

全国应用型本科商务英语系列规划教材

现代商务英语写作实务

Modern Business English Writing Practice

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出版说明

经济与贸易的蓬勃发展为我国高校商务英语专业建设提供了难得的机遇，也提出了更多的挑战。为了更好地推动商务英语本科专业的发展，对外经济贸易大学出版社组织编写了这套“全国应用型本科商务英语系列规划教材”。

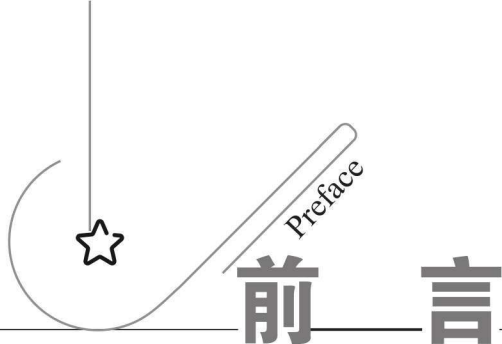
面对经济全球化和中国加入 WTO 之后社会对人才需求的新形势，高等院校本科商务英语的人才培养应该定位在“培养德、智、体、美、劳全面发展，英语语言基础扎实，具有较强的英语交际能力，具备基本的商务与文秘知识和业务能力，知识面宽，具有创新精神，知识、能力、素质协调统一，面向经贸、外事、涉外企业、跨国公司、教育等行业，能从事国际商务策划、国际商务谈判、国际贸易、国际金融、国际市场营销、高级商务翻译、教学、科研及管理工作的应用型专门人才”。本系列教材从当前形势需求出发，力求培养具有扎实的英语基本功，掌握国际商务基础理论和知识，善于跨文化交流与沟通，能适应经济全球化，具备国际竞争力的复合型英语人才。

本套“全国应用型本科商务英语系列规划教材”适用于全国应用型本科院校商务英语专业、英语专业的商务/应用/外贸英语方向以及财经类专业的学生，内容包括《商务英语听说》《商务英语阅读》《现代商务英语写作实务》《商务英语函电》《商务英语翻译》《国际商务制单》《国际贸易理论与实务（英文版）》《国际商务洽谈口语教程》等。

本系列的编撰者们不仅具有丰富的语言教学经验，而且具备商务活动的实践经验，他们集教学经验和专业背景于一身，这是本套商务英语系列教材编撰质量的有力保证。

此外，本套教材配有课件等立体化教学资源，供教师教学参考（可登陆 <http://www.uibepresources.com> 下载）。

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2020年1月



商务英语写作贯穿于商务活动的全过程，因此，商务英语写作在对外经济贸易活动中以及在商务英语课程体系中都日益凸显出其实用性和重要性。商务英语写作是商务英语专业或英语专业商务方向学生的必修课程，也是很多非英语专业学生的热门选修课程，因为使用英语进行各种商务内容的写作将会是他们从事各类国际业务必备的基本职业技能。近些年来，我国与世界经济接轨的步伐大大加快，国家的经济活动也已远远超出传统的外贸范畴，扩大到了金融、保险、法律、海外投资等领域。由此，各个行业与国际接轨的过程中都在经历着前所未有的变革，人们的工作方式和交流方式也在潜移默化中快速发展；是否具有良好的商务写作能力越来越被视为职场人士的重要职业素质之一，更是成为了商务活动能否成功的关键因素。

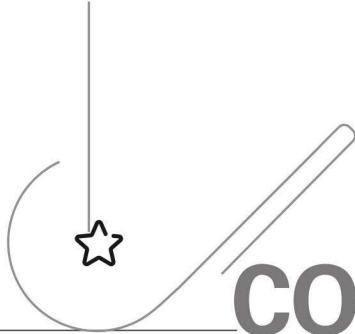
为顺应中国这一经济高速发展的新形势，笔者特编写这本《现代商务英语写作实务》，为学生和职场人士提供更加全面、可操作性强、与时俱进的商务英语写作知识，快速提高他们在各种商务环境下的商务英语写作技能。本书突出实用性，把商务英语写作涉及的诸如商务业务知识、惯例和做法、信息传递的手段和方式、语言修辞等各方面因素和当今广泛的商务活动内容（包括货物贸易和服务贸易）各个实际操作环节的真实场景融合渗透到了每个单元。在选材方面，本书除采用传统外贸实例外，还涵盖了当代经济社会中各类公司间商务活动，具有很强的时代感和现实指导意义。本书强调商业活动双方之间的灵活互动，要在“知彼”的基础上进行恰当得体的实用写作，兼顾写作的形式与内容，以完成更加符合商业目标的商务英语写作。

笔者现从教于北京物资学院（副教授），曾有幸担任瑞士 Faude & Huguenin 公司中国区商务代表和哈萨克斯坦造币局 Kazakhstan Mint 中国区独家采购商，希望能把更多的实际商务内容融入到本书的写作中。本书共四部分十三个单元，除包含针对进出口业务主要环节的商贸函电写作外，还包括涉及公司商务活动的其他日常写作形式，以贴近实际、通俗易懂、简明完整、清楚正确为写作原则，以达到良好的沟通效果和商业目标为准绳，这样的内容构成更加符合实际课堂讲解或自学的需求。为便于教学或自学，本书练习配有参考答案，请发邮件至 wangru@bwu.edu.cn 索取或登陆对外经济贸易大学出版社资源网（www.uibepresources.com）下载。

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编者

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CONTENTS

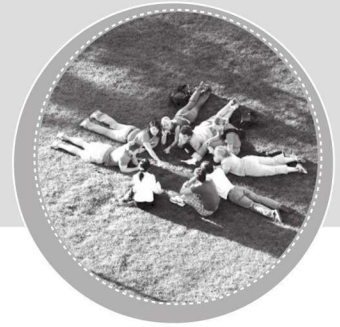
Part One Introduction	1
Unit 1 An Overview of Business Writing	3
Part Two Correspondence in International Trade	13
Unit 2 Enquiries and Replies	15
Unit 3 Offers and Counter-offers	27
Unit 4 Orders and Acknowledgements	37
Part Three Entering into Contracts	47
Unit 5 Contracts	49
Part Four Basic Writings in Office Work	61
Unit 6 Memos	63
Unit 7 Agendas	71
Unit 8 Minutes	81
Unit 9 Notices and Announcements	89
Unit 10 Business Reports	99
Unit 11 Business Proposals and Business Plans	113
Unit 12 Sales Letters	139
Unit 13 Questionnaires	151
References	163
Appendix I List of Business Titles	165
Appendix II Common Abbreviations in Business Writing	167
Appendix III Résumé	185

Part One

Introduction

Part One contains only one unit, which outlines the composition of this book, shows the characteristics and patterns of business writing, explains its general writing process, and emphasizes the principles and tactics of how to accomplish them effectively.

Unit 1



An Overview of Business Writing

• Objectives

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand what business writing involves;
- Know the general process of effective business writing;
- Understand the principles of effective business writing.

1.1 Introduction

Business writing covers a wide range of written documents, from informal one-line emails to complex contracts covering hundreds of pages of legal English. Clearly, in a book like this, it will not be possible to cover every aspect in detail. What this book will do is to give you an introduction to the most common types of business writing you are likely to meet.

As far as business is concerned, strong communication skills increase productivity. Written communication is about putting your thought and ideas into a form (a code) which can then be transmitted to another person. This may draw forth some sort of feedback or response, so communication actually involves more than the writer himself/herself—it is not only about writing the document, it is also about the document being received, understood and reacted upon. Business writing is about communicating a message. Everybody in the business world has to be able to communicate with colleagues, customers, partners and so on. In an ever-increasing global workplace, much of this communication is likely to be with people from a different country and a different culture. English is the *lingua franca* in the business world.

Business writing has three basic functions—to inform, to persuade and to entertain:

Messages to inform are used to convey the vast amount of information needed to

complete the day-to-day operations of the business—explain instructions to employees, announce meetings and decisions, acknowledge orders, accept contracts, etc. 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. So the writer must have an adequate knowledge of the English language as basis in order to inform well.

In addition to providing information, some business messages can also influence the reader's 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 and so on.

To make the customers happy to do business with you, it is also necessary to have a thorough understanding of human nature. The writer should have an acquaintance with the particular interests 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/her future patronage. No communication is wholly successful unless it retains the reader's goodwill and guarantees further more cooperation.

Misunderstandings can easily occur if the person receiving the message interprets the code in a different way from the sender. Therefore, anyone producing written business messages must make sure that the information sent is as clear and unambiguous as possible. And to do this successfully, it is necessary to think about the reader all the time.

1.2 Patterns of Business Writing

You'd better know some basic patterns of business writing, then you can organize business messages either deductively or inductively depending on your prediction of the receiver's reaction to your main idea. Learning to organize business messages according to the approaches that are outlined below will improve your chances of writing a document that elicits the response or action you desire.

Direct Good-news Messages

Good-news or routine messages follow a direct order (deductive sequence)—the message begins with the main idea. To present good-news or routine information deductively, you may begin with the major idea, followed by supporting details, and end with goodwill.

Most business writings such as routine inquiries and replies, favorable response to claims and adjustment requests, recommendation letters, good news about employment, congratulations, messages of appreciation, announcements fall into this category.

Indirect Bad-news Messages

When the main message is about bad news, hard for the reader to accept, you should

usually write in indirect order. The indirect order is especially effective when you must say “no” to a request or when you must convey other disappointing news. The main reason for this approach is that negative messages are received more positively when an explanation precedes them. An explanation cushions the shock of bad news. In fact, an explanation may even convince the reader that the writer’s position is correct.

The indirect writing strategy usually consists of four parts: a buffer; reasons supporting the negative decision; a clear diplomatic statement of the negative decision; a helpful, friendly and positive close.

Examples of bad-news messages in different business occasions are:

- Bad news about orders such as back orders, substitutions, unfilled orders, non-confirming orders;
- Negative replies such as denying cooperation, declining invitations and request for favors, refusing adjustment of claims;
- Unfavorable news about people such as refusing to write recommendation letters, giving negative performance reviews, terminating employment.

Indirect Persuasion

In all occupations and professions, rich rewards await those who can use well-informed and well-prepared presentations to persuade others to accept their ideas or buy their products/services. By persuasion, we mean reasoning with the reader—presenting facts with logic that support the case.

Persuasive messages aim to influence readers who are inclined to resist. Common types of persuasive messages are sales letters, claim letters and letters that request special favor or information.

To succeed, therefore, you have to begin with convincing them. In this approach, you should generally follow the indirect order strategy. Open with words that set up the strategy—needs and appeals, emotion, logic and credibility, and gain attention. Then present the strategy (the persuasion), using persuasive language and you-attitude. End the letter by describing precisely what you would like to happen, restating how the audience will benefit by acting as you wish and making actions easy to be taken.

1.3 Process of Business Writing

People see business writing as a process. It can involve a number of stages as follows:

- Identifying your readers
- Clarifying your aim
- Generating ideas
- Organizing the ideas

- Sketching a synopsis
- Drafting your text
- Revising and editing
- Proofreading

Good writers tend to follow certain strategies. But these stages are not fixed. Depending on the type of writing and what the writer intends to achieve, some may be left out, some may take weeks, and some may be done by other people.

1.4 Principles of Business Writing

A business message is considered to be successful when the receiver interprets the message as the sender intends and it achieves the sender's ends. In order to meet these two objectives, seven C's principles and one more positive attitude should be paid enough attention.

Seven C's Principles

1. Courtesy

Actual business correspondence reveals the fact that special attention should be devoted to assuring the courtesy of business communication. By courtesy, we mean treating people with respect and friendly human concern. Effective writers visualize the reader before starting to write. They consider the reader's desires, problems, circumstances, emotions and probable reactions to their request. Thus, courtesy doesn't merely need expressions such as "please..." "would you..." "may I...", etc., but to show tactfully in your writing the honest friendship, thoughtful appreciation, sincere politeness, considerate understanding and heartfelt respect. Compare the following example sentences:

<i>Your letter of May 2nd regarding payment of this order <u>has been received.</u></i>	<i>Your letter of May 2nd regarding payment of this order <u>has received our careful attention.</u></i>
<i>We are sorry <u>you have misunderstood us.</u></i>	<i>We are sorry <u>we have not made ourselves misunderstood.</u></i>

2. Correctness

Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are basic requirements for both academic writing and business writing. In business writing, correctness also means choosing the correct level of language and using accurate information, industrial terms and data for different customers/clients. Pay special attention to the details under the business conditions, such as exact numbers in price, quantity, date, etc. It is necessary for them to be rechecked before being sent. Compare the following example sentences:

<i>We are sorry for the delay in establishing <u>credit certificate</u>.</i>	<i>We are sorry for the delay in establishing <u>L/C</u>.</i>
<i>Any questions, pls feel free to call <u>82360696</u>.</i>	<i>Any questions, pls feel free to call <u>+86-10-82360696</u>.</i>
<i>The unit price of this sewing machine is <u>50</u>.</i>	<i>The unit price of this sewing machine is <u>USD 50</u>.</i>

3. Conciseness

Business people put a high premium on conciseness in business messages, because a wordy message wastes their more time to write and read. Effective writing should be concise—each word, sentence and paragraph counts. Conciseness in business writing demands the fewest possible words without sacrificing completeness and courtesy. Conciseness gives emphasis to the message itself. Compare the following example phrases:

<i>a long period of time</i>	<i>long time</i>
<i>at the present time</i>	<i>at present; now</i>
<i>due to the fact that</i>	<i>because</i>
<i>in accordance with your request</i>	<i>as requested</i>
<i>right now</i>	<i>immediately</i>

4. Clarity

Clarity tells the reader exactly what he or she wants and needs to know, using words and formats that make the writing totally understood. Short familiar words and simple short sentences rather than long difficult words and complex long sentences are better for this purpose. Compare the following example paragraphs:

<p><i>Dear Ms. Wang,</i></p> <p><i>Mr. Simpson yesterday called our agent David saying that the mistake was <u>his</u>. Therefore, we shall be repaid the <u>full amount</u> of our <u>subrogation</u> interest in this matter. If this is satisfactory to you, please sign the attached release and <u>forward it</u> along with the copy of our accident report.</i></p> <p><i>Best regards,</i></p> <p><i>F. Middleman</i></p>	<p><i>Dear Ms. Wang,</i></p> <p><i><u>Mr. Simpson yesterday admitted his fault</u> when calling our agent David. His insurance company has agreed to repay us the <u>full amount (\$3,000)</u> for the damage. If this is satisfactory to you, please sign the attached release and <u>forward it to us</u>, along with the copy of our accident report.</i></p> <p><i>Best regards,</i></p> <p><i>F. Middleman</i></p>
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5. Concreteness

Business writing should be vivid, specific and definite, rather than vague, general and abstract. For example, when we express some qualities or other situations of goods, we should use exact figures, specific time such as date, month, year even hour and minute, if necessary, and avoid using general words like good, long, yesterday, next month. Compare the following example sentences:

<i>We've well received your letter <u>yesterday</u>.</i>	<i>We've well received your letter <u>dated May 5 regarding prepayment of your shoe order</u>.</i>
<i>We are making an effort to ship the goods <u>earlier</u>.</i>	<i>We are making an effort to ship the goods <u>before the end of October, 2019</u>.</i>

6. Completeness

Business writing should include all the necessary information and data in the message because these information and data can help senders get receivers' responses and achieve desired objectives much earlier. An incomplete message may result in increased communication costs, loss of business goodwill, sales and valued customers, cost of returned goods and more time trying to make sense out of the incomplete messages. Practically, an outline helps the sender to write fully and completely, which should be one of work habits for business people.

7. Consideration

To create good impression to your reader, put yourself in his/her place to give enough consideration to his/her varied wishes, demands, interests and difficulties. Emphasize the "you" attitude rather than the "I" or "we" attitude. Compare the following example sentences:

<i>We would allow you a 2% discount for cash payment before Apr. 1st, 2019.</i>	<i>You would be provided a 2% discount for cash payment before Apr. 1st, 2019.</i>
<i>We found a quality issue in the workshop today, so we <u>require your coming</u> next Monday.</i>	<i>You are <u>supposed to come</u> to our plant next Monday, because a quality issue happened in the workshop today</i>

Positive Attitude

In any business writing, especially when we intend to persuade someone to accept our idea, we need stress advantages of doing something rather than disadvantages of not doing something. Compare the following example sentences:

<i>This kind of <u>unfortunate</u> incident will <u>not</u> occur in the future.</i>	<i>Future transactions will be handled with the <u>utmost care</u>.</i>
<i>The color is guaranteed <u>not to dull</u> for three years.</i>	<i>The color is guaranteed to <u>stay bright</u> for three years.</i>
<i>We are <u>withholding</u> your shipment <u>until</u> we receive the payment.</i>	<i>We will deliver your order <u>as soon as</u> payment is received.</i>
<i>The <u>price</u> you quoted is <u>so high</u> that we could <u>not</u> place an order.</i>	<i>We shall <u>appreciate</u> it very much if you could quote us your <u>best price</u>.</i>

1.5 Tactics for Effective Business Writing

Four tips for accomplishing effective business writing are as follows:

1. Use clear language

Make sure the reader will get the exact message you are sending. To do this, you need to be clear in your own mind about the purpose of the written document. Then you need to think about how to express it in your writing:

—Use simple words and phrases

Convey the message clearly.

—Use simple paragraphs

Focus on one topic or point, and start each paragraph with a topic sentence.

—Use pictures, diagrams, lists and examples

Clarify what you are trying to say.

—Use headings.

2. Use the right register

Register is about using the right sorts of words and phrases for your audience. For example, if you are writing to engineers, it is alright to use technical jargon. However, you should not use them if you are writing to the finance department. Likewise, you should think about the formality of what you are writing. An e-mail to a close colleague will be quite different in tone from the one to the managing director of a large foreign enterprise, even if both are essentially sending the same message (e.g. what time to meet for a discussion).

3. Use “we” and “you”

Treat the reader as if you are having face-to-face communication in between. This means that you can name them “you” rather than “*the supplier*” or “*the customer*” or “*the receiver*”. Likewise, use “we” when you are writing about yourself or your organization. “You” and “we” in business writing, for most of the cases, refer to “*your company*” and “*our company*”, because anyone who are writing is indeed on behalf of the company. This certainly helps to have better communication through business writing.

4. Use correct titles and names

This is common courtesy, and may appear obvious. However, it is very easy to get titles and names wrong. In modern business writing, using the reader’s name once or twice in the letter text has become a way to show that the reader is being given special treatment. This makes the reader feel important and that his/her identity as an individual has been recognized.

1.6 Attention

All business writing in English will involve intercultural communication, which means that you are sending and receiving messages to and from another culture. Different countries have different cultures, but so do different companies and different professions. Culture is the

key element that goes to make up a person's identity, and such needs should be treated seriously.

Culture is difficult to define in a simple way, but it refers to the beliefs, attitudes, norms and values that people have learnt from their surroundings. People in a particular community have certain ways of doing things which may be different to people from a different community. They have certain beliefs and behave in certain ways which may appear strange to people from the other community. Culture influences how they behave and how they write.

It is easy to put people from different cultures in a certain category to stereotype them. This somehow simplifies the problem, and helps us understand what we might expect. But it is important to realize that we are dealing with individual people, not cultures. In addition, people belong to different cultures at the same time. So a Chinese accountant may be influenced by his Chinese culture, but at the same time he is influenced by his professional culture. In this way, he may have certain things in common with other Chinese, but will also share many ideas and beliefs with his American counterparts.

Cultures can vary along different dimensions. For example, some cultures, such as the US, see individual efforts and achievements as most important; other cultures, such as Japan, might see the group as more significant. Cultures treat power in different ways too. In some cultures, it is expected that you do what your manager or boss instructs you to do. In others, feedback and discussion may be the norm. Different cultures also treat risk in different ways. Some cultures prefer to avoid risk by having lots of written rules and regulations, but others prefer more flexibility. Besides, some cultures need to explain things explicitly, whereas others are happy to understand what is happening from the context or situation. All of the above can have important impact on intercultural communication. Specifically within written business writing, culture can have some very specific implications, to which the writers should pay enough attention:

1. Article structure

Different cultures organize documents in different styles. Take a report on a particular technical problem as example. Some cultures might prefer a linear approach, for example, where things are arranged chronologically, so that the report might contain background information before its recommendations which are based on the information. Other cultures, on the other hand, might prefer to see the recommendations at the very beginning of a report, since these are the very information for further action.

When preparing for a certain type of business writing, some cultures might prefer to spend some time discussing relationships and going into details to build up that relationship, other cultures might regard style and presentation to be of the most importance. Some cultures prefer a simple and short report, others might prefer a longer version where the writer has a chance to go into detail and show how much efforts have been made. The problem is that different readers have different understanding of what is meant by the word report, and

become irritated and frustrated when things do not conform to their cultural expectations. Worse still, they may feel that important information has been ignored, or too much information has been included, or they are unable to find, what they consider to be, the crucial relevant information.

2. Language wording

When we write in our own language, we are encouraged to use idioms and metaphors—they help to make the text more interesting and often bring a message home in a way that other simple straightforward language cannot. Unfortunately, this often has the opposite effect on someone from another culture. A typical example of this is the US preference to mentioning sport in their business communication. These cultural idioms are difficult to translate and can lead to misunderstanding. It is important to understand that the English language we use for international communication is not the same as American or British English. It is an international variety which both sides can understand.

3. Date expression

The way of expressing date is actually confusing in business writing. In Germany, 7/5/2019 means seventh of May, 2019. In the US, it means fifth of July, 2019. So, we'd better always use the names of the months to avoid confusion, e.g. 7 May, 2019 or May 7th, 2019. Besides, some cultures might use different calendar systems altogether. Some Islamic business people prefer to use the Islamic calendar, which is quite different from the Western calendar. And, of course, New Year in the West is quite different from the New Year in China.

4. Religious greetings

Customers from different cultures may have different religious faith because different cultures may have different systems and traditions. Thus, business people would like to be greeted in their religious way with respect. Certainly you may choose to greet people in standard ways with “*how are you?*” “*have a nice day*” “*happy weekend*”, etc. Wishing “Happy Christmas” or “Hari Raya” or “Deepavali” might not be appropriate for all your clients.



Exercises

I. Answer the following questions.

1. What are the differences between academic writing and business writing?
2. What are the tips for effective business writing?
3. Why does culture play an important role in influencing business communication?

II. What are the problems in the following expressions? Try to revise them to be more positive.

1. Your negligence in this matter caused the damage to the equipment.
2. Do not walk on the grass.

3. We inform you that we must deny your request for credit.
4. Your order cannot be acknowledged until next week.
5. To avoid the loss of your credit rating, please remit payment within three days.

Part Two

Correspondence in International Trade

Part Two follows the general sequence of an international transaction, focusing on business correspondence between sellers and buyers. Unit 2 deals with business letters from buyers to enquire for goods. Unit 3 deals with those from sellers to make an offer. This part also explains, after preceding discussion of all transaction details, how to place an order and how to acknowledge it.