

## Chapter 1 Basic Knowledge of Business Letter Writing

Business letters, a most widely used communication tool, play a vital part in international trade. This type of business communication allows for professional correspondence with other businesses, as well as with clients.

Properly written, business letters can give a positive reflection on a business and individual. Effective communication can shape your company's reputation, improve productivity, develop clientele and allow the company to run more efficiently.

Business communication is a dynamic, multi-channeled process, which covers internal as well as external communication in a given organization.

Within the company, an employee and his co-workers use the information they obtain from one another and from outsiders to guide their activities. The work of the organization is divided into tasks and assigned to various organizational units, each reporting to a manager who directs and coordinates the effort. This division of labor and delegation of responsibility depends on the constant flow of information up, down, and across the organization. So by getting messages across to his boss and peers, an employee helps them do their jobs, and vice versa. This chapter is intended to discuss internal and external networks of business communication, principles of business communication and format and elements of business letters.

### 1.1 Internal Communication Network

Communication among the members of an organization is essential for effective functioning, so each organization approaches internal communication differently, depending on its particular requirements. In a small business with only five or six employees, much information can be exchanged casually and directly. In a giant organization like Disney, with hundreds of employees scattered around the world, transmitting the right information to the right people at the right time is a real challenge, whether communicating by phone, e-mail, fax, or interoffice memo.

Some companies are better at communicating than others. At top-performing companies, communication is a way of life. For example, AT&T's auto news service delivers information to managers and employees by offering callers a choice of reports on specific subjects. AT&T also distributes a daily newsletter to employees and mails a monthly magazine to employees' homes. IBM encourages all US employees to communicate any concerns electronically, using confidential and secure online systems. Because managers and employees at such companies communicate freely, employees develop a clear sense of the organization's mission. And managers are able to identify and react more quickly to potential problems. In these firms, management is communication. To maintain a healthy flow of information, effective managers use both formal and informal channels.

### 1.1.1 Formal Communication Channels

The formal communication network is the official structure of an organization, in which information may travel down, up, and across an organization's formal hierarchy.

#### Downward Information Flow

In most organizations, decisions are made at the top and then flow down to the people who will carry them out. Downward messages might take the form of a casual conversation or a formal interview between a supervisor and an individual employee, or they might be communicated orally in a meeting, in a workshop, on videotape, or even on voice mail. Messages might also be written for e-mail or for a memo, training manual, newsletter, bulletin board announcement, or policy directive. From top to bottom, each person in the organization must be careful to understand the message, apply it, and pass it along.

#### Upward Information Flow

Upward communication is just as vital as downward communication. To solve problems and make intelligent decisions, managers must learn what is going on in the organization. Since they can't be everywhere at once, executives depend on lower-level employees to furnish them with accurate, timely reports on problems, emerging trends, opportunities for improvement, grievances, and performance.

Other formal methods for channeling information upward include e-mails, group meetings, interviews with employees who are leaving the company, and formal procedures for resolving grievances. At Disney, two favorite methods are employee surveys (which give people a chance to comment anonymously on a wide range of issues) and focus groups (which allow employees to share their insights in specific subjects).

#### Horizontal Information Flow

In addition to the upward and downward flow of communication in the formal communication network, horizontal communication flows from one department to another, either laterally or diagonally. It helps employees coordinate tasks, and it is especially useful for solving complex and difficult problems. For example, the sales manager might write a memo or send e-mails to the vice president of finance, outlining sales forecasts for the coming period; or the plant manager might phone the director of advertising and promotion to discuss changes in the production schedule.

The amount of horizontal communication that occurs through formal channels depends on the degree of interdependence among departments. The most recent trend has been toward more cross-functional interaction.

### **1.1.2 Informal Communication Channels**

Formal organization flows mentioned above illustrate how information is supposed to flow. In actual practice, however, lines and boxes on a piece of paper cannot prevent people from talking with one another. Every organization has an informal communication network—a grapevine—that supplements official channels. As people go about their work, they have casual conversations with their friends in the office. They joke and kid around and discuss many things: their apartments, their families, restaurants, movies, sports, and other people in the company.

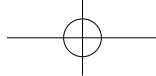
Although many of these conversations deal with personal matters, business is often discussed as well. In fact, about 80 percent of the information that travels along the grapevine pertains to business, and 75 to 95 percent of it is accurate.

## **1.2 External Communication Network**

Just as internal communication carries information up, down, and across the organization, external communication carries it in and out of the organization. Companies constantly exchange messages with customers, vendors, distributors, competitors, investors, journalists, and government and community representatives, by phone, fax, videotape, or letter.

### **1.2.1 Formal Contacts with Outsiders**

Even though much of the communication that occurs with outsiders is casual and relatively unplanned, most organizations attempt to control the information they convey to customers, investors, and the general public. Two functional units are particularly important in managing the flow of external messages: the marketing department and the public relations department. Marketing has three basic responsibilities: to find out who customers are and what they want, to develop products that satisfy those needs, and to get the products into the customers' hands. As a consumer, you are often on the receiving end of marketing messages: face-to-face or telephone conversations with salespeople, direct-mail solicitations, TV and radio commercials, newspaper and magazine ads, blurbs advertising companies on the Internet, product brochures, and mail-order catalogs. Although these messages are highly visible, they present just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to marketing communication. In addition to advertising and selling products, the typical marketing department is also responsible for product development, physical distribution, market research, and customer service, all of which involve both the transmission and reception of information. The public relations department (also called the corporate communication department) manages the organization's reputation with various groups, including employees, customers, investors, government agencies, and the general public. Professional PR people may have a background in journalism, as opposed to marketing. They view their role as disseminating



news about the business to the organization's various audiences.

Whereas marketing messages are usually openly sponsored and paid for by the company, public relations messages are carried by the media if they are considered newsworthy. The communication tools used by PR departments include news releases, lobbying programs, special events, booklets and brochures about the organization, letters, annual reports, audiovisual materials, speeches and position papers, tours, and internal publications for employees.

### **1.2.2 Informal Contacts with Outsiders**

As a member of an organization, you are automatically an informal conduit for communicating with the outside world. In the course of your daily activities, you unconsciously absorb bits and pieces of information that add to the collective knowledge pool of your company. During a trip to the shopping mall, you notice how a competitor's products are selling; as you read the paper, you pick up economic and business news that relates to your work; when you have a problem at the office, you ask your family or friends for advice.

What's more, every time you speak for or about your company, you send a message. In fact, if you have a public-contact job, you don't even have to say anything. All you have to do is smile. Many outsiders may form their impression of your organization on the basis of the subtle, unconscious clues you transmit through your tone of voice, facial expression, and general appearance—which is one reason Disney enforces a strict grooming code for all employees who interact with the public.

Top managers rely heavily on informal contacts with outsiders to exchange information that might be useful to their companies. Although much of the networking involves interaction with fellow executives, plenty of high-level managers recognize the value of keeping in touch with "the real world." For example, Xerox executives spend one day each month handling customer complaints. Senior executives at Hyatt Hotels serve as bellhops, and Disney managers all take their turns in 80-to-100-pound character costumes at one of the theme parks.

## **1.3 Principles of Business Communication**

To compose effective written or oral messages, you must apply certain communication principles. These principles provide guidelines for choice of content and style of presentation, adapted to the purpose and receiver of your message. Called the "seven C's", they are completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, clarity, courtesy, and correctness. Although we deal here with these principles on the sentence level, they are applicable to all forms of communication, from mere utterances and sentences to complete documents or presentations.

## Completeness

A business letter requires completeness. When you initiate a message, check to make sure you have provided all the information the reader needs for thorough, accurate understanding. One way to help make your message complete is to answer the five W questions—*who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*—and any other essentials, such as *how*. The five-question method is especially useful when you write requests, announcements, or other informative messages. See that all these questions are answered and all the matters are referred to completely. For instance, to order (request) merchandise, make clear *what* you want, *when* you need it, to *whom* and *where* it is to be sent, and *how* payment will be made. Sometimes when you answer an inquiry, you need to give something extra, when desirable.

Here are some examples of incomplete questions on faxes.

### Fax 1 Incomplete question

*Please fax me in return the departures from Singapore to Hong Kong on the 8th.*

In responding to the above you would have to “give something extra” as to times of day, airlines flying that route, costs, and departure and arrival times.

### Fax 2 Incomplete question

*How come my request for an interview letter did not receive a response?*

When was the letter sent? Who sent it? To whom was it sent? In other words, to answer Fax 2 would require a return letter or fax seeking answers to the above questions.

## Conciseness

Conciseness is saying what you have to say in the fewest possible words without sacrificing the other C qualities. Being concise is the most important writing principle in writing a good business letter. A concise message is complete without being wordy.

In order to achieve conciseness, we should pay attention to the following aspects.

1) Use single-word substitutes instead of phrases whenever possible without changing meanings.

Wordy	Concise
in the near future	soon
will you be kind enough to...	please
at this time	now
due to the fact that	because

2) Omit “which” and “that” clauses whenever possible.

**Wordy**

The receipt that is enclosed documents your purchase.

It gives us much pleasure to inform you that...

She bought desks that are of the executive type.

**Concise**

The enclosed receipt documents your purchase.

We are pleased to tell you that...

She bought executive-type desks.

3) Avoid repetition of words in the same sentence.

**Wordy**

Please quote your best price for your best quality.

How do you account for the fact that the account is not correct?

**Concise**

Please quote your lowest price for your best quality.

How do you explain the fact that the account is not correct?

4) Omit unnecessary expressions.

**Wordy**

Please be advised that your admission statement was received.

Allow me to say how helpful your response was.

**Concise**

Your admission statement has been received.

Your last response was helpful.

5) Avoid overusing empty phrases.

**Wordy**

It was known by Mr. Smith that we must reduce inventory.

There are four rules that should be observed.

**Concise**

Mr. Smith knew we must reduce inventory.

Four rules should be observed.

6) Eliminate unnecessary prepositional phrases.

**Wordy**

The issue of most relevance is teamwork.

In most cases the date of the policy is indicated in the upper right corner.

**Concise**

The most relevant issue is teamwork.

The policy date is in the upper right corner.

7) Limit use of the passive voice.

**Wordy**

The total balance due will be found on Page 2 of this report.

The reports are to be submitted by employees prior to 5:00, at which time they will be received by Mr. Jones.

**Concise**

The balance due is on Page 2 of this report.

Please submit your reports to Mr. Jones by 5:00.

In all attempts to reduce wordiness, you must be careful not to distort meaning. Conciseness reflects the thoughtful elimination of unnecessary words.

**More simplified expressions for reference**

- |                                 |                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| come to a decision              | — decide             |
| express a preference for        | — prefer             |
| owing to the fact that          | } — because...       |
| due to the fact that            |                      |
| for the reason that             |                      |
| at your earliest convenience    | — soon, promptly     |
| please advise us                | — please let us know |
| as a matter of fact             | — in fact            |
| be in possession of             | — have               |
| by means of                     | — by                 |
| in accordance with your request | } — as requested     |
| complying with your request     |                      |
| in compliance with your request |                      |
| dated July 7                    | — of July 7          |

**Consideration**

Consideration means preparing every message with the message receivers in mind, trying to put yourself in their place; you are considerate; you do not lose your temper; you do not accuse; you do not charge them without facts. You are, foremost, aware of their desires, problems, circumstances, emotions, and probable reactions to your request. Then handle the matter from their point of view. This thoughtful consideration is also called “you-attitude,” empathy, the human touch, and understanding of human nature.

To create considerate, audience-oriented messages, focus on how message receivers will benefit, what they will receive, and what they want or need to know.

**Insensitive**

You failed to enclose your check in the envelope.

You are completely off base in your proposal.

**Considerate**

The check was not enclosed.

The proposed plan has three aspects that need clarification.

Another way to show consideration for your receivers is to accent the positive. This means stressing what can be done instead of what cannot be done, and focusing on words your recipient can consider favorably.

**Negative**

It is impossible to open an account for you today.

We don't refund if the returned item is soiled and unsalable.

**Positive**

As soon as your signature card reaches us, we will gladly open an...

We refund when the returned item is clean and resalable.

**Concreteness**

Concreteness in communication means being specific, definite, and vivid rather than vague and general. Often it means using denotative (direct, explicit, often dictionary-based) rather than connotative words (ideas or notions suggested by or associated with a word or phrase).

**Vague**

Our apples are excellent.

Smithson Company is our big buyer.

**Concrete**

Our apples are juicy, crispy and tender.

Smithson Company did more than one million USD.

Whenever possible, use an exact, precise statement or a figure in place of a general word to make your message more concrete.

The benefits to business professionals of using concrete facts and figures are obvious: Your receivers know exactly what is required or desired. When you supply specifics for the reader or listener, you increase the likelihood that your message will be interpreted the way you intended.

**Clarity**

Clarity is achieved by choosing plain and simple words, which are short, familiar, conventional and straightforward, which also means using the precise words and phrases in the right place to build effective sentences and paragraphs. For instance, when you have a choice between a long word and a short one, use the short, familiar word that your reader or listener will quickly understand.



**Unfamiliar**

anticipate	commence	verification	approximate	terminate
utilize	subsequent	accommodate	facilitate	optimum

**Familiar**

expect	start	proof	about	end
use	after	serve	help	best

In addition, the writer should construct effective sentences. Insert no more than one idea into a sentence. Limit average sentence length from 17 to 20 words.

**Courtesy**

Courtesy, playing an important role in business letter-writing, has two meanings.

1) Being very polite, even in asking the addressee to pay back the debts or refusing his demands, your letter still should be mild and tactful, avoiding expressions that might be offensive or misunderstood.

2) Being prompt in replying to the opposite party’s letter, the reply should usually be sent on the same day. If it is impossible for you to give a prompt reply in detail on the same day, you should write a short note to the client explaining why.

**Tactless**

We can not comply with your request.

Dear Sirs, we are sorry you have misunderstood us.

Your letter of May 8, regarding... has been received.

I rewrote that letter three times; the point was clear.

**More Tactful**

We are afraid that we can not...

Dear Sirs, we are sorry we didn’t make ourselves clear.

Your letter of May 8, regarding... has received our careful attention.

I’m sorry the point was not clear; here is another clear version.

Another requirement for courtesy is the use of nondiscriminatory language that reflects equal treatment of people regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, and physical features. The suggestions selected here can be particularly useful for your written and oral business communication.

For a long period of time *man* was accepted to denote not only a male person but, generically, humanity at large. Today many people in the United States connect *man* with a “male human being.” Thus the English language—more so than other languages—uses alternative expressions for *man* that are neuter in form.

**Questionable**

manpower  
 man-made  
 the best man for the position

**More Desirable**

workers; employees; work force; personnel  
 manufactured; constructed  
 built the best person; the best candidate for the position

English lacks a neuter singular pronoun signifying “he” or “she”. Previously we accepted—and some persons still do—masculine pronouns in expressions as “anyone... he” or “each customer... his bill”. The trend today is to avoid using *he*, *him*, and *his* when referring to the hypothetical person or humanity in general.

**Questionable**

Each customer will have the new changes noted on his bill.  
 Each manager has an assigned parking place. He should park his car...  
 The executives may benefit from the stock options. He will...

**More Desirable**

Customers will have the new changes noted on their bills.  
 Every manager has been assigned a parking place. Each car should be parked in...  
 The executives may benefit from the stock options. Each executive may...

**Correctness**

Correctness includes the correctness of forms of writing, of grammar, spelling and of punctuation, particularly of figures.

In order to be correct, the following four questions should be very carefully considered:

- 1) Is the accuracy of all factual information beyond question?
- 2) Are all the statements in strict conformity with policies and decrees?
- 3) Is the letter free from grammatical errors, spelling errors or misleading punctuation?
- 4) Are the commercial terms correctly used?

The correct use of words is a very important part of correctness. For example, some nouns are only used in singular form, such as

advice ( 建议 / 劝告 )  
 correspondence ( 通信 )  
 merchandise ( 商品 )

dozen ( 打, 指实数 )  
 information ( 情报 / 资料 )  
 literature ( 宣传用印刷品 )

Some nouns, such as the names of commodities, are used as collective nouns, not using the plural form, such as

aluminiumware ( 铝制品 )  
 chinaware ( 陶瓷器皿 )  
 flatware ( 盘碟类 )

bambooware ( 竹制品 )  
 enamelware ( 珐琅铁器 / 搪瓷器皿 )  
 glassware ( 五金器皿 )

ironware ( 铁器 )

kitchenware ( 厨房用具 )

tableware ( 餐具 )

When “ware”, as a collective noun is used in compound words, it means “制品”, while its plural form “wares” means commodities ( 商品 ).

jewellery/jewelry ( 珠宝类 )

confectionary ( 糖果类 )

machinery ( 机器类 )

drapery ( 布匹 )

hosiery ( 袜类 )

perfumery ( 香水 )

stationery ( 文具 )

porcelain ( 瓷器 )

pottery ( 陶器 )

earthenware ( 陶器 )

( 但 ceramics 作 “陶瓷器” 解释时, 动词用复数式, 而 crockery 作 “陶瓷器” 解释时, 则动词用单数式。 )

produce ( 农产品 )

footwear ( 鞋类 )

underwear ( 内衣 )

furniture ( 家具 )

When relating to quantity, the following expressions should be used:

a piece (pieces) of

an article (articles) of... } (piece 及 article 都译为 “件” )

a kind of... etc

Some other nouns often occur in plural form in business English. They are:

chemicals ( 化学制品 )

circumstances ( 情况 )

conditions ( 情况, 条件 )

contents ( 内容 )

customs ( 海关, 关税 )

details ( 细节 )

proceeds ( 款项, 收益, 贷款 )

terms ( 条件, 条款 )

arrangements ( 安排, 准备, 用于 make arrangements, 作安排 )

funds ( 资金, 但作 “基金” 解时, 用单数 fund )

exports ( 输出商品, 即 exported goods )

imports ( 输入商品, 即 imported goods )

instructions ( 指示, 规定事项、通知、说明 )

means ( 手段, 资产, 经济能力, 作 “手段” 解释时, 单复数都是 means, 但作 “资金” 解释时一般用复数动词 )

particulars ( 详细情况 )

The correct used of punctuation is also important in Business English. The following are some examples.

1) Not using a full-stop after the receiver's name and address. For example,

China Power Company

Kowloon, Hong Kong



[www.cellfirst.com](http://www.cellfirst.com)

January 28, 2012

Jan Turner  
Arrowhead East Conference Center  
412 Bellevue Lane  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Ms. Turner:

In our telephone conversation yesterday, we discussed plans to conduct our training seminars at your conference center. I would like to confirm those plans.

The dates of seminars are March 15th and 16th. The hours are 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the 15th and 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the 16th. Eighty people will be attending. We will need a total of four rooms: one large room and three smaller break-out rooms.

As we discussed, we will need a microphone and speakers in the large room as well as a computer projection system. In each break-out room, we will need five tables, and a monitor and VCR.

On March 16th, we will have a catered lunch. I would appreciate your faxing me the menu choices as soon as possible, but no later than Friday, February 4th.

I would also appreciate receiving the projected costs for our two-day meeting. You do not need to include the lunch catering costs at this time. Could you fax or e-mail me your cost projections by January 31st? I will give you final confirmation of our reservation by close-of-business on the 31st.

I want to thank you for your help in planning our seminar. I look forward to meeting you next week when I come to look over your facilities.

Best wishes,

*Curt Marks*  
Curt Marks  
Special Projects Officer  
CM/Is

2) The indented form

*Arrowhead East Conference Center*  
*412 Bellevue Lane*  
*Annapolis, MD 21401*

15 March 2012

Ms. Helen Jones  
B-Z Network Communications  
123 International Lane  
Boston, Massachusetts 01234

Dear Ms. Jones,

We are pleased that you have selected Arrowhead East Conference Center to host your training seminar. This letter will confirm our understanding of our telephone discussions.

The seminar will take place on June 3. You are expecting 35 participants and will need one large room with six 4 round tables and 35 chairs. In addition, you will require a computer projections system, as well as a flip chart.

This morning, our catering manager, Virginia Su, faxed the menu choices for your lunch on the 3 rd. She will call you tomorrow to discuss these options with you.

I have attached a projected cost for your seminar. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We understand that you have choices when deciding where to hold your seminar. I'm sure you will be pleased that you chose Arrowhead.

Sincerely yours,  
*Jan Turner*  
Jan Turner

3) The modified block style

SANTRAK INDUSTRIES

46B, PAMUR

88320 PETALING JAYA

SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

August 20, 2012

Maltech Medical Equipment

90088 Analayar Road

Selangor, Malaysia

Dear Sir or Madam,

We thank you for your letter of April 4.

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 heavy demand for the goods, we would suggest that you advise us by cable in case of interest.

We are looking forward to your early reply.

Yours faithfully

*David Smith*

David Smith

### 1.4.2 Elements of a Business Letter

Whether the indented style or the blocked style is used is determined by personal taste or by a firm's preferred style, but whichever style is used, the ordinary business letter may contain the following elements: the essential elements and optional elements.

## Essential elements of a business letter

A typical business letter is made up of seven parts as follows:

- 1) The letter-head
- 2) The date
- 3) The inside address
- 4) The salutation
- 5) The message, or the body of the letter
- 6) The complimentary close
- 7) The writer's signature and designation

### 1) The letter-head

The letter-head includes the essential particulars about the writer—his name and postal address, his telephone number, fax number, his telegraphic and telex addresses, and, if any, the telegraphic codes used. Most of the business firms use a stationery with a printed letterhead which may include other items such as company logo, website, e-mail address, besides the said essential particulars.

### 2) The date

The date should be written in full in the logical order of month, day and year (typical American—M/D/Y), or day, month and year (typical British—D/M/Y). For the day, either cardinal or ordinal number can be used. Avoid using all-number forms for it may lead to confusion. Always spell out the month in the date at the beginning of a business letter. For example,

29th July 2012 or 29 July 2012; May 23rd, 2011 or May 23, 2011

**Note that a comma should be used between the day and the year.**

September 18, 2012; December 22nd, 2001

### 3) The inside address

The inside address is the recipient's address, identical to the delivery address on the envelope. The particulars of this part are the name of person addressed; title of person addressed; name of company; street number and name; city, state/province and postal code; country of destination.

The common sequence of the inside address in a typical business letter is

- Name of addressee: Mr. Bill Rubin
- Title of addressee: Vice President of Operation
- Name of organization: Garnet Educational Services
- Street number and name: 1525 Dexter Avenue, Suite 200
- City, state/province and zip code: Seattle, Washington 98109
- Country of destination: USA

### 4) The salutation

The salutation is the complimentary greeting with which the writer opens his letter. The



particular form used depends upon the writer's relationship with his correspondent. To some extent it settles the form of the complimentary close; the two must always be in keeping.

For ordinary business purposes *Dear Sir* (or *Dear Madam* for both single and married women) is used for addressing one person, and *Dear Sirs* or *Gentlemen* for addressing two or more, as where a letter is addressed to a firm.

*Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Miss.*, *Ms.*, and *Messrs.* are the ordinary courtesy titles used for addressing correspondents. *Messrs.* (abbreviation of *Messieurs*) is used only for partnerships whose firm's name includes a personal element, as in *Messrs. Macdonald & Evans*. It is not used when there is no personal element in the name, as *Utility Furniture Co.*, or when the name already carries a courtesy title, as *Sir William Dobson & Sons*, or when the word "The" forms part of the name, as *The Grayson Electrical Co.* Of course, it is not used with limited companies and other corporate bodies, which should always be addressed through an official.

#### 5) The body of the letter

When writing, pay attention to the following:

- Write simply, clearly, courteously, grammatically and to the point.
- Paragraph correctly, confining each paragraph to one topic.
- See that your typing is accurate and the display is artistic. Aim at an attractive and pleasing appearance for your letters. Margins especially are important, since they serve to "frame" your letter.

For very short letters you may adopt double line-spacing except for your correspondents' name and address for which single line-spacing should always be used.

If there has been previous correspondence the place to refer to it is in the opening paragraph. The paragraphs that follow will contain further details, the closing paragraph, a statement of your intentions, and hopes or expectations concerning the next step.

#### 6) The complimentary close

The complimentary close is merely a polite way of ending a letter. Just as the use of "Yours faithfully", "Yours truly", and similar expressions. We must, always bear in mind that the expressions used must be appropriate to the occasion, and that salutation and closure must be in keeping. "Yours faithfully" is the standard closure for business letters. Like all other complimentary terms, it must be typed in full. The first word should be capitalized and a comma usually placed at the end.

"Yours truly" is also being used in business, particularly in the United States. Inverted forms like *Faithfully* or *Truly yours* (for business letters) and *Sincerely* or *Cordially yours* (for personal letters, the latter being common in the United States) are considered somewhat forced and artificial by some writers.

To use "Yours", etc. as closure is in bad taste.

A list of the most commonly used salutations arranged with their appropriate closures is given below:

Salutation	Suitable Closure	Remarks
Dear Sir(s), Dear Madam,	Yours faithfully,	Standard closure for business letter, particularly in the U.K.
Gentlemen:	Yours truly,	Commonly used in the United States
Dear Mr. Shaw,	Yours sincerely,	For private letters, now also fashionable in business between persons well known to each other.

### 7) The signature

The signature is the signed name or mark of the person writing the letter of the firm he represents. It is written in ink immediately below the complimentary close. Because a signature is the distinguishing mark of the one who used it, the same style must always be adopted.

The signature as written and the signature as typed must correspond exactly.

Never sign your letters with a rubber stamp.

### Optional elements of a business letter

- 1) Reference
- 2) The attention line
- 3) The Subject line
- 4) The reference notation
- 5) The enclosure
- 6) The carbon copy notation
- 7) The postscript

#### 1) Reference

Most letter-heads provide for reference letters and numbers. The references help the recipient match the letter to the relevant problems, which it concerns. These are marked "Our ref:" and "Your ref:" to avoid confusion. For example,

Your Ref.: HR/544

Our Ref.: QW F-2

#### 2) The attention line

The phrase "For the attention of..." or simply "attention" is used where the writer of a letter addressed to an organization wishes to direct it to a particular official. For example,

For the attention of Mr. Smith

Attention: Mr. Smith

#### 3) The subject line

Often useful as a time-saver is the practice of including at the head of a letter a short title

announcing the subject matter. To call reader's attention, it may be underlined or in boldface letters. For example,

Subject: order No:689

**Sub.: S/C No. 987**

Re: Invoice 369

**4) The reference notation**

This notion is typed two spaces below the typed signature, and shows only the initials of the typist. If the dictator's name is not typed in the signature area, the reference notation shows the initials of both the dictator and the typist. The following examples are acceptable forms of reference notations:

RBG      rbg      FMA/RBG      FMA/rbg      FMA:rbg

**5) The enclosure**

Two line-spacings below the Reference Notation the writer may indicate one or more enclosures in the letter by following any one of these examples:

Enclosure: Price list

Enclosures

Encls: 4

Encl. As stated

Enc.

**6) The carbon copy notation**

Carbon copy notation is indicated by "cc" followed by the names of the persons who will receive copies of the letters. The notation is typed on the original and carbon copies.

**7) Postscript**

If the writer wishes to add something he forgot to mention or for emphasis, he may type his thought two spaces below the copy notation. The adding of a P.S. should, however, be avoided as far as possible, since it may suggest that the writer failed to plan his letter before he wrote it or dictated it. For example,

P.S.: Please visit our website: <http://www.hisl.co.uk>

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

Letter-head

July 22, 2009

Ms. Rebecca Quinlan  
3456 Dewhurst Circle

Unit No.18

Birmingham, AL 35233

Dear Ms. Quinlan:

The purpose of this letter is to convey to you my sincere apologies for any inconveniences you may have experienced last month with the respect of the installation of your Internet high speed service.

I just returned from my vacation this week and found your file in my in-basket. As soon as I reviewed your case it was clear that somehow your May 20th for a change in service had somehow slipped through the cracks. The only possible explanation I can give is that we have recently had a number of key staff changes that might result in your letter being overlooked.

Consequently, I have directed our Installation Group to contact you by the end of this week to set up a time convenient to you when they could go to your house and install a new router and make the necessary adjustment to your software.

Because of this serious oversight, and as a testament to our appreciation of you as a customer, we are going to provide you with your first three months of high speed service free of charge. Therefore, your account will not be billed until October of this year.

Ms. Quinlan, let me assure you what had happened is not typical of our company's level of customer service.

We continue to provide you and all our customers with the highest standard of service in this industry.

Should you have further questions, please feel free to call me at 756-7638.

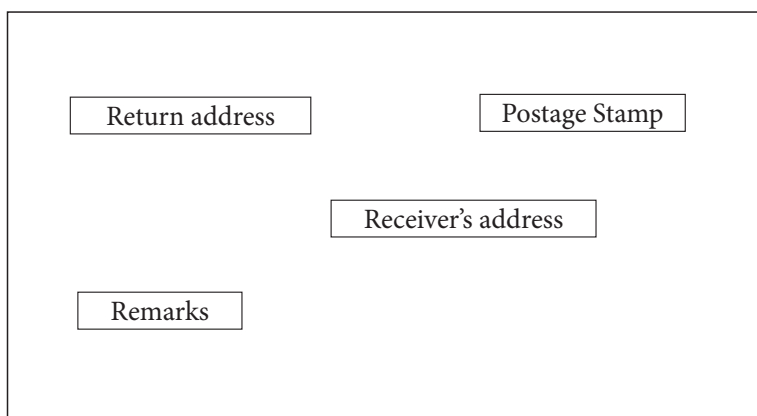
Yours faithfully,  
Michael Johnson  
Manager, Customer Solutions

### 1.4.3 Envelope Addressing

Like the inside address, both the return address and the recipient's address on the envelope can be written in the following order:

- Name of the addressee;
- Name and organization;
- Number and street;
- City, state and zip code;
- Country.

Remarks or post notation if necessary may refer to private, confidential, registered, printed material, express or sample as it is.



## Useful Expression for Opening and Concluding a Business Letter

### Opening a Business Letter

#### 1. Expressing thanks for receiving the letter

We thank you for	}	your letter/inquiry/telex/fax of...
Thank you for		
We appreciate		
We were pleased to receive		
Please accept our thanks for		

#### 2. Giving an answer to the incoming letter

We are pleased to reply to	}	your letter/inquiry/telex/fax of...
In answer to		
In response to		
In reply to		

**3. Referring to a certain matter or problem**

With reference to	}	your letter/telex/fax of...
In reference to		
Referring to		
We refer to		

**4. Expressing “according to your instructions (request, requirement)”**

As requested	}	the request/instructions	}	in your letter of...
As required				
As instructed				
According to				
In accordance with				
In compliance with				
In conformity with				

**5. Expressing pleasure or satisfaction**

We were gratified	}	to learn from your letter of... that
We were glad		
It was a pleasure		

**6. Expressing regret or astonishment**

We regret	}	to learn from your letter of... that...
We were sorry		
We were surprised		

**7. When something is to be sent or enclosed with the letter**

(1) We are sending	}	you...
We have sent		
We shall be pleased to send you upon request...		
(2) We enclose	}	...
You will find attached to the letter		
You will find enclosed		
Enclosed is		
We are enclosing		

**8. The way of sending something**

by separate mail/post  
 by another mail  
 under separate cover

- by air mail
- by air parcel post
- by surface/ordinary mail
- by sea mail
- by registered mail
- by express mail

### Concluding a Business Letter

The conclusion of a business letter should be succinct and to the point and closely related to the purpose of writing the letter.

#### 1. When asking for a reply

If the letter asks for a reply, it means that you express your request for something from the receiver, the following patterns are often used:

<p>We hope to receive          We hope to be favored with          We await          We are waiting for          We shall be obliged for          We shall appreciate          We look forward to</p>	}	<p>a/an/your</p>	<p>reply          (early/definite/favorable/further/          satisfactory) reply          answer          favorable news          comment          opinion</p>
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#### 2. When no answer is needed

- 1) Just expressing thanks to the incoming letter for patronage or cooperation
  - We thank you for the services (you) rendered in this matter.
  - Thank you for your attention to this matter.
  - We thank you for your trial order.
  - Thank you for your cooperation.
  - Thank you for your interest in our products.
  - We appreciate your patronage and hope that the pleasant relationship established between us will continue.
  - Your favorable cooperation/patronage would be greatly appreciated.
- 2) Expressing apology
  - We apologize for the delay in replying to your letter.
  - We regret the trouble we are causing you.
  - Please accept our apology for the inconvenience we have caused you.

We regret that we are unable to

be of assistance to you.  
 give you order at present.  
 meet your requirements.  
 submit the quotation desired by you.  
 make use of your kind offer.  
 avail ourselves of your proposal.

3) Expressing hopes

We hope this is the beginning of a good relationship to our business.

We hope that you will feel free to call on us again wherever we may be of further assistance to you.

If we can be of further service to you, please do not hesitate to write us.

We look forward to a pleasant business relationship with you in the future.

**Exercise** 

I. Answer the following questions.

- 1) What are the seven C's principles of typical business letters?
- 2) What are the essential elements of a business letter?
- 3) What about envelop addressing?

II. Translate the following terms and expressions from English into Chinese or Chinese into English.

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1) block style   | 2) salutation   |
| 3) letterhead    | 4) optional     |
| 5) complimentary | 6) conciseness  |
| 7) signature     | 8) concreteness |
| 9) courtesy      | 10) clarity     |
| 11) 签名           | 12) 事由          |
| 13) 混合式          | 14) 缩进式         |
| 15) 信封的写法        | 16) 经办人         |
| 17) 抄送           | 18) 结尾恭敬语       |
| 19) 案号           | 20) 称呼          |