

高/级/英/语/选/修/课/系/列/教/材

曹晓玮 编著

# 专业英语写作 原理与实务

*Professional  
Communications*

高级英语选修课系列教材

*Professional Communications*

**专业英语写作**

**原理与实务**

曹晓玮 编著

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# **PREFACE**

## **Professional Communications/Professional Writing Courses**

Professional Writing Courses (also known as Professional Communications) introduce you to some of the most important aspects of writing in the world of science, technology, liberal arts and business, in other words, the kind of writing that scientists, scholars, doctors, computer specialists, government officials, engineers, business people and other such people do as a part of their regular work.

Professional Writing Courses build on what you have learned in other writing courses. But there are many skills that are new to learn! If you currently have a job in which you do some writing, you will discover that you can put what you learn in your professional writing course to immediate use.

## **Professional Writing**

You are probably wondering what professional writing is. The field of professional communications is a fully professional field with degree programs, certifications, and theories. It's a good field with a lot of growth and income potential; and an introductory professional writing course for which this book has been developed is a good way to start if you are interested in a career in the field. It also provides a self-improvement opportunity for people seeking employment, promotion, or upward mobility on the job who are not enrolled in degree programs.

However, the focus for professional writing courses is not necessarily career as a professional writer but an introduction to the kinds of writing skills you need in practically any technically oriented professional job. No matter what sort of professional work you do, you're likely to do lots of writing and much of it technical in nature. The more you know about some basic professional writing skills, which are covered in this guide and in professional writing courses, the better job of writing you are likely to do.



And that will be good for the projects you work on, for the organizations you work in, and will be good for you and your career.

## Technical Communications/Technical Writings

Technical communications or technical writings, as the course is also called, is not writing about a specific technical topic such as computers, but about any technical topic. The term “technical” refers to knowledge that is not widespread, that is more the territory of experts and specialists. Whatever your major is, you are developing an expertise and you are becoming a specialist in a particular technical area. And whenever you try to write or say anything about your field, you are engaged in technical communications.

Another key part of the definition of technical communications is the receiver of the information—the audience. Technical communications is the delivery of technical information to readers (or listeners or viewers) in a manner that is adapted to their needs, level of understanding, and background. In fact, this audience element is so important that it is one of the cornerstones of this course: you are challenged to write about highly technical subjects but in a way that a beginner or non-specialist could understand. This ability to “translate” technical information to non-specialists is a key skill to any technical communicator. In a world of rapid technological development, people are constantly falling behind and becoming technological illiterates. Technology companies are constantly struggling to find effective ways to help customers or potential customers understand the advantages or the operation of their new products.

So relax! You don’t have to write about computers or rocket science. Write about the area of technical specialization you know or are learning about. And plan to write about it in such a way that even Granddad can understand!

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# Letter



## I Introduction

English Letters can generally be classified into two broad types: Business Letter and Private Letter/Personal Letter. The former refers to letters out of business purposes, and the latter refers to communication between friends and relatives. To be more specific, English Letters can be divided into Social Letter, Business Letter, Private Letter, Special Letter, and Other Letter (such as Letter of Commendation and Encouragement, Letter of Thanks). Another way of classifying English Letters is accepted by more and more people: Informal (Business) Letter and Formal (Business) Letter.



## II The Writing of Letters

The following samples review the basic elements of both personal and business letters, outline the format conventions, and highlight the writing of the contents. Specifically, you will learn to format and organize purposeful correspondence and to familiarize yourself with effective strategies to use in a wide range of writing contexts. These samples also explain how to focus on issues of purpose, tone, and structure to produce powerful letters.

## 1 The Format of Letters

### Sample 1-1 A Typical Business Letter in Block Format

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Company Logo   |                                    |
| Your Company Name (company name & address can be centered) |                                    |
| Your Company Address                                       |                                    |
| Date   |                                    |
| Recipient's Name   |                                    |
| Recipient's Title  |                                    |
| Recipient's Company  |                                    |
| Recipient's Address  |                                    |
| Salutation:  |                                    |
| Main Text  | Introduction<br>Body<br>Conclusion |
| Closing,   |                                    |
| Signature  |                                    |
| Sender's Typed Name  |                                    |
| Title  |                                    |
| Attachments:/Enclosures:/CC:                               |                                    |



Note that in the sample above, all the elements of the letter except the logo are on the left side of the page. Your company name and address; the recipient's name, title, company, and address; the letter's main text; the sender's typed name and title; and the attachment, enclosures, cc. are all single-spaced. You double-space or triple-space between your company's address and the date. You double-space or triple-space between the date and the recipient's name, between the recipient's address and salutation, and between the salutation and the letter's main text. You also double-space or triple-space between the letter's main text and the closing (which is usually the word "sincerely"). Leave about four lines for your written signature, and double-space or triple-space between your title and the ending lines.

The main text always single-spaced. Each paragraph is not indented but begins at the left margin. Double-space between the paragraphs.

### Sample 1-2 Modified Block Format (modified flush left):

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Company Logo   |                                    |
| Your Company Name (company name & address can be centered) |                                    |
| Your Company Address                                       |                                    |
| Date   |                                    |
| Recipient's Name   |                                    |
| Recipient's Title  |                                    |
| Company Name   |                                    |
| Recipient's Address  |                                    |
| Salutation:  |                                    |
| Main Text  | Introduction<br>Body<br>Conclusion |
| Closing,   |                                    |
| Signature  |                                    |
| Sender's Typed Name  |                                    |
| Title  |                                    |
| Attachments:/Enclosures:/CC:                               |                                    |

This letter format is slightly different from the first. The date, the closing, your signature, and your title are all lined up along the center of the letter. They are not centered, but if you drew a line down the center of the letter, these elements would all be flush against this line.

The main text is different, also. Single-space the text and indent the first sentence of each paragraph. Do not double-space between paragraphs.

With both types of business letters, you may leave more space between each of the elements. With shorter letters you may wish to leave 3 blank lines between each element. You may also wish to drop the top margin down. The idea is to achieve good visual balance. Always try to keep a one-inch margin at the bottom and on the right and left sides.

### Sample 1-3 A Personal Letter Format

5555 SW 31 Street  
Sometown, ST 12345

Date

Recipient's Name  
Recipient's Title  
Company Name  
Address

Salutation:

Letter Text Introduction  
Body  
Conclusion

Closing,

Your Signature

Your Typed Name

Encl:/Attachments:/CC:

A personal letter can be block formatted or modified block formatted—just like a business letter. The text formatting follows the same rules as a business letter.

Personal letters are formatted like business letters except that the company logo and name are omitted, of course. Also, omit your name and place your address as the initial line of the first element. You would use this format, for example, when writing a cover letter or letter of application to accompany your resume.

### Sample 1-4 An Informal Personal Letter in Modified Format

| Structure                      | Letter  | Content  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| The heading                    | 345 Wall Street<br>New York 3, N. Y.<br>June 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2008  |  |
| Date                           |   |  |
| The inside address is omitted. |   |  |
| The salutation                 | Dear John,  |  |
| The body                       | <p>Your marks have just come, and by George—I'm <u>delighted</u>! You really have worked hard, haven't you? I must say I'm very pleased with the steady improvement you have shown, especially in Latin and Math.</p> <p>Now I'm not saying that a 70 in Latin is good—<u>don't misunderstand me!</u> But it's certainly a lot better than the failing mark you got last time; and it shows that you are really trying. That's the important thing to me. As long as you keep trying and improving, I'll be satisfied.</p> <p><u>You know</u>, John, I'd feel much worse if you had difficulty with subject like science or math. After all, such subjects require intelligence. But a fellow doesn't need much intelligence to master Latin! It's just a matter of memorizing, as I've told you in the past. <u>All that's necessary is to buckle down to the job and lick it.</u> That's what you are apparently doing now... and that's why I'm so pleased with you.</p> <p>Everything at home is fine. Your mother is well, and very happy about the good report from school.</p> <p>Take good care of yourself, John. Your mother and I may drive up to see you soon. In the meantime, we all send you our love—and we hope you keep up the good work!</p> | <p>Expression of strong emotions and use of contractions</p> <p>Short/incomplete sentences (no more than 4 words)</p> <p>Use of filler words</p> <p>Use of idiomatic phrases</p> <p>Avoid unpleasant and impolite clichés.</p> |
| The complimentary close        | Affectionately,   |  |
| The signature                  | Dad   |  |

## Sample 1-5 A Business Letter in Blocked Format

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Official letterhead  | The American Association of Travel Agents<br>125th North Crescent Drive<br>Beverly Hills, CA 99908<br>U.S.A.  |
| Date   | June 23rd, 2008   |
| Inside address   | Mr. Raymond Strobe<br>Human Relations Council<br>990 State Street<br>Springfield, MA39029<br>U.S.A.   |
| Salutation   | Dear Mr. Strobe,  |
| The body<br>Stating the purpose directly<br>Giving precise and exact information         | <p>You have been highly recommended by several of our members as a speaker for the banquet that closes a three-day meeting of the American Association of Travel Agents. The place is the Sheraton Inn in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; the date is the evening of October 3.</p> <p>The banquet is a purely social affair. Climaxing three days of hard work, and we prefer an address on the light side, but with an inspirational theme. I would leave it to you to select a topic, which I know will be appropriate for the occasion. A talk of about thirty minutes would be just right.</p> |
| Making requests by asking direct question  | May I hear from you by June 14? Please indicate in your reply the financial arrangements you require. Just as soon as we have reached an agreement, I will send you more details, including a tentative convention program.   |
| The complimentary close<br>The signature<br>Typed name<br>The writer's official capacity | Sincerely yours,<br><i>James Gary</i><br>James Gary<br>Head of the program committee  |
| P.S.   | Enc. 4  |



## 2 The Parts of Letters

A letter generally has six parts: the heading, the inside address, the salutation, the body, the complimentary close, and the signature. We will present the parts of letters by way of discussing the similarities in personal letters and business letters and the differences between them.

Part 1: Date

Part 2: The Heading

Part 3: The Inside Address

Part 4: Salutation

Part 5: The Body

Part 6: Complimentary Close

Part 7: Signature

### Part 1: The Date

The date line is used to indicate the date the letter was written. However, if your letter is completed over a number of days, use the date it was finished in the date line. When writing to companies within the United States, use the American date format. (The United States-based convention for formatting a date places the month before the day. For example, June 11, 2008. ) Write out the month, day and year two inches from the top of the page.

### Part 2: The Heading

You may place the sender's full address, called the heading, in your letter. Including the address of the sender is optional. If you choose to include it, place the address one line below the date. Do not write the sender's name or title, as it is included in the letter's closing. Include only the street address, city and zip code. Another option is to include the sender's address directly after the closing signature. The heading can be in either of blocked or indented way. The heading may or may not have end punctuation. The British may put a comma after each line in the heading and end the address with a period, but the Americans do not. For example:

| The British Heading                                       | The American Heading  |
|---|---|
| Mr. Johnson Brown,<br>29 St. West,<br>London,<br>England. | Ms. Susan Armstrong<br>22 Jones St.<br>Lafayette, LA 37489<br>USA |

### **Part 3: The Inside Address**

The inside address is the recipient's address. It is always best to write to a specific individual at the firm to which you are writing. If you do not have the person's name, do some research by calling the company or speaking with employees from the company. Include a personal title such as Ms., Mrs., Mr., or Dr (See Useful Expressions). Usually, people will not mind being addressed by a higher title than they actually possess. To write the address, use the U.S. Post Office Format. For international addresses, type the name of the country in all-capital letters on the last line. The inside address begins one line below the sender's address or one inch below the date.

This part refers to the full name of the person or company to which your letter will go which is often omitted in personal letters. Because a business letter can become a legal record of transactions between individuals and organizations, both the sender and the receiver must be shown in the letter. In many companies, the copies of business letters are filed alphabetically by the names of the persons or businesses to whom they were sent. The importance of file copies should be obvious. Any future question about a particular transaction can be easily answered if copies of all business letters are on file. The inside address also ensures that the letter will be directed to the proper person when it is received. The inside address should be complete and accurate, with the name, title, company, division, mailing address, and zip code of the person to whom the letter is directed. The inside address would appear on the page like what we can see in Sample 1-5:

Mr. Raymond Strobe  
Human Relations Council  
990 State Street  
Springfield, MA39029  
U.S.A.

## Part 4: Salutation

After the inside address, there should be a double space followed by the salutation, or greeting. The British tend to use a comma after the salutation while the Americans prefer a colon. The salutation for any business letter is followed by a colon. The first name (Christian name) may be used in friendly private letters. But in a business letter, the surname of the addressee is used. For example, if you have identified the individual to whom your letter will go as A. Jones, the proper salutation is either Dear Mr. Jones: / Dear Mrs. Jones: —depending on gender.

What merits the attention of us is that the salutation should be formal, even though you are personally acquainted with the person to whom you are writing. With the growing emphasis in business on avoiding terms that might incorrectly identify marital status, it has become advisable to use the designation “Ms.” when you are addressing a woman.

If you have not been successful in getting the name of the person, then *Dear Director*, */Dear Madam*, */Dear Sir*, */Dear Sir or Madam*, may be used. Although the use of Sir is considered correct in this particular case even if you don't know the person's gender, it should be obvious that you are on better ground if you can use a term that does not indicate gender. See the salutations in Sample 1-4 and Sample 1-5.

## Part 5: The Body

There are two main forms for the body of letters—the block style and the modified style. The choice between these two styles is purely a matter of personal preference. The blocked form should be used only when a letter is typewritten, and the indented form is most suitable for handwritten letters. The body of the business letter begins a double space following the salutation. The paragraphs of the business letter in either style are single-spaced, with a double space between paragraphs. When completed, the body of the letter should be centered on the page.

## Part 6: Complimentary Close

The closing of a letter is generally placed at the right of the page, in line with the

heading and two spaces below the last line of the body. Some writers prefer to have it on the left and some even in the middle one or two spaces below the last line of the page. Usually, the closing begins at the same horizontal point as your date and one line after the last body paragraph.

The closing for a business letter should be formal. It consists of three parts: complimentary close, signature, and the typed name. Capitalize the first word only (e.g. Thank you) and leave four lines between the closing and the sender's name for a signature. If a colon follows the salutation, a comma should follow the closing; otherwise, there is no punctuation after the closing. Some traditional closings are:

|                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Very truly yours, | Yours truly,     |
| Sincerely yours,  | Yours sincerely, |
| Cordially yours,  | Yours cordially, |

You may choose one of these depending on your exact relationship with the addressee:

**1) Formal close in letters to organizations, companies, or unfamiliar receivers**

Yours faithfully,

Yours truly,

Yours very truly,

**2) Formal close in letters to seniors, or teachers**

Yours respectfully,

Very respectfully yours,

**3) Personal close in letters to friends, acquaintances, or colleagues**

Yours sincerely,

Yours very sincerely,

Yours cordially,

Fraternally yours,

**4) Intimate close in letters to relatives or intimate friends**

Yours,

Yours ever,

Yours affectionately,

With love from,

Your loving son (daughter, sister, mother...),



## Part 7: Signature and Postscript

In a private letter, you may sign your full name, your first name, or even a nickname in accordance with your relationship with the addressee. While in a business letter the handwritten signature is placed between the complimentary close and the typed name of the writer. The writer's official capacity is indicated after the typed name. Only rarely would it be proper for a secretary to sign your name or to use a stamped signature. If either of these is used, the initials of the person signing for you should follow the signature.

If you happen to have something additional to add to the letter after you have finished it, you may start with P.S., which stands for "postscript", and then write what you want to add.

If any material besides the letter is to be included in the envelope, such as a copy of a report or a resume, this should be indicated. Single-space below the reference initials and type Enclosure, Enclosures, or Enc. If a large number of items are enclosed, it is a good idea to add the Arabic number for reference (as in Sample 1-5):

Sincerely yours,

*James Gary* (handwritten signature)

James Gary

Head of the program committee

Enc. 4

### 3 The Writing of Envelopes

The three formats of letters can also be applied to the writing of envelopes though there are some differences between British and American in envelope writing. The differences lie not only in the forms of an envelope, but also in the arrangements of the words of each item (see the following Sample 1-6 and Sample 1-7).