


梁为祥 李 刚 总主编

商贸英语 写作教程

ENGLISH WRITING OF
BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

吕晔 郭明静 主编



 复旦大学出版社

商贸英语写作教程

English Writing of Business Correspondence

总 主 编	梁为祥	李 刚	
主 编	吕 晔	郭明静	
副 主 编	梁玉玲	李凤娟	
参编人员	白新芳	胡 燕	李海军
	王宇涯	涂 斌	涂惠良
	周 琳		

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前 言

高等职业技术学院商贸英语专业是我国高等职业教育特色专业之一,着力培养同当今时代要求相适应的高素质的劳动者和商贸行业所需要的实用型人才。为了适应我国高等职业院校商贸英语专业的实际教学需要,为更好地培养出商贸第一线应用型人才,我们专门编著了这本《商贸英语写作教程》作为本专业的写作教材。编著前,作者们详细地听取了有关本科院校和高职院校商贸英语专业一线教师的意见,为写作提供了宝贵的理论与实践依据。本书具有以下特点:

- 一、精选的内容具有实用性,涵盖:商贸英语信函的设计、商贸英语信函的写作原则、商贸英语信函种类、如何建立贸易关系、请柬、普通公文、广告、通告、公告、通知、求职信、简历、招聘、名片、启事、证书等。这些都是生活中用得上的知识,充分体现了“教材内容符合实际需要的原则”。
- 二、写作的内容重点主要有三个部分:突出写作要点,列出实例,设计练习。由此可见,全书内容突出理论与实践相结合,以理论指导写作实践的编写精神。
- 三、全书虽然是英文版本,但考虑到高职学生的英文基础这种实际情况,作者尽量做到英文文字表达浅显易懂,最大限度地减少生词量,且为了让学生学习方便,在每个章节后面都注出 New Words and Expressions。
- 四、实例和练习的选材尽量做到贴近实用,贴近生活,让学生看得懂、学得进、易掌握。这能激发学生的学习积极性,提高学习效果。
- 五、从教学课时的实际出发,采用简洁的体例,使教师便于教学,学生便于学习。对书的内容进行了反复地筛选、精心地提炼,其内容实用有效。
- 六、练习内容为教师实例讲解、学生亲笔实践提供了丰富的内容和活动空间。
- 七、练习答案与课本分开,另行成册,这样便于教师教学,也便于学生发挥独立思考的能力。



这本全英文版的《商贸英语写作教程》的编写,迄今为止,在高职院校的教材中尚属首例,它有利于学生运用英语思维去进行英文写作,有利于学生尽快地提高英文水平。

本书在写作过程中,得到了有关院校外语系的大力支持和帮助,并由东南大学外国语学院梁为祥教授担任总主编,李刚副教授担任第二总主编,使本书得以顺利出版。在此要感谢复旦大学出版社施胜今副编审的大力支持。由于时间仓促,加之水平有限,疏忽和不足在所难免,希望广大教师和读者多提宝贵意见,以利今后修正与完善。

编者

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Chapter One

Writing of Business Letters

商贸信函写作

Writing Points:

The ability to write effectively is a valuable business asset. One reason is that a great deal of business is transacted in writing. With the wide use of fax and e-mail, even more writing is involved in every part of business. More than at any previous time business people feel the need to put ideas and information into written form. Another reason is that effective business writers can use their skill to help increase their company's sales and profits by promoting good relations with customers, employees, and the general public. Still another reason is that proficiency in writing gives the people in business a personal advantage over less capable writers and contributes substantially to their self-confidence, necessary quality for business success.

Section 1

Writing Principles of Business Letters

商贸信函写作原则

1. Functions of Business Writing (商贸写作功能)

Every business message is designed to achieve a specific business objective. Its success depends on what it says and to what extent it induces a favorable response from the reader. Thus, business writing has three functions: to inform, to persuade and to entertain.

1) The First Function — To Inform

Messages to inform are used to convey the large amount of information



needed to complete the day-to-day operations of the business, such as explaining instructions to employees, announcing meetings, acknowledging orders, accepting contracts. The major purpose of most of these messages is to have the receiver understand a body of information and concentrate on the logical presentation of the content.

2) The Second Function — To Influence

A business message must also influence the readers' attitudes and actions. These messages might include letters promoting a product or service and seeking support for ideas and worthy causes presented to supervisors, stockholders, customers/clients, and others.

3) The Third Function — To Entertain

To secure the desired response, it is necessary to have an adequate knowledge of the English language and an understanding of human nature. The writer should have an acquaintance with the particular interest and, if possible, the emotions of the reader. It seems easy enough, for example, to ask payment of a bill, but it is quite difficult to secure payment without offending the reader and losing his or her future patronage. No communication is wholly successful unless it retains the reader's goodwill.

2. Principles for Effective Business Writing (商贸写作有效原则)

A business message is considered successful when (1) the receiver interprets the message as the sender intended it and (2) it achieves the sender's purposes. In order to meet these objectives, American experts in business communication developed six C's principles: Courteousness, Correctness, Conciseness, Clearness, Concreteness and Completeness.

1) Courteousness

Business message must show courteousness. People respond positively to those who treat them with respect and kindness. Nothing can take the place of words like "please" and "thank you". It should be remembered, however, that true courtesy requires more than the use of polite words and phrases. For instance, timely information with the desire to be helpful and useful is a genuinely courteous message. It will please your customer who dislikes waiting

for a long time before he gets a reply to his inquiry.

A friendly and sincere tone transmits courteousness and opens the way to the pleasant transaction of business.

2) Correctness

Correctness means using standard grammar and spelling. It means choosing suitable stationary and a format acceptable for the situation. It means avoiding obvious erasures or corrections. Certainly, it means choosing the exact word, selecting the appropriate sentence structure, and creating careful paragraphs. Above all, it means accuracy of facts and figures. In short, every effort should be made to ensure the correctness of business messages in all respects.

3) Conciseness

Conciseness is the soul of business writing. In a business message every word counts and every sentence carries the message. Business people receive many messages every day. If you overburden them with unduly long expressions and tire their eyes with excess words, they might just toss your message in the nearby wastebasket.

To make your message as concise as possible, you must:

(1) get to the heart of the message immediately and stick to the point. For example, instead of saying "I would like to take this opportunity to", begin with the information you want to convey.

(2) Strike out extra words and omit words that repeat. Never use several words when you can say the same thing with a single word. For instance, the words underlined can be omitted in the following: during the year of 1994, full and complete details.

(3) Avoid phrases that say nothing, such as "I think", "I feel" and "I believe", for your readers will know that the message contains your thoughts, feelings, or beliefs.

(4) Use simpler constructions to save the reader's time. Use a word instead of a phrase and a phrase instead of a clause for the same thing.

(5) Discuss each point in a separate paragraph. Business writing can be made clearer, easier to read and more attractive to look at by careful paraphrasing. A paragraph for each point is a good rule. Be concise without sacrificing courtesy.



4) Clearness

Clearness is the keynote of the other five characteristics. Clarity relates most directly to the effectiveness of business writing. A business message does not fulfill its function if its reader does not understand it. So a business message must be clear so that it will be understood the first time it is read.

You achieve clarity by thinking before you write, by defining your purpose and by using clear, plain language, avoiding jargon and fancy words. They will only conceal the meaning of the message.

Don't puzzle your readers with long, involved sentences and make sure that what you have written cannot be misunderstood. But you should include necessary details for the readers to understand the subject completely. Inclusion of pertinent information is necessary to make the meaning clear. Good, straightforward, simple English is what is needed for business writing.

5) Concreteness

Business writing should be vivid, specific and definite rather than vague, general and abstract, especially when the writer is requiring a response, solving problems, making an offer or acceptance, etc.

6) Completeness

In addition to concreteness, business message must be complete. Completeness refers to providing enough information so that the intention of the message is understood by the reader. Business writing that leaves out necessary and essential information invariably leads to extra work, extra letters, extra memos — hence extra cost — to add information that should have been included in the original.

The businessman who forgets to include any relevant details in his message will make a poor impression on his readers. An incomplete message is almost worse than none. Exclusion of pertinent information is exasperating. Compare the following notices:

Incomplete: All sales representatives will meet at 9:00 on Monday.

Complete: All sales representatives will meet at 9:00 on Monday, February 27, in Conference Room C.

Be Sure you include all the details that will be needed by the readers of

your message. Say everything that must be said but do not waste your reader's time.

You may list other attributes of effective writing (creativeness). But if you can master the above mentioned Six C's: Courteousness, Correctness, Conciseness, Clearness, Concreteness and Completeness, you'll be a competent writer of business messages.

3. Adapting to Modern Changes in Business Writing (商贸写作适应现代的变化)

Languages are products of the times and always bear the marks of a particular time. The rapid development of technology has brought changes to business writing. Fax and e-mail send messages quickly, and narrow the distance between people in different locations. Business writing, in general, has more and more assumed a friendly, easy, and conversational style.

There were times when the prevailing rule for business writing was that it should be written in the driest possible manner and in language so stilted and formal that the true personality of the writer was completely hidden. The awareness of change — the appreciation of up-to-date ways of doing business — is most important to anyone who aspires to become a successful writer.

The primary concern in business writing is to communicate information. Clarity is important in such business writing as reports, memorandums, procedures, and proposals. However, when you write letters, you will be concerned about communicating more than information. The information in the letters will be important, of course. But you will also need to communicate certain effects.

1) Goodwill Effects

One effect that you need to communicate is the goodwill effect. Building goodwill through letters is good business practice. Wise business leaders know that the success of their businesses is affected by what people think about their businesses. What they think about businesses is influenced by their human contact with the businesses, and letters are a major form of human contact.

The goodwill effect in letters is desirable not only for business reasons. It



is the effect most of us want in our relations with people. We enjoy doing and saying things that create goodwill. They are the friendly, courteous things that make relations between people enjoyable.

2) Other Effects

Other effects sometimes ensure the success of business letters. For example, in writing to persuade a reader to accept an unfavorable decision, you can use the techniques of *persuasion*. In applying for a job, you can use writing techniques that *emphasize your qualifications*. And in telling bad news, you can use writing techniques that *play down the unwelcome part*.

4. Suggestions for Writing Techniques (写作技巧建议)

Achieving the desired effects is a matter of writing skill and of understanding how people respond to words. It involves keeping certain attitudes in mind and using certain writing techniques to work them into your letters.

The following are some helpful suggestions.

1) Conversational Style

A letter — a good letter — reflects the personality of the writer and also should be pleasing to the reader. In a good letter a conversation is held. The reader must be made to forget that he or she is reading a letter. Instead, the writer has traveled on a piece of paper to talk to him or her. People who write with a sense of personal contact have a better chance to make what they say interesting and convincing than those who feel they are “writing letters”. Whatever you talk about in the letters, the language you use should be the same as if you met the person on the street, at home, or in the office. Such language is warm and natural. It leaves an impression that people like. It is also the language we use most and understand best.

2) Resisting Tendency to Be Formal

The executives of your company do not want letter contacts to be cold and formal. They know that the most loyal customer is the one who feels like “one of the family”. But when faced with a writing task, many of us tend to change

character. Instead of writing in friendly, conversational language, we write in stiff and stilted words. There is a misconception that big words and difficult words are preferred in business letters, but the result of such words is a cold and unnatural style that does not produce the goodwill effect you want your letters to have.

3) Avoiding the Old Language of Business
Good writers take care to avoid stale expressions. Early English business writers borrowed heavily from the formal language of law and from the flowery language of the nobility. From these two sources they developed a style of letter writing that became known as the “language of business”. It was a cold, stiff, and unnatural style, but it was generally accepted throughout the English-speaking world.

For example. Your letter of the 7th inst, received and contents duly noted; Please be advised to . . . ; wherein you state as per your letter; Thanking you in advance.

It is obvious the tone is cold, and the expressions “7th inst, please be advised to . . . , wherein” are out of date and should be avoided.

4) You-viewpoint
Writing from the you-viewpoint (also called you-attitude) is another technique for building goodwill in letters. You-viewpoint is to focus interest on the reader. It is a technique for persuasion and for influencing people favorably.

In a broad sense, you-viewpoint writing emphasizes the reader’s interest and concerns. It emphasizes “you” and “your” and de-emphasizes “we” and “our”. But it is more than a matter of just using second person pronouns. It is an attitude of mind. It is the attitude that places the reader in the center of things. Sometimes, it just involves being friendly and treating people in the way they like to be treated. Sometimes it involves skillfully handling people with carefully chosen words to make a desired impression.

When you use you-viewpoint in writing, avoid insincerity. You-viewpoint can be used to the point of being insincere, and it can be obviously flattery. Remember the objective of you-viewpoint is to treat people courteously — the



way they like to be treated. You cannot afford to sacrifice sincerity by overdoing it. Use the you-viewpoint for good goals. If you use it for bad goals, it will have the effect of manipulation.

5) Accent on Positive Language

People enjoy and react favorably to positive messages. A positive tone builds the reader's confidence in the writer's ability to solve problems and strengthens personal and business relationships. Positive words are usually best for letter goals, especially when persuasion and goodwill are needed. Positive words emphasize the pleasant aspects of the goal and tend to put the reader in the right frame of mind. They also create the goodwill atmosphere readers seek in most letters. Negative words tend to produce the opposite effect. They may stir up your reader's resistance to your goals, and they are likely to be highly destructive of goodwill.

6) Singling Out Your Reader

Letters that appear to be written for one reader tend to make the reader feel important and appreciated. To single out your reader in a letter, you should write for his or her particular situation. What you say throughout the letter should make it clear that the reader is getting individual treatment. Consider the following situation: A company training director is writing to the director of a management-training program asking for additional information on the program. The individualistic closing should be something like "We look forward to the possibility of sending our executives to you in the years ahead." It is much better than one that fits any similar case "We look forward to hearing from you."

7) Using the Reader's Names

As you have probably noticed in some letters, using the reader's name in the letter text is another way to show that the reader is being given special treatment. It makes the reader feel that his/her identity as individual is recognized. That letters begin with customer's name makes him or her feel important. Use it once or twice in the letter, but not so often as to sound like a ward politician out for votes.

8) Avoiding Anger

Rarely is anger justified in letters. It destroys goodwill. Most of comments