

Foreign Economic Relations and Trade correspondence

对外经贸英语函电

全国外贸中等专业学校教材编写组 编



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修 订 说 明

本书(原名《外贸英语函电》)1982年初版发行,1986年进行修订。经全国外贸中专学校作为统一教材使用,并经一些院校的外经贸专业使用,普遍反映是一部好的函电教科书。但随着我国对外经贸事业的发展,国际贸易新事物的出现以及外贸中专教育改革的深化,有必要再次修订、改编。

此次修订、改编的要点是:删去不必要的课文及繁琐的练习,简化注释,增加适应经贸事业发展的新内容、课文及练习。

修订、改编工作是在对外贸易经济合作部人事教育司及全国外贸学校英语学科组的领导下进行的。以下人员参加了修订、改编工作:王乃彦任主编,李慧芳任副主编,隋思忠、徐平任参编。参加编写工作的还有刘静容同志。

本书由王联祖初审,何其雄、齐毅复审,对外经济贸易大学王克礼教授审核定稿。在编写过程中,芮增霖、王曰宽、张继祖等同志提出了不少宝贵意见。张继祖同志为打印本教材付出了辛勤的劳动。

本书属于全国外贸中专学校统编教材,也可供外经贸工作者自学之用。

由于修订、改编工作是在不脱产情况下进行的,加上修订、改编人员水平有限,书中的错误和缺点在所难免,希望广大教师和读者给予批评指正。

全国外贸中等专业学校教材编写组

一九九三年七月

PREFACE

With the rapid development of China's foreign trade and other economic activities in recent years, business communication has undergone significant changes in form and style. Telex and Fax become so popular that they are being widely used. Simplified and straightforward messages are much preferred to those stuffed with business jargon. To cope with such changing conditions, we find it necessary to have the third edition of the text book "International Business Correspondence" updated and revised. The new edition has been entitled "Foreign Economic Relations and Trade Correspondence", which better reflects the contents of the book. The material in this edition goes beyond the confines of trade itself and includes also some of the foreign economic activities currently in practice. Its chief aim is to help the students learn how to write good business letters, cables and telexes by using up-to-date expressions in the simplest possible language.

This book is designed for foreign trade students and workers who have already had a vocabulary of around three thousand words and attained an intermediate level of proficiency in English. The specimens contained herein are almost adaptations of documents selected from the files of our various import and export corporations. The goal is for the students to improve his or her ability to communicate in English with others in the field of foreign economic relations and trade.

This text book consists of 12 chapters. One chapter devoted to some newly emerged modes of trade and economic activities is presented in this book, so as to enable the students to keep pace with the recent development. A brief introduction is given at the beginning of each chapter. One or two specimen letters to demonstrate the related business link in a given situation are presented in each lesson. Notes and supplementary examples are provided. Exercises are given either for class/home assignment or for the purpose of self-study.

This new edition is compiled under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation, without whose guidance and supervision, the publication of this book would be hardly possible.

We are fully aware that mistakes would be inevitable owing to our own shortcomings in language and professional knowledge. Criticism and comments are heartily welcome.

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THE LAYOUT OF A BUSINESS LETTER

Displaying the Letter

Although formality in business letter-writing is rapidly giving way to a less conventional and more friendly style, the layout still follows a more or less set pattern determined by custom. It is safe to follow established practice so as to avoid confusion and waste of time for both sender and receiver.

Good form in letter-writing, like good form in any other activity, comes from making correct practice habitual. It is a good plan to adopt one form of layout and to stick to it.

Basically, two main patterns of layout are in current use—the conventional indented style (vide p2) and the modern blocked style (vide p3). Following traditional British practice the indented style takes in the first line of each paragraph in the body of the letter, five spaces for pica type and six for elite type, though deeper indentations than these are sometimes preferred. Consistency in use is, however, the important point.

The practice of displaying business letters in the blocked style is now quite common. Its outstanding feature is the commencement of all typing lines, including those for the date, inside name and address, salutation, subject heading and complimentary close, at the left-hand margin. The loss of clarity occasioned by the absence of indentations may be made good by indentations the number of separating line-spacings between paragraphs from two to three, as shown on page 3.

1. Indented Form:

TIANJIN CARPETS IMPORT & EXPORT CORPORATION

45 BAODING STREET
TIANJIN, CHINA

Cable Address: JUNCOCARPET TIANJIN
Telex: 23234 TJCAR CN
Telephone: 310223

Our Reference No. J/W-CO18
Your Reference NO.

Date: 30th November, 1991

Messrs. Williams & Warner
36 Tower Street
Sydney, Australia

Attention: Mr. Arnold Simpson. Sales Department

Dear Sirs.

Re: SHEEP WOOL

With reference to our Order TC303 of 30 September for 50 M/T Sheep Wool. we shall be glad to know when we may expect delivery, as these are urgently required.

When we made the initial enquiry, your department assured us that delivery would only take two months, and we placed the order on that understanding as we wished to have the WOOL before the end of November. Your failure to deliver by the promised date has caused us great inconvenience.

Will you please inform us by telegram or telex, of the earliest possible date when you can deliver these goods. Should the delay be longer than two or three weeks, we shall regretfully have to cancel the order.

Yours faithfully,

Tianjin Carpets Import & Export Corporation

(Sig). _____

Manager

2. Blocked Form:

TIANJIN CARPETS IMPORT & EXPORT CORPORATION

45 BAODING STREET

TIANJIN, CHINA

Cable Address: JUNCOCARPET TIANJIN

Telex: 23234 TJCAR CN

Telephone: 310223

Our Reference No. J/W-CO18

Your Reference NO.

Date: 30th November, 1991

Messrs. Williams & Warner

36 Tower Street

Sydney, Australia

Attention: Mr. Arnold Simpson. Sales Department

Dear Sirs.

Re: SHEEP WOOL

With reference to our Order TC303 of 30 September for 50 M/T Sheep Wool, we shall be glad to know when we may expect delivery, as these are urgently required.

When we made the initial enquiry, your department assured us that delivery would only take two months, and we placed the order on that understanding as we wished to have the WOOL before the end of November. Your failure to deliver by the promised date has caused us great inconvenience.

Will you please inform us by telegram or telex, of the earliest possible date when you can deliver these goods. Should the delay be longer than two or three weeks, we shall regretfully have to cancel the order.

Yours faithfully,

Tianjin Carpets Import & Export Corporation

(Sig.)

Manager

Placement of the date on the left-hand side of the paper may cause inconvenience when particular letters are required from the files. Because of this, some firms using the blocked style of layout prefer a date position on the right. An example of modified blocked style is shown on page 5.

Single line-spacing gives a letter an appearance of compactness and is usual for both long and short letters, though double line-spacing is preferred by some for very short letters.

Whether the indented style or the blocked style is used is determined by personal taste or by a firm's preference, but whichever style is used the ordinary business letter consists of seven parts:

- (1) the letter-head
- (2) the reference and date
- (3) the inside name and address
- (4) the salutation
- (5) the message, or the body of the letter
- (6) the complimentary close
- (7) the writer's signature and designation

A common fault is to type the letter too high on the paper. It should be neither too high nor too low, but nicely placed to preserve an appearance of balance and dignity, even if your letter might contain some more parts such as:

- (8) the attention line
- (9) the subject line
- (10) the reference notation
- (11) the enclosure
- (12) the carbon copy notation
- (13) the postscript

However faultless a business letter may be in matter, style and tone, it will not only create a bad impression but also weaken its effect if it is not attractively displayed.

The following letter is designed to illustrate the position of each part mentioned above.

(1) TIANJIN CHEMICALS IMPORT & EXPORT CORPORATION

58 Nanjing Road

Tianjin, China

Cable Add: "SINOCHEM" Tianjin

Telex: 23223 TJCHM CN

Telephone: 311290

(2) 3rd May, 1986

(3) Messrs. J. Brown & Co.

143 Eastcheap

London, E. C. 3.

(8) Attention: Import Dept.

(4) Dear Sirs,

(9) PHARMACEUTICALS

(5) We thank you for your letter of the 21st April.

In compliance with your request, we are sending you herewith a copy of our latest price list for your reference.

All prices are understood to be CIF European Main Ports, subject to our final cable confirmation. Payment is to be made by irrevocable Letter of Credit available by draft at sight.

As there is a heavy demand for our products, we would suggest that you advise us by cable in case of interest.

We are looking forward to your early reply.

(6)

Yours faithfully,

Tianjin Chemicals Imp. & Exp. Corporation

(7)

.....Manager

(10) NQ/SC

(11) Encl.

(12) cc our Branch Offices

(13) P. S. Your letter of the 22nd April has just come to hand . As requested, we will airmail you two packets of sample tomorrow.

1. The Letter-Head (信头)

Letter-heads include the essential particulars about the writer——his name and postal address, his telephone number, his telegraphic and telex addresses, and, if any, the fax number and telegraphic codes used. Good quality paper and a neat, well-balanced letter-head combine to enhance the prestige of the firm that uses them.

2. The Reference and Date (案号和日期)

Most letter-heads provide for reference letters and numbers. When one firm writes to another each will give a reference, and there are marked 'Our ref:' and 'Your ref:' to avoid confusion. Sometimes a rectangle or other space is provided for them in the printed heading.

Quite commonly, and especially in small offices, the reference consists of no more than the initials of the person dictating the letter followed by those of the typist:

Our ref: LGB/ww

Your ref: JDM/je

Such kind of reference may be placed two spaces below the typed signature against the left margin, i. e. the position indicated by 'the reference notation'.

The date should be typed three or four line-spacings below the letter-head and, in the indented form of layout, so placed to the right that the last figure serves as a guide for line-endings in the body of the letter, though other placements are now accepted. It should always be typed in full and never abbreviated. Never give the date in figures (e. g. 10/2/19...); it could easily be confusing.

Whether commas or full stops are used in dates is accepted as a matter of taste, but the inclusion of a comma after the month with no full stop after the year is now customary. e. g.

24th March, 1986 (British style)

March 24, 1986 (American style)

3. The Inside Name and Address (封内名称及地址)

The preferred position for the correspondent's name and address is the upper left-hand side of the sheet, three or more line-spacing below the line of the date, depending on the length of the letter.

Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., and Messrs. are the ordinary courtesy titles used for addressing correspondents.

It is the usual practice to type the inside name and address in blocked paragraph form in alignment with the left-hand margin of the letter. This helps to give the letter a tidy appearance.

4. **The Salutation** (称呼)

The salutation is the complimentary greeting with which the writer opens his letter. The particular form used depends upon the writer's relationship with his correspondent. To some extent it settles the form of the complimentary close; the two must always be in keeping.

For ordinary business purposes Dear Sir (or Dear Madam for both single and married women) is used for addressing one person, and Dear Sirs or Gentlemen (or Mesdames) for addressing two or more, as where a letter is addressed to a firm.

Whatever its form, the salutation always appears on a line by itself, conventionally three line-spacings below the inside name and address, and followed by a comma for Dear Sirs and a colon for Gentlemen.

5. **The Body of the Letter** (信文)

This is the part that really matters. When writing, pay attention to the following:

- (a) Write simply, clearly, courteously, grammatically, and to the point.
- (b) Paragraph correctly, confining each paragraph to one topic.
- (c) See that your typing is accurate and the display artistic. Aim at attractive and pleasing appearance for your letters. Margins especially are important, since they serve to "frame" your letter.

For very short letters you may adopt double line-spacing except for your correspondent's name and address for which single line-spacing should always be used.

6. **The Complimentary Close** (结尾敬语)

The complimentary close is merely a polite way of ending a letter. Just as the use of Dear Sir, etc., is purely conventional, so is the use of Yours faithfully, Yours truly, and similar expressions. Used in this way the terms are meaningless; nevertheless, convention imposes these fashions on us, and for the time being we must accept them, always bearing in mind that the expressions used must be appropriate to the occasion, and that salutation and closure must be in keeping. 'Yours faithfully' is the standard closure for business letters. Like all other complimentary terms, it must be typed in full. The first word should be capitalized and a comma usually placed at the end.

'Yours truly' is also being used in business, particularly in the United States.

Inverted forms like Faithfully or Truly yours (for business letters) and Sincerely or Cordially yours (for personal letters, the latter being common in the United States) are considered somewhat forced and artificial by some writers.

With the blocked form of layout, the complimentary close, the name of the firm or company,

and the writer's designation or title of office all begin at the left-hand typing margin.

Five line-spacings will usually leave enough room for the writer's signature, but it may be necessary to allow more if the signature is a bold one.

The complimentary close must never be separated from the substance of a letter by being carried to a separate sheet. If through faulty judgment this becomes necessary the letter must be scrapped and retyped, with some portion of the subject-matter carried over to the next sheet.

When using continuation sheets, plain paper of the same quality as the letter-head must be used and typed with a heading to show:

- (a) the number of the sheet (in the centre of the page);
- (b) the name of your correspondent (on the left-hand side);
- (c) the date of the letter (on the right-hand side);

e. g.

-2-	
L. A. Brizier & Co. Ltd.	1st March 19..

7. The Signature (签署)

The signature is the signed name or mark of the person writing the letter or that of the firm he represents. It is written in ink immediately below the complimentary close. Because a signature is the distinguishing mark of the one who uses it, the same style must always be adopted.

The signature as written and the signature as typed must correspond exactly.

Never sign your letters with a rubber stamp.

8. The Attention Line (注意事项)

The phrase 'For the attention of' or simply 'Attention' is used where the writer of a letter addressed to an organization wishes to direct it to a particular official. It is typed two line-spacings above the salutation, underscored and, except with the fully-blocked letter-style, centred over the body of the letter. e. g.

For the attention of Mr. Smith

or

Attention: Mr. Smith

9. The Subject Line (事由)

- (a) Main heading: (主标题)

Often useful as a time-saver is the practice of including at the head of a letter a short title announcing the subject-matter, especially where correspondence is considerable.

The heading belongs to the letter and so is typed two line-spacings below the salutation, underscored and, except with the fully-blocked letter-style, centred over the body of the letter.

- (b) Paragraph headings: (分标题)

Whether a letter dealing with more than one subject should be given paragraph numbers or headings is a matter of judgment. Give them by all means if it is likely to make future reference easier or to minimize the risk of points being overlooked, but not otherwise.

The paragraph headings are often followed by a full stop, though some prefer a colon, or even a dash.

10. **The Reference Notation** (经办人代号)

This notation is typed two spaces below the typed signature, and shows only the initials of the typist. If the dictator's name is not typed in the signature area, the reference notation shows the initials of both the dictator and the typist. The following examples are acceptable forms of reference notations:

RBG rbg FMA/RBG FMA/rbg FMA: rbg

11. **The Enclosure** (附件)

Two line-spacings below the Reference Notation the writer may indicate one or more enclosures in the letter by following any one of these examples:

Enclosure: Price list

Enclosures

Enclosures 4

Encl. As stated

Enc.

12. **The Carbon Copy Notation** (抄送)

There are two types of carbon copy notations. The first is indicated by 'cc' followed by the names of the persons who will receive copies of the letters. This notation is typed on the original and carbon copies.

The second type of copy notation is specified on the copy only by the abbreviation 'bcc' (blind carbon copy) and the recipient's name. No one other than the recipient of the 'bcc' and you will know he has received a copy of the letter.

Notations for cc and bcc would look like this in your letter:

cc Shanghai Branch Office

bcc Mr. Jones

Full names and addresses may be given if including them would help with mailing or filing.

13. **Postscript** (附言)

If the writer wishes to add something he forgot to mention or for emphasis, he may type his thought two spaces below the copy notation. The adding of a P. S. should, however, be avoided as far as possible, since it may suggest that the writer failed to plan his letter before he wrote it or dictated it.