

Unit 1



General Introduction

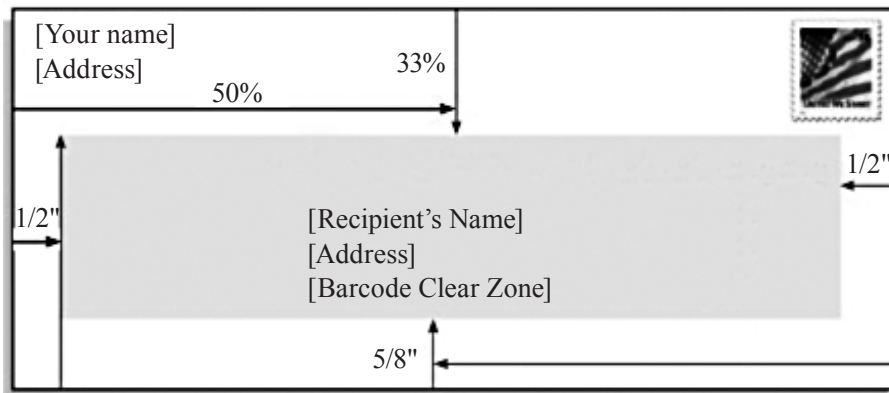
Foreign trade letters are of great importance in international trade and business communication. Today, they are more frequently used in forms of notepapers, telegraphs, faxes, e-mails, etc.

This book mainly dwells on 11 types of foreign trade letters widely used in foreign trade, which are about:

- establishing business relations;
- credit and status inquiries;
- inquiries and replies;
- sales;
- offers and counter-offers;
- orders and confirmations;
- payment;
- packing;
- shipping;
- marine insurance;
- claims and adjustments.

Layout of Envelopes

When you write an envelope, you should put your name and address at the upper left corner of the envelope and the recipient's name and address in the center of the envelope. The following is an example of a standard English envelope.



Generally, the information about the recipient is laid out in the following order:

- recipient's name (if known);
- company name;
- address or post office box;
- city, state, and postal code;
- country (if it is an international mail).

For example:



Layout of Letters

Generally, a foreign trade letter can be divided into three parts: the pre-message, the message, and the post-message. It can be further divided into 16 segments.

The structure of a letter is demonstrated in the tables below illustrating the position of each part in a letter. After that, all segments will be introduced one by one with more details and examples.

Pre-message

Modern Truck 234 First Street Newtown, NY 20022 Tel: 01-2-555-1212 Fax: 01-2-555-4545	Letterhead (信头)
September 11, 2021	Date (日期)
Joe Martin First Trucking 5656 North Willow Road Middleton, NY 20088	Inside Address (信内地址)
Att: General Manager	Attention Line (指明收信人)
Ref: 12-5-56A	Reference Number (编号)
Sub: Replacement parts	Subject Line (事由 / 主题行)
Dear Mr. Martin,	Salutation (尊称)

Message (Body)

Valley Truck Supply is now in a position to reduce the cost of your truck spare parts. This is due to our growing number of satisfied customers over the past few years.

Opening Sentences (开头语)

Volume discounts are available to customers buying as few as six of an item with, however, a dollar minimum per order.

Main Body (主旨段落)

...
Please refer to the enclosed sheet for a list of widely purchased parts and the discount rates.

We hope this program will help you provide faster service to your customers. We look forward to continuing to serve you in the future.

Closing Sentences (结尾语)

Post-message

Sincerely,

Complimentary Close (结尾敬词)

John Smith

Signature (签名)

John Smith

Manager

Sales Department

JS/aw

Identification Initials (作者姓名缩写 / 打字员姓名缩写)

Encl.: List of Available Parts

Enclosure (附件)

CC: Bob Wood

Copy Notation (抄送)

P.S.

Postscript (附笔)

■ Layout of the pre-message

1) Letterhead

Companies normally have their own letterhead templates customized with the logo, company name and address. The address includes street, city, state or province, postal code, and country (if necessary). Many companies also add a phone number, fax number, e-mail address or website to the letterhead. The letterhead can be on the left side of the page, in the middle, on the right, and it can also be put in long lines, e.g.:

Total Communications
1234 NE Central Road
Camas, WA 98607
Phone: 360-555-1212, Fax: 360-555-1515
Totalcom@communication.com

2) Date

All foreign trade letters should be dated. The date includes the day, month and year. There are two basic forms of dates. The American form is as follows:

September 2, 2021

The British form is different:

2 September, 2021

3) Inside address

The order of the inside address includes the recipient's name, title, the company, then the street, city, state or province, postal code, and country (if necessary), e.g.:

*Charles Staples
General Manager
7 Studios
11943 Montana Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90049
USA*

4) Attention line

The attention line is optional. It is used when the inside address includes only a company name. Its function is to tell to whom the letter should go. We can use such abbreviations as “Att” or “ATT” to indicate the attention line, e.g.:

*Att: Charles Staples, Game Designer
ATT: Mr. George Williams
Att: Sales Manager
ATT: President*

5) Reference number

A reference number may be an order number, invoice number, part number or date. “Re” and “Ref” are the most common abbreviations, e.g.:

*Re: Order No. 789
Ref: PO No. 345
Re: Invoice No. 456*

Sometimes, we use “Your ref” to indicate to which letter we reply; “Our ref” is used as the reply letter’s reference number, e.g.:

*Your ref: CNN/255
Our ref: 1234/BD*

6) Subject line

The subject line shows the general idea or the purpose of the letter. It features a word or two, or a short phrase. The subject lines appear as follows:

Sub: Thursday's meeting
Sub: Sales conference
Sub: DELAY OF DELIVERY
Sub: Request for price lists

Usually, reference numbers and subject information are combined together to facilitate understanding, e.g.:

Re: Account No. FG 1234
Billing Dated 10-4-04
Error in Billing
Sub: Order No. 1234
Price Reduction

7) Salutation

A salutation is a way of greeting the reader or addressee. The name is usually combined with “Mr.”, “Mrs.”, “Miss”, “Ms.”, or an official title like “President” or “Doctor”, etc. In American style, a salutation ends with a comma, e.g.:

Dear Mr. Smith,
Dear Mrs. Jones,
Dear Peter,
Dear President Jones,
Dear Professor Qin,

If the addressee's name is not known, you may use his title, or address the letter to his department, e.g.:

*Dear Sales Manager,
Accounting Department,*

If the letter is addressed to a company or organization, you may say:

Dear Sirs,

Sometimes letters are addressed in a more general way:

*Gentlemen,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

■ Layout of the message

The main part of the letter is divided into three sections: opening sentences, body, closing sentences.

1) Opening sentences

The opening sentences give the reader a general idea about what your letter is going to say, e.g.:

*In response to your letter of May 15...
Your letter has been received and we are pleased to say that...
After reading your advertisement...
Our Sales Manager, John Jones, suggested that I contact you regarding...*

2) Body

The body gives more details, asks questions, presents points of view, etc. Usually, a good foreign trade letter is not very long. Extra information other than the subject the letter deals with is kept out.

3) Closing sentences

The closing sentences of a letter can be an expression of gratitude, a suggestion or a request, e.g.:

Thank you for your attention.
Your assistance in this matter is appreciated.
I would appreciate your mailing this information today.
Please call me.
Our supply is limited. Act now!

■ Layout of the post-message

There are six parts in the post-message.

1) Complimentary close

The complimentary close is always followed by a comma and only the first letter is capitalized. The close can be formal or informal, depending on whether you are familiar with the addressee. Formal complimentary closes are like:

Very truly yours,
Yours cordially,
Respectfully yours,

Less formal ones are as follows:

*Best regards,
Cordially,
Yours truly,*

Examples for informal close include:

*Best wishes,
Warmest regards,
See you in the near future,*

2) Signature

The signature is put at the left margin, leaving three lines' space for the handwritten signature before the typed name, title and/or department. It usually looks like this:

Sincerely,

John Smith
John Smith
Sales Department

Some companies also include the name of the company as part of the signature, e.g.:

Sincerely,

Jean Goecks
Jean Goecks
President
 NORTHWEST COMMUNICATION

3) Identification initials

Identification initials are the initials of the person who dictates the letter in uppercase characters (大写字母) and then the initials of the person who types the letter in lowercase characters (小写字母).

If the letter is dictated by David Green and typed by Beth Mark, it would be:

DG/bm

Examples in different styles are as follows:

HM:lz
Hmorgan/lz

4) Enclosure

Enclosures are optional—it is used when you put something into the envelope together with the letter. We often use the abbreviation “Encl.” or “Enc.”; “Attachments” is also acceptable.

It is usually signified below the identification initials, on the left margin, e.g.:

Enc.

Encl. 2
1 Encl. Check
2 Encl. Order

Attachments

5) Copies

This part is often initialed as “CC”. It stands for “Carbon Copies”, which means to send a copy of your letter to someone other than the recipient, e.g.:

CC: Jean Goecks
CC: Sales Manager

6) Postscript

The postscript is used to add further information to the letter. It is always abbreviated as “PS”, “P.S.”, or “PSS”.

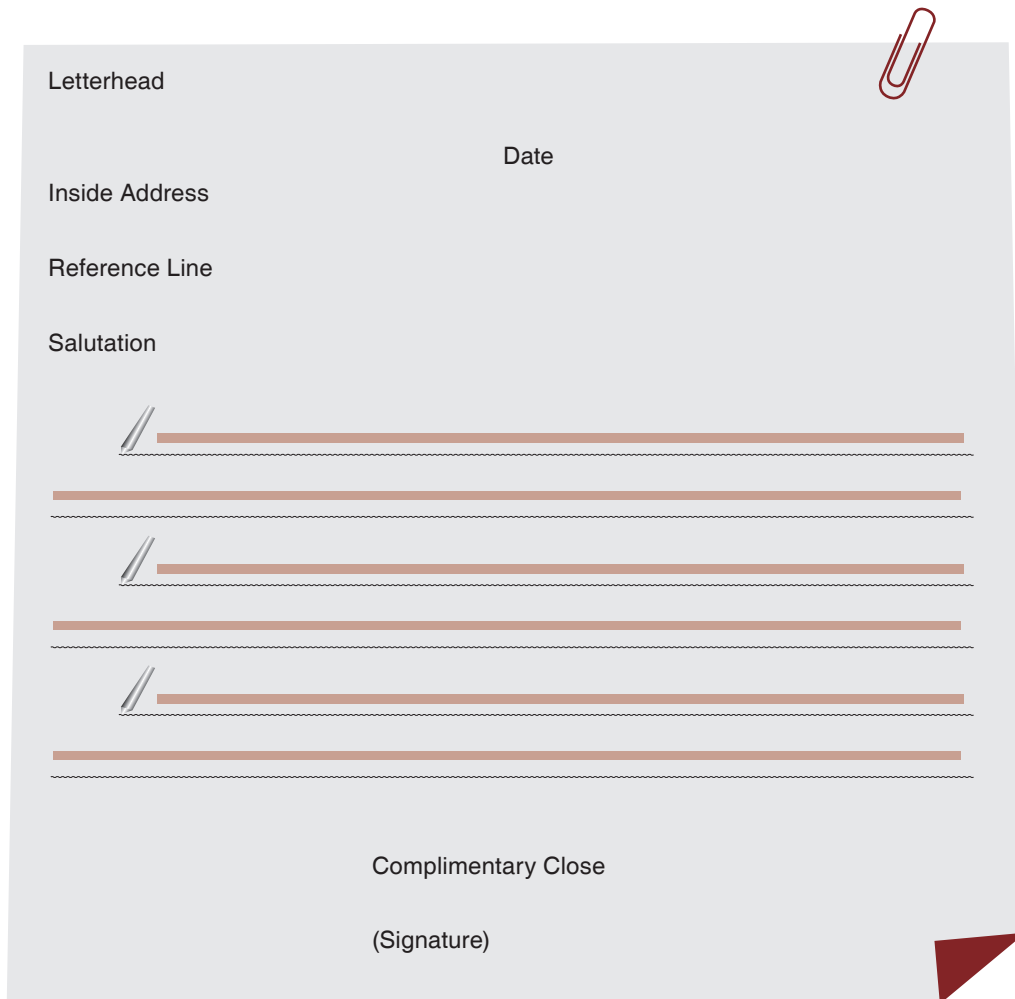
P.S. Hope to see you at the trade fair on August 10.
PSS Be sure to place your order soon!

Formats of Letters

There are three types of widely used formats of a business letter: semi-block, modified block and block format.

1 Semi-block format

The date, complimentary close and signature are lined up in the center of the page. Each paragraph is indented three to five spaces. There may or may not be a double space between paragraphs. The following is an example:



Letterhead

Date

Inside Address

Reference Line

Salutation

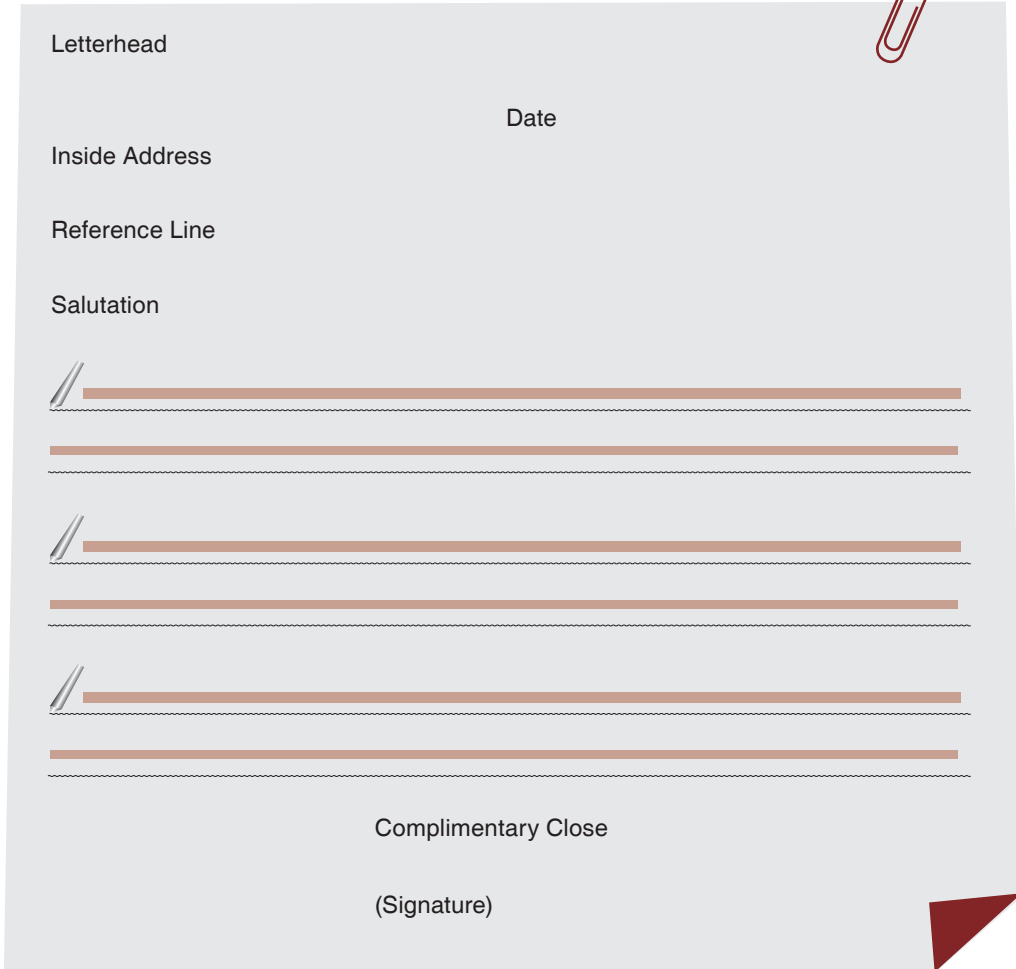
Complimentary Close

(Signature)

The diagram illustrates the semi-block format of a business letter on a sheet of paper. The paper has a red paperclip in the top right corner and a red folded corner in the bottom right. The letter is centered on the page. The components are arranged as follows: Letterhead at the top left; Date centered at the top; Inside Address on the left side; Reference Line on the left side; Salutation on the left side, followed by three paragraphs of text, each starting with a pen nib icon and indented three to five spaces; Complimentary Close centered at the bottom; and (Signature) centered at the bottom.

2 Modified block format

The date, complimentary close and signature are again lined up in the center of the page, but the paragraphs are not indented and there is a double space between paragraphs. The following is an example:




Letterhead


Date


Inside Address

Reference Line

Salutation

 _____

 _____

 _____

Complimentary Close

(Signature)

3 Block format

This format is most widely utilized in business communications in the US. Everything starts from the left edge of the page. The entire letter is single spaced except for a double space between paragraphs.

Letterhead

Date

Inside Address

Reference Line

Salutation

Complimentary Close

(Signature)

Sample Letters

1

STAPLES INCORPORATED
P.O. Box 1357
Atlantic Beach, NC 28512
252-555-3454
staples@clis.com

January 21, 2021

Brown's Furniture Store
1212 Main Street
Camas, WA 98607

Re: Catalog request

Dear Mr. Brown,

We have seen your advertisement online and we are interested in your products.

Please send us a catalog of your office furniture and supplies. We are planning to purchase new furniture and file cabinets. Please include your terms of payment and let me know how soon you will be able to ship after you receive an order.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Andrew Staples
Andrew Staples
Purchasing Manager

Labels Pty. Ltd.
Canterbury 8633, New Zealand
Tel: 04-4721388
E-mail: labels@govert.com.nz

November 10, 2021

ABC Bottles Pty. Ltd.
Kirra Road
Ashtown 1128

Re: Late deliveries of stocks

Dear Mr. Turner,

Thank you for your letter of October 31 about late deliveries of our labels.

We have had a series of industrial disputes at our Canterbury factory which have greatly delayed the production of our labels. There have also been transport problems which have not been overcome.

I sent a letter of explanation to your store manager, Mr. Tomkin, but he has apparently not passed it on.

We apologize for having disrupted your normal production and would be grateful for a chance to make whatever remedies we can to reduce the delays.

Yours faithfully,

R.G. Cole
R. G. Cole
Manager

CC: Mr. Tomkin

STAPLES INCORPORATED
P.O. Box 1357
Atlantic Beach, NC 28512
252-555-3454
staples@clis.com

May 14, 2021

Northwest Communications
4516 NW 18th Avenue
Camas, WA 98607

Re: Mailing list

Dear Mrs. Goecks,

Please have my name and address deleted from all mailing lists. I do not wish to receive unsolicited mails.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Andrew Staples
Andrew Staples
Purchasing Manager

Writing Skills

Business writing requires adherence to the 7C Principles: Clarity, Completeness, Conciseness, Concreteness, Constructiveness, Casualness and Correctness.

- Clarity:** Use the language that the reader understands, and avoid jargon and unfamiliar words and phrases.
- Completeness:** Include all the information necessary to make the point and promote action from the reader.
- Conciseness:** Keep the letter short and to the point.
- Concreteness:** Use figures, ratios and facts whenever they are available to make the letter specific and definite rather than vague and abstract.
- Constructiveness:** Apply words and phrases that set a positive tone or cast recipients' actions or inactions in the most positive light possible so as to receive a favorable response, and thus more effectively accomplish the goal.
- Casualness:** Make the letter informal and conversational to be easily understood and better received.
- Correctness:** Ensure accuracy with respect to grammar, facts and opinions.

Apart from general principles, the following 10 points will provide you with more detailed guidance in writing an effective trade letter.

1 Limit the length of your letter.

The general rule is the shorter the better.

2 Use active verbs rather than passive verbs.

Look at the following two sentences and try to feel the differences.

- *Jane called Loraine on the phone.*
- *Loraine was called on the phone by Jane.*

Generally, active voice produces a more concise and powerful sentence than passive voice. An active construction immediately identifies the sentence's subject so readers can quickly understand and visualize who is doing what. Because of its clarity, the active voice is almost always the best choice in composing documents that are intended primarily to exchange information, such as foreign trade letters and memos.

3 Vary sentence length.

Overlong sentences may be confusing, and obscure the intention with too much information, both of which dull the impact. However, a series of short sentences may seem boring. Varying your sentence length works best.

4 Use modifiers.

Adjectives and adverbs are important to make descriptions clear and impress the reader effectively. Just be sure that you are not using too many modifiers to distract your reader.

5 Master verb power.

Verbs bring action to sentences, the more specific the verb, the clearer the message. Don't always rely on simple verbs; use words that have more exact meanings.

- *Original: Mr. Frederickson was promoted to Vice President last week. Please send your congratulations.*
- *Revised: Mr. Frederickson earned his stripes, and we're pleased to announce his rise to the level of Vice President. Please help us applaud his accomplishment.*

The revised sentence uses more colorful language to describe an occasion, and shows more feeling and excitement than the original sentence.

6 Avoid being overly formal.

Stiffness and overly formal approaches are common problems in trade communication. Read the following examples and think about the familiarity between the writer and the recipient.

- *Sarah, I really need your report as soon as possible.*
- *Ms. Smith, you have not yet submitted your report that was due a month ago. Please work only on this until it is finished.*

Decide the level of formality on the basis of the level of your familiarity with the recipient.

7 “I” or “we”.

“We” is considered less personal and more formal. “I” is often regarded more appropriate, while “we” often makes the responsibility of the letter the company’s, not the individual’s. “I” expresses personal opinions rather than the policy of the company. Remember that a company is an “it”.

8 Show details.

You should be specific, and include details, but only what are required. Compare the following sentences and decide which is better.

- *We have a new product on the market.*
- *We have created a superior product with a choice of features suited to your needs.*

9 Tone.

Tone is defined as the way someone speaks as an indicator of what he is feeling or thinking. Remember that your tone indicates how you feel and it should usually be friendly and encouraging unless a trouble caused by the other party annoys you. A friendly tone is more successful in getting what you want than one that shows anger or frustration.

- *Original: You need to fix this problem or I will find another business partner.*
- *Revised: I look forward to your help in solving this problem.*

10 Structure your paragraphs well.

Each paragraph should focus on one main idea or contain one topic sentence and the rest of the paragraph supports it. Also, each paragraph should be complete. But integrating too many ideas into one paragraph will distract the reader and make it difficult to understand. Therefore, it is better to divide a long paragraph into several short ones.

P

Practice Guide

1 Discussion.

- What should be included in a foreign trade letter?
- What are the three basic styles of foreign trade letters?
- What are the 7C Principles of foreign trade letters?

2 Try your hand.

Write a block format letter to give information about the main products made by a company you imagine.

E

ercises

I. Arrange the following information into a foreign trade letter.

- Sender's name: China National Light Industrial Products Import & Export Corporation, Shanghai Branch
- Sender's address: 128 Huqiu Road, Shanghai, 111111, China
- Sender's cable address: INDUSTRY SHANGHAI
- Sender's telex address: 33054 INDUS CN
- Date: March 23, 2021
- Recipient's name: H. G. Wilkinson Company, Ltd.
- Recipient's address: 245 Lombart Street, Lagos, Nigeria
- Salutation: Dear Sirs,
- Subject: Sewing Machines
- Message: We thank you for your letter of March 16 inquiring for the captioned goods.

The enclosed booklet contains details of all our sewing machines and will enable you to make a suitable selection.

...

II. Translate the following titles into Chinese.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Chairman of the Board/of Directors | 2. President/General Manager |
| 3. Managing Director | 4. Deputy/Vice President |
| 5. (Standing) Executive Director | 6. Director |
| 7. Standing Auditor | 8. Export Manager |
| 9. Import Manager | 10. Finance/Accounting Manager |
| 11. Administration/General Affairs Manager | 12. Personnel Manager |
| 13. Sales Manager | 14. Assistant Manager |
| 15. Department Manager | 16. Head of Sales Department |
| 17. Production Manager | 18. Acting Manager |
| 19. Section Chief | 20. Company Secretary |
| 21. Chief Clerk | 22. Clerk |
| 23. Representative | |

III. Change the layout of the following letter into the block format.

*English Department
Beijing Foreign Studies University
Beijing, P. R. China*

May 6, 2021

*Office of Admission
Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West Street
New York, USA*

Dear Sirs,

*It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to introduce to you
Wang Ning, my good friend and colleague.*

Mr. Wang graduated from Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1997, where he completed the four-year course, majoring in English. Upon graduation, he was engaged by his university as a teacher of English, saying that they have been most favorably impressed by him in many ways. He has shown himself industrious, dutiful, intelligent and reliable. You will not fail to find him amiable and cooperative.

It is for the above reasons that I highly recommend Mr. Wang to your institution. If you have any further questions about his qualifications, please feel free to write to me.

Yours sincerely,

Wu Xianghua

Wu Xianghua

IV. Situational writing.

Write an envelope with the following information:

Sender: Wang Ning, Department of Foreign Languages, Hubei Vocational-technical College, Xiaogan, Hubei, P. R. China, 432000

Recipient: Susan Jones, Atlantic Nut Company, 345 North First Street, Atlanta, GA 33415-0022, USA