.

11. Pay attention to first and last impressions

If your letter is one sent in reply to another, refer in the opening paragraph to the letter you are answering, but avoid the sort of old-fashioned phrases, such as "We are in receipt of your letter...", "We have for acknowledgement your letter...". Although they are grammatically correct, they tend to be dull and monotonous, worn threadbare from over-use.

If a letter has been well planned and follows a logical sequence, a brief observation will usually be enough to provide the kind of ending needed. A word of caution! Avoid the kind of ending introduced by a participle. Thanking you in anticipation and similar endings are no longer used in modern letter writing. They mean nothing and serve no useful purpose.

12. Check your letters

Be careful to create a good first impression with each of your letters. Before signing, check it for the accuracy of its contents and test its general suitability against such questions as these.

- a. Is its appearance attractive; is it well laid out?
- b. Is it correctly spelt and properly punctuated?
- c. Does it cover all essential points and is the information given correct?
- d. Is what I have said clear, concise and courteous?
- e. Does it sound natural and sincere?
- f. Does it adopt the reader's point of view and will it be readily understood?
- g. Is its general tone right and is it likely to create the impression intended?
- h. Is it the kind of letter I should like to receive if I were in the reader's

place?

If the answer to all the questions is “yes” then the letter will take the first step in creating good will and you may safely sign and send it.

Eleven Writing Tips

1. To join two independent clauses, use a comma followed by a conjunction, a semicolon alone, or a semicolon followed by a sentence modifier.

e. g.

Incorrect—Correct

The delivery boy knew he carried strange cargo, but still ventured off unafraid.

The delivery boy knew he carried strange cargo, **but he** still ventured off unafraid.

My math teacher doesn't know how to lecture, she should have remained a student.

My math teacher doesn't know how to lecture; **she should** have remained a student.

Gregor has not changed physically; but has given himself an excuse to separate himself from the pain of previous experiences.

Gregor has not changed physically; **however, he** has given himself an excuse to hide from the pain of previous experiences.

2. Use commas to bracket nonrestrictive phrases, which are not essential to the sentence's meaning.

e. g.

Incorrect—Correct

The bus driver with her ears tuned to the roar decided to take the grumbling bus on a detour across the football field.

The bus driver, **her ears tuned to the roar**, decided to take the grumbling bus on a detour across the football field.

My window as dirty as it is reveals the beauty of nature on a snowy

morning.

My window, **as dirty as it is**, reveals the beauty of nature on a snowy morning.

King and Lucille, his customized black Gibsons have electrified audiences all over the world.

King and Lucille, **his customized black Gibsons**, have electrified audiences all over the world.

3. Do not use commas to bracket phrases that are essential to a sentence's meaning.

e. g.

Incorrect—Correct

The man, who has too many ties, has too few necks.

The man **who has too many ties** has too few necks.

The cats, with six toes, are a unique attraction of the tour of Hemingway's house.

The cats **with six toes** are a unique attraction of the tour of Hemingway's house.

4. When beginning a sentence with an introductory phrase or an introductory (dependent) clause, include a comma.

e. g.

Incorrect—Correct

After buying the five pound jar of marshmallow spread he set off in search of a bulk portion of peanut butter.

After buying the five pound jar of marshmallow spread, he set off in search of a bulk portion of peanut butter.

With this he bestows the responsibility of his own happiness on his mother and father.

With this, he bestows the responsibility of his own happiness on his mother and father.

As she begins to gain independence it is natural for Grete to regard the idea of dependency as repugnant.

As she begins to gain independence, it is natural for Grete to regard the idea of dependency as repugnant.

5. To indicate possession, end a singular noun with an apostrophe followed by an "s". Otherwise, the noun's form seems plural.

e. g.

Incorrect—Correct

Though the lobsters claws were bound, the creature made a threatening gesture as they dropped it in the pot.

Though the **lobster's** claws were bound, the creature made a threatening gesture as they dropped it in the pot.

In a democracy, anyones vote counts as much as mine.

In a democracy, **anyone's** vote counts as much as mine.

There is a vast age difference between Victors mother and father.

There is a vast age difference between **Victor's** mother and father.

6. Use proper punctuation to integrate a quotation into a sentence. If the introductory material is an independent clause, add the quotation after a colon. If the introductory material ends in "thinks," "saying," or some other verb indicating expression, use a comma.

e. g.

Incorrect—Correct

Tumbling down the hill, Jack yelled: "Gosh, I'm sick of this."

Tumbling down the hill, Jack yelled, "Gosh, I'm sick of this."

Her letter spoke to him in harsh tones, "You never fail to repulse me."

Her letter spoke to him in harsh tones: "You never fail to repulse me."

He views the problem as a slight delay or a sickness that will eventually disappear, "I will go back to sleep for a few minutes and forget all this nonsense."

He views the problem as a slight delay or a sickness that will eventually disappear: "I will go back to sleep for a few minutes and forget all this nonsense."

7. **Make the subject and verb agree with each other, not with a word that comes between them.**

e. g.

Incorrect—Correct

The Thanksgiving dinner, right down to the beautiful centerpiece, were devoured by the escaped grizzly.

The Thanksgiving dinner, right down to the beautiful centerpiece, was devoured by the escaped grizzly.

The cart, as well as its contents, were gone.

The cart, as well as its contents, was gone.

The girl, along with her classmates, like the new teacher.

The girl, along with her classmates, likes the new teacher.

8. **Be sure that a pronoun, a participial phrase, or an appositive refers clearly to the proper subject.**

Incorrect—Correct

Its hump decorated in strings of flowers, the programmer rode the camel through the food court.

The programmer rode the camel, its hump decorated in strings of flowers, through the food court.

Filled with bad gas, he drove his car to Tucson despite the knocking.

Although it was filled with bad gas, he drove his car to Tucson despite the knocking.

9. **Use parallel construction to make a strong point and create a smooth flow.**

e. g.

Incorrect—Correct

I was glad to be departing for Australia but I was nervous when I left my apartment.

I was glad to be departing for Australia but nervous to be leaving my apartment.

The system excels at tasks such as communicating with other computers,