

# 01

## Project 1

### Overview of Foreign Trade Correspondence

### 外贸函电概述



#### 【Project Leading】项目导入

Upon graduation, Zheng Hao, a student majoring in International Trade wishes to make full use of his academic study and seek employment in foreign trade. Having submitted several resumes to various companies, he is finally recruited by HEFEI GOMILE IMP&EXP Co., Ltd. as a foreign trade salesman.



#### 【Task Splitting】任务分解

As a foreign trade salesman, it is necessary to have a comprehensive mastery of foreign trade correspondence:

1. Understanding the layout of foreign trade correspondence;
2. Getting acquainted with the structure of foreign trade correspondence;
3. Grasping the writing principle of foreign trade correspondence.

### Task 1 The Layout of Foreign Trade Correspondence

### 外贸函电格式

#### 1. Layout of Foreign Trade Correspondence

Usually, there are the following elements in formal business letters.

##### 1) Letterhead 信头

Letterhead includes the sender's name, postal address, telephone number, fax number, and E-mail address, etc. Usually letterhead is printed in the up-center or at the left margin of a letter.

Shenzhen Chiwan Petroleum Supply Base Co., Ltd.

Add.14F Chiwan Petroleum Building Shekou

Shenzhen China 518068  
Tel.86-755-26694211  
Fax.86-755-26694227 86-755-26699989  
E-mail:webmaster@chiwanbase.com

## 2) Reference and Date 编号和日期

In business communication, when a firm writes to another, each will give a reference. The reference may include a file number, departmental code or the initials of the signer followed by that of the typist of the letter. These are marked “Our ref:” and “Your ref:” to avoid confusion:

Your ref:

Our ref:

They are typed immediately below the letterhead. If desired, the reference initials can also be placed at the lower left margin two lines below the name of the signer.

The date should always be typed in full and not abbreviated (e.g. December for Dec.). And the -th, -st, -nd, and -rd that follow the day can be omitted (e.g. 6 May for 6<sup>th</sup> May, June 1 for June 1<sup>st</sup>). Don't write 17 instead of 2017 for the year.

The forms of dates are as follows:

16<sup>th</sup> August, 2017      August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Avoid typing dates in figures (e.g. 12/3/2017), since it should easily be confusing. Because English form follows the order of day, month and year, while the U.S. practice is to write in the order of month, day and year. So 12/3/2017 could be taken as either December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 or March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## 3) Inside Name and Address 封内名称和地址

The name and address of the receiver is typed at the left-hand margin about two to four spaces below the date. It appears exactly the same way as on the envelope.

The following are the two examples to show the way of writing an inside name and address:

e.g. 1 Messers William & Werner  
36, Tower Street  
North York, Ont  
M2H1W8, Canada

e.g. 2 Mr. C. E. Eckersley  
The London Export Corporation  
6&7 Clifford Street  
London, W. 1, England

## 4) Attention Line 经办人

Attention line is used when the writer of a letter addressed to an organization wishes to direct the letter to a specific individual or section of the firm. It generally follows the inside

address.

e.g. Attention: Mr. Smith

Attention: the Sales Manager

### 5) Salutation 称呼

Salutation is usually typed three spaces below the inside address of the attention line, and followed by a comma for “Dear Sir”, “Dear Sirs”, and a colon for “Gentlemen”.

The customary formal greeting in a business letter is “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam” used for addressing one person; and “Dear Sirs”, “Dear Mesdames”, or “Gentlemen”(always should be in plural form and never write “Gentleman”) for addressing two or more people. If the receiver is known to the writer personally, a warmer greeting “Dear Mr. sb.” is then preferred.

### 6) Subject Line 事由

Subject Line is actually the general idea of a letter. It is inserted between the salutation and the body of the letter either at the left-hand margin for fully-blocked letter form or centrally over the body for other forms. It calls the receiver’s attention to the topic of the letter.

### 7) Body of a Letter 正文

This is the main part of the letter. It expresses the writer’s idea, opinion, purpose and wishes, etc., so it should be carefully planned.

### 8) Complimentary Close 结尾敬辞

Complimentary Close is merely a polite way of ending a letter. It is in keeping with the salutation. The most commonly used sets of salutation and Complimentary Close are as follows.

Formal:

Dear Sir(s),                      Yours faithfully,

Gentlemen:                      Truly yours,

Less Formal:

Dear Mr. Henry, (: )        Yours sincerely,  
(Or: Sincerely yours,)

### 9) Signature 签名

It is common to type the name of the writer’s firm or company immediately below complimentary close. Then the person who dictates the letter should sign his name, by hand and in ink, below it. Since hand-written signatures are illegible, the name of the signer is usually typed below the signature, and followed by his job title or position.

### 10) Enclosure 附件

If something is enclosed, note it below the signature.

e.g. 1 Enclosures 4 samples

e.g. 2 Encl. Price List

## 11) Carbon Copy Notation 抄送

When copies of the letter are sent to others, type c.c. below the signature at the left margin.

e.g. 1 c.c. The Osaka Chamber of Commerce

e.g. 2 c.c. Mr. G Well

## 12) Postscript 附言

If the writer wishes to add something he forgot to mention or for emphasis, he may add his postscript two spaces below the carbon copy notation.

e.g. P.S. The samples will be mailed to you tomorrow.

Try to avoid P.S. since it may suggest that the writer failed to plan his letter well before he typed it.

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

- ① Shenzhen Chiwan Petroleum Supply Base Co., Ltd.  
Add. 14F Chiwan Petroleum Building Shekou  
Shenzhen China 518068  
Tel. 86-755-26694211  
Fax. 86-755-26694227 86-755-26699989  
E-mail: webmaster@chiwanbase.com
- ② Your ref: Our ref: bw/bw Date: 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2017
- ③ Messers. J. Brown & Co.  
219 Eastcheap  
London, E. C. 3.
- ④ Attention: Import Dept.
- ⑤ Dear Sirs,
- ⑥ Oil Tools
- ⑦ We thank you for your letter of March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

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 confirmation.

Payment is to be made by irrevocable Letter of Credit available by draft at sight.

As there is a heavy demand for the goods, we suggest that you advise us by E-mail in case of interest.

We are looking forward to your early reply.

⑧ Yours faithfully,

⑨

Chiwan Petroleum Supply Base  
(Signed)...

Jiang yitian

Manager

⑩ Encl. as stated

⑪ CC. our Branch Office in Hong Kong

⑫ P.S. Your letter of March 5<sup>th</sup> has just come to hand. As requested, we will airmail you two samples tomorrow.

## 2. Format of Foreign Trade Correspondence

### 1) Full-block Format 全齐头式

In the full-block format, all lines begin at the left margin. There is no indention in the letter at all. This format is simple, easy to type, and is often used in business letters.

Letterhead	
Date	
Inside address	
_____	
Salutation	
Body of a letter	
_____	
Complimentary close	
Signature	

### 2) Semi-block Format 半齐头式

Complimentary close and signature begin to the right of the centre of the paper. All the other elements are blocked against the left margin.

Letterhead	
Date	
Inside address	
_____	
Salutation	
Body of a letter	
_____	
_____	
	Complimentary close
	Signature

### 3) Conventional Format 传统式

The difference between this format and the semi-block format is that it takes four spaces in

the first line of each paragraph of the body letter. The positions of other elements are quite similar to those in the semi-block.

Letterhead	
Date	
Inside address	
_____	
Salutation	
Body of a letter	
_____	
_____	
Complimentary close	
Signature	

### 3. Addressing Envelopes

Business envelopes ordinarily have the return address printed in the upper left corner. The receiver's name and address should be typed about half way down the envelope.

The post mark or stamps should be placed in the up right-hand corner, while the bottom left-hand corner is for post notations such as "Confidential", "Secret", "Printed Matter", etc.

Here are two samples:

#### 1) Block form 齐头式

Jennifer Green 78 Cowpepper Road, Jericho Oxford X2 6DP England	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Stamp</div>	Purchase Manager Huapu Chemicals Import and Export Corporation 29 Baishiqiao Road Haidian District Beijing 100034 P. R. China
By Air		

## 2) Indented form 缩进式

Overseas Trading Co. 88 Market Street London, E. C. 3.	Stamp
	Huapu Chemicals Imp. & Exp. Corporation Li Qing Chaoyang District Beijing 100022 P. R. China
Registered	

## Task 2 The Structure of Foreign Trade Correspondence

### 外贸函电框架

Outline for a typical foreign trade correspondence usually has three paragraphs, they are as follows.

#### 1. Opening Paragraph

The opening paragraph of a foreign trade letter is like a headline in the newspaper. It should obtain the reader's attention at the first sight, and help to gain a positive response from the reader. In order to accomplish this aim, the following points should be considered:

##### 1) Be Brief

As a general rule, keep the paragraph short—two or three sentences.

##### 2) Indicate What the Letter is About

Get to the point immediately in the first paragraph and let the reader find the key information quickly.

##### 3) Refer to Previous Correspondence, if Appropriate

When there has been previous communications concerning the subject, reference to them is necessary. This may help the reader to get the point promptly.

##### 4) Set a Positive and Friendly Tone

Setting a positive and friendly tone in the opening paragraph may help to evoke the positive reaction the writer desires.

## 2. Middle Paragraph(s)

Middle paragraphs support the first paragraph and provide more information. After finishing the opening paragraph, think about what the reader still needs to know so that he/she may react as you desire. Here necessary background and supporting information should be provided. Usually, information concerning these aspects should be considered: Who, What, Why, When, Where and How.

## 3. Last Paragraph

The last paragraph usually serves as a summation, suggestion or further request. It should:

- ① Conclude or restate the key point.
- ② Request necessary action, if appropriate.
- ③ Further confirm a positive image.

## Task 3 The Writing Principle of Foreign Trade Correspondence 外贸函电写作原则

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### 1. Courtesy

Courtesy is not mere politeness. It stems from a sincere You-attitude.

In order to make a business letter courteous, try to avoid irritating, offensive, or belittling statements. To answer letters promptly is also a matter of courtesy.

### 2. Consideration

Consideration emphasizes You-attitude rather than We-attitude. When writing a letter, keep the reader's request, needs, desires, as well as his feelings in mind. Plan the best way to present the message for reader to receive.

The following points are necessary for writing a letter to embody consideration:

- |        |   |                |
|--------|---|----------------|
| e.g. 1 | We allow 2% discount for each payment.                | (We-attitude)  |
|        | You earn 2% discount when you pay cash.               | (You-attitude) |
| e.g. 2 | We won't be able to send you the brochure this month. | (We-attitude)  |
|        | We will send you the brochure next month.             | (You-attitude) |

### 3. Completeness

A business letter should include all the necessary information. It is essential to check the message carefully before it is sent out.



## 4. Clarity

The writer must try to express his meaning clearly so that the reader will understand it well. To achieve this, he should try to:

### 1) Avoid using the words which have different understanding or unclear meaning

e.g. As to the steamers from Hong Kong to San Francisco, we have bimonthly direct services.

The word “bimonthly” has two meanings: twice a month, or once two months. The reader will feel puzzled about the meaning.

(Rewriting):

We have two direct sailings every month from Hong Kong to San Francisco.

We have semimonthly direct sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco.

We have a direct sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco every two months.

### 2) Pay attention to the position of the modifiers

e.g. We shall be able to supply 12 cases of the item only.

We shall be able to supply 12 cases only of the item.

The modifier “only” in the above sentences modifies two different words, so the two sentences have different meanings.

### 3) Pay attention to the sentence structures

e.g. We sent you 4 samples yesterday of the goods which you requested in your letter of April 6<sup>th</sup> by air.

We sent you, by air, 4 samples of the goods which you requested in your letter of April 6<sup>th</sup> yesterday.

### 4) Paragraph carefully and properly

Commercial letters should be clear and tidy, easy to understand the content. So a writer should paragraph a letter carefully and properly. One paragraph for each point is a good general rule.

## 5. Conciseness

To achieve conciseness is to use concise sentences and fewest words, without losing completeness and courtesy, to explain the meaning of a letter clearly.

### 1) Avoid using wordy expressions

e.g. Enclosed herewith please find two copies of... (Wordy)

We enclose two copies of... (Concise)

## 2) Avoid unnecessary repetition

e.g. Will you ship us any time during the month of December, or even November if you are rushed, for November would suit us just as well? (Wordy)

Please ship us by the end of November. (Concise)

## 3) Use short sentences, simple words and clear explanations

## 4) Avoid padded expressions

## 5) Use subject line flexibly and properly

Using subject line flexibly and properly can cancel the same content in the opening sentence of a letter.

## 6. Concreteness

Make the message specific, definite and vivid.

e.g. 1 ST675L8-Band Radio Cassette Recorder is of full functions.

ST675L8-Band Radio Cassette Recorder can deliver superb FM/MW/LW/SW1/SW2 Stereo band reception. Full auto-stop and automatic quick program search (AQPS system).

e.g. 2 We have drawn on you as usual under your L/C.

We have drawn on you our sight draft No.536 for the Invoice amount US \$ 736.00, under your L/C No.132 of the bank of China.

## 7. Correctness

Correctness refers not only to correct usage of grammar, punctuation and spelling, but also to standard language, proper statement, and accurate figures as well as the correct understanding of commercial jargons.

## 1) Avoid using overstatements

e.g. 1 It is the lowest price available to you. (No)

It is the lowest price that we can offer you now. (Yes)

e.g. 2 We are well-established exporters of all kinds of goods made in Sweden. (No)

We are well-established exporters of Swedish sundry goods, such as Toys, Buttons and Stationary. (Yes)

## 2) Using accurate numbers

**【Skill Training】技能训练**

- I. Look at the following letter, which breaks some of the rules we have just mentioned above. Identify each of the mistakes, and then rewrite the letter.

<p>Business International Co., Ltd. 68 Xingfu Street Chongwen District Beijing 100032, P. R. China Tel: 86-10-67554422 Fax: 86-10-67554424</p> <p>9.8.2017 Purchase Manager ABC Company New York 66783 USA</p> <p><u>Subject:</u></p> <p>Dear Sir or Madam,</p>
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- II. Design an envelope and fill it with the address in the above letter.